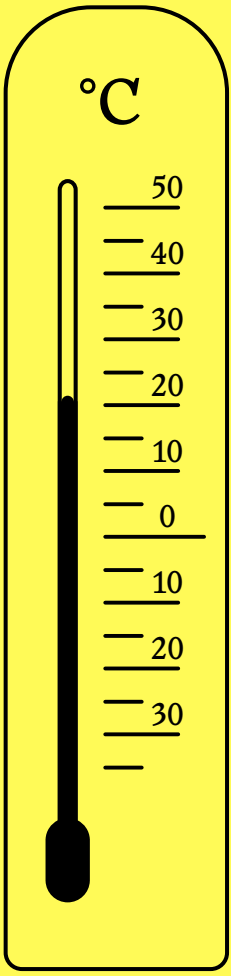

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL

BEITRÄGE ZUR KUNSTGESCHICHTE UND VISUELLEN KULTUR

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ARTICLES – ARTIKEL

REVIEWS – REZENSIONEN

IN MEMORY OF MICHAEL F. ZIMMERMANN (1958–2025)

Ursula Frohne

"Courage!" With this simple yet profound encouragement, Michael Zimmermann would urge us on upon departures from intense and inspiring discussion with his overwhelmingly capturing smile. Have courage: to speak, to keep speaking, especially – and perhaps precisely – within a discipline still often bound by the status quo of methods and conventions as art history is. His exhortation always echoed the Horatian motto Kant famously translated as "*Sapere aude* – Have the courage to use your own understanding".

Unexpectedly, the scholarly community has lost in Michael Zimmermann an enthusiastic art historian, an original thinker, a tireless initiator of debates, and a singularly warm-hearted colleague. With his passing, also this journal *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual. Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte und visuellen Kultur* loses an indefatigable advocate for methodological renewal and cultural expansion whose intellectual curiosity and critical energy will continue to shape our work.

Michael F. Zimmermann was born in 1958 in Münster, Westphalia. He studied art history, philosophy, and history at the University of Cologne, complementing his studies with extended stays abroad – first in Rome at the Bibliotheca Hertziana (Max Planck Institute for Art History) and at La Sapienza University, then in Paris at the Sorbonne. In 1985, he received his doctorate with a seminal dissertation on *Seurat. Sein Werk und die kunsttheoretische Debatte seiner Zeit*, which has since been translated into several languages and remains widely cited.[1]

Following his doctorate, Michael worked as a research assistant at the Freie Universität Berlin and at the German Art Historical Institute in Florence. His academic reputation soon led to a leadership position: in 1991, he became Second Director of the Central Institute for Art History in Munich, where he not only guided the institute's development but also advanced his research on the relationship between media, painting, and national identity in modern

1 Michael F. Zimmermann, *Seurat. Sein Werk und die kunsttheoretische Debatte seiner Zeit*, Weinheim 1991; also: *Seurat and the Art Theory of His Time*, Antwerp 1991; *Les mondes de Seurat. Son œuvre et le débat artistique de son temps*, Paris 1991; *Seurat en de kunsttheorie van zijn tijd*, Antwerp 1991.

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Michael F. Zimmermann (1958–2025) © Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (July 7, 2025).

Italy. This work culminated in his Habilitation, *Industrialisierung der Phantasie. Malerei, illustrierte Presse und das Mediensystem der Künste in Italien, 1875–1900* (*The Industrialization of the Imagination. The Formation of Modern Italy and the Media System of the Arts, 1875–1900*), published in 2006.[2]

Zimmermann's international visibility continued to thrive. In 2001, through a competitive selection process, he was nominated by the Conseil National des Universités as a qualified candidate for French professorships. That same year, he held visiting appointments at the University of Paris X and served as Robert Sterling Clark Visiting Professor at Williams College in Massachusetts. By 2002, he had accepted a professorship in Modern and Contemporary Art History at the Université de Lausanne. Two years later, he took up the Chair of Art History at the Katholische Universität Eichstätt-Ingolstadt – a role he held with passion and distinction for more than two decades. Even while based in Eichstätt, he remained deeply engaged with academic communities across Europe, holding visiting professorships and giving guest lectures in Amsterdam, Berlin, Milan, Paris, Pisa, Trento, and other centers of art historical research.

Michael's research interests spanned the visual arts of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in France, Italy, and Germany. Artists such as Jean-Honoré Fragonard, Caspar David Friedrich, Gustave Courbet, Édouard Manet, Edgar Degas, Paul Cézanne, Vincent Van Gogh, and Claude Monet figure prominently in his writings. Inspired by his exchanges with Robert Herbert, he set out to explore the art of Impressionism through fresh approaches that connected it to the history of science, theories of perception, and, importantly, to the vibrant contemporary debates that shaped painting in late nineteenth-century France. He not only infused the research on Impressionism with insights into the social and political context of the time but also delved into both historical and contemporary theories of the image. Among his major works are *Die Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts. Realismus – Impressionismus – Symbolismus*, the above-mentioned *Industrialisierung der Phantasie*, and an insightful monograph on Lovis Corinth and countless book chapters, essays and reviews in prestigious anthologies and international journals of art history and art criticism.[3]

In his nuanced study *Artistic Self-Discovery Beyond Influence*, Zimmermann used the example of Manet to demonstrate that artistic originality does not simply emerge from the "influence" of historical precedents. Instead, he understood the deliberate and often contradictory appropriation of past visual languages as a strategy of

[2] Id., *Industrialisierung der Phantasie. Malerei, illustrierte Presse und das Mediensystem der Künste in Italien, 1875–1900*, Berlin 2006.

[3] Id., *Die Kunst des 19. Jahrhunderts. Naturalismus – Impressionismus – Symbolismus*, Munich [2]2020 [2011]; id., *Lovis Corinth*, Munich 2008.

Georges Seurat, *Bathers at Asnières*, 1884, oil on canvas, 201 × 300 cm, London, National Gallery (and details). Photo: Wikimedia Commons, in the public domain (July 10, 2025).

modern self-positioning.[4] By referencing the painting of Velázquez, for instance, Manet developed an autonomous and historically conscious artistic identity – an approach that shaped Zimmermann's own reflections on the dialectic between tradition and innovation. To place contemporary visual practices in conversation with currents of art history was not only one of his passions; time and again, he succeeded in illuminating how visual cultures – then and now – speak to one another and continue to shape our ways of seeing. In his essay *Selfies as Self-Caricature* (2019), Zimmermann interpreted contemporary selfies not merely as expressions of narcissistic self-display but as playful experiments with masks, roles, and staged identities.[5] Drawing on the image culture of social media, he showed how strategies of self-promotion and ironic masquerade echo earlier traditions of artistic self-portraiture – extending back to Gustave Courbet's self-stylizations. In this way, he found deep satisfaction in connecting contemporary analysis with historical depth.

With a keen sensibility for visual phenomena and always guided by close looking, Michael wrote on artists ranging from monographic approaches to Seurat, Courbet or Van Gogh to philosophical trajectories of time, to Hermann von Helmholtz's scientific experiments and their relation to Paul Cézanne's studies of vision, from Jean-Luc-Nancy to Allan Sekula's practice and theory of documentation as dialogue, from contemporary selfie-culture to the political dimensions of Adam Szymczyk's *documenta 14*. Michael Zimmermann's writing unfolded perspectives that spanned precise analyses of single works, reflections on visual theory, film, and socially engaged artistic practices – always reaching into philosophical thought and history of science that passionately pushed the boundaries of conventional scholarship.

His intellectual reach extended far beyond art history alone. With an acute awareness of the questions of our time, and deep familiarity with cultural and philosophical debates, he continually brought concerns about the pressing issues of our present into our shared discourses. His insightful engagement with the philosophy of Giorgio Agamben, which he explored alongside his early engagement with Michel Foucault – whose lectures he had himself attended at the Collège de France in 1981/82 – are just a few examples of how masterfully he introduced philosophy and the French school of Deconstructivism to art history while bridging disciplines and generations of thought, with as much profound knowledge as playfully and with a creative impetus towards expanding the repertoire of our discipline's methods.

4
Id., Künstlerische Selbstfindung jenseits von Einflüssen. Manet und Velásquez, ‚Maler der Maler', in: Ulrich Pfisterer and Christine Tauber (eds.), *Einfluss, Strömung, Quelle. Aquatische Metaphern der Kunstgeschichte*, Bielefeld 2018, 97–137 (June 29, 2025).

5
Id., Courbet als Assyrer. Selbst-Karikatur und Self-Fashioning im Dialog mit Baudelaire, in: *Diaphanes. Kunst-Literatur-Diskurs/Art-Fiction-Discourse* 8/9, 2019, 76–81 (= special issue *Authentizität und Feedback/Authenticity and Feedback*).

Michael Zimmermann was not only a pioneering scholar but also an institutional builder and an inspiring colleague. As co-initiator and founding member of *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual* – a journal he helped shape after having significantly revitalized the *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* between 2014 and 2019 – he left an indelible mark on the scholarly landscape. Since 2023 he was a member of the editorial leadership team, serving with passion, intellectual generosity, and an unwavering belief in the power of dialogue across disciplines, cultures, and perspectives.

He brought people together: organizing interdisciplinary seminars, workshops, and graduate courses with colleagues past and present, and publishing with them on topics that transcended any single field. As early as the 1990s, in the *Kunstchronik*, he called for a more international and inclusive art history, urging the discipline to integrate East German heritage sites and to engage more fully with Eastern Europe – ideas that prefigured debates that continue to shape the field today. His unwavering commitment to critical discourse was vividly expressed in recent years when he co-authored, among other texts, a debate essay in the *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte*. Taking the remarkable convergence of contemporary art exhibitions in the summer of 2017 – documenta 14 in Kassel, the Skulptur Projekte in Münster, and the Biennale di Venezia – as a point of departure, he reflected on the condition of contemporary art and its capacity to intervene in social and political discourse.[6] For Michael, this was also a call to art historians to acknowledge their own political responsibility and to engage more directly with the ethical challenges posed by today's global realities, rather than retreat into purely retrospective scholarship.

His edited volume *Vision in Motion. Streams of Sensation and Configurations of Time* brought together wide-ranging studies on how vision itself is shaped by time, sensation, and movement – from Berkeley and Goethe to Cézanne, from gesture to cinema, from the physiology of perception to theories by Bergson and Deleuze.[7] Among his many nuanced readings, his essay "Nach-Denk-Bilder. Der Blick auf die Sonne und die Bewegung der Wahrnehmung" stands out as a vivid example of how he made complex ideas about seeing both tangible and deeply engaging, revealing how Robert Delaunay's *formes circulaires* capture perception as a dynamic interplay of presence and memory.[8]

6
Ursula Frohne and Michael F. Zimmermann, The Summer of Art 2017, or, The Condition of Art in Times of Political Unrest, in: *Zeitschrift für Kunstgeschichte* 81/2, 2018, 163–169.

7
Michael F. Zimmermann, *Vision in Motion. Streams of Sensation and Configurations of Time*, Zurich/Berlin 2016.

8
Id., Nach-Denk-Bilder. Der Blick auf die Sonne und die Bewegung der Wahrnehmung, in: Werner Busch and Karolin Meister (eds.), *Nachbilder. Das Gedächtnis des Auges in Kunst und Wissenschaft*, Zurich/Berlin 2011, 173–214, 293–297.

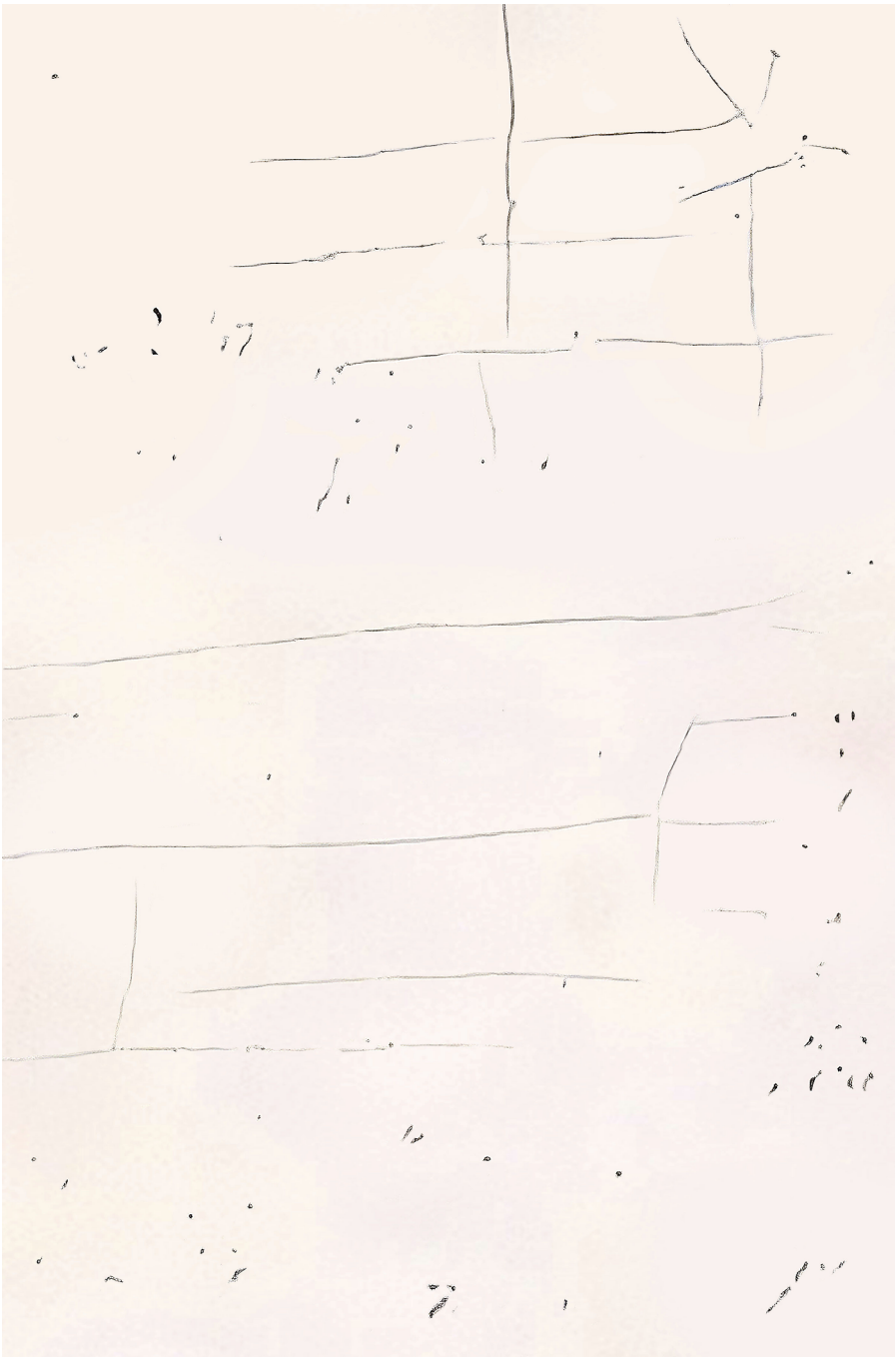
At the KU Eichstätt-Ingolstadt, Michael played a central role in developing the DFG-funded graduate school *Practicing Place – Socio-Cultural Practices and Epistemic Configurations* and served for many years as spokesperson of the master's program *Aisthesis. Historical Art and Image Discourses* within the *Elitenetzwerk Bayern* – an innovative, interdisciplinary course of study blending cultural and media studies, media sociology, journalism, and hands-on media practice. *Aisthesis* – the ancient Greek word for "perception" – was a perfect emblem for Michael's commitment to openness, interdisciplinarity, and theoretical boldness. A valued member of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (Bavarian Academy of Sciences and Humanities) since 2008 and the Academia Europaea since 2012, Michael tirelessly championed interdisciplinary research communities, leading working groups on topics from "Fake and Fact in Images" to "Future Values", always with a keen sense for the ethical, political, and cultural stakes of our time. His programmatic initiation of a series of video conversations on *The Power and Impotence of Images* engaged international colleagues in discussions on the complex interplay between media image production and claims to truth in society.[9] In view of historical and contemporary visual practices that interweave fiction, manipulation, and authenticity – from nineteenth-century photography to today's digital image cultures and the debates around "fake news", this still accessible forum of conversations underscores the central role of art history in critically reflecting on the power of images to construct social realities and questioning the notion of objective documentation in times of digital practices of image manipulation.

Above all, Michael was a gifted and generous teacher, beloved by students and doctoral candidates for his intellectual rigor, human warmth, and infectious humor. His lectures and excursions were journeys through cultural and social history, reaching far beyond the traditional boundaries of art history. He gave his students a strong foundation and inspired in them a lasting passion for art.

In his last years, he pursued studies in visual narratology – investigating how images not only show what is but also evoke what unfolds – to explore the sea as a "space of longing, economy, escape, and still life". Although a non finito project of his rich scholarly repertoire, it stands for his profound belief to be guided by open horizons of thought and for future art histories. Michael Zimmermann's presence embodied the very spirit of living scholarship: restless, curious, unafraid to challenge complacency, and always brimming with ideas. He never imposed authority but shared it – gently, zugewandt and always eager to make space for others to grow.

The news of his passing has struck us deeply and leaves us with a profound sense of loss. For exactly four decades, I personally had the privilege to enjoy a constant discourse with him and within our editorial team Michael shared his inexhaustible knowledge, profes-

9
See the video conversations on the website of the Bayerische Akademie der Wissenschaften (June 29, 2025).



sionalism, and kindness since 2019, when he acted as an enthusiastic advocate for the realization of this then unforeseeable adventure. He proved in all his spheres of collaboration and in the widespread network of his activities to be a true colleague, a wholehearted collaborator, and loyal friend. He was a fearless advocate for academic freedom, a brilliant scholar, a charismatic teacher, and, above all, a warm and generous spirit whose presence enriched our academic lives in countless ways. His untimely departure leaves behind unfinished thoughts and projects, and a community that will feel his absence for a long time to come.

We honor his memory by living his courage, his openness, and his unshakeable belief that dialogue is at the very heart of scholarship and humanness. Michael will be missed more than words can say – and in our thoughts, he will always remain close.

ARTICLES
BEITRÄGE

ON LEISURE AND LIMBO

ADRIATIC NODES OF TOURISM AND MIGRATION

Hanni Geiger

21: INQUIRIES INTO ART, HISTORY, AND THE VISUAL
5/2, 2025, 195–237

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary artworks re-envision the Adriatic littoral as a frictional arena where tourism and migration converge, disrupting commercial images of seamless global connectivity. In installations and photographs by Renata Poljak, Ilir Tsouko, and Šejla Kamerić, beaches, hotels, and pools appear as liminal infrastructures shaped by both mobility and stasis, presence and absence, pleasure and struggle, and gendered dynamics. These non-commercial visuals challenge harmonised leisure imagery and design – envisioned for fluid exchanges, short stays, communication, ease, and equal access – by revealing protracted waiting, invisibilities, and exclusions. Viewed through a dis:connective lens, the coastal sites emerge as dynamic nodes of voluntary and forced movements, questioning commodified maritime regions. Artistic and personal perspectives deconstruct dominant spatial conceptions and simplistic globalisation narratives, including binarised stereotypes of tourism and migration. This analysis contributes to a global art history that recognises the overlooked modern Adriatic Mediterranean as a microlaboratory of complex globalisation processes.

KEYWORDS

Adriatic; Node; Tourism; Migration; Liminality; Infrastructure; Dis:connection; Globalisation; Mediterranean.

I. Introduction

The beach in Renata Poljak's multimedia work *Partenza* (2016) is clearly not a tourist destination [Fig. 1]. While postcards and guidebooks have long depicted Croatia's *Zlatni Rat* as a global attraction, the artist deconstructs the image of the Dalmatian destination that promises seamless global exchanges. In promotional images, the beach on Brač is often shown either as an intimate, almost empty seashore[1] [Fig. 2a] or a lively spot for leisure activities, with vibrant colours enhancing the scene [Fig. 2b]. In contrast, Poljak depicts the beach in black and white, creating drama with light and shadow. She focuses on a small part of the beach, using a low perspective that barely hints at the sea. The motionless people depicted from behind and dressed in dark clothing seem to be waiting for someone or something, not relaxing or engaging with each other. Their presence conveys immobility, and a sense of isolation and unease. The idle group on the empty Boler beach represents those who stayed behind during the mass emigration around 1900, when hunger and economic instability drove thousands of Croatians to seek a better life in Argentina and Chile.[2] By 1939, nearly 15,000 men had emigrated, most never to return.[3] Poljak's great-grandfather was among those who found death, not wealth, in South America.[4] His absence, along with that of many others, left deep gaps in Adriatic communities.

Poljak's work introduces the central theme of this essay: beaches, hotels, and pools along the Adriatic littoral as sites of global dis:connection. The term "dis:connection", coined by Christopher Balme, Burcu Dogramaci, and Roland Wenzlhuemer, underscores that disruptions, gaps, and absences are not exceptions but constitutive of globalisation – highlighting the dynamic interplay of integration, disintegration, and missing links.[5] Touristically imagined as a world of seamless flows, globalisation in the Adriatic reveals itself through uneven mobilities and their associated ambivalences. Pol-

1
Eva Illouz, *Consuming the Romantic Utopia*, Berkeley, CA 1997, 95; Illouz draws attention to the marketing strategies of the tourist industry, which in advertising tends to detach the beach "from the crowded and highly commercialised vacation resorts".

2
Renata Poljak (ed.), *Don't Turn Your Back on Me*, Vienna 2017, 11; Mario Bara, Snježana Gregurović, Simona Kuti, Dubravka Mlinarić and Drago Župarić-Iljić, *Croatian Migration History and the Challenges of Migrations Today*, 6 January 2015 (19 December 2024).

3
Bara et al., Croatian Migration History; Alaina Claire Feldman, Islands of Displacement in Renata Poljak's *Partenza*, in: Poljak, Don't Turn Your Back on Me, 2–5, here 4.

4
Poljak, Don't Turn Your Back on Me, 11.

5
Christopher Balme, Burcu Dogramaci, and Roland Wenzlhuemer, Introduction, in: eid. (eds.), *Dis:connectivity and Globalisation. Concepts, Terms, Practices*, Berlin/Munich/Boston 2025, 1–18.

jak's images reflect this tension: between circulation and standstill, presence and absence, activity and passivity.

In her video and photographs, the artist does not directly reference the tourism industry but frames scenes of historical exile within the modern view of beaches as popular holiday destinations that stand for easy global entanglements. By incorporating past migration experiences into a contemporary leisure setting, Poljak challenges the consumerist expectations of mass-tourism hubs as presented in globally circulated postcards, brochures, and websites. Through this multitemporal reading of the beach, she disrupts the one-dimensional imagery of the Adriatic beach. Unlike these adverts, she employs visual media to reveal fraught comings and goings. Rather than highlighting the pristine landscape, fluid movements, smooth exchanges, and harmonious interactions, the artist visualises spaces of simultaneous global connections and disconnections. *Zlatni Rat* appears to be a node where the pathways of tourism and migration intersect,[6] creating dissonance in the understanding of leisure spaces. Drawing on the biological definition of nodes as points of new growth,[7] this Adriatic node symbolises the emergence of new spatial and societal meanings, transforming the beach from a simple tourist attraction into a site of global tensions.

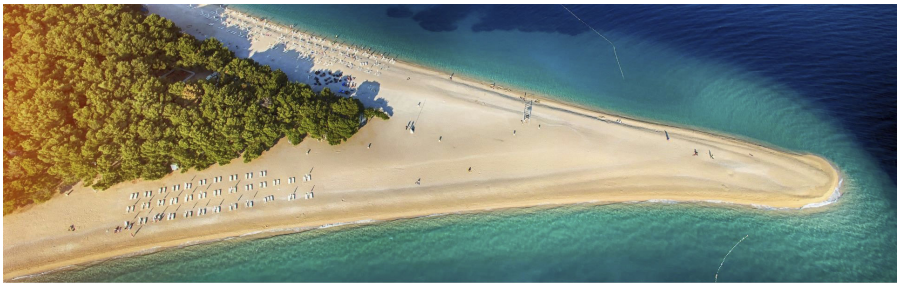
The varying visual representations of spaces in tourism show that their meanings are not fixed. They change over time, shaped by the media and the perspectives of creators and consumers within specific social, economic, and political contexts. By incorporating historical separations, absences, waiting, and loss into current tourism imagery, *Partenza* creates ambivalent spaces linked to global circulation. Such non-commercial visuals encourage us to recognise the interconnection between forced and voluntary movements, complicating the understandings of environments and global mobilities alike. Through evoking spaces charged with complexities of connections and disconnections, these visuals offer a more nuanced understanding of globalisation, particularly in relation to tourism and migration.

From an art-historical perspective, I examine contemporary installations, films, and photographs that critically engage with tourism-driven spaces in their encounters with migration. This analysis employs sociological and human geography frameworks to examine tourism as a globalised mobility regime, while migration (and its intersections with tourism) are explored through social anthropology, ethnology, and literary, media, and migration studies. The spatial dimension, including infrastructures, is approached via philosophy, history, anthropology, cultural and social theory, with particular emphasis on concepts such as liminality and relational

6
Oxford English Dictionary, *s.v.*, *node, n., sense 9.a.*, June 2024 (20 December 2024). According to the dictionary, a node is a point of intersection or convergence.

7
Oxford English Dictionary, *s.v.*, *node, n., sense 7*, June 2024 (20 December 2024).

[Fig. 1]
Renata Poljak, *Partenza*, 2016, film (still), 11 minutes, HD © Renata Poljak.



[Fig. 2a, Fig. 2b]
Zlatni Rat beach on the island of Brač, 2023. Photography: Ivo Biočina (top) © Ivo Biočina; Somto Ugwueze (bottom) © Somto Ugwueze.

space. By applying a dis:connective perspective, I study artistic media, techniques, and styles that stage these sites, including the performances within them, which hint at disruptions of consumerist notions of spaces devoted to mobility, communication, and access. Rather than focusing on spaces conceptualised as built or natural leisure infrastructures ensuring smooth societal or commercial functioning,[8] the Adriatic nodes of migration and tourism I discuss emerge as liminal infrastructures of physical, mental, and social in-betweens. The threshold – derived from *limen*, the Latin root of "liminality" – refers here not only to physical or metaphorical spaces of transition,[9] but to spaces marked by disruption and change. The concept, as employed in this analysis, draws on the anthropological model of liminality introduced by Victor Turner (1967; 1969), following Arnold van Gennep (1909).[10] Turner's notion of a space of ambivalence, social tension, destabilisation, but also creativity and transformation in rites of passage, both individual and collective,[11] is expanded here into a global social condition. It encompasses the charged dynamic of connections and disconnections as fundamental to global interactions: comings and goings, movement and immobility, presence and absence, inclusion and exclusion, pleasure and pain. In line with Edward W. Soja's "Thirdspace" (1996) – grounded in Henri Lefebvre's spatial triad (1974) and Homi Bhabha's concept of the "Third Space" (1994) and resonating with Doreen Massey's relational view of space (2005) – I understand the Adriatic nodes of tourism and migration as sites of transition that highlight ambiguity, difference, precarity, and resistance rather than synthesis and seamless integration.[12] As such, they hold emancipatory potential for the reconfiguration of spaces, entire regions and the understandings of worldwide interactions.

Artistic perspectives – grounded in local, personal, corporeal, and emotional sensing – along with the viewers' embodied and affective engagement with visualised global frictions, are crucial here, showing how art can deconstruct dominant spatial conceptions and challenge oversimplified globalisation narratives, espe-

8
Dirk van Laak, Infrastructures, in: *Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte*, 20 May 2021 (17 January 2025).

9
Dictionary.com, *s.v.*, *liminality* (15 January 2024).

10
Victor Turner, Betwixt and Between. The Liminal Period in 'Rites de passage', in: id. (ed.), *The Forest of Symbols*, New York 1967; id., *The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-structure*, Chicago 1969. In *The Ritual Process* (1969), Turner expands and deepens the concept of liminality within a broader ritual and social framework; Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee, Chicago 1960, first published as *Les rites de passage*, Paris 1909.

11
Turner, Betwixt and Between; id., The Ritual Process.

12
Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Oxford 1996; Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Oxford/Cambridge, MA 1991 (1974); Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London 1994; Doreen Massey, *For Space*, London 2005. The following sections explore Lefebvre's spatial triad in greater detail.

cially around tourism and migration. Dis:connectively recoded, Croatian and Albanian beaches, hotels, and pools contribute to a global art history that recognises the overlooked modern Adriatic Mediterranean as a micro-laboratory of complex globalisation processes.

It is a space where what Roland Robertson has termed "glocalisation" becomes tangible: the co-constitution of the global and the local in specific sites, where universal flows are refracted through local histories, memories, and spatial practices.[13] Adriatic beaches and hotels act as glocal micro-sites where global tourism imaginaries of seamless flow encounter layered, often concealed histories of migration, absence, and exclusion – shaped by volatile political and economic conditions. The same coastal location may serve at once as a site of emigration and a holiday destination; a retreat for the weary and a shelter for the displaced; a European border open to some, closed to others.

What is unique to the Adriatic is not the presence of globalisation's tensions, but its spatial compression. The small sea, enclosed and bordered by states formed by divergent political systems, wars, and economic disparities, condenses tourism, forced migration, and economic flight within a compact physical setting. As Caterina Resta writes, building on Predrag Matvejević, the Mediterranean is an "internal sea" shaped by its coasts and their entanglements, unlike the Atlantic which surrounds land.[14] In this way, the Adriatic becomes a Mediterranean microcosm of fraught globalisation manifesting within a small geography yet extending beyond geopolitical borders – where mobilities and their social, spatial, and emotional interstices spill across national and ideological divides.

This study is part of a broader project exploring the entire Adriatic through visual art and design, with particular attention to the long-overlooked so-called eastern coast and its aesthetic practices. Unlike historical or social science perspectives, art offers a situated, sensuous, and emotional lens on a region shaped not just by territorial and political legacies – whether capitalist or socialist – but by shared maritime experience as tied to shifting mobilities. To date, scholarly engagement with the Adriatic has often remained confined within national frameworks, reinforced by linguistic and geopolitical boundaries that discourage cross-border perspectives. This project instead approaches the Adriatic across spatial divides, acknowledging the entangled movements and imaginaries that extend throughout its shores. As a region shaped transnationally by ambivalent globalisation processes, the Adriatic may overcome its Cold War-induced split into a European core and its

13
Roland Robertson, Glocalization. Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity, in: Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities*, London 1995, 25–44.

14
Caterina Resta, *Geofilosofia del mediterraneo*, Messina 2012, 1–3; Predrag Matvejević, *Mediterranean. A Cultural Landscape*, trans. Michael Henry Heim, Berkeley, CA 1999.

periphery. It emerges as a dis:connective entity – a holistic region defined by the complex interplay of global mobilities – that challenges stereotypes and binaries opposing a progressive West to a marginalised, "backward" Balkans. This perspective contributes to a non-hegemonic and inclusive art history that moves beyond national paradigms and embraces diverse visual forms.

Ultimately, the Adriatic as a micro-laboratory of globalisation resonates with other coastal regions shaped by maritime tourism. It invites a reframing of the Mediterranean – not as Braudel proposed, as a stable longue durée region shaped by enduring structures, but as a space continually transformed by tourism-driven global economies. Change itself becomes the region's only constant. This perspective offers new insights for Mediterranean studies and beyond.

II. Deconstructing Space Construction

Before turning to specific sites of leisure and migratory dis:connections, I begin by examining how tourism shapes maritime spaces as seemingly smooth realms of global circulation. Building on Peter Eisenman's architectural interpretation of "deconstruction" as a design strategy that exposes hidden spatial structures and contradictions, I engage with Jacques Derrida's concept of deconstruction as introduced in *Of Grammatology* (1967) – not as destruction but as a method for uncovering dominant meanings, concepts, and practices.[15]

This section approaches tourism-driven spatial design as a visual and material practice that masks its own ideological foundations. Understood as such, deconstruction enables a re-evaluation of spaces, particularly along the Adriatic coast, where commodification under the leisure economy has long dominated both representation and use, concealing other global dynamics such as migration. It opens the possibility of understanding the coast and its infrastructures not merely as sites of seamless connectivity, but as liminal zones where mobilities and standstills, absences and presences, access and exclusion, and unequal power relations intersect – revealing the frictions and asymmetries embedded within seemingly harmonious landscapes.

Returning in *Partenza* to the artistic engagement with the construction of beach space and the exposure of its economic fabrication, it becomes evident that spaces are not determined solely by geological or environmental conditions but are social products.[16]

15
Peter Eisenmann, *Moving Arrows, Eros and Other Errors. An Architecture of Absence*, New York 1986; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Baltimore 1976, first published as *De la grammatologie*, Paris 1967. See chapter 2, *Linguistics and Grammatology*, 27–73.

16
Lefebvre, The Production of Space.

Lefebvre has shown that physical environments are shaped by human activity – by planning, power relations, everyday practices, relationships, and emotions – while also shaping them in return.[17] This includes material interventions and performative acts across spaces such as tourism and migration.[18] Yet not all global mobilities are equally visible: tourism is framed by visual regimes orchestrated by powerful economic interests. Specifically, the tourism industry – as a leading global industry rooted in visual culture – dominates the production of representations that both reflect and shape how coastal spaces are designed, consumed, and perceived. Since the mid-twentieth century, it has defined sun-and-sea destinations as smooth sites of global connectivity.[19] By circulating advertising images of pristine beaches, "authentic" cultures, and beautiful resorts, it has transformed coastal landscapes into spaces of longing, easy consumption, and undisturbed comings and goings.[20] This also entails transforming maritime landscapes – materially, visually, and conceptually – into fundamental elements of tourism infrastructures.[21] As natural attractions and recreational areas, beaches are indispensable components of the physical and organisational structures required for tourism.[22] Under the influence of the leisure industry and its "development" of the littoral, the coast becomes what Lefebvre prominently calls a "conceived" or "abstract space" – part of a spatial triad introduced in *The Production of Space* (1974).[23] These are spaces professionally planned, systematically imagined, and shaped by policymakers, developers, and architects.[24] In contrast to the "lived" dimensions of space, which I explore in more

17
Ibid.; Mimi Sheller and John Urry, Places to Play, Places in Play, in: eid. (eds.), *Tourism Mobilities. Places to Play, Places in Play*, London/New York 2004, 1–10.

18
Karlheinz Wöhler, Andreas Pott, and Vera Denzer, Formen und Konstruktionsweisen von Tourismusräumen, in: eid. (eds.), *Tourismusräume. Zur soziokulturellen Konstruktion eines globalen Phänomens*, Bielefeld 2010, 11–19, here 15. The authors emphasise the importance of performances as ways to spatialise social practices.

19
Sibel Bozdoğan, Panayiota Pyla, and Petros Phokaides, Introduction, in: eid. (eds.), *Coastal Architectures and Politics of Tourism. Leisurescapes in the Global Sunbelt*, New York/London 2023, IX–XIIII; John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze. Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London 1990.

20
Bozdoğan, Pyla, and Phokaides, Introduction, IX–XIIII; Krystian Woznicki, Der Mensch als Tourist, in: *Telepolis*, 4 December 2005 (26 January 2025).

21
Marian Burchardt and Dirk van Laak, Making Spaces through Infrastructure – Introduction, in: eid., *Making Spaces through Infrastructure. Visions, Technologies, and Tensions*, Oldenbourg 2023, 1–18, here 7. Van Laak points to spatial development and its recoding through the establishment of infrastructures.

22
Ibid., 7.

23
Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.

24
Ibid.

detail in subsequent artistic case studies, the conceived littoral reflects dominant ideologies and consumerist logics embedded in spatial planning.[25] They ensure the Adriatic is staged and experienced as a region of effortless access, economic exchange, and mass tourist circulation.[26] But these images of leisure obscure the complexities of globalisation, often sidelining or omitting less marketable realities such as migration. While tourism is meticulously curated in media representations, migration is depicted, if at all, as a source of instability and unease. Such imagery tends to erase migration or reduce it to anonymous crowds in motion or immobilised figures in coastal border zones – reinforcing disorder in contrast to the smooth, regulated, and desirable spaces of tourism. This contrast reveals how visual regimes differentially frame global mobilities and spatial legitimacy, and how profoundly they shape our perception of coastal areas[27] – exposing a biased ambivalence between global connections and disconnections: the seamless tourist destinations and the spaces unsettled by displacement.

Sociologist and tourism researcher John Urry describes this standardised, streamlined, and frictionless view of destinations as the "tourist gaze" – a collective way of seeing shaped by the leisure industry's pervasive visual presence.[28] The beach, in fact, is a tourism construct that features not only in travel marketing but also in everyday advertising for products like tobacco, cars, and fashion.[29] Because of this constant exposure, Pau Obrador Pons, Mike Crang, and Penny Travlou warn that we cannot reduce mass tourism to beach tourism or divorce it from everyday life in Northern Europe.[30] Karlheinz Wöhler, Andreas Pott, and Vera Denzer confirm this, linking the tourist gaze to the touristification of daily life.[31] Meanwhile, Adrian Franklin sees tourism as a metaphor for living in a consumer society, and Krystian Woznicki even calls it a

25
Ibid.

26
Burchardt and van Laak, Making Spaces through Infrastructure, 7.

27
Wöhler, Pott, and Denzer, Formen und Konstruktionsweisen.

28
John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0*, Los Angeles ³2011, first published as *The Tourist Gaze. Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London 1990.

29
Woznicki, Der Mensch als Tourist.

30
Pau Obrador Pons, Mike Crang, and Penny Travlou, Introduction. Taking Mediterranean Tourists Seriously, in: eid. (eds.), *Cultures of Mass Tourism. Doing the Mediterranean in the Age of Banal Mobilities*, Farnham 2009, 1–20, here 2.

31
Wöhler, Pott, and Denzer, Formen und Konstruktionsweisen, 14.

strategic colonisation of reality.[32] This aligns closely with Lefebvre's insights in *Critique of Everyday Life* (1948), the foundational work for his later spatial theory.[33] There, Lefebvre argues that everyday life is increasingly colonised by capitalist rhythms – into which the tourist gaze and commodified leisure clearly fall. These reflections expose the one-sidedness of tourism's ideological promise of smoothness, freedom, and ease, which masks deeper contradictions such as forced or restricted mobilities, the state-regulated (in)visibilities or denied social participations of migrants in the same coastal spaces.

The power of the tourist gaze lies not only in it being an economically imposed and learned collective perspective on uniformly perceived spaces of connection, but also in its deeply internalised nature. Operating unconsciously, it often goes unnoticed, leaving us largely unaware of how tourism commodifies our surroundings and shapes our views of smooth entanglements. We have absorbed the idea of infrastructure as described by Dirk van Laak – as systems that enable effortless access, communication, and mobility – rendering beaches and resorts integral to the fabric of everyday life.[34] Staged as leisure fantasies of global attraction – promising the connection of remote regions, cultural exchange, job creation, and prosperity – Adriatic sites appear as "Leitungswege" or conduits of a fluid globalisation.[35] Almost instinctively, we come to perceive these beaches, hotels, and amenities not as constructed or contested spaces, but as self-evident sites of smooth circulation.

Sibel Bozdoğan, Panayiota Pyla, and Petros Phokaides note that the standardised sun-and-sea imagery promoted by the leisure industry is fragile and incomplete.[36] Post-war mass travel generated visions of harmonious global connections, overshadowing the less fluid mobilities that preceded or accompanied the creation of consumer-oriented beaches.[37] Recognising Adriatic holiday sites as formed by both connections and disconnections underscores the interwoven nature of migration and tourism. The social sciences have emphasised this necessity. John Urry and Mimi Sheller describe global spaces as "criss-crossed by various mobilities and

32
Adrian Franklin, Tourism. An Introduction, London 2003, 5; Woznicki, Der Mensch als Tourist.

33
Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, vol. 1: *Introduction*, trans. John Moore, London 1991 (1947).

34
Van Laak, Infrastructures.

35
Bozdoğan, Pyla, and Phokaides, Introduction, IX–XIIII; Van Laak, Infrastructures.

36
Bozdoğan, Pyla, and Phokaides, Introduction, IX.

37
Ibid., IX–XIIII.

performances", continuously remade by tourists and migrants.[38] Therefore, Adriatic tourism and migration nodes are perpetually "on the move",[39] shifting their meanings and values as the dynamics of these diverse mobilities intersect. Researchers emphasise not only how space is (trans)formed by these intersections, but also how they shape one another, stressing the need to re-evaluate migration and tourism mobilities themselves.[40] In art history, Alexandra Karentzos, Alma-Elisa Kittner, and Julia Reuter's *Topologies of Travel. Tourism – Imagination – Migration* (2010) offers valuable insights into how tourism and migration intersect in artistic spatial productions.[41] Although it does not address liminal spaces between global connections and disconnections, it provides groundwork for exploring the complex interplay of leisure and flight in the Adriatic.

By visually relating migration and tourism, Poljak reveals the instable nature of Adriatic leisure sites, offering a more nuanced view than the productivist bias of economic planning. She subverts the tourist gaze – the consumerist mass perception of balanced global connections – by focusing on individual fates in a Dalmatian community affected by migration, rather than the usual collective beach scene. This subjective approach challenges internalised, habitual interpretations of spaces shaped by unhindered movements. Rather than passively consuming commodified tourism, the artist exposes hidden layers, contrasting expected tourist arrivals and their associated social stabilities with migratory departures, divisions, absences, and immobilities. Poljak opens a view onto a contested "physical" or "perceived space", where contemporary and past spatial practices intersect – the material routines and corporeal engagements within spaces, in Lefebvre's sense.[42] The expected flows of tourism, marked by bodies that are usually mobile, recreational, and carefree, are disrupted by the static, emotional, and uncertain presence of Poljak's immobile group. In doing so, the artist questions the dominant uses of the beach and highlights its "lived" or "representational" character, with spaces shaped by personal experiences, memories, and feelings.[43] She shows that migrants and locals inhabit and engage with the coast differently, their physical and affective experiences contrasting with the tour-

38
Mimi Sheller and John Urry, Prologue, in: eid., Tourism Mobilities, [s.p.]; eid., Places to Play, Places in Play, 1.

39
Eid., Places to Play, Places in Play, 1.

40
Ibid.

41
Alexandra Karentzos, Alma-Elisa Kittner, and Julia Reuter (eds.), *Topologies of Travel. Tourism – Imagination – Migration*, Trier 2010.

42
Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 38–41.

43
Ibid.

ist's idealised gaze. The beach emerges as a liminal zone, haunted alike by economic forces and personal loss.

Art thus exposes the complex globalisation processes underlying the pristine surfaces of tourist destinations. By deconstructing the tourist gaze and the spatial logic it produces, it advocates a critical unlearning of the assumptions that render these sites flawless. Instead of the social, imposed, learned, consumerist, standardised, and unconscious way of seeing, a dis:connective perspective reframes the Adriatic maritime locations as spatial condensations of a globalisation marked by frictions.

In the following, I examine Adriatic beaches, hotels, and pools in visual artworks whose scenes, motifs, and techniques reveal complex globalisation processes that transcend geopolitical borders and systems. I will shed light on the physical, mental, and social in-betweens among countries, memories, and future prospects, along with feelings of lightness and loss, and the interplay of visibility, invisibility, inclusion, and exclusion.

III. The Beach. On Comings and Goings

The tension between the dynamics of attraction and flight at *Zlatni Rat* can be thought of in relation to its natural liminality. The beach is described as "an indeterminate, ambiguous zone between earth and water, raked by sun and blasted by wind",[44] constantly claimed and reclaimed by tides and waves. The sea's movements echo the human arrivals and departures that have taken place in the same setting throughout history. Poised between conflicting elements and human mobilities, it is considered "*the* 'archetypal liminal landscape'".[45]

Partenza alludes to the beach's liminal properties as an unstable margin between land and sea, and human comings and goings. In the film, instead of music, we hear only the rhythmic sound of waves washing over the gravel, constantly setting it in motion. *Partenza* uses images and sounds to draw a sensory connection between the oscillating beach and the alternating movements of people, both past and present. Rob Shields highlights that not only tourists arrive as travellers to the seashore, but historically, in-shore fisherman and other locals also departed from beach landings.[46] Tom

[44] A. Martin, Beach, in: Stephen Coates and Alex Stetter (eds.), *Impossible Worlds*, Boston 2000; [Anonymous], *beach*, 18 February 2018 (16 January 2025).

[45] [Anonymous], beach; Bjørn Thomassen, Revisiting Liminality. The Danger of Empty Spaces, in: Hazel Andrews and Les Roberts (eds.), *Liminal Landscapes. Travel, Experience and Spaces In-Between*, London 2012, 21–35, here 21; see also Robert Preston-Whyte, The Beach as a Liminal Space, in: Alan A. Lew, C. Michael Hall, and Allan M. Williams (eds.), *A Companion to Tourism*, Oxford ²2005, 349–359.

[46] Rob Shields, Surfing. Global Space or Dwelling in the Waves?, in: Sheller and Urry, Tourism Mobilities, 44–51, here 45.

Holert and Mark Terkessidis link twentieth- and twenty-first-century mobilities to modernity's push-and-pull mechanisms. Tourists seek holiday paradises like *Zlatni Rat* for freedom or an "anti-structure", escaping industrial society's constraints and impositions.[47] By contrast, Poljak's great-grandfather left the same beach nearly a century ago in search of economic and political security – mirroring those who leave Europe's Mediterranean margins today for its continental West. While one group is drawn to the Adriatic by the promise of leisure, play, and freedom, others depart the same setting in pursuit of stability and predictable modern structures.

For viewers, this scene foregrounds the complex interplay of past and present global mobilities. The shifting beach, shaped by the sea's movements,[48] underscores how a natural tourism infrastructure can embody ever-changing meanings and values. As a "host to various forms of [...] human mobilities",[49] the artistically reevaluated beach becomes a transient space between comings and goings. *Zlatni Rat* thus emerges as a hotspot of instable globalisation processes, shaped by connections and disconnections likewise.

In the following sections, I explore the beach as a site of overlapping global movements, focusing on the fraught dynamics of comings and goings. Visual representations highlight (im)mobilities, presences and absences, and gender-related disruptions, revealing both harmony and disturbance in spaces shaped by global entanglements.

III.1 (Im)mobility

The immobile people on *Zlatni Rat* do not appear to be absorbed in nature or in each other [see Fig. 1].[50] Their stillness conveys a sense of remoteness and loneliness. The Dalmatian title *Partenza*, borrowed from Italian, denotes "departure" as a movement from the place one is.[51] Yet the rigidly standing figures on Bol's beach suggest that leaving the Adriatic coast is inseparable from moments of stasis. This immobile group, dressed in dark clothing on a beach known for leisure and socialising, creates a palpable tension – something feels off. As van Laak notes, infrastructures only become visible when habitual expectations of unhindered connections are distur-

47
Tom Holert and Mark Terkessidis, *Fliehkraft. Gesellschaft in Bewegung – von Migranten und Touristen*, Cologne 2006, 242–243.

48
[Anonymous], beach.

49
Shields, Surfing, 45.

50
Illouz, Consuming, 137–145.

51
Collins Dictionaries, *s.v., partenza, f.*, 2025 (17 January 2025).

bed.[52] While he defines infrastructure as "the stable or immobile elements that are necessary to enable fluidity, movement, and communication",[53] Poljak depicts a rupture in the modern world's circular imperative. Instead of relaxing, surfboarding, strolling, fishing, or sunbathing tourists, she presents frozen figures stayed behind exile movements and caught up in a state of persistent expectation for those who are gone. Placing them in what today is a tourist setting evokes unease. Their rigid, column-like stance and turned backs defy the consumerist imagery of holidays, which thrives on allure and the fluidity of action.

Poljak questions the ingrained perception that modern societies, shaped by global economies, rely on unhindered mobility.[54] She disrupts the fluid concept of globalisation mainly built on the simplistic notion of "rapid flows of travellers, migrants, and tourists physically moving from place to place, from time to time"[55] underlying the ideal of smooth and democratic global movements that emerged from the 1990s mobility turn. The turn romanticised travel as a mobility opportunity for all, with the tourist or even the migrant as a postmodern nomad becoming its metaphor. Focusing on the stasis of the remaining vulnerable population – women, children, and elderly islanders – and their day-to-day use of the beach built on the experience of exile and displacement, she draws a space marked by deeper ambivalences that challenges the internalised image of uninterrupted movements for all. The Dalmatian beach emerges as a dissonant space of both forced and voluntary mobility, shaped by the interplay between global circulation and local standstill. By doing so, *Partenza* also weakens dominant media stereotypes of migration as persistent, threatening refugee flows. Liquid metaphors like "flood", "wave", and "tsunami" – which imply constant mobility, as well as magnitude and danger – become obsolete.[56]

III.2 Presences and Absences

The sea's movements, alternately exposing and concealing the land, suggest another form of liminality that mirrors the presences and absences inherent in the comings and goings of tourists and migrants in the Adriatic. This is particularly evident in one of the

52
Van Laak, Infrastructures.

53
Ibid.

54
Ibid.

55
Sheller and Urry, Places to Play, Places in Play, 3. Refers to the following paragraph.

56
Burcu Dogramaci, Bilder der Migration – Migration der Bilder?, in: *kritische berichte. Zeitschrift für Kunst- und Kulturwissenschaft* 50/2, 2022, 37–47.

cutout collages featured in the installation *Partenza*, where the number of people on the beach is drastically reduced [Fig. 3]. The few remaining figures give *Zlatni Rat* a spacious quality, emphasising its emptiness.

Seemingly lost in the vast, black-and-white seascape that dominates the image, they personify the absence of entire families and groups. The beach, symbolically "washed free" by the waves of the leaving ships, reveals an emptiness that reflects the exodus of Croatian coastal communities at the turn of the twentieth century. The almost deserted shoreline with a few remaining individuals symbolises the social gaps that migration engenders on a large scale, making it clear that globalisation does not run smoothly, and that the comings and goings of people are accompanied by both connections and separations.

Beyond the usual focus on host societies' issues, art can redirect migration research towards regions marked by the absence of entire communities due to exile. This often applies to countries on Europe's so-called border, including the Adriatic coast, which today is more recognised as a holiday destination than as an area affected by migration.

By visualising absence and a lingering sense of farewell and loss, the artist constructs a liminal space in which lived experiences of desolation intersect with the conceived spaces of economic promise, allure, and vibrancy. With this, she highlights distance as a crucial spatial category between the few people on Bol's beach and the emigrants in South America. This seems to contradict the idea of a "time-space compression" that emerged with the idealisation of physical movement across the globe since the 1990s.[57] Instead of endorsing Zygmunt Bauman's notion of a fluid, accelerated "liquid modernity" that heralded the "death of distance",[58] and the "elimination of space", Poljak depicts individuals who sense the division between countries and continents as a tangible obstacle in their attempts to reconnect with loved ones. Her work demonstrates that globalisation processes not only bring people closer together – both physically and virtually through technology and transport[59] – but also create absences marked by distance. In this way, movement is not about eliminating spaces, but experiencing, forming, and negotiating them as physical entities – underscoring that human mobility and its associated "turn" cannot be understood without material spaces.

57
Sheller and Urry, Places to Play, Places in Play, 3.

58
Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge 2000; Sheller and Urry, Places to Play, Places in Play, 3.

59
Eid., Places to Play, Places in Play, 3.

[Fig. 3]
Renata Poljak, *Partenza*, 2016, cutout collage © Renata Poljak.

III.3 Challenging Active and Passive Dimensions of Gendered Movements

In another scene of the stationary, waiting people, we recognise a group of sitting or standing women, gazing at the sea or turning away from it [Fig. 4].[60] Poljak draws our attention to a beach that reveals a female facet of both migration and tourism – a side that research has often overlooked.[61] Mobility studies traditionally assume male actors – both emigrees and consumers[62] – a view that can be traced back to the dominant idea of the postmodern tourist or migratory nomad as essentially male, which has one-sidedly shaped the mobility turn and the imagination of its travelling actors.[63] Typically, women are cast in a passive role within mobility performances, serving as waiting or decorative figures.

Poljak, however, does not depict her female protagonists in line with aesthetic models of commercial tourism brochures or the one-sided media portrayals of migration circulating in the media. Instead of presenting "beach babes" posed lasciviously in skimpy bikinis against an attractive seaside backdrop, or women who surrender themselves to idle waiting, she visualises powerful female protagonists. This is particularly evident in the penultimate film scene, when one woman interrupts the initial waiting on the shore by diving into the sea [Fig. 5]. She opens our view onto a now-colourful underwater world, the flowing garments evoking the many lives lost in contemporary Mediterranean migrations.[64] With her plunge into another space and time within the same basin, she connects the migration experiences of a Dalmatian micro-locality from the early twentieth century with current migrations from Africa and

60
For a more detailed discussion of waiting in art and its relation to dis:connectivity – an aspect of globalisation that I touch on in various sections of this text – see my essay: Hanni Geiger, Waiting, in: Christopher Balme, Burcu Dogramaci, and Roland Wenzlhuemer (eds.), *Dis:connectivity and Globalisation. Concepts, Terms, Practices*, Berlin 2025, 295–304. There, I examine waiting as a central, yet often overlooked dimension of migration. Drawing on case studies by photographers Thana Faroq and Renata Poljak, I analyse how waiting informs aesthetic practices that challenge dominant narratives of migration and globalisation.

61
Female migration has been on the rise since the 1970s, but it is perceived as economically insignificant compared to male migration and has been underexamined in research. The same applies to the experiences of family members, mostly women, who remained behind in the context of migration, which is only slowly attracting academic interest. Ahsan Ullah, Male Migration and "Left-Behind" Women. Bane or Boon?, in: *Environment and Urbanization ASIA* 8/1, 2017, 1–15.

62
Johanna Rolshoven, Mobilitäten. Für einen Paradigmenwechsel in der Tourismusforschung, in: ead. et al. (eds.), *Mobilitäten!*, Berlin 2014, 11–24, here 14–17.

63
Sheller and Urry, Places to Play, Places in Play, 3; Ramona Lenz, Von der Metaphorisierung der Mobilität zum "Mobility Turn", in: *mobileculturestudies*, 4 April 2013, cited after Rolshoven, Mobilitäten, 14–17.

64
Mladen Lučić, Don't Turn Your Back on Me, in: Poljak, Don't Turn Your Back on Me, 50–53, here 52.

[Fig. 4]
Renata Poljak, *Partenza*, 2016, film (still), 11 minutes, HD © Renata Poljak.

[Fig. 5]
Renata Poljak, *Partenza*, 2016, film (still), 11 minutes, HD © Renata Poljak.

Asia in the Mediterranean. The piece serves as a homage to the contemporary tragedies of migrants, while simultaneously linking them to Croatia's similar past – and even present – experiences.[65] By forging this connection, the work becomes a reminder of how refugee stories repeat throughout history.[66] In doing so, she reveals the enduring patterns of migration that are constitutive of the Mediterranean. As a proactive bearer and transmitter of alternative knowledge, she resists the portrayal of women in literature and art as seductive, sunbathing beauties or as abandoned, passively waiting figures on the seaside.[67] As an empowered "remained-behind" rather then "left-behind",[68] she redefines the historically feminised notion of impotent waiting which Roland Barthes drew attention to[69] and challenges gender binaries. This involves rethinking the categories and the opposing forces and dependencies between those who leave and those who stay in the context of exile,[70] as well as between those who act and those who attract in tourism.

Drawing on a local perspective and personal, embodied experience, Poljak replaces rigid conceptions of globalisation with a more nuanced understanding of individual agency in relation to reconfigured spaces and the dissonant mobilities of global movement. This example shows how art can help the world learn from the particular.

IV. The Hotel (Pool). From Fluid Spaces to Frictional Places

Non-commercial images can expose the visual strategies used to stage hotels and pools as fluid, seamless spaces, redefining them as sites of physical, emotional, and social liminality – balancing uniformity and particularity, impermanence and permanence, joy and loss, visibility and invisibility, as well as inclusion and exclusion.

First, I examine the classic infrastructures of tourism in the Albanian Adriatic, which are not merely spaces of standardisation,

65
Ibid., 52.

66
Ibid.

67
The image of waiting women on the shore has been a poignant motif in literature and art since antiquity, often symbolising themes of longing, isolation, and the passage of time. It is also perceived as a feminine archetype, embodying themes of patience, sacrifice, or devotion.

68
Ullah argues in favour of renaming women that stayed behind exile movements "remained behinds" instead of "left behinds" to undermine migration narratives of female passivity and dependency. Ullah, Male Migration, 4.

69
Roland Barthes, *Fragmente einer Sprache der Liebe*, trans. Hans-Horst Henschen, Frankfurt am Main 1984 (1977), 4, 27–28.

70
Geneviève Cortes, Women and Migrations. Those Who Stay, in: *EchoGéo* 37, 2016, 1–17, here 8–9 (7 July 2025).

abstraction, and mass transition but also function as nodes where tourism and migration intersect, generating spaces of differentiation marked by the traces of waiting individuals' "temporary permanence".

Furthermore, I explore how migrants experience hotels differently from tourists. Rather than on the ease and lightness conveyed in adverts and brochures, I focus on visualised spaces of affective liminality that evoke the agonising state of migratory waiting amidst a harmonious and cheerful leisure setting. I trace the emotional dimensions of physical dis:connections, as previously addressed in *Partenza*, where I highlighted Adriatic nodes of (im)mobilities, absences, and presences, as well as performative resistances to stereotypes surrounding passivity or activity, particularly in relation to gendered roles in migration and tourism.

In two further sub-sections, I discuss hotels in the Adriatic as hotspots of power asymmetries. Visual media serve to reveal social inequalities by either concealing or highlighting certain groups and individuals, alluding to their (in)visibility as well as to their social exclusion or participation. I analyse how the staging of individual refugees and their personal stories in a setting devoted to mass tourism ultimately transforms anonymous spaces of fluid, impersonal movements into a site of friction that points to disturbed global connections.

IV.1 "Mummy, Why Does This Holiday Never End?"[71] Differentiating Spaces of Impermanence

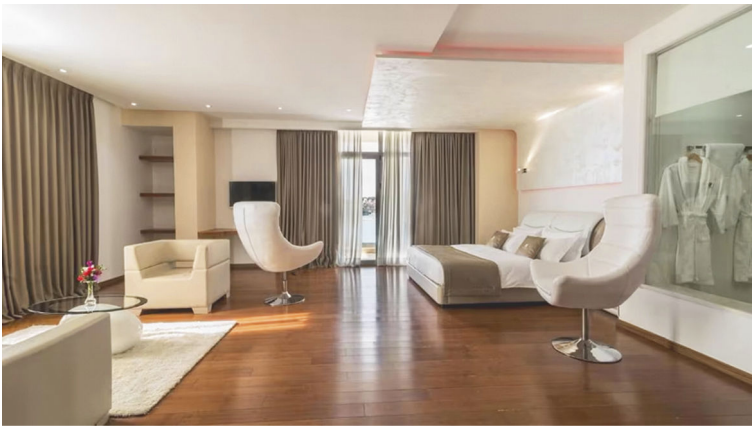
Looking at commercial hotel photos alongside images by visual storyteller Ilir Tsouko,[72] captured through a dis:connective lens, we easily identify a difference. In his photo series *Life in Limbo* (2021–2022), Tsouko confronts the smooth aesthetics of tourist architecture with spaces marked by waiting migrants [Fig. 6]. Rather than erasing signs of human presence, he accentuates them. In one image, a room in poor daylight does not immediately evoke a hotel: two single beds have been merged into a double bed – evident from the differing headrests and varied mattress heights. The bed linen is crumpled, the pillows still deformed from the previous night, and prayer mats lie on the beds while a black rucksack leans against the right-hand cushion.

Although the same beds appear in one of the resort's website photos, Tsouko's work hardly resembles the digitally reworked

[71] Franziska Tschinderle, Geflüchtete aus Afghanistan. Ein Jahr am Strand, in: *Zeit Online* 29, 2022 (21 January 2025). *Die Zeit* accompanied the refugees in the resort for a year and spoke to numerous Afghans who commented on the unexpectedly long stay in the Rafaelo, sometimes referring to their children's perspectives on a space that over time transformed from a hotel into housing. My translation of the German quote.

[72] Adela Demetja, Life in Limbo, Ilir Tsouko, in: *Les Nouveaux Riches*, 10 April 2023 (20 January 2025). Ilir Tsouko is described as a visual storyteller who deals with the human condition in his photography, which transcends the categories of art and documentary photography.

[Fig. 6]
Ilir Tsouko, photography from the series *Life in Limbo*, 2021–2022, Maritim Rafaelo Resort, Shëngjin, Albania © Ilir Tsouko.



[Fig. 7a, Fig. 7b, Fig. 7c]
Advertising photos of the Maritim Rafaelo Resort on lastminute.com (2025) and hotel-mix.de (2007–2025) (25 February 2025).

hotel images [Fig. 7a, Fig. 7b, Fig. 7c]. Technically, the first striking difference is the brightness and colourfulness of the promotional images compared with Tsouko's subdued palette. Regardless of the category, all presented rooms are very similar: they range from simple to lush, classic to modern, with decorative pictures on the walls and balconies or windows overlooking the sea. They are clearly clean and tidy, with freshly made beds. The same furnishings and staging techniques used in hotels worldwide epitomise the standardisation and abstraction – principles inherent in the capitalist mode of production and the commodification[73] of environments, including their infrastructures and spaces. The room designs aim to attract the masses while ensuring a quick turnover of guests, so they must be appealing yet impersonal. Thus, the hotel operates as a connectively conceived infrastructure, "designed for the anonymous population at large".[74] This is further demonstrated by the principle of the ever-new: design rejects individual inscriptions on objects and surroundings – despite heavy use, no traces of previous guests should be visible on the ostensibly untouched items.[75] In light of these design principles, the fleeting and transitional hotel space can hardly ever become "one's 'own' place".[76] The carefully structured daily routines in hotels reinforce the idea of standardised holiday spaces, designed for a perpetually exchanging crowd. Although hotels market themselves as intimate, temporary "substitute homes",[77] they ultimately rely on anonymity, interchangeability, and flux.

Tsouko disturbs the fluid hotel concept [see Fig. 6]. He undermines it as a space that draws in and continually circulates masses by drawing attention to the inconsistent furniture arrangement and the personal inscriptions found in the room. With this, the photographer reveals disruptions in the homogenised, flawless leisure spaces of promotional adverts, suggesting that hotels are meant for short, transitory stays, while his image implies a sense of permanence. This is underscored by the context: Tsouko spent a year photographing Afghan refugees brought to Shëngjin on Albania's

73
Conny Eiberweiser, Zur Phänomenologie eines Hotelbettes, in: Johannes Moser and Daniella Seidl (eds.), *Dinge auf Reisen. Materielle Kultur und Tourismus*, Münster/New York 2009, 211–223, here 213; Michael Edema Leary-Owhin, *Exploring the Production of Urban Space. Differential Space in Three Post-Industrial Cities*, Bristol 2016, 265–310.

74
Van Laak, Infrastructures.

75
Eiberweiser, Zur Phänomenologie eines Hotelbettes, 212. My translation of the German quote.

76
Asta Vonderau, *Geographie sozialer Beziehungen. Ortserfahrungen in der mobilen Welt*, Münster 2003, 35–36, after Eiberweiser, Zur Phänomenologie eines Hotelbettes, 212.

77
Eiberweiser, Zur Phänomenologie eines Hotelbettes, 212–213.

Adriatic coast in August 2021.[78] They were housed at the Rafaelo – a local manifestation of global holiday industry principles during the rise of tourism in Albania since the 2000s. The five-building, three-pool resort temporarily housed refugees awaiting immigration approval to Canada or the USA.[79] The hotel had been taken over by Western NGOs, who needed safe shelter for their Afghan colleagues and families.[80] For almost a year the Rafaelo hosted nearly 2,000 Afghans fleeing the Taliban,[81] intended as a transit centre to be temporary but evolving into an unexpected long-term residence. Originally meant as a brief stopover, the resort was repurposed into an improvised residential complex with a kindergarten replacing the pub, a library in the conference room, and a classroom in the former security office.[82] The resort transformed into an ambivalent site for refugees: a seemingly eternal vacation space, mimicking permanent housing, yet without the promise of becoming anyone's home.[83] Obviously, the only lasting factor in this altered hotel setting is the migrants' enduring state of waiting for evacuation, or, as Cathrine Brun describes it, their "permanent impermanence"[84].

Depicting the Albanian hotel room as a space where design and function aimed at mass circulation are disrupted, Tsouko creates an Adriatic node of flight and leisure that challenges the idea of smooth globalisation. His photographs resist dominant images of twentieth-century consumerist uniformity and abstract infrastructures designed for short stays.[85] Instead, they foreground personal presence and particularities that suggest a fragile stability, often suppressed by homogenous, profit-oriented spatial logics. The traces left by refugees who lived there for a year do not vanish but solidify and persist in both the space and its images, challenging the prominent idea of the hotel as a purely transient "non-place" in

78
Abigail Hauslohner, The Wrong Plane Out of Afghanistan, in: *The Washington Post*, 21 August 2022 (20 January 2025).

79
Ibid.

80
Amanda Coakley, The Albanian Tourist Town That Welcomed Afghan Refugees, in: *Aljazeera* 21 December 2021 (20 January 2025).

81
Ibid.

82
Tschinderle, Geflüchtete aus Afghanistan.

83
Ibid. In conversation with the reporter, one of the evacuees emphasises: "A hotel can never be a home." My translation of the German quote.

84
Cathrine Brun, Active Waiting and Changing Hopes. Toward a Time Perspective on Protracted Displacement, in: *Social Analysis* 59/1, 2015, 19–37, here 19.

85
Leary-Owhin, Exploring the Production of Urban Space, 265–310.

Marc Augé's sense – one that lacks the conditions for dwellings or connection.[86]

Tsouko's hotel environments are not defined by functionality, circulation, or anonymity, but by individual physical presence and emotional inscription.[87] Personal belongings and visible signs of use mark the space. These settings carry memories, dreams, and subjective meanings, suggesting a sense of duration – a temporary yet grounded inhabitation. By foregrounding personal traces against market-driven abstraction, Tsouko not only uncovers lived spaces but accentuates their layered, heterogeneous nature shaped by overlapping logics of individually experienced migration and mass tourism – an aspect already present in Poljak's work but here more explicitly expressed. Drawing on the anatomical concept of a "node", which refers to the growth of new stems in botany, the Adriatic hotel appears as "differentiated tissue"[88] – an unconventional formation that intensifies the disruption of the uniform, fluid system from which it emerged. Perceived as such, this space aligns with Lefebvre's notion of "differential space":[89] one that deepens the resistance, complication, and redefinition of dominant spatial meanings beyond what lived spaces alone reveal.

Tsouko transforms the rationally planned Albanian resort into a liminal infrastructure, marked by standardisation and singularity, impersonality and intimacy, transience and unexpected permanence. By presenting the Rafaelo as a lived space for migrants within a leisure environment, his images create Adriatic nodes of tourism and migration that counter the dominant visual narratives of globalisation shaped by state-driven coastal development.

IV.2 Spaces of Affective Liminality

Thus far, I have highlighted Adriatic nodes of tourism and migration that create physical tensions between connection and disconnection – arrivals and departures, presences and voids, mobilities and standstills, masculine and feminine aspects of global movement, and impermanence versus permanence rooted in both designed uniformity and individuality. Next, I will examine hotel rooms and pools as spaces of affective liminality between lightness and loss. Unlike commercial images that emphasise an effortless tourist environment, Tsouko's photos expose the discomfort of migratory waiting in a hotel. Set within a classic vacation context, the lim-

86
Marc Augé, *Non-places. Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, London 2008 (Paris 1992).

87
Ibid.

88
Oxford English Dictionary, *s.v.*, *node, n.*, 1989 (9 January 2025).

89
Lefebvre, The Production of Space, 352–400.

bic state of the evacuees caught between gratitude, hope, longing, uncertainty, and despair becomes strikingly palpable.

In a dim scene with little daylight, we see a figure from behind [Fig. 8]. Seated on a bed still rumpled from sleep, the person gazes at the concrete wall of the hotel façade, denied a view of the sea – unlike the resort's advertising, which boasts a "panoramic view of the Adriatic"[90] [see Fig. 7b]. Here, the wall symbolises the material and legal barrier faced by those fleeing. The image suggests a deceptive tranquillity: rather than waiting for the next meal, swim, or dance, this waiting is imposed, out of one's control, interminable, and fraught with uncertainty. This sharply contrasts with the temporary immobility of hotel tourists, whose holiday duration is fixed and self-determined. Tourists experience their stays through a sense of freedom, safety, and ease – a sentiment echoed in holiday industry images on social media, adverts, and prospectuses that create bright, positive spaces of joy and relaxation.

In a setting driven by the commercial promise of selling "good feelings", Tsouko portrays migrant waiting as a limbo – an uncertain or undecided state, where what is hoped for may or may not occur.[91] He contrasts the uneasy immobility of those awaiting the *next message* with the relaxed inertia of holidaymakers expecting their *next massage*. By capturing "frozen movements",[92] Tsouko reveals the paradox of migrants whose rigid bodies hide an intense emotional vigilance, always alert for updates on their past and future lives.[93] Waiting visually becomes an affective threshold that both connects and divides origin and destination, as well as "what was" and "what's next".[94] This evokes the broader social concept of liminality grounded in anthropology – the transitional phase in a rite of passage, where one's status is suspended between separation and incorporation.[95] Turner described it as a state of flux, but its "betwixt and between" quality of "belonging neither here nor there" imbues it with emotional tension.[96] Marked by doubt, ambivalence,

90
Albania-hotel.com, *Rafaelo Resort*, 2025 (22 January 2025). My translation of the German quote.

91
Andreas Bandak and Manpreet K. Janeja, Introduction. Worth the Wait, in: eid. (eds.), *Ethnographies of Waiting. Doubt, Hope and Uncertainty*, London 2018, 1–39, here 16.

92
Holert and Terkessidis, Fliehkraft, 247. My translation of the German quote.

93
Ghassan Hage, *Against Paranoid Nationalism. Searching for Hope in a Shrinking Society*, London 2003.

94
David Crotty, *Life in a Liminal Space; Or, The Journey Shapes the Destination*, 13 January 2022 (22 January 2025).

95
Turner, Betwixt and Between, 93–97.

96
Ibid.

[Fig. 8]
Ilir Tsouko, photography from the series *Life in Limbo*, 2021–2022, Maritim Rafaelo Resort, Shëngjin, Albania © Ilir Tsouko.

and disorientation,[97] the migrant's liminality stands in stark contrast to the holidaymaker's certainty of return. Tsouko extends this concept into a global social context: his work disrupts the idealised image of a nonchalant leisure, revealing a deeper affective unrest within global connectivity. The spaces he depicts become ambiguous sites of encounter, where connections may arise but rarely succeed.[98]

The pool images particularly capture the emotional ambivalence of spaces shaped by both tourism and migration. In one of the works, Tsouko presents bright, light-filled photos of Afghan children playing in the basin – scenes typical of everyday tourism [Fig. 9]. The warmth of the sun, the refreshing water, and the carefree moment are palpable. As Tsouko, himself a migrant, observes, even in the pain of flight, children can find beauty.[99] In these snapshots, a migrant's daily life appears strikingly similar to those of ordinary vacationers – an impression not seen in images featuring adults. In one such adult-focused photograph, Tsouko depicts the pool in the off-season [Fig. 10]. Now empty, the basin becomes a stage for a young, warmly dressed refugee holding his face up to the autumn sun. The cyclical change of seasons, implied by the deserted pool and the bare trees in the background, evokes a sense of personal stagnation in the waiting person.

In the two photos, the pool oscillates between lightness and freedom on the one side, and the burden of being trapped in migration on the other, which is accompanied by an incapacity to act and by despair.[100] The feeling of being stuck is symbolised by the empty basin acting as a prison-like space – the hotel and its sparkling mosaic pool turn into a golden cage[101] that provides life's essentials but blocks further progress. Despite being called "luxury refugees"

97
Lothar Pikulik, *Warten, Erwartung. Eine Lebensform in End- und Übergangszeiten. An Beispielen aus der Geistesgeschichte, Literatur und Kunst*, Göttingen 1997; Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism.

98
Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction. An Ethnography of Global Connection*, Princeton, NJ 2005. Tsing describes global space not as a smooth network, but as a field of frictions, misunderstandings, liminal states, and ambiguities.

99
From a conversation with Ilir Tsouko in July 2024.

100
Hage, Against Paranoid Nationalism; Anna Wyss, Stuck in Mobility? Interrupted Journeys of Migrants with Precarious Legal Status in Europe, in: *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 17/1, 2019, 77–93.

101
Hauslohner, The Wrong Plane Out of Afghanistan. The Albanian Prime Minister Edi Rama commented on the ambivalent situation of the migrants staying in a "great hotel [...] [that is] still a golden prison for them". In an interview with *The Washington Post*, the evacuees themselves report that their stay in a hotel resembles a "psychological prison" that creates uncertainty.

[Fig. 9]
Ilir Tsouko, photography from the series *Life in Limbo*, 2021–2022, Maritim Rafaelo Resort, Shëngjin, Albania © Ilir Tsouko.

[Fig. 10]
Ilir Tsouko, photography from the series *Life in Limbo*, 2021–2022, Maritim Rafaelo Resort, Shëngjin, Albania © Ilir Tsouko.

with little sympathy for their wait in a seaside resort, these people remain migrants whose lives have been disrupted by flight.[102]

The resort's rooms and pools, where ease and heaviness intersect, serve as liminal Adriatic infrastructures within a Mediterranean microcosm shaped by diverse transnational mobilities. As spaces straddling between sensations of leisure and limbo, they challenge the binary between tourism and migration movements. By highlighting the intense emotional productivity experienced during enforced waiting, Tsouko further counters mass-media portrayals of idle border or camp dwellers and undermines the notion of migrants as passive.

IV.3 Hotspots of Power Asymmetries

While tourists enjoy freedom, time control, and independence, the forced, unpredictably long waits faced by migrants in the same spaces create a social imbalance. They endure inequality, dependency, and a sense of being at the mercy of others,[103] leading to powerlessness. According to Pierre Bourdieu, waiting is an experience of dominance[104] that limits some from fully participating in globalisation processes. The overlapping dynamics of flight and leisure in the resort reveal that the opportunities promised by infrastructure are not equally available.[105] Despite hotels aiming to attract mass tourism – that is, everyone – they do not operate democratically but rather reinforce inequity.

In the following, I analyse the maritime hotel as an Adriatic node of migration and tourism that exposes social tensions. I highlight power asymmetries that control not only bodily performances and feelings but also the visibility and participation of certain groups. Analysed through a dis:connective lens, the hotel emerges as a liminal infrastructure that simultaneously offers prospects and imposes restrictions on a global scale.

IV.3.1 (In)visibility

Power asymmetries manifest in the invisibility of certain resort guests. Unlike tourists, whose presence is actively promoted by national and global economies, migrants are hidden from view, confined to camps, containers, or other temporary structures outside city centres. They become "social zombies" living a ghostly exis-

102
Coakley, The Albanian Tourist Town.

103
Ibid.

104
Pierre Bourdieu, *Pascalian Meditations*, trans. Richard Nice, Stanford, CA 2000, 227–229.

105
Van Laak, Infrastructures.

tence on societies' margins.[106] Through legislation, political institutions, and the mass media, refugees are reduced to "non-persons" that do not exist on a social level,[107] unlikely to feature in tourist brochures or on resort homepages.

In a subtle, gentle manner, Ilir Tsouko brings Afghan refugees at the Rafaelo into the spotlight, giving them visibility [see Fig. 8, Fig. 9, Fig. 10]. Representing migrants in a space usually reserved for the privileged already creates tension. Yet Tsouko not only depicts the fleeing protagonists in Shëngjin's central hotel but also highlights their personal waiting experiences [Fig. 11a, Fig. 11b, Fig. 11c]. His close-up shots – capturing a young man's worried face at an empty pool, tear-filled eyes, and hands sifting through shells – sensitively probe the refugees' intimate experiences of waiting in an anonymous setting. While hotels, as conceived by national and global economies, are planned and organised as empty, unrelational non-places,[108] Tsouko infuses these leisure spaces with individual life stories. By fuelling these shallow rooms with "meaning, 'personality' and a connection to a cultural or personal identity", he not only evades homogenised hotel spaces, but also makes them true "places" in an anthropological sense.[109] Rather than representing mere nothingness, Tsouko's frictional places reveal subjectivities, destinies, relationships, and stories.[110] His reluctance to depict faceless migrants may stem partly from his own background; as the child of exiled parents, he recalls the reports surrounding the 1991 Albanian diaspora after the collapse of communism [Fig. 12].[111] The container ship Vlora, packed with people, left a lasting impression as a mass invasion to Italy, with desperate people fleeing isolation and a lack of prospects in their own country.[112]

By visualising refugees and their personal stories in a tourist-dominated setting, Tsouko achieves two aims. Firstly, he challenges

106
Holert and Terkessidis, Fliehkraft, 91–92. My translation of the German quote.

107
Ibid., 92. See also Alessandro Dal Lago, *Non-persone, L'esclusione dei migranti in una società globale*, Milan ²2004.

108
Holert and Terkessidis, Fliehkraft, 93.

109
Michel Foucault, *Of Other Spaces. The Affair of the Heterotopia*, Graz 1998 (Paris 1967); Madeline Fink, *Everyday Anthropology: Space vs. Place*, 22 February 2019 (19 July 2025).

110
Lars Wilhelmer, *Besser als nichts. Transit-Orte und Nicht-Orte*, 7 March 2016 (10 January 2025).

111
From a conversation with Ilir Tsouko in July 2024.

112
Tschinderle, Geflüchtete aus Afghanistan; Matthias Bertsch, Als das albanische Flüchtlingsschiff "Vlora" Italien erreichte, in: *Deutschlandfunk Kultur*, 8 August 2021 (21 January 2025). Nearly 27,000 migrants were initially barred from disembarking and were then taken by the police to a football stadium in Bari, where they were locked in and kept away from the public until most were returned to Albania by ship or plane within a few days.

[Fig. 11a, Fig. 11b, Fig. 11c]
Ilir Tsouko, photography from the series *Life in Limbo*, 2021–2022, Maritim Rafaelo Resort, Shëngjin, Albania © Ilir Tsouko.

[Fig. 12]
Luca Turi, The ship *Vlora* docked to a quay in the port of Bari, with Albanian immigrants, on 8 August 1991, Bari, Italy © Luca Turi.

political tactics that erase refugees by integrating them visually into spaces reserved for a privileged few, enabling them to emerge from their imposed shadows. Secondly, he counteracts media stereotypes of a threatening "undifferentiated mass" of migrants.[113] Commissioned by *The Washington Post* and *Die Zeit*, his photo series attains significant visibility, rivalling commercial images that promote the notion of a dangerous migrant invasion. In this environment of tensions between visibility and invisibility, Tsouko grants refugees a political subjectivity[114] – and thus a measure of social influence – that even mass tourists cannot claim in anonymous leisure spaces.

Although Tsouko's series is commissioned, the visual storyteller works from his own perspective. The magazines, known for their incisive political storytelling, required his personal perspective on the hotel situation, drawing on his thoughtful approach informed by his experience as a migrant. Tsouko rejects the market-driven distancing that comes with commodification of places and people, instead forging an intimate connection with the migrants. While national and global economies take a hierarchical approach, he meets the migrants at eye level, contributing his lived experience. In doing so, he reminds us that infrastructures are inherently liminal systems shaped by practices both "from above" and "from below", pointing to top-down policies and grassroots practices.[115] Societal environments are thus shaped not only by commercial images from hotels, travel agencies, and global corporations, but also by authorial works emerging from within society.

Tsouko draws on his personal experience and his artistic perspective towards the manifold global migrations in the Adriatic to expose social imbalances in vacation settings, showing that globalisation is far from democratic. By visualising migrants and their individual fates in the salesrooms of tourism, he disrupts the myth of infrastructures that promise equity for all. Instead, he reveals the power asymmetries at work and reimagines these spaces as liminal infrastructures offering both opportunities and restrictions, thereby bringing the invisible and underprivileged into view.

IV.3.2 "Place to Stay". Negotiating In- and Exclusions

Adriatic nodes of unequal power relations involve not just visibility, but the inclusion or exclusion of certain groups. Artist Šejla Kamerić shows that infrastructures like resorts – designed to "connect, network, travel, 'surf', open up new horizons" – also isolate segments

113
Rebecca Rotter, Waiting in the Asylum Determination Process. Just an Empty Interlude?, in: *Time & Society* 25/1, 2016, 80–101, here 86.

114
Holert and Terkessidis, Fliehkraft, 93. Refers to the political subjectivity of migrants.

115
Van Laak, Infrastructures.

of the population, leaving them disconnected [Fig. 13].[116] In northern Istria, she transforms Tsouko's call for migrant awareness into a demand for their social participation.

Her work, *Place to Stay* (2020), is a collage of inactive flat signs for various tourist accommodations in different languages and characters, anchored by a glowing neon sign reading "refugees welcome".[117] She employs advertising aesthetics of (tourism) economy, featuring striking neon signs with soft, curved and appealing lettering, to allude to migration – thereby provoking the viewer. Created in collaboration with local community initiatives, the piece criticises the EU's restrictive integration policies. Located in the Adriatic, her work reflects on the Mediterranean, which since at least 2015 has become not merely a beach destination but also a geopolitical border.[118] While Europe's coasts welcome a limited global population, others are ruled out. Like Poljak's and Tsouko's works, *Place to Stay* presents an Adriatic that is not only a region for global vacationers or a traditional emigration area,[119] but also a longstanding refuge. During the 1992–1995 phase of the Yugoslav Wars – a broader conflict that spanned the entire decade – hundreds of thousands sought protection in Istria, where tourist accommodations initially served as a first asylum for many who later settled there permanently. Drawing on the Adriatic's history as a refuge, Kamerić argues that, despite temporal and geographical differences, today's migrations in the Mediterranean share the fundamental trait of forced flight. Refugee "crises", she suggests, cannot be resolved through prohibition and coercion, but only through inclusive practices.

Kamerić exposes the dis:connect in tourism infrastructures that create both opportunities and segregation, and she advocates turning them into spaces for social participation. She does so through artistic means: the neon sign saying "refugees welcome" doesn't invite migrants to linger in a hotel-like limbo, nor does *Place to Stay* imply a final destination that merely promotes passive integration. The hotel does more than serve as a conventional infrastructure that incorporates different groups and harmonises living conditions in a society.[120] The installation's sequential signs on tourism and migration evoke Lefebvre's idea of space as "being

116
Ibid.

117
Šejla Kamerić, *Homepage. Place to Stay* (22 January 2025).

118
Samira Yildirim, De Facto Border. The Division of Cyprus in Contemporary Photography by Heinrich Völkel, in: *static* 3/2, 2024, 9–17, here 9.

119
Tihomir Milovac, *Place to Stay* (22 January 2025). As seen also in Renata Poljaks's installation *Partenza*.

120
Van Laak, Infrastructures.

[Fig. 13]
Šejla Kamerić, *Place to Stay*, installation, project *Invisible Savičenta – Translating Tradition into Culture* and *Apoteka – Space for Contemporary Art*, August 2020, Savičenta, Croatia. Photography: Andi Bančić © Šejla Kamerić / Andi Bančić.

close to each other", implying active societal engagement.[121] Kamerić's "place to stay" is not only accessible to all but is shaped by all. The artist champions socially effective spaces that do more than expose dominant societal norms which perpetuate imbalanced power structures.[122] Unlike Foucault's "other spaces" or "heterotopias", which merely illustrate or describe how societies organise divisions, Kamerić's fusion of leisure and flight aligns with Lefebvre's "counter-space" – a strategy using differential spaces to dynamically challenge prevailing hegemonic structures.[123] Rooted in the lived experiences and desires of marginalised groups, her envisioned counter-space between tourism and migration embodies creativity to fight and ultimately break dominant spatial configurations in order to fundamentally reshape society, rather than merely hinting at its discrepancies.[124]

Having fled Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 1990s conflict, Kamerić, like Tsouko, has been affected by migration. This experience informs her politically subversive work, which questions governmental and economic power structures.[125] In *Place to Stay*, she creates a counter-space that overturns the abstract or conceived realm of market-driven and statal forces, envisioning emancipatory practices for those segregated or oppressed.[126] The installation fiercely opposes the logic of efficiency, commodification, and control that upholds social hierarchies, instead proposing alternative spaces that prioritise human agency and empower the underprivileged.[127] With infrastructure designed for both holidaymakers and refugees, Kamerić establishes an Adriatic nexus between global belonging and omission that fosters social transformation.

However, a re-created society of active participation requires rethinking dominant social categories. Distinguishing tourism from migration is challenging.[128] Consider the early days of Adriatic mass

121
Lefebvre, The Production of Space.

122
Foucault, Of Other Spaces.

123
Ibid.; Lefebvre, The Production of Space.

124
Lefebvre, The Production of Space.

125
Kamerić, Homepage. Place to Stay; Milovac, Place to Stay.

126
Lefebvre, The Production of Space.

127
Ibid.

128
Holert and Terkessidis, Fliehkraft. The authors describe how people move increasingly in a globalised world – both physically and culturally – and how this movement challenges existing structures. They also examine the relationship between migration and tourism, since both involve mobility, crossing borders, and encountering the "other". Alongside their differences, they highlight the overlaps, for instance in how these movements redefine identities and spaces.

tourism, which was inseparable from the contributions of regional or global labour migrants, guest workers, and seasonal returnees.[129] Their human and financial investments were vital in expanding the Mediterranean holiday industry, with their seasonal comings and goings mirroring those of vacationers.[130] A closer look at Tsouko's work reveals a similar ambiguity: both tourists and Afghan migrants are "paying guests". As former Afghan elites, including politicians, athletes, civil servants, presenters, and journalists, these individuals were brought to Shëngjin and accommodated at the expense of US NGOs.[131] Economically, they are no less significant than global holidaymakers.

This illustrates that the artistic exposure of liminal infrastructures of power asymmetries, and its demand for a society shaped by active participants, ultimately helps to dissolve hegemonic social categories and binary stereotypes.

V. Conclusion

The non-commercial visuals explored in this article depict Adriatic beaches, hotel rooms, and pools as nodes of both forced and voluntary movements, highlighting their intricate, dynamic relationships. They challenge the predominantly idyllic and harmonised portrayals of tourist infrastructures and their associated spaces, offering a critical perspective on these mediated environments and the social relations they shape.

By examining Adriatic leisure sites through a lens of dis:connection, these artistically negotiated hubs of migration and tourism reveal underlying instabilities. Rather than reinforcing commodified spaces of smooth access, undisturbed communication, freedom, and opportunity, non-commercial visuals introduce liminal infrastructures of global dis:connection. They reframe beaches, hotels, and pools as arenas of physical, emotional, and social unease – spaces caught between arrivals and departures, marked by (im)mobility, absence and presence, and active and passive dynamics of (gendered) global movements. These depictions also engage with the (im)permanence of global travellers' stays within tourism settings, and illuminate sites of both affection and struggle, where joy intertwines with loss and power dynamics expose inequalities. Moreover, the Adriatic littoral emerges in art as a zone of resistance against prevailing structures of social asymmetry. Viewed this way,

129
Ibid., 115–119; Ramona Lenz, Migration and Tourism as the Subject Matter of Research and Artistic Projects, in: Karentzos, Kittner, and Reuter, Topologies of Travel, 237–249, here 240–241.

130
Lenz, Migration and Tourism, 240–241.

131
Tschinderle, Geflüchtete aus Afghanistan. The nonprofit organisations covered the refugees' overnight costs in the Rafaelo, which amounted to $25 per person.

it becomes a site where creative, individual and local forces bring visibility and agency to the unseen and excluded.

Art disrupts simplistic spatial narratives and counters dominant perspectives on globalisation as a force of homogenisation, abstraction, seamless functionality and the incorporation of all. In these maritime spaces, where the tensions between tourism and migration converge, art enhances the awareness of exile and displacement while challenging stereotypes of leisure and flight. Non-commercial visuals prompt us to complicate globalisation and consider global mobilities in their interconnectedness, bridging the often separate or dualistic approaches of migration and tourism research.

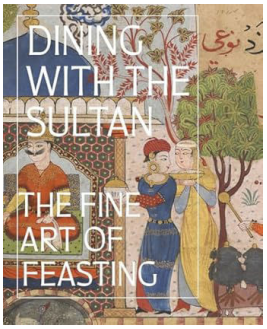
By introducing the frictional spaces of the Adriatic – a compact maritime zone where different global movements intersect within condensed, divergent economic and political systems throughout history – art foregrounds a region that has too often been viewed either as ideologically divided or nationally confined. It redirects attention to an overlooked modern Mediterranean: a space shaped by the legacy of mass tourism and the ambivalences brought by sustained migratory movements. It advocates for a global art history that transcends national categories while addressing regional exclusions in Europe. The Adriatic emerges as a microcosm of globalisation's contradictions and prompts a re-examination of the Mediterranean and other maritime regions shaped by tourism and migration. This focus invites a more nuanced understanding and rethinking of global connections, their disruptions, and the spaces where they unfold.

Hanni Geiger is an art and design historian, most recently a post-doctoral researcher at the Käte Hamburger Research Centre *global dis:connect* at LMU Munich. Her work centres on twentieth- and twenty-fist-century art and design, with an emphasis on the interrelation of tourism and the Adriatic littoral; Mediterranean art and design; exile and migration; (post)digital arts; ecocritical arts. She has published on these themes, including the monograph *form follows culture. Entgrenzungen im Konzept-Design Hussein Chalayans*, which examines the correlation between migration and artistic production in Chalayan's cross genre creative practice. Previously a senior lecturer in the Department of Design at AMD Akademie Mode & Design / Fresenius University of Applied Sciences, she currently teaches at the Design Academy of the Munich Chamber of Commerce and at other institutions and universities.

REVIEWS
REZENSIONEN

PERMANENT EFFECTS OF TEMPORARY DISPLAYS

Review of the exhibition *Dining with the Sultan. The Fine Art of Feasting*, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Los Angeles (December 17, 2023 – August 4, 2024).



Reviewed by
Yasmine Yakuppur

The most recent exhibition of "Islamic art" at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), *Dining with the Sultan: The Fine Art of Feasting* took place from December 17, 2023 to August 4, 2024. According to the museum, the exhibition was the first of its kind in terms of content and scale, bringing together 253 objects at the intersection of food culture and art. The exhibition's theme, a cousin of the 2011 exhibition *Gifts of the Sultan*, was chosen by the curator Dr. Linda Komaroff due to its universality.[1] In post-9/11 America, where Islamophobia still runs rampant, food is an effective theme to promote and expand the audience's interest in Southwest Asia and North Africa, as it appeals to all museum-goers regardless of

1
I would like to extend my thanks and gratitude to Dr. Linda Komaroff for taking the time to meet with me on April 22, 2024 and answer my questions regarding the making of this exhibition. Statements regarding the intent of the curator in this review have been compiled from this interview.

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6/2, 2025, 241–250

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background, age, or gender.[2] Although Dr. Komaroff does not think that making non-Western art accessible in Western museums is part of the traditional job description of a curator, she believes that bridging the gap between differences is, in fact, part of her job as a human. That said, *Dining with the Sultan* was a humanist exhibition that aimed to re-evaluate and re-present the category of "Islamic art" beyond the confines of religion and rather as a complex network of peoples, objects, and stories that come together on dining tables across empires of Islam.

The exhibition was arranged thematically in eight open-format galleries, although lacking written headers that announced these preconceived themes. Clarified by Dr. Komaroff, the galleries were arranged as: introduction, water, outdoor dining, dining across cultures, eating for health, coffee culture, dressing for dinner, and music. Within each theme, objects in a variety of media were displayed, ranging from textiles, to paintings, to manuscripts, to glass, ceramic, and metalwork. Additionally, the exhibition included a Damascus Room [Fig. 1] and an installation by Sadik Kwaish Alfraji titled *A Threat of Light Between my Mother's Fingers and Heaven* (2023) [Fig. 2], the first work to be commissioned specifically for an exhibition by the curator. Along with the lack of thematic headers, the exhibition also did not have object descriptions on its wall labels, instead featuring only the catalogue number, name, place, approximate date, media, and provenance information of each work. When asked, Dr. Komaroff explained that the reason for omission was not only limited wall space, but also her personal aversion to excessive text, which she thinks hinders the viewer from navigating the exhibition space freely.[3] Freedom of movement is an important tenet in Dr. Komaroff's curatorial practice, illustrated by the open galleries and three entrances into the space, which encourages the visitor to wander rather than forcing upon them a pre-ascribed route.[4] Dr. Komaroff attributes this approach of hers to her visit to the 1990 exhibition *Matisse in Morocco* at the National Gallery in Washington, DC, which had a strict curatorial pathway guiding its audience along a linear trajectory. After noticing that instead of

2
The combatting of Islamophobia via displays of Islamic art, using such objects "as expressions of cultural tolerance", has been an increasingly popular phenomenon since 9/11, one that was only practiced by a select few in the field prior to that date. See Magnus Berg and Klas Grinell, *Understanding Islam at European Museums*, Cambridge/New York 2021, 6.

3
Dr. Komaroff noted that she had hoped for viewers to go around the exhibition with the catalogue in hand, which was made available in two separate locations in the open-format galleries, to then look up descriptions of the objects that they were especially interested in; however, the final catalogue, weighing 2.4 kilograms, did not allow for such portability.

4
At the time of my visit to the LACMA, one of the three entrances was closed due to construction in the adjoining galleries, making only two of the entrances available to the exhibition space. I observed that most – if not all – visitors entered the exhibition from gallery 1 that featured the introductory wall text, which was visible from the main entrance to the Resnick Pavilion in which the exhibition took place; therefore, although the exhibition could be said to have had a "non-prescribed route" in the sense that it was composed of open interlocking galleries, there seemed to be a designated entrance and exit that most visitors preferred to use.

[Fig. 1]
Dining with the Sultan at LACMA, *Damascus Room*, image taken by author on April 19, 2024 © Yasmine Yakuppur.

[Fig. 2]
Dining with the Sultan at LACMA, Sadik Kwaish Alfraji, *A Threat of Light Between my Mother's Fingers and Heaven* (2023), images taken by author on April 19, 2024 © Yasmine Yakuppur.

[Fig. 3]
Dining with the Sultan at LACMA, gallery featuring objects related to outdoor dining, image taken by author on April 19, 2024 © Yasmine Yakuppur.

[Fig. 4]
Dining with the Sultan at LACMA, gallery featuring objects related to dining across cultures, image taken by author on April 19, 2024 © Yasmine Yakuppur.

following the prescribed route, she did a quick walkthrough of the exhibition to then go back to objects that were of specific interest to her, Dr. Komaroff said that she came to embrace the free will of her audience in her own curatorial practice.

Due to its theme, *Dining with the Sultan* had the challenge of capturing the multisensory nature of the dining experience itself and incorporating as many senses in the exhibition design as possible. Sight, the primary sense associated with Western museum display,[5] was captured via objects of different types, media, colors, and textures, in vitrines and pedestals of varying shapes and sizes [Fig. 3], creating a feast for the eyes. Smell was incorporated in scent boxes featuring traditional ingredients such as rosewater and orange blossom. These boxes also introduced an element of tactility, as the audience has to open and close them to access the scents, almost like how one would interact with the featured ingredients while cooking, opening and closing a spice drawer or a pantry cabinet. Sound was featured as the soundtrack of Alfraji's work echoing across the open galleries, although musical instruments on display were accompanied by QR codes, which allowed for those who wished to be able to hear how they sound from their smartphones. The last and perhaps most important sense, taste, was notably absent from the exhibition due to obvious restrictions of having food in a gallery space; however, the museum did organize a limited capacity paid seated dinner on June 12, 2024, in which Iranian American chef Najmieh Batmanglij cooked six historic recipes she adapted to the contemporary kitchen. Images of these dishes were featured in four plate-shaped screens placed on a *sufra* in the gallery about dining across cultures, accompanied by custom made bread and vegetable sculptures [Fig. 4].

Although its title implied to represent the breadth of Muslim dining practices by referring to an ambiguous and general "sultan", the exhibition featured seventy-one objects attributed to Iran and forty-six to Turkey, accounting for almost half of the objects on display.[6] This imbalance seems to be the result of the exhibition's basis on the collection of the LACMA itself, with a fifth of the objects on view being from the museum's own holdings.[7] The LACMA

5
Regarding oculo-centrism in Western museums, see Svetlana Alpers, The Museum as a Way of Seeing, in: Ivan Karp and Steven D. Lavine (eds.), *Exhibiting Cultures. The Poetics and Politics of Museum*, Washington/London 1991, 25–32. For the difference between Western versus Islamic visual culture, see D. Fairchild Ruggles, Making Vision Manifest. Frame, Screen, and Vision in Islamic Culture, in: Dianne Harris and D. Fairchild Ruggles (eds.), *Sites Unseen. Landscape and Vision*, Pittsburgh, PA 2007, 131–288.

6
The remaining objects were attributed to the following regions: twenty-two each to Syria and India, twenty to China, fourteen each to Iraq and Italy, seven to Spain, six to Egypt, four to Afghanistan, two each to Russia and the Eastern Mediterranean, one each to North Africa, Dagestan, and Pakistan, and twenty-seven undecided with attributions to several distinct regions simultaneously.

7
In terms of provenance, the objects in the catalogue come from the following institutions, in order of prevalence: forty-six from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, twenty-four from the Metropolitan Museum of Art, eighteen from the Topkapı Palace (that were

collection is heavily saturated with works from Iran and Turkey due to the preferences of collectors such as Nasli M. Heeramaneck and Edward Binney III, whose donations formed the nucleus of the Islamic Art department of the museum.[8] Outside of its consequential focus on Iran and Turkey, the exhibition brought together works from Europe (Italy, Spain) and Asia (Russia, China), traditionally excluded from the geographical scope of the category of "Islamic art".[9] Dr. Komaroff has presented a renewed approach to this category since her appointment in 1995, aiming to expand mainstream canonical considerations beyond imposed restrictions of time (610 to around 1800) and space (Southwest Asia and North Africa), into one that encompasses the greater history of trade and migrations in and across majority Muslim empires, kingdoms, and countries. Her intersectional approach has been propagated by trading in a permanent display of Islamic art for temporary exhibitions in 2005, which allowed the museum to seek constant renewal in the meaning of this category labeled by religion. Efforts by Dr. Komaroff to expand considerations of Islamic art are parallel to the overarching efforts by the LACMA itself, which champions intersectional exhibitions that refuse traditional art historical categories bound by time and space, rather than relying on permanent displays of said rigid and outdated categories.[10]

not included in the final iteration of the exhibition), fifteen from the Victoria and Albert Museum, fourteen from the British Museum, thirteen each from the Museum of Islamic Art in Qatar and the Detroit Museum of Art, twelve from the al-Sabah Collection, ten from the Walters Collection, nine each from the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco, the Louvre, and the Corning Glass Museum, eight each from the British Library, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, and the David Collection, seven each from the Ashmolean Museum, the Farjam Collection, and the Getty Institute, four from the Textile Museum, three each from the Fowler Collection, the Houston Museum of Art, and the Hispanic Society, two each from the Bodleian Library and the Asian Art Museum of Washington, and one each from the New York Public Library, the Pera Museum, and the Wellcome Collection.

8
For a history of acquisitions and the formation of the collection, see Linda Komaroff, *Collecting Islamic Art at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. A Curatorial Perspective*, Los Angeles 2017, and Pratapaditya Pal (ed.), *Islamic Art. The Nasli M. Heeramaneck Collection, Gift of Joan Palevsky*, Los Angeles 1973.

9
The category of "Islamic art" has been heavily debated within the last two decades. See, for example, Wendy Shaw, *What Is "Islamic" Art? Between Religion and Perception*, Cambridge 2019; Avinoam Shalem, What Do We Mean When We Say 'Islamic Art'? A Plea for a Critical Rewriting of the History of the Arts of Islam, in: *Journal of Art Historiography* 6, 2012 (July 10, 2025); Gülru Necipoğlu, The Concept of Islamic Art. Inherited Discourses and New Approaches, in: Benoît Junod, Georges Khalil, Stefan Weber, and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *Islamic Art and the Museum. Approaches to Art and Archaeology of the Muslim World in the Twenty-First Century*, London 2012, 57–75; and Finbarr Barry Flood, From Prophet to Postmodernism? New World Orders and the End of Islamic Art, in: Elizabeth Mansfield (ed.), *Making Art History. A Changing Discipline and Its Institutions*, London 2007, 31–52. A brief discussion is also included in Linda Komaroff, John W. Hirx, and Anke Scharrahs, Introduction, in: id., *Beauty and Identity. Islamic Art from the Los Angeles County Museum of Art*, Los Angeles 2016, 11–19.

10
A general view of categories prevalently used by Western museums to group their permanent collections can be found in the fields listed in the June 1995 issue of the *Art Bulletin*, as reproduced in Robert S. Nelson, The Map of Art History, in: *The Art Bulletin* 79/1, March 1997, 28–40, here 29. The list of *Art Bulletin* categories for Art History and Archaeology dissertations, which Nelson presents as a general list of the "fields" of art history in the West, is as follows: Egyptian, Ancient Near Eastern, and Classical Art; Early Christian, Byzantine, and Medieval Art; The Renaissance; Baroque and Eighteenth-Century Europe; Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Europe; Photography and Film; Art of the United

The exhibition also featured a companion installation at the Charles White Elementary School from January 20 to August 10, 2024, open to visitors on Saturday afternoons. This companion installation featured seventy works arranged in five galleries, sixty from the collection of the LACMA, five printed reproductions of folios on display at the Resnick Pavilion, two musical instruments from the collection of Amir Hosein Pourjavady, two video installations, and one floor spread made in 2023 in Ishafan, Iran, purchased for the exhibition. Out of the sixty featured objects, fifty were ceramic vessels used in either dining or storage, reflecting the stronghold of the medium in the LACMA collection of Islamic art. Unlike those installed in the main campus, the Charles White objects featured both English and Spanish labels, possibly motivated by the fact that the visitors to the site are primarily students in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), 73 percent of whom identify as Latinx.[11] This collaboration with Charles White is part of the *Art Programs with the Community: LACMA On-Site* program that allocates a million dollars per year from a 23.9-million-dollar endowment by former trustee Anna Bing Arnold to support arts programming in the LAUSD. The program was established in 2006 to serve partner institutions in LAUSD's District 4, embodying the vision of Bing who saw "education as an essential function of [the LACMA]",[12] which has since been adopted by the museum. In line, *Dining with the Sultan* offered programming for the public to interact with the exhibition beyond simply looking, allowing for a hands-on approach, at the Resnick Pavilion with daily tours including practical exercises and at the Charles White Elementary School with family workshops.[13] By placing a second installation of the exhibition at the school and offering educational programming, Dr. Komaroff has been able to expand her humanist mission of familiarizing the general American public with "Islamic art" and Muslim culture to not only adults but more importantly families with children.

Dining with the Sultan, in its celebration of tableware from the lands of Islam dating from medieval to contemporary, can be read not only as a decolonial project that challenged associations of "religious" and "medieval" with the category of "Islamic art", but also a humanist one that aimed to familiarize the American public

States and Canada; Native American, Pre-Columbian, and Latin American Art; Asian Art; Islamic Art; African Art; African Diaspora; Art Criticism and Theory.

11
Los Angeles Unified School District, *LAUSD Unified: Fingertip Facts 2024–2025*, 2024 (July 10, 2025, page not available in all regions).

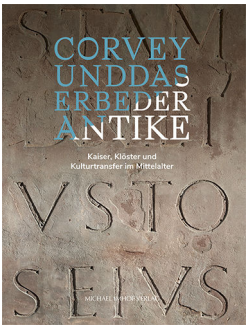
12
Art Programs with the Community: LACMA On-Site, Los Angeles 2011, 7; Susan Hoffmann, *SWAP: LACMA Exhibition Project at Charles White Elementary School*, Los Angeles 2009, 6.

13
The day of my visit, artist Eszter Delgado was leading a family workshop titled "Set the Table!", a monthly craft workshop in which children and their families made paper plates with different techniques such as linocut, in the designated workshop area within the exhibition space for weekly workshops.

with Muslim food culture. Although the exhibition fell short in its goal to provide a geographically holistic overview of dining ware and food culture in the lands of Islam due to logistical limitations and boundaries of the already existing collection of the LACMA, the curatorial approach taken by Dr. Komaroff made the exhibition a success in facilitating an intimate engagement between its audience and exhibited material. Free movement within the exhibition space, sensory engagement with the displayed objects, and educational programming that offered hands-on activities allowed this exhibition to refuse being a static informative display for passively viewing the Other, and rather to become an innovative project that engaged its visitors and promoted critical thinking.

HOLGER KEMPKENS & CHRISTIANE RUHMANN (EDS.), *CORVEY UND DAS ERBE DER ANTIKE. KAISER, KLÖSTER UND KULTURTRANSFER IM MITTELALTER*

Petersberg: Michael Imhof Verlag 2024, 656 pages with 621 color and 23 b/w ill., ISBN 978-3-7319-1425-9 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
William J. Diebold

Corvey und das Erbe der Antike ("Corvey and the Classical Heritage") is the catalogue to the most recent large-scale exhibition of medieval art held at the Diocesan Museum in Paderborn; it was on view for four months beginning in September 2024.[1] The Paderborn museum has, rather surprisingly, become the successor to the Schnütgen Museum in Cologne as the major German venue for temporary displays of medieval art and culture. If Cologne set the tone in the 1970s and 1980s with exhibitions such as *Rhein und Maas* (1972) and *Ornamenta Ecclesiae* (1985), in this century Paderborn has assumed Cologne's mantle with *799: Kunst der Karolinger* (1999), *Canossa 1077* (2006), *Credo* (2013), and others. (It is surely no coincidence that both cities are heavily Catholic.) In the wake of *799*, which was a totally unexpected success, drawing 328,000 viewers,

1
I did not see the exhibition; photographs of the installation are available on the exhibition's website (May 27, 2025).

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the smallish museum in Paderborn has followed a consistent exhibition formula which combines the serious scholarly presentation of relatively small numbers of often very important medieval objects (there were 120 in the Corvey exhibition) with display techniques featuring staging, reconstructions, and the like (English currently lacks a handy equivalent for the useful German term *Inszenierungen*). All of these Paderborn exhibitions were the brainchild of Christoph Stiegemann; *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* was the first to be organized by his successor as director, Holger Kempkens, and by Christiane Ruhmann, a curator at the museum.

The immediate history of these Paderborn displays takes us back to the very tail end of the twentieth century, but the Corvey exhibition also has a longer intellectual pedigree. The catalogue opens with an introduction by Frank-Walter Steinmeier, the president of the Federal Republic of Germany and the exhibition's patron. According to Steinmeier, "the spiritual and cultural foundation for the Europe that arose was laid in the monastic libraries and scriptoria" (p. 7; all translation the author's). That sentence could easily have appeared in the catalogue to the first blockbuster display of medieval art in post-World War II Germany, *Werdendes Abendland am Rhein und Ruhr* ("The West in Gestation in the Rhine and Ruhr Valleys") held in Essen in 1956. That exhibition's name makes clear that its politics were rooted in the Cold War and the reemergence of *West* Germany as a European power. The year 2024 is a very different one from 1956, but in many ways the message of *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* was not entirely different from that of *Werdendes Abendland*. In twenty-first-century Paderborn, as in mid-twentieth-century Essen, Christianity was crucial; Cornel Dora's catalogue introduction flatly asserted that the Middle Ages was the "era of heaven" (p. 9). This Christian emphasis was very much business as usual at Paderborn; as one observer of the exhibitions at the Diocesan Museum has noted: "For Christoph Stiegemann, it was always clear that European culture and history were inconceivable without Christianity."[2] It was not only in terms of ideology that *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* harkened back to an earlier era of exhibitions. The show's catalogue weighs a hefty three kilos; it is a book to be studied in a library, not consulted in an exhibition (in the wake of the massive catalogues from the Schnütgen Museum and elsewhere, the citation of a catalogue's weight became a trope of exhibition reviews). The format of the volume under review was also traditional (in this instance, a welcome conservatism), as it featured long object entries, many extending a page or more, with

[2] Richard Böger, Vom Mehrwert der Kunst. Kulturförderung der Bank für Kirche und Caritas e.G. Paderborn am Beispiel der großen Sonderausstellungen des Diözesanmuseums seit 1999, in: Christiane Ruhmann and Petra Westhues (eds.), *Museum als Resonanzraum. Festschrift für Christoph Stiegemann*, Petersberg 2020, 478–487, here 484. The Christian emphasis of the Paderborn exhibitions is apparent if they are contrasted to those shown at the other major German center for medieval exhibitions, the Kulturhistorisches Museum in Magdeburg; these have had an almost unrelenting focus on emperors: e.g. *Otto der Grosse, Magdeburg und Europa* (2001) or *Heiliges Römisches Reich Deutscher Nation* (2006).

full bibliographies; these were joined by thirty-four serious and substantial scholarly essays on a diverse array of topics.

The subject of *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike*, a Carolingian-era monastery and its relationship to classical antiquity, might also seem very traditional. What hoarier subject could there be than the "Carolingian renaissance"? But, as Ingo Herklotz shows in an enlightening and characteristically thoroughly researched historiographical essay ("Die *Karolingische Renaissance*: Ein schwieriges Erbe der deutschen Kunstwissenschaft"), the art-historical prominence of the Carolingian revival of antiquity goes back only to Richard Krautheimer's 1942 essay "The Carolingian Revival of Early Christian Architecture".[3] Before Krautheimer, the Carolingians had been difficult to locate in a German art history that prized nationalism and progress. If Charlemagne's artistic patronage, notably his palace chapel at Aachen, was indebted to late antique Mediterranean models, it was neither German nor innovative. Krautheimer challenged those ways of thinking so successfully that it is now hard for us to imagine things otherwise. But *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* consistently shows that the classical legacy was disputed in the Middle Ages, treasured and despised in more or less equal measure.[4] This tension enriched the catalogue and the display and made clear that, Steinmeier's banal words to the contrary, this was *not* an exhibition intended simply to demonstrate the hoary formula that Western culture is the result of combining the ancient pagan and medieval Christian heritages.

Why Corvey? As with many exhibitions, historical anniversaries were crucial, although this was a rare medieval/modern anniversary combination (tenth anniversary of Corvey becoming a UNESCO World Heritage site; more or less the 1200th of the monastery's founding, since a cornerstone was laid in 822). Displaying Corvey in Paderborn, some sixty kilometers distant, posed logistical and conceptual challenges. For example, Corvey is home to two remarkable ninth-century witnesses to the classical heritage: the extraordinary wall painting depicting Odysseus and the Scylla (II.27) and the beautiful inscription in *capitalis quadrata* (II.9). The latter was sufficiently portable to travel to Paderborn, the former not, although an image of it was projected onto the gallery wall, one of the exhibition's many uses of multimedia (Paderborn's tradition of *Inszenierungen* has also survived Stiegemann's departure).

Exhibition and catalogue begin not with Corvey, but with the Carolingian era more generally. The thickly documented essays make clear this was a well-studied subject and the objects in this part of the exhibition were also familiar: manuscripts of ancient Christian authors and works of art, especially ivories, with ties to

[3] *Art Bulletin* 24, 1942, 1–38.

[4] See in particular Aaron Joachim's catalogue essay: Vergiftetes Erbe. Antikes Wissen bei Bovo und Widukind von Corvey, 305–311.

classical themes and forms. *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* singled out a small subset of objects to which it gave particular attention; these were treated from the technical perspective as well as the more familiar cultural-historical one. In this first part of the exhibition, the work that drew such a focus was the Roman statue of a she-bear from Aachen (I.14). The statue was very nicely contextualized in terms both of form, as it was juxtaposed to a Roman statue of a dog from the Vatican Museums, and its physical context; Aachen was represented by an ancient or Carolingian bronze column base from Charlemagne's chapel and the Byzantine quadriga textile from the Aachen treasury (I.16–17). These kinds of telling juxtapositions make an exhibition succeed and they characterized *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike*, which was extremely carefully curated, a welcome change from the sometimes almost random accumulation of objects that can characterize high-profile exhibitions.

The next sections of catalogue and exhibition turned to Corvey itself. One was devoted to material remains from the abbey, including colored glass, stucco, and wall painting. Most of these objects are known to specialists, but it is very useful to have detailed scholarly accounts and color images of them gathered in one place. This section was paired to one that considered the monastery's library and scriptorium. For the organizers, these were Corvey's head and beating heart and this section functioned as a microcosm of the exhibition, since it showed how the classical heritage was both preserved (library) and transformed (scriptorium). The part on the library contained a rich collection of manuscripts, both late antique and medieval, containing classical texts and their medieval reworkings. More impressive for the art historian and likely the average viewer was the subdivision devoted to the scriptorium; here were assembled a number of the quite spectacular and distinctive manuscripts produced at Corvey in the tenth century. In another example of careful curation, the late ninth-century Franco-Saxon gospel book from Prague was displayed (III.26). This book is rarely exhibited, but it was a key hinge object for *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike*, so the museum did well to obtain it as a loan. Its ivory cover, a reused consular diptych of the fifth century, looked backwards to the classical heritage. The manuscript itself, however, pointed forward. It was written and decorated in northern France, but its three scribes were trained at Corvey and the manuscript was at the monastery by the tenth century, where it provided inspiration for Corvey's highly particular school of book production.

Corvey und das Erbe der Antike then turned from the title subject to something like its opposite: the Saxon inhabitants of the region around Corvey and their conquest by the Carolingians. This section was given literal short shrift (twenty-nine catalogue pages and six objects compared to just over a hundred pages and twenty-seven objects in the previous part). Shrift here is an apposite word; because this was an exhibition that focused so intently on reading, writing, and textual evidence, the Saxons, a generally non-literate culture, were difficult for it to present. The curators did not force

the issue and are to be commended for not padding the exhibition here. The object in this section that received by far the most attention was little known but fascinating (even if not especially impressive to look at): a fragment of the exhaust opening from an eighth-century bell foundry at Dülmen (IV.5). Bell casting is a clear mark of Christianization and the Dülmen foundry's exceptionally early, carbon-14-based date is unexpected evidence of organized Christianization well in advance of the Carolingian conquest. This was a nice example of the ways in which material culture can be used as a historical source, one entirely appropriate to a display that otherwise put such weight on the written word.

The nominal theme of the fifth section of the exhibition was important and innovative: Westphalian monasteries as sites of "Technologie-Transfer".[5] Here, the focus shifted from Corvey to Enger and especially the purse reliquary from that monastery now in the Kunstgwerbemuseum in Berlin (V.1). This major object was surrounded by an array of important loans, including other pieces from the Enger treasure and the Theudericus shrine from Saint-Maurice d'Agaune (perhaps one of the few slightly gratuitous loans in the exhibition). The Enger purse was also the subject of five historical and scientific scholarly essays filling forty pages, so *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* unexpectedly contains between its covers what amounts to a short monograph on the Enger purse. This was not the only surprise in this part of the catalogue, which ended with a presentation of female monasteries and their interest in antiquity. This is a welcome subject and one that allowed the display of the spectacular Roman cameo from Nottuln, now in Berlin (V.21) and some important objects from Essen, including a quadripartite psalter and the crown associated with the Golden Madonna (V.25, 27).

In an unexpected but excellent curatorial move, the final section of the exhibition jumped from Carolingian-Ottonian Corvey to the mid-twelfth century and the abbacy of Wibald. Although he is more usually connected with Stavelot, the "Christian Cicero" was also, near the end of his life, abbot of Corvey. An essay by Holger Kempkens outlined Wibald's spectacular artistic patronage, including the portable altar in Brussels and the triptych in the Morgan Library and Museum in New York. These were not present in Paderborn, but the Diocesan Museum was able to obtain such high-profile (and relevant) loans as Wibald's crozier (VI.13), the two remaining enamel medallions from the Remaclus retable (VI.14), and the Corvey *Liber vitae* (VI.4).

The exhibition ended with a "calligraphic intervention" by the contemporary artist Brody Neuenschwander, who also contributed to several earlier shows at the Paderborn museum. From the catalogue entry and installation photographs it was hard to discern how trenchant Neuenschwander's installation was. Given

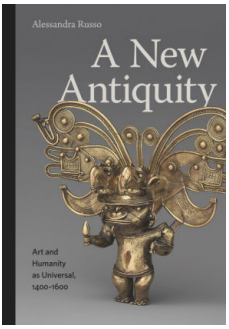
[5] The tendency of *Corvey und das Erbe der Antike* to infuse itself with an English-inflected vocabulary of management consulting was not one of its most attractive features. According to the exhibition's website, Corvey was a "Think-Tank des Mittelalters".

the exhibition's clear and coherent theme and exceptionally tight curation, it is unclear whether any intervention was necessary. Also questionable were some of the *Inszenierungen*. The so-called Arch of Einhard, a small, now-lost Carolingian object known from seventeenth-century drawings, is a prime example of the medieval *Erbe der Antike*; probably a cross base, it remarkably takes the form of a Roman triumphal arch. But the Arch was not one of the objects included in the catalogue, although it appeared in the exhibition in the form of a three-dimensional, meter-tall vitrine. To my mind, both the immensely magnified scale and the use as exhibition furniture were inappropriate.

But these last are really quibbles about a fine exhibition and a book that will be used with pleasure and profit for many years to come, taking its deserved place alongside what is by now a very impressive shelf of Paderborn exhibition catalogues.

ALESSANDRA RUSSO, *A NEW ANTIQUITY. ART AND HUMANITY AS UNIVERSAL, 1400–1600*

University Park, PA: The Penn State University Press 2024, 272 pages with 35 color and 40 b/w ill., ISBN 978-0-271-09569-1 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
Stephen J. Campbell

Towards the end of *A New Antiquity*, Alessandra Russo observes "it is perhaps not an exaggeration to say that a geopolitical underpinning characterizes several 16th century art treatises" (p. 167). Far from being an exaggeration, this might be an understatement. Sixteenth-century art theory from at least Paolo Pino (1548) to Karel Van Mander (1604) is fraught with geopolitical contestation. A series of controversies about Michelangelo, his key works enshrined at the heart of Roman Christendom, are motivated by bids to map the territories of modern art: Michelangelo re-constitutes and surpasses antiquity, therefore his status is universal; Michelangelo is the face of a Tuscan cultural hegemony, and so draws oppositional challenges from proponents of other regional modernities (Venetian, Lombard, Netherlandish); Michelangelo represents a resurgence of idolatrous pagan license, hence an undesirable model for artists dedicated to the propagation of universal Catholic faith.

Two years before Giorgio Vasari published the first edition of his *Lives*, with Michelangelo as the emphatically Tuscan grand climax of the progress of art since Giotto (and even since antiquity), the Portuguese Francisco da Holanda published his *Da pintura*

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antigua (1548). In Book I of this visionary work of artistic geography, Holanda reflects on the universality of ancient painting, less a period descriptor than a category of universal artistic excellence which – according to Holanda – can be found throughout the world, from Europe to "the antipodes" – Morocco, India, the Levant, Asia, and "among the barbarous people of Brazil and Peru, who had been hitherto unknown to us".[1] To be sure, for Holanda the revival of ancient painting in Europe is due to Italian artists, but his canon of moderns is far more geographically pluralist than the Florence-centric roster of masters that Vasari would commemorate in 1550 and more emphatically and influentially in the expanded edition of the *Lives* in 1568. In Book II, purportedly a series of conversations in Rome with Michelangelo and Vittoria Colonna, Holanda has Michelangelo set forth an altogether more inclusive notion of what "Roman art" could be in modern times: he praises works by the Paduan Mantegna, the Sienese Beccafumi, the Venetian Titian, the Friulian Giovanni da Udine, Giulio Clovio from Istria, Parmigianino from Parma, and the Ferrarese Dosso Dossi – the latter of whom would be singled out for particular vilification by Vasari, who was at best grudgingly appreciative of most of the others.

The counter-Vasarian potential of Holanda's text is not the basis on which Russo wants to re-position Michelangelo in the geography of art. Where one could read Holanda to deconstruct the Tuscan axis of Vasari and expand an Italian geography of art, Russo's ambition is to look beyond Europe entirely, and to suggest that Holanda is principally concerned with a new world of arts that had not been known to Europe before the age of exploration. More than once, she quotes Holanda's Michelangelo speaking for painting as *metatechne*, since by virtue of his training the painter "can undertake all the other manual trades that are practiced through the entire world" (p. 116). Russo finds echoes of this dictum in repeated attestations by Europeans of the versatility of indigenous artists and their speedy mastery of imported arts. More provocatively, she speculates on Michelangelo's awareness of works of art from the New World: if Michelangelo had seen the Codex Vindobondensis in the 1520s, it might have reminded him of his own Sistine ceiling, "which is reminiscent of an unfolded – and magnified – Mesoamerican codex" (p. 50). When he painted his *Creation of Adam* did Michelangelo think about the "common humanity" increasingly revealed by artifacts from the New World and acclaimed by informants like Pietro Martire d'Anghiera and Bartolomé de Las Casas, who he may have met in Rome (p. 101)? In fact, there is evidence (not discussed here) that such conversations were indeed happening in the Vatican. A 1494 fresco by Pinturicchio in the papal apart-

[1] Francisco de Hollanda, *On Antique Painting*, transl. by Alice Sedgwick Wohl, University Park, PA 2013, 95. Hollanda was not the first to see art beyond Europe in terms of antiquity. In 1516 the Florentine traveler Andrea Corsali deplored the demolition by the Portuguese near Goa of "un tempio antico, detto Pagode, ch'era con maraviglioso artificio fabricato, con figure antiche di certa pietra nera lavorata con grandissime perfettione". Giovanni Battista Ramusio, *Navigationi et viaggi*, 3 vols., Venice 1563, vol. 1, 178v.

ments depicts the resurrected Christ soaring over a panoramic landscape: directly beneath his feet appear diminutive near-naked figures adorned with feather artifacts, an artistic first response to early reports of the first voyage of Columbus.

Russo's opening chapter on Holanda and his Portuguese and Roman artistic and intellectual milieux recognizes his radical implications for a more inclusive and globalized understanding of Renaissance art. This is followed by an account on the Dominican Pietro Martire d'Anghiera, whose writing and scholarship bridged the world of Italian humanism and the Spanish and Spanish colonial spheres. In a chapter on Anghiera's fellow Dominican Bartolomé de Las Casas, best known for his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias* (1542), Russo draws on his posthumously published writings to demonstrate the centrality of art making to his passionate advocacy of indigenous peoples. Two further chapters pursue a more globalizing frame, with case studies in Peru, West Africa, and Japan, and draw on an array of witnesses that include Albrecht Dürer, Bernardo Diaz del Castillo, Felipe de Guevara, and Inca Garcilaso de la Vega.

Russo is attentive to a common sphere of discourse among these Italian and Iberian clerics and humanists, whose reflections on the extraordinary skill of indigenous makers manifest in artifacts from the New World are presented as constituting a new artistic anthropology, a grasp of the centrality of art to the quality of being human. "The evidence of such singular artifacts [...] in a previously unthinkable part of the earth" – Russo argues – prompted a "revolution in thought" – nothing short of a "redefinition of humanity" itself (p. 8).

For Russo, therefore, Renaissance humanism means more than philology and rhetoric, or the practice of *humanae litterae*, or the imitation of the ancients. Far more than the cultivation of the self through literary pursuits, *humanitas* according to her sweeping redefinition is manifest both in the *ingenium* of artistic making and – more implicitly – in the recognition of the humanity of art, wherever it comes from. Such "artifact-based humanism" as Russo calls it is precisely the opposite of the "othering" of indigenous people through the commerce in and spectacle of *exotica*, a practice by European elites often linked with the extraction of raw materials and the brutal exploitation of indigenous labor. Artifacts and monuments are discussed as proofs of a rationality beyond necessity – art making manifests operative reason, or prudence, in action. It is in making the case for empathy, upholding the urgency with which her early modern witnesses linked the recognition of human *ingenium* with the human dignity of New World inhabitants, that Russo's project appears most original and highly necessary. It goes against the grain of scholarship on the early modern globe that prioritizes the adversarial, that sees cultural encounters only in terms of well-documented instances of human exploitation and cultural extermination, that reduces sixteenth-century advocacy for indige-

nous rights to the political-economic machinery of confessionalization and colonization.

Of course, as Russo well knows, her alternative view is assailable. The enterprise is punctuated by moments of ambivalence – her own as well as her sources' – even as the argument is developed and forcefully re-stated. She underscores the frequency with which her sources juxtapose the refinement of indigenous architecture, featherwork, and sculpture with the horror of human sacrifice, and the brutal facts of post-conquest enslavement. A ruthless colonial administrator and enslaver like the historian Gonzalo Fernandes de Oviedo y Valdes can admire goldsmithing, body painting, bird masks and feather costumes (p. 92–94) while decrying the people who made them as barbarians, idolators, and sodomites. Las Casas encounters an enslaved man with artfully wrought physical restraints, and is told by his custodian that the captive made these "artifacts" himself. Are we supposed to notice the collision between the inhumanity of slavery and the very notion of "liberal" arts, or do such seemingly "embarrassing self-contradictions" ultimately disclose what Las Casas might really be seeking to impart: that "something of the Indian world has not been destroyed by the conquest", and that art "signals that humanity persists through domination" (p. 127).

That the affirmation of artists in the Americas by Anghiera and Las Casas is not just humanitarian in a twenty-first-century sense but humanistic in a Renaissance sense, and that it calls for a more expansive understanding of Renaissance humanism, is a powerful idea, and one that deserves further expansion and debate. Russo's claim that "artifact-based humanism" constitutes a paradigm shift with more global implications is also appealing, but more tendentious. The encounter with the artisans of the New World, she claims, profoundly transforms European understanding of what artists do, and leads to a "modern" conception of art. Russo is emphatic that her observers were not merely projecting an "Old World" understanding of civilization upon the New (p. 89). Instead, she suggests, antiquity "was deeply renovated by the antipodes" becoming synonymous with a timeless and universal potential for artistic excellence. But here, problems emerge.

Readers of Anghiera might note that he constantly sought to project Greco-Roman antiquity onto the New World. In his *First Decade*, he compares the warlike men and women of Hispaniola to the Thracians and the Amazons, and reports that the Taino woman Catarina "performed a deed much greater than Roman Cloelia". While it is possible that his conception of antiquity might have been enriched by what he saw, I would argue that his capacity to register contradictions between indigenous civility and cruelty were shaped by a distinctly non-idealizing and hard-primitivist view of the ancient world. That is, Anghiera was filtering these new situations through ancient literary topoi and conceptual categories. Hispaniola with its multiple kings is like Latium when Aeneas arrived,

> yet they [the Taino and other islanders] too [i.e. like the ancients] are tortured by ambition and desire for empire, and in their wars they inflict mutual destruction on one another; we believe that the Golden Age did not live free from that plague.[2]

Anghiera's correspondent cardinal Ascanio Sforza, and very probably Anghiera himself, would have been familiar with the *Libro Architecttonico* (ca. 1464) of Antonio Averlino, known as Filarete, which had been dedicated to Ascanio's father Duke Francesco Sforza. A passage describing Piero de'Medici in his studiolo cycles through several of the formulae of praise drawn on later by Anghiera. Piero is described as taking pleasure in the effigies of emperors and famous men wrought in bronze and precious metals

> first, for the excellence of the image represented, secondly for the noble mastery of those ancient angelic spirits who with their sublime intellects made such ordinary things as bronze, marble, and such materials acquire great price. Valuable things such as gold and silver have become even greater through their mastery, for, as it is noted, there is nothing, from gems on, that is worth more than gold. They have made a worth more than gold by means of their skill.

After all, when we see the works of "Phidias and Praxiteles", they seem to have come from heaven rather than from the hand of man. And Piero enjoys his collection of "vases of gold, silver and other materials made nobly and at great expense and brought from different places [...] praising their dignity and the mastery of their fabricators", along with "other noble things that have come from different parts of the world".[3]

Anghiera's praise of artworks in which craft supersedes the value of the materials, and which call to mind "Phidias and Praxiteles", indicates that he has absorbed the toolbox of early Renaissance humanistic art theory, which contemporary art history has seemingly forgotten.

To be sure, it does not finally matter who said what first. The meaning of a topos depends on its context, not on its putative origin text. Russo's argument that the humanistic celebration of indigenous makers and their works demonstrates the recognition of an essential humanity still stands, is still important, and very compelling. Yet Russo herself – in the tradition of Hans Belting's now rather shopworn account on the shift from "image" to "art" – is heavily invested in firsts, in paradigm shifts on the pathway to

[2] *Ocean Decade*, Book 2, in: *Repertorium Columbianum, Vol. V: Selections from Peter Martyr*, ed. and transl. by Geoffrey Eatough, Turnhout 1998, 55.

[3] Filarete (Antonio Averlino), *Treatise on Architecture*, 2 vols., transl. by John Spencer, New Haven, CT/London 1965, vol. 1, 320.

"modernity". When Bernardo Diaz del Castillo praises "idols made with gold, that even if it was of low value, was elevated by the art", Russo tells us that we are seeing how the category of idol "contributed to generating the modern concept of art" (p. 132). And yet there is nothing new or modern here: the artistry of idols had been acclaimed long before, in the rich descriptions of Lorenzo Ghiberti's *Third Commentary*, where newly excavated works of ancient sculpture attract the admiration of people "intendenti et dotti nell'arte della scultura et orefici et pictori" and the stigma of *ydolatria* from the rest.[4]

A key line of Russo's argument is that such New World "renovation" transformed the humanist discourse on the mechanical arts as liberal arts, calling for a new historiography of the art historical early modern. The reader is invited to see Vasari's use of ekphrasis in the *Lives* as anticipated and possibly even influenced by the European eyewitness response to feather mosaics, masks, goldsmithing, and bone carvings from the Americas. "In the history of art history, the '*Lives*' of Vasari (published in 1550 and 1568) is considered the first text where ekphrasis became a practice to celebrate artistic activity itself: it was no longer a tool to describe what was represented but how" (p. 135). Surely an eyebrow-raising claim: whoever could have considered Vasari to be the first author to celebrate artistic making or activity with poetic description? The citation is to Patricia Rubin's 1995 monograph *Giorgio Vasari. Art and History*, but at the loci cited Rubin says no such thing. Rubin discusses Vasari's "enumerative descriptions [that] emphasize the artist's inventive capacities" but makes no claim about Vasari's originality in that regard; more concerningly, Rubin adds that "to identify [such descriptions] specifically as the exercise known as *ekphrasis* is misleading".[5]

Most early modernists would baulk at the notion that Vasari was the first to employ ekphrasis to convey the effectiveness of artistic performance, but the relevant literature has not been consulted here.[6] In the 1400s, the conventions of Byzantine ekphrasis had been adapted by humanists and artisan-writers in Italy to produce vivid laudatory accounts in poetry and prose of work by artists like Pisanello and Andrea Mantegna. For Cennino Cennini, writing in the early 1400s, painting "combines imagination with skill of hand".[7] Russo, however, wants to make the admiration of artistic

4
Lorenzo Ghibertis Denkwürdigkeiten (I commentarii), 2 vols., ed. by Julius von Schlosser, Berlin 1912, vol. 1, 61–64.

5
Patricia Lee Rubin, *Giorgio Vasari. Art and History*, New Haven, CT/London 1995, 279.

6
For instance: Michael Baxandall, *Giotto and the Orators. Humanist Observers of Painting in Italy and the Discovery of Pictorial Composition 1350–1450*, Oxford 1971.

7
Cennino Cennini, *The Craftsman's Handbook (Il libro dell'arte)*, transl. by Daniel V. Thompson, Jr., New Haven, CT/London 1960 [1933], 1.

subtlety by Las Casas, d'Anghiera, and da Hollanda, more than a century after Cennini, the decisive factor in the recognition of an intellectual dimension to artistic making. By the end of the sixteenth century the hand of the artist is "the staple of excellence embedded in an artwork" (p. 139). While earlier references to the hand from the fifteenth century supposedly concern only "autograph rights and duties", by the 1600s, with Guido Reni and Bernini: "hands were definitely considered to be connected to the intellect" (p. 139). An epigram by Conrad Celtis on the *docta manus* of Dürer from 1500 is stated to be an early recognition of the manifestation of intellect in manual skill. Petrarch, then, might as well never have paralleled the painterly hand of Simone Martini (*Simonis digitus*) with the authorial hand of Virgil; it matters little that Mantegna was acclaimed (and more than once) for combining "la mano industriosa et l'alto ingegno", and that Cosmè Tura was praised for his "Daedalian hand".[8] Russo writes

> that the subtlety of the artworks observed and described in the context of the early modern globalization participated in this major shift: manufactured 'idols' proved artistic refinement, and myriad handworks were considered related to and even sources of thought (p. 139).

"Participated in", perhaps – but the rhetorical apparatus of humanist aesthetics that connected hand and mind was available to humanists in Italy in the 1400s, as was the habit of praising the value of craftsmanship in precious metals over the value of the material itself. It was those categories, already employed in the appreciation and critical appraisal of an idolatrous pagan art, that provided the terms in which indigenous artifacts from the Americas and elsewhere could be admired.

Such objections here do not diminish the revisionist force of Russo's intervention, her attempt to change the narrative of the global early modern. It is especially commendable that she draws attention to the troubling contradictions in her primary sources, as well as the risks in her own readings, and thus sets in motion the manifold debates that should emerge from this book. And yet I remain haunted by other questions, other possibilities: could the "humanity" manifest in artifacts ultimately be an affirmation of the commentator's professed humanity, grounded in educated taste and the command of a humanist vocabulary? If European observers recognized that the plundered artifacts circulating in Europe manifested the humanity of people in the Americas, could that be because humanity has been displaced to the artifacts from the labo-

[8] For Petrarch on Simone Martini, see Tim Markey, Servius Illustrated. Latin Texts and Contexts of Simone Martini's Frontispiece Painting to Petrarch's Virgil, in: *Humanistica Lovaniensia* 65, 2016, 1–28. On Mantegna, Stephen J. Campbell, *Andrea Mantegna. Humanist Aesthetics, Faith, and the Force of Images*, Turnhout 2020, 11. On Tura, Stephen J. Campbell, *Cosmè Tura of Ferrara. Style, Politics and the Renaissance City 1450–1495*, New Haven, CT/London 1997, 22.

ring bodies that produced them? An alternative reading might see in such displacement a re-enactment of the severance of people and marketable resources inherent in the colonial process; the investing of the art object with human-like characteristics that calls to mind – however anachronistically – Marx's theorization of the commodity through reification, the personification of things, and the objectification of people. While the book succeeds in demonstrating the emergence of positive universalizing discourses about art, it does not finally dispel the possibility that such discourses might be just another tool of Europe's violent colonialism.

TOBIAS FRESE, LISA HORSTMANN & FRANZISKA WENIG (ÉD.), *SAKRALE SCHRIFTBILDER. ZUR IKONISCHEN PRÄSENZ DES GESCHRIEBENEN IM MITTELALTERLICHEN KIRCHENRAUM*

Materiale Textkulturen 42, Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter 2024, 297 p. avec 94 ill. en couleur, 10 ill. en noir et blanc et 1 tableau, ISBN 9783111303864 (livre relié), ISBN 9783111304496 (ebook), DOI http://doi.org/10.1515/9783111304496.

Compte-rendu par
Vincent Debiais

L'immense projet de recherche consacré à la matérialité des cultures textuelles à l'ère pré-typographique, basé à l'Université d'Heidelberg, fait paraître un nouveau volume dans sa belle collection en accès libre. Chaque publication est une bonne nouvelle pour les spécialistes de la culture écrite, et plus généralement pour les historiens et historiennes des périodes antiques et médiévales qui trouvent de quoi penser l'écrit dans ces ouvrages richement illustrés et réunissant toujours des contributions solides et documentées. Dans cette quarante-deuxième livraison, on découvrira les actes d'un colloque tenu en ligne en janvier 2022 sur la présence iconique de l'écriture dans l'espace sacré au Moyen Âge ; il regroupe 12 chapitres rédigés en allemand et en anglais.

Le titre donné à ce volume collectif, « Sakrale Schriftbilder », est à la fois énigmatique sans son sous-titre, et parfaitement évident une fois que l'on a pris connaissance du contenu de la riche intro-

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duction rédigée par les éditeurs. Par cette expression, il s'agit de désigner la dimension visuelle de l'écriture, l'image de la lettre et du texte au sein des pratiques graphiques médiévales, en particulier lorsque celles-ci prennent place au sein d'un édifice sacré. Le sujet est intéressant puisque c'est l'une des tendances de l'épigraphie, de la paléographie et de l'histoire de l'art que d'interroger, en même temps que le contenu du texte et de l'image, la puissance visuelle de l'écriture, les formes « iconiques » des lettres, et de façon générale tout ce qui dans la forme graphique transmet du contenu et du sens par-delà les opérations de lecture effective. Les éditeurs relèvent cette tendance et renvoient à un certain nombre de travaux qui ont, ces dernières années, permis de regarder l'écriture plutôt que de la lire, et d'approfondir notre connaissance des relations entre les cultures écrites et visuelles du Moyen Âge occidental. Le volume *Sakrale Schriftbilder. Zur ikonischen Präsenz des Geschriebenen im mittelalterlichen Kirchenraum* s'inscrit donc dans un courant historiographique aussi fréquenté que passionnant, et l'ensemble des chapitres réunis ici participent, grâce à des exemples remarquablement analysés, à une meilleure compréhension de ce qu'écrire signifie au Moyen Âge.

L'introduction compte deux parties : la seconde consiste en un résumé des contributions, ce qui la rend précieuse pour qui voudrait survoler l'ouvrage ; la première, plus programmatique, dresse un bilan historiographique des questions relatives à la visualité de l'écriture, et elle propose l'illustration de certains problèmes de recherche, principalement à propos du monde manuscrit. C'est la célèbre ligature VD du *vere dignum* dans les livres liturgiques qui retient l'attention de Tobias Frese comme paradigme de la combinaison des aspects textuels et visuels de l'écriture médiévale : un signe qui se voit plus qu'il se lit et qui, dans le contexte rituel de la célébration eucharistique, matérialise, met en image la prière prononcée au-dessus des espèces par le prêtre. L'exception liturgique, la singularité performative de la « récitation visuelle » de cette ligature, inviteraient sans doute à questionner la permanence de cette pratique dans d'autres contextes au Moyen Âge, mais elle permet à l'éditeur de renvoyer à des notions importantes déjà traitées par l'équipe d'Heidelberg dans d'autres volumes de sa collection, telle que la spatialité, la présence restreinte et la mise en scène de l'écriture. Avec cette entrée en matière, on comprend qu'il s'agit d'aborder les manifestations visuelles des pratiques graphiques et l'exemple convoqué dans l'introduction (le *Sacramentaire de Peterhausen*, Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, Cod. Sal. IXb) prépare le lecteur à la découverte d'objets exceptionnels, débordant de lettres, de matières et de couleurs, y compris là où on ne les attend pas. On le signale ici, mais il faudrait le signaler pour presque tous les articles du volume : certains choix dans les références sont surprenants et, quand on connait le sérieux et l'expertise des auteurs publiant ici leur chapitre, on ne saurait attribuer l'état de l'art construit page après page à des oublis, ni à une méconnaissance de la bibliographie ; il s'agit, comme dans d'autres volumes de cette même col-

lection, de décisions intellectuelles qui excluent volontairement de l'appareil critique et théorique une partie de la recherche. On n'en fera pas le reproche aux éditeurs qui sont parfaitement libres de façonner ainsi leur propre compréhension de l'historiographie, mais sans doute faudrait-il s'en expliquer, dans le cadre de l'introduction par exemple.

Les chapitres s'enchaînent dans le volume en faisant alterner les questions manuscrites et le domaine de l'épigraphie médiévale, dans la mesure où les deux formes de la culture écrite du Moyen Âge coexistent en effet, et se répondent parfois dans cet « espace sacré » qui donne sa cohérence au volume. Il faut ajouter à cela l'écriture en tant que sujet dans la littérature, un autre dossier passionnant qui est évoqué dans l'article de Dennis Disselhoff traitant des « miracles d'écriture » dans l'espace sacré, rapportés dans les textes de la mystique tardo-médiévale. Ce regroupement, tout à fait pertinent donc, permet de se demander si ce sont les mêmes questions de visualité qui se posent à l'échelle du livre et à l'échelle du monument : la lisibilité restreinte de bon nombre d'inscriptions est-elle ce qui autorise le transfert de son efficacité du contenu impossible à lire à la forme visible dans l'espace ? Ou bien faut-il voir dans cette circulation du sens une propriété de l'écriture chrétienne qui accorde à la forme du signe une valeur sémantique ? Après tout, le Christ est l'alpha et l'oméga, il est le *verbum*, et il est aussi l'image du Père, et il convient de garder en tête cette dimension « alphabétique » de la théologie et le paradigme de l'Incarnation au moment de lire les différentes contributions, que l'on peut regrouper autour de trois notions.

La première notion est celle de « mémoire ». La dimension matérielle, visuelle et spatiale de l'écriture est convoquée pour assurer la mise en scène et la permanence du souvenir des fidèles, sur les tables d'autel du Moyen Âge central étudiées, à la suite de Cécile Treffort et de Jean Michaud, par Matthias Untermann ; la mémoire des commanditaires sur les objets précieux de la liturgie tels que les candélabres, dans l'article de Vera Henkelmann ; ou dans les mosaïques des absides romaines, dans le texte rédigé par Franziska Wenig. Dans tous les cas, il s'agit d'associer le nom à l'autel, ou au lieu sacré de façon plus étendue, et d'assurer la présence du défunt auprès du Christ lors du rituel. L'écriture est alors un dispositif d'affichage indépendant de la reconnaissance et de la lecture des noms : ils sont inscrits *là*, au plus près de l'efficacité sacramentelle.

La deuxième notion est celle de « présence », justement. L'écriture est utilisée pour faire apparaître le contenu du texte, pour *re-présenter* visuellement ce que l'inscription signifie par les mots. Les riches inscriptions tracées sur la patène de Goslar, très bien étudiées par Jochen Hermann Vennebusch, d'une grande complexité théologique quant à la présence du Christ dans l'hostie consacrée, cherchent à faire surgir la réalité corporelle du sacrifice de Jésus de l'intérieur vers l'extérieur de l'objet, et à faire apparaître ce qui est dissimulé dans la pyxide. Les listes de reliques tracées sur les autels, toujours dans le texte de Matthias Untermann, ou les

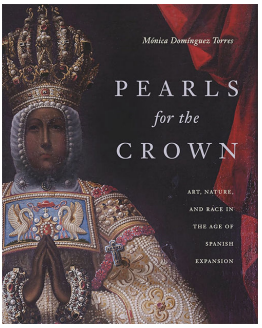
identifications des archanges dans les peintures murales catalanes analysées par Susanne Wittekind, répondent à la volonté de rendre présent le contenu du reliquaire ou de la figure, comme si la forme graphique du nom remplaçait, pour un temps au moins, l'accès à ce qu'elle désigne. Estelle Ingrand-Varenne étudie l'inscription par excellence de cette dialectique absence-présence, à savoir les textes sur le tombeau du Christ à Jérusalem, où l'écriture devient le corps de Jésus après son ascension.

La troisième notion à retenir est celle d'« iconicité » dans la mesure où bon nombre des inscriptions évoquées dans les articles cherchent avant tout à montrer une image de l'écrit – les *Schriftbilder* du titre de l'ouvrage. Sur la reliure d'un évangéliaire de Bamberg (BSB, Clm 4454), Katharina Theil montre que c'est un texte en caractères arabes taillés sur une pierre qui a pour objectif de figurer le *logos*, dans un décalage absolu des matériaux, des langues et des signes. Sur le triptyque Braque du Louvre, peint par Rogier van der Weyden, l'image de l'écriture hébraïque est peinte à la manière d'un tissu perlé sur la coiffe de Marie-Madeleine pour renvoyer par le visuel, selon Lea Pistorius, au contexte de la Crucifixion. Dans son article sur les vitraux, Lisa Horstmann va encore plus loin et analyse de façon tout à fait originale le rôle de la pseudo-écriture, des simulacres de texte qui ressemblent à des inscriptions et qui évoquent le geste graphique. Dans son article consacré au *Conseil de Rédemption* peint par Konrad Witz vers 1444–1447, Fiametta Campagnoli examine la multiplication des figures graphiques du Christ sur les nimbes, dans les livres, et sur les objets, une multiplication qui montre que Jésus est véritablement *littera* dans les arts visuels du Moyen Âge.

Le regroupement des chapitres autour des trois notions de mémoire, présence et figure n'épuise pas la richesse du contenu des articles qui se terminent tous par une bibliographie exhaustive transformant ces actes de colloque en véritable outil de travail. Ce volume contribue grandement à faire entrer l'étude de l'écriture dans le champ des recherches sur la culture visuelle du Moyen Âge. Il invite également à consolider les démarches épigraphiques et paléographiques pour la prise en compte de tous les éléments qui définissent l'écriture au Moyen Âge : la graphie et le contenu certes, mais aussi l'emplacement, le dispositif, le matériau, la couleur, la lisibilité…

MÓNICA DOMÍNGUEZ TORRES, *PEARLS FOR THE CROWN. ART, NATURE, AND RACE IN THE AGE OF SPANISH EXPANSION*

University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2024, 218 pages with 50 color and 40 b/w ill., ISBN: 978-0-271-09681-0 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
Anna Grasskamp

Pearls for the Crown provides a welcome challenge, and to some perhaps a provocation, to the field of art history. First, through the applaudable attempt to write the histories of labour and exploitation into art history and the book's ecological approach; second, as it is free from reliance on the methods that have been brought to bear by art historians in previous interpretative work on its main objects of study: sculptures, textile works, jewellery pieces, and other artefacts crafted from and with pearls as well as painted and printed representations of pearl fishing.

Mónica Domínguez Torres presents the reader with five chapters organized around key objects in a select number of places, which on the one hand are sites of pearl extraction in Venezuela – its north-east coast and the island of Cubagua, and on the other hand European sites of image and artefact production, consumption, and display that are all, to different degrees, connected to Habsburg Empire networks, namely Toledo in Spain, Florence in Italy, as well as Nuremberg and Dresden in Germany. A few discussed pieces link the two cultures of craftsmanship, for example when Torres briefly addresses Indigenous works in the Americas as

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related to European crafts through the example of South American frog-shaped artefacts (p. 62) or touches upon the Indigenous use of metal from European ships (p. 146). Yet, this is neither a book on transcultural connections in art nor on the European perception of Indigenous ingenuity, but a volume dedicated to the political instrumentalization of South American pearls in European craftmanship and the visual representation of pearl fishing practices in paintings and prints.

Chapter 1 unravels pearls' theopolitical implications via the densely pearl-embroidered vestments of a wooden image of St Mary at Toledo. Torres thoughtfully analyses representations of the pieces, which disappeared from public view in 1939. Referring to Toledo as "one of the main textile centers of Castile" (p. 29) the chapter is neither invested in the agency of the artisans in the workshops and the embroiderer Felipe de Corral nor in goldsmiths like Julián Honrado, Alejo de Montoya, or Hernando de Carrión, who made jewels for the sculpture. Instead, Torres focuses on the commissioning and gift giving of the Virgin's costly attire. She insightfully analyses how Spanish monarchs positioned themselves as chosen by God to "administer the abundant resources of the 'New World' to the glory of the Catholic Church" as pearls were presented unworthy of Indigenous people because, according to European period sources, they did not "observe the natural law" using materials found in their lands for "sacrilegious ends" (p. 42). In this way, as Torres convincingly shows, pearls became a "tool" (p. 44) in the expansion of Christendom as the Habsburg exploitation of American resources put an end to the Islamic rulers' exclusive access to pearling grounds in the Persian Gulf. They also performed "important functions in the depiction of what was considered the divine political order" in the Habsburg Empire (and beyond) playing a role in the confrontation between Catholics and Protestants (p. 42). The chapter presents the reader with the precious insight that due to "her luxurious casing giving material substance to the abstract notion of Mary's lifelong virginity" the pearl-clad figure of "the Virgin of the Sagrario [at Toledo] thus produced the visual effect of a pearl herself" (p. 34). Accordingly, Torres reads the Virgin of Sagrario at Toledo, who herself was presented pearl-like, as one of many Habsburg articulations of their God-given right to rule, an example of the Spanish Crown's "distinct piety and religious policies" (p. 19) as articulated through its conceptualization of the Immaculate Conception in the cult of St Mary, at Toledo, a place with a relatively recent Islamic past whose traces were radically eradicated.

Chapter 2 moves on to discuss jewellery. Using a frog-shaped pendant made of pearl as a key example, it unfolds a network of connections between small amphibians that traditionally carried sexual connotations and ideas on pearls in natural history treatises. Both – frogs as well as pearls – were thought to share not only medicinal powers but also "wondrous origins" (p. 56) as frogs were believed to spring to life from sun-heated mud, a process that,

according to Aristotle, also applied to the (spontaneous) generation of shells, while much discussion evolved around the origin of pearls, for example that they stemmed from dew. The chapter mentions that "pearls and frogs especially were often found together in princely collections" (p. 74), a claim that raises the question whether this pairing was indeed higher in significance and/or quantity than, say, pairings of pearls, shells, and porcelain or jewellery pieces that employ pearls as human body parts hereby engaging with the potential of the material to resemble flesh and skin meditating on the human body's as well as a shell's and a pearl's potential for metamorphosis. It is not clear why Marcia Pointon's book on the cultural history of gem stones and jewellery of 2009 remains unmentioned,[1] and why scholarship on the reception of objects with pearly surfaces, for example polished nautilus and turbo shells or artefacts covered with mother-of-pearl, is not brought into conversation with discussions of pearl artefacts in this and other chapters throughout the book. It could be speculated that this is the case because much of this literature is neither sufficiently postcolonial nor ecologically informed, but then again, work such as Marsely Kehoe's discussion of nautilus cups "between the foreign and domestic" seem to address topics related to those at the heart of *Pearls for the Crown*, namely questions of how global networks of trade and exploitation changed collective identities in Europe through the craftsmanship and display of objects with pearly surfaces.[2] This does not, of course, negate Torres' main premise but could perhaps one day be subject to closer cross-examination.

Chapter 3 compares historical records by eyewitnesses to representations of pearl fishing by Theodor De Bry. He created "a novel narrative" (p. 94) of places situated in contemporary Venezuela, most prominently the "island of pearls" Cubagua, as sites of extraction by providing a highly idealized visual validation of Spanish presence in the Americas which "served over the years as a screen for the genocide and brutal exploitation that prevailed in the Atlantic pearl trade" (p. 99). The historic contextualization directs the reader's attention to important ecological aspects such as the depletion of pearls which led to a turn to slave trafficking and was fought by the introduction of overfishing decrees.

Chapter 4 brings the reader to late sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century Italy, more precisely to the palaces of Medici-ruled Florence. Here, Torres' focus lies again on representations of pearl fishing, adding paintings to further examples of printed imagery. These paintings have been interpreted before (also in one of Torres' own earlier publications). Torres' neglect of Graeco-Roman references (which would have been easily discernible to Ovid-literate

1
Marcia Pointon, *Brilliant Effects. A Cultural History of Gem Stones and Jewellery*, New Haven, CT 2009.

2
Marsely Kehoe, The Nautilus Cup between Foreign and Domestic in the Dutch Golden Age, in: *Dutch Crossing* 35/3, 2013, 275–285.

European audiences) is on the one hand to be applauded as it is about time for postcolonial and ecocritical approaches to overwrite Eurocentric pathways of interpretation in art history. Yet, neglecting such pathways of interpretation completely may perhaps create fundamental problems of interpretation, too? Although mythological content in imagery is acknowledged, references to Ovid's *Metamorphoses* are not explored, neither in relation to paintings in Chapter 4 nor to *Kunstkammer* collectibles in Chapter 5. Taking Allori's *Pearl Fishers* interpreted in Chapter 4 as example: isn't it the case that the depicted figures, who gesture toward a strange light behind the mountains in the backdrop, are turning their attention toward the fire caused by Phaeton, who tried to travel the skies in his father Helios' sun chariot? After all, Allori's painting was positioned between Santi di Tito's *Sisters of Phaeton* (depicting the generation of amber) and Vasari's *Perseus and Andromeda* (evoking the creation of coral), both paintings with obvious references to the *Metamorphoses* and Phaeton. As Ovid narrates, Phaeton's downfall was observed by Luna, the divine embodiment of the moon. As moon, she is arguably represented in Allori's painting above the Moon Mountains that burned before the fire caused by Phaeton reached other places, among them "Ethiopia". Apart from signalling foreign spaces such as "Ethiopia", the appearance of Luna in her planet manifestation simultaneously embodies the biggest pearl of all, namely the moon itself, which forms the vanishing point of the pearl fishers' gazes. Iconographically, imagery inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, a text in which geographically accurate specifications blend with mythological realms, is the foil against which depictions of the foreign came into being before and simultaneously with imagery from foreign lands based on eyewitness accounts. How involuntarily patchy or consciously mutilated such representations of the foreign – for example of pearl fishing practices – were, was an ambivalent area manoeuvred by artists, artisans, and commissioners, but one defined as much by information trickling in from abroad as by the pre-defined moulds of representation provided by classical texts and centuries of mythologically inspired imagery. While Lia Markey writes that Francesco de Medici "may not even have been aware of the brutality involved in mining or pearl fishing, nor would it have been a concern of his",[3] Torres takes it as given that members of the European elite were well-read and informed on the matter of forced labour and slavery. Regardless of what applies in individual cases, what we can safely assume is that the early modern elite commissioners of artworks and, more importantly, the artists and artisans themselves were familiar with Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

Locally defined facts and figures (that go beyond the identification of commissioners and their lovers) also play a role revealing implications for early modern understandings of ecology. While it is, for example, true that Jacopo Zucchi's *The Treasures of the Sea*

[3] Lia Markey, *Imagining the Americas in Medici Florence*, University Park, PA 2015, 76.

features an abundance of references to pearl fishing practices in the Caribbean all identified in applaudable ways by Torres' painstaking and detailed research, it is equally true that this painting shows coral specimen and references to coral fishing, a practice to be situated in the Mediterranean Sea, not too far from the Persian Gulf which, in addition to the Caribbean that the book focuses on, was the major alternative source of salt water pearls during the early modern period. The "apparent geographic incongruence – presenting pearl traders from the Americas and the Persian Gulf in the same space" that Torres observes in a painting by Antonio Tempesta – may "be explained by the fact that [...] in 1580, the main pearling centers of the world were nominally under Spanish Habsburg control" as she tentatively suggests (p. 120). Yet, is it not also relevant that "the Indies" – a period term that would have benefitted from further unpacking – were a complex and ambivalent site and that images such as those by Allori, Zucchi, and Tempesta are not about geographic and/or historic accuracy (and do not aim at them as their main goal), but instead celebrate ambivalence and the potential for metamorphoses in objects (e.g. coral that changes from soft to hard) and people (e.g. identifiable Italian men and women customized as "Indians") as well as mythological figures? Similarly, the "political meanings" of scenes of hunting and fishing for "resources" that Torres reveals as underlying images of pearl fishing (p. 114) do not explain away the sexual implications of the activity of hunting, which in much Ovid-inspired art is a hunt for bodies and sexual encounters. As Rebecca Zorach has pointed out, "the naming function of allegory" and the potential identification of historical people as superimposed upon sculpted and painted figures can "explain away the suggestion of sexual availability".[4] The erotic aspects are, however, crucial to some of Torres' examples which display "resources" like pearls side by side with pictorial objectifications of foreign bodies. As Peter Mason and others have shown, the objectification of foreign people through strategies of sexualization formed part of the commodification of the foreign.[5] The ways in which such strategies informed European art and visual culture therefore seem constitutive for a better understanding of what defined "resources" – material as well as human ones – throughout the early modern period. Chapter 4 seems to most clearly showcase some challenges of Torres' non-Eurocentric fresh look at European art, whose general importance can, of course, not be overstated.

Chapter 5 turns to the courtly collections of August the Strong in Dresden and the works by Balthasar Permoser, the Dinglinger

[4] Rebecca Zorach, Desiring Things, in: *Art History* 24/2, 2001, 195–212, here 200.

[5] Peter Mason, *Deconstructing America. Representations of the Other*, London 1990, 173. Scott Manning Stevens, New World Contacts and the Trope of the 'Naked Savage', in: Elizabeth D. Harvey (ed.), *Sensible Flesh. On Touch in Early Modern Culture*, Philadelphia, 2003, 125–40.

brothers, Elias Lencker, and Johann Heinrich Köhler which employ pearls and, in some cases, display them alongside representations of Black men. Torres insightfully explains the position of Black men in German lands. She addresses court performances, for example the one in which August the Strong himself appeared blackfaced as an incarnation of a "Moorish king" (p. 155), and compares some of the sculptures to performers referring to them as "amusing figures, not unlike the grotesque characters created from baroque pearls" (p. 160) such as the sculpture of a "dancing dwarf" with a pearl body (p. 140). Potentially, a deeper engagement with early modern cultures of wit and a discussion of pearl bodies in relation to anthropomorphic shapes associated with "dwarves" and other non-normative figures could have been fruitful here for an even deeper understanding of race-making processes through art. Especially the *mundus inversus* ("world upside down") tradition of sixteenth-century engravings and costume books collected at German courts stood in close connection to the carnivalesque aspects of theatrical court performances; consistent with role reversals that are common throughout early modern cultures of visual wit, this imagery reversed objectification strategies defined by power relationships, heterosexually defined and other types of normativity, as well as racial stereotyping. In this way, early modern artistic imagination arguably created an alternative realm dominated by reverse objectification strategies that could overrule aspects of politically invested race making and the colonial commodification of people and their bodies.

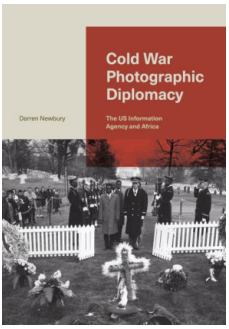
Taken together, Chapters 4 and 5 present missed opportunities to enter into ongoing scholarly conversations on techne and early modern understandings of materiality in goldsmith workshops as well as research on European resources presented in collections, e.g. through elaborate displays of *Handsteine*. Hopefully, in the future, an unpacking of what exactly constitutes a "resource" to whom in the different early modern contexts Torres touches upon could further complicate the divergences between commissioners' political incentives and the creative agendas of artists and artisans as gem-cutters and goldsmiths who had a certain degree of liberty vis-à-vis the commissioners (last but not least also due to the fact that they were the authoritative voices when it came to the potential of the natural objects they were working with, aspects of whose material properties they often knew better than their commissioners). Courtly demands of what precisely should be made out of the "resource" of a jewel or a pearl could therefore be nuanced and, in few cases, even countered by the artisans' expertise in service of their own creative visions. Without trying to diminish the importance of Torres' highly insightful and new lines of interpretation to the Dresden works, the aspects addressed above could perhaps one day be brought into fruitful conversation with her findings.

Yet, one book can certainly not do it all, and the above does not mean to detract from the very real service *Pearls for the Crown* does to early modern art history. Understanding this beautifully

illustrated book as a fine piece of scholarship as well as a challenge to the field, it is an important contribution to our understanding of pearls in the early modern period and a highly recommended read for everyone interested in questions of art and ecology during the early modern period as well as those invested in the decolonizing of art history.

DARREN NEWBURY, *COLD WAR PHOTOGRAPHIC DIPLOMACY. THE US INFORMATION AGENCY AND AFRICA*

University Park, PA: Penn State University Press 2024, 283 pages with 104 ill., ISBN 978-0-271-09567-7 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
Jennifer Bajorek

Darren Newbury's *Cold War Photographic Diplomacy. The US Information Agency and Africa*, is a fascinating and unexpected book. Its unusual – and at first glance, perhaps, off-putting – frame centers the use of photography by the United States Information Agency (USIA) to reach Africa and Africans during a critical period: the heyday of the Cold War and the first decades of decolonization in Africa. An idiosyncratic and often highly problematic archive becomes, in Newbury's deft hands, a matrix generating rich and sometimes startlingly timely questions. The book, which traverses an impressive volume of photographic material, also takes the reader into the inner workings of working groups, committees, and policy documents dedicated to the production of what most would call visual propaganda, starting around 1952 (one year before the agency's formal creation). Newbury himself argues against calling this material propaganda, preferring to call it "photographic diplomacy" (this is a theoretical rather than a semantic argument, and one to which I will return). The nitty-gritty of US information policies and the depths of Americans' deluded self-perceptions – matched only by the depths of their ignorance about Africans – are explored through six chapters, each providing insights into photo-

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graphy history, mid-century image ecologies, and Africa's place in the cultural and political triangulations of the Cold War.

But *Cold War Photographic Diplomacy*'s larger contribution lies in its meticulous tracing of the evolution of a set of pressures and practices linking race, photography, and political imagination on an ambitious and, in the years in question (the 1950s and 1960s), unprecedented global scale. Its true lessons emerge, not from its exploration of the specific mechanisms or broader intentions of US Cold War propaganda (though these receive due attention), but from its treatment of questions at the intersection of photography history, changing discourses of race – usually, although not exclusively, blackness – in connection with the Civil Rights and African liberation movements, and shifting approaches, in the US and elsewhere, to race's visualization. "Race", as Newbury underscores, "was at the heart of the Cold War imagination" (p. 6). While a sizeable body of scholarship has examined the role played by jazz, Hollywood film, and other cultural exports in shaping the racial dynamics of the Cold War imagination, Newbury's book is one of only a few volumes to lavish attention on photography's place in this project.

The photographs reproduced as illustrations here, ranging from the expected shots of John F. Kennedy with Julius (Mwalimu) Nyerere in Dar es Salaam (1963), or of Miriam Makeba on a US tour (1961), to less expected ones, such as those of Margaret Kenyatta, Jomo's daughter, on a visit to Disneyland (1963) (she consented to be photographed only in the "Indian Village", where we see her speaking to Chief White Cloud in front of a wigwam-type dwelling) or the inaugural cover of *Topic* (1965), the USIA's magazine for Africa, featuring a multiracial group of "New York Social Workers" – three black or brown, three white, all young and stylishly dressed – are in themselves eloquent arguments for why such attention is overdue.

For readers wanting a refresher, the Cold War and decolonization in Africa did not just overlap chronologically. They were deeply intertwined. The newly independent African states were, from the moment of their birth, a fierce battleground in the proxy wars, actual and ideological, between the Soviet Union and the US. What is astonishing to see – and this is a core lesson of the book's early chapters – is just how ill prepared the US arrived at this front. Some reasons for this are obvious, but as we learn, thanks to Newbury's thoughtful scholarship, others are more nuanced. On the obvious end of the spectrum, US alliances with European nations still hanging on, in a last gasp, to their colonial territories in Africa were a serious impediment to US involvement in Africa prior to 1960. Chapter One contextualizes Americans' preoccupation with, and deference to, European opinion in the immediate post-war period, even as they felt a growing sense of urgency to burnish the US's image globally. This would soon require reorienting their message to an even bigger, and largely non-white, public: the decolonizing world. Newbury also helpfully illuminates, as part of this context, the lingering impacts of Nazi-sponsored imagery on the global racial imaginary, and an awareness of the role of photography

in creating the racial *vision* behind Nazism. More surprisingly, he presents instances of post-war experimentation with what he dubs "anti-racist" photography – a mode of working and of thinking that was rarely the USIA's, but that suggests a wider field of possibilities for public understandings of the relationships between race and photography than has generally been acknowledged.

Chapter Two elucidates the challenges faced by the USIA as it sought to legitimate its programs and to distinguish its photographic output on multiple fronts. Looming large here are the blandly universalist humanism of Edward Steichen's *Family of Man*, which proved a too-blunt instrument for targeting differentiated publics and viewers, and the overtly Left photographic programs of the Farm Services Administration (FSA), whose photographs were, Newbury reveals, a perpetual thorn in the side of the USIA's activities – yet whose darkroom, we learn in a juicy tidbit, the agency inherited. (This would be the darkroom in which, for a long time, the agency continued to print.) This Scylla and Charybdis situation imbues Newbury's account of the agency's early photographic campaigns with a sense of unforeseen drama.

This drama creates the perfect backdrop for the book's central argument: that the USIA would, over the course of the 1950s and 1960s, progressively sharpen its efforts to reach, *through photography*, particular African audiences. In 1952, a working group on "Racial Problems in Propaganda" sought to distinguish between Scandinavians', Germans', and Indonesians' responses to photographs of black Americans but did not consider viewers from a single African country. Over the next decade, we see the agency's efforts not only to produce content tailored to Africans, but to consider how Togolese, Congolese, or Tunisian viewers were likely to respond to a given photograph. By 1964, we read of discussions, within the agency, of how images of President Johnson signing the Civil Rights Act had played during a convening of the Organization of African Unity in Cairo; or how USIA-commissioned photographs of SNCC's Freedom Summer organizing in Mississippi would play in Ghana. Tantalizingly, we eavesdrop on agency voices in Conakry expressing concern about the media attention that was being generated by Malcolm X's second visit (also in 1964) to Africa; or soliciting advice on how to "inoculate Sékou Touré against Malcolm X" (p. 163). The following year, in 1965, President Johnson's speech responding to the much-mediatized violence at Selma was swiftly made the object of a Swahili-language pamphlet for distribution in Nairobi, presumably in an effort to counteract the Malcolm X effect, which had also caused panic among US actors in Kenya. This level of detail is extraordinary, and it is a testament to the quality of Newbury's research that the book is laden with such gems.

These early chapters also lay out a fundamental irony of the USIA's program of photographic diplomacy in Africa: the agency needed to produce an uplifting visual narrative about progress toward "racial integration" at a moment when photographic images depicting violent whitelash against the struggle for black liberation

in the US had begun hyper-circulating across the globe. This irony, if it did not define the USIA's program of "photographic diplomacy" in Africa in absolute terms, profoundly shaped it, and the story of this shaping fills the rest of the book. Throughout the 1950s, this irony, in Newbury's account, seems to have been tinged as much with naivete as with hypocrisy, and it was expressed mainly in the form of damage control. The Soviet Union had already proved nimble (in fact, since 1936, when it seized on the story of the Scottsboro Nine) at exploiting the US's brutal treatment of black Americans, and a smattering of European nations had also taken to calling out US anti-black racism. America's "Negro problem", in other words, was fast becoming an image problem, as documentary photographs of key events in the Civil Rights timeline, such as *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), the lynching of Emmett Till (1955), and the integration of Little Rock Central High School (1957), were flooding the global image ecology, which, it was dawning on agency authorities, included a majority non-white "Third World". By the time 1960 arrived – the year when seventeen African countries attained independence – the USIA had begun to recognize, at least implicitly, that "the conjunction" (p. 26) of African decolonization with the US civil rights struggle had implications for the agency's communications with Africa, and that it stood to gain from a more "imaginative framing" (p. 28) of diasporic and African solidarities.

To say that this road is paved with questionable intentions would be an understatement. As one might expect from a cadre of (we can surmise, mostly white) government bureaucrats attempting to present issues of racial strife in the US "within a more affirmative narrative" (p. 123), this is less a road than a minefield. Newbury is frank in naming this a neocolonial project, and, to be clear, he does not ask readers to endorse the agency's appropriation of the discourses and iconography of black liberation, whether at home or abroad. Nor are readers asked to judge either the feasibility or consequences of this project – except, perhaps, in the book's reflective epilogue. Rather, Newbury invites readers into the archive to witness concrete decisions that agency employees made, as they sought to engage Africans "as modern political subjects and actors" (p. 23) with and through photography, in the midst of an emergent world order that was increasingly seeing "the racial situation in the US through an anti-colonial or postcolonial lens" (p. 5).

The most illuminating moments, here, stem from Newbury's ability to combine insights drawn from mountains of documents with readings of particular photographs. Some of these turn on minutiae – such as when, for example, African subjects are named in captions in USIA photographs for the first time. This detail is critical both because it marks a break with colonial-era practices, which established an expansive traffic in images of anonymous Africans, and because it reveals one of the few places in the archive where Newbury finds traces of African agency: the demand that all people visible in a given image be named in the caption comes from USIA field offices in Africa. Other readings derive their interest

from outright failure. A 1958 photo-essay comprising photographs taken on the eve of elections in Togoland seems to be understood, by agency employees, as an anodyne narrative of gradualist democratic reform (the one promoted by the colonial power), when in fact it pictures the leaders of the anti-colonial nationalist party, then on the cusp of victory. As Newbury wryly writes, "One has to wonder if the USIA staff constructing the sequence understood at all what they were looking at, or even felt that such understanding was required" (p. 83). Cumulatively, Newbury's readings demonstrate a deepening curiosity, if not understanding, on the part of the agency, and its increasing sophistication (the term is relative) in responding to the needs, and desires, of differentiated and specific African viewers and publics, located in specific places with specific cultures and histories. If I had one confusion upon finishing the book, it is that it is structured around a central narrative that reads largely like a progress narrative, even though the idea of progress is treated with some skepticism by the author himself and basically punctured by the book's end.

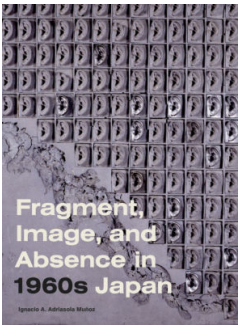
Cold War Photographic Diplomacy also raises a number of provocative methodological questions, ensuring that it will be of interest to scholars of photography working in other periods and in other parts of the world. Some of these are connected with Newbury's claims for "photographic diplomacy" as a sphere distinct from propaganda. To push for understandings, and recognize uses, of photography that extend beyond the representational or the documentary – to activate what Newbury calls its "relational" dimensions – is to open a much wider field of analysis than has been granted histories of the medium until recently, an opening that I am happy to support, as will be many readers. It is also, in this instance, to acknowledge that neocolonialism is a relational project, one that was here clearly aided by photography, leading me to wonder whether a distinction between diplomacy and propaganda is really so stable and, more to the point, whether it can ever be photographically sustained. Equally provocative is Newbury's assertion that the USIA's photographic archive might be considered an African one, when these photographs reveal more about the way the US used photography to imagine its relations with Africa than they do about the continent or its citizens. To be sure, there are vital details of African history that can be gleaned here, and scholars and others (including a younger generation of artists, designers, and cultural producers on and off the continent) are enthusiastically embracing a more expansive and distributed understanding of African archives. At the same time, given these materials' neocolonial nature and the elusiveness of African agency within them, we must weigh carefully what is gained, and what is lost, when we are invited to learn and unlearn in and with a given archive.

All of these questions are, and to his credit, Newbury's own, and they amplify his book's many achievements. Worth adding in conclusion, many readers (perhaps especially American readers, like myself) will feel extra grateful to Newbury for having dedicated

his energy to this research, when the current US administration has radically curtailed US engagement in Africa and is energetically mounting campaigns to bury black history and block public access to public information. The book's achievements begin to feel all the more precious to us now.

IGNACIO A. ADRIASOLA MUÑOZ, *FRAGMENT, IMAGE, AND ABSENCE IN 1960S JAPAN*

University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press 2023, 262 pages with 16 color and 48 b/w ill., ISBN: 978-0-271-09290-4 (Hardback).



Reviewed by
Ayelet Zohar

Ignacio A. Adriasola Muñoz's book is an investigation into objects of art, the metaphoric and metonymic meaning of their potential position in the psychoanalytic context. Muñoz's book offers a skillful weave of his analysis of works of art, combined with art criticism, as well as artists' writings composed at the time of production/display, to which he adds extra layers of reference, such as psychoanalytic and contemporary postmodern theories.

The book looks into "the object", both as a concept (in this case *objue*), and as matter (as works of art), and its presence and absence in artistic practices of 1960s Japan. The concept of *objue* stands for objects of everyday life rather than art objects, which also indicates the incorporation of everyday objects into art pieces, a move that linked the current postwar movements to prewar Surrealism, but also foresees the entry of postmodernist strategies. The author discusses the work of several artists, such as Miki Tomio, Kudō Tatsumi, Arakawa Shūsaku, Ōtsuki Kyoji, Takamatsu Jirō, Lee Ufan (and Mono-ha), photographers Tōmatsu Shōmei, Kawada Kikuji and Hosoe Eikoh (with Mishima Yukio), as well Akasegawa Gempei, Nakanishi Natsuyuki, and Takamatsu Jirō. Alongside the artists,

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several art critics are extensively quoted, making their analysis an important apparatus in the development of the argument, among them are Takiguchi Shūzō, Miyakawa Atsushi, Fukushima Tatsuo, Taki Kōji, and Hariu Ichirō – all active in the 1960s and 1970s, in the wake of the ANPO[1] agreement crisis and popular criticism of the process in Japan. The main concepts Muñoz considers in his analysis are the territories of *objue* and performance, from the point of view of matter and disappearance, presence and absence, the artist's presence in the process, and the presence of the object as a signifier of itself, as *objue*. Moreover, the book looks at the passage from modernity to contemporaneity through the analysis of different works and theories that have performed the transformation of art objects into concepts, such as *anti art* and the *avant-garde*, as a critique of the division between art and life, which eventually led to the critical approaches that created contemporary art (*gendai bijutsu*). Another important aspect of the analysis comes from Muñoz's use of psychoanalytic concepts at key points, making the journey of the artists and objects also tinted with the terminology of unconscious undercurrents, or as he puts it: "from hysteria to melancholia".

The first part of the book reconsiders *fragments* – as the presence of broken or cut objects. This is a reference to art that materializes from the destruction of war, and points to the unstable existence of objects during times of instability, and the great efforts made to emerge from the rubble into an industrial society, its domestic and international struggles around the ANPO agreement, the growing population, and the rise of consumer society in Japan. This process was also influenced by the desertion of painting in the face of the growing importance of *objue*, as part of a growing art project positioned against political activities, as well as art institutions. The core value of the *objues* lies in their potentiality, which "accounts for their heterogeneity as an approach", while fragmentation marks the denial of "completion and totality" (p. 14), as the fundamental value of art making. The fragment also marks the compulsion to repeat, an allusion to the structure of obsession and masochism, yet, it is also present in melancholia, as it stands in contradiction to the *pleasure principle*, and is linked to the *death instinct*.

Muñoz emphasizes the continuity of the past within the present, as an historical tautology in which the present erases the past, and poses the victory of the new over the old. This argument extends into the discussion of the return of Surrealism in the post-war era, the topic that forms Chapter 1, in which Muñoz presents Arakawa Shūsaku and Hi Red Center, as well as Kudō Tatsumi's works as the main objects of analysis. At this juncture, Muñoz introduces some psychoanalytic concepts to show how the ruined

[1] ANPO is a Japanese acronym for the *Anzen Hoshō Jōyaku* (安全保障条約), or, *The Treaty of Mutual Cooperation and Security between the United States and Japan* (The US – Japan Security Treaty), which allows the presence of US Military bases on Japanese land. The treaty was first signed in 1951, upon the end of the Allied Forces occupation of Japan and was due to be revised and renewed in June 1960, when demonstrations erupted against this agreement.

environment and its objects reflect a state of mind and a psychic condition that moves between *hysteria* and *castration*, arguing for the impotence of philosophy in relation to everyday life. This point is augmented through the discussion of Kudō's monument to metamorphosis, a huge penis sculpture, inserted into the woods.

The discussion argues for the shift of the object to the *objue* of Neo Dada – which has become an extension to Pop Art's way of working with readymades – when it was attached to the Japanese environment and events of the 1960s, especially the ANPO demonstrations, and an energizer of the youth and art making of that period. Yet, the rise of *anti art* during that period also generated the criticism of art making as solipsism and masturbation, and claimed the Left has nothing to offer but criticism. In this context, the importance of *anti art* was in its engagement with the question of what art is, and how to understand its birth out of junk and ruined materials, or by extension, the ruined Japan of the postwar era. Arakawa's coffins embody the debate on the surrealist object and its value in postwar art, by displacement and condensation (as a dream), as they are at once both object and concept. "At once, material thing and procedure, *objue* are a method of estrangement of the everyday from its modification of the encounter [...] experienced by the viewer" (p. 18), as the tension between social and psychic conditions, as key redefinitions of the relationship between art and politics. In this sense, we see how the object, associated with materiality and documentary practices, is transformed into *objue*, as a conceptual form of being within the art, distancing itself from representation or classical modes of "art" in the Western world. Despite being called *anti art* in the beginning, it is seen in retrospect as a call for "a redefinition of art".

Chapter 2 discusses *fragment* and *repetition* by introducing the ear images of Miki Tomio as "an aesthetics built on fragmentation, which through its denial of totality underscores an increasingly antihumanist position" (p. 44) as its core image. Muñoz sees irony in Miki's ears, as well as a ritual of the artist's subjectivity in the spirit of Jean-Paul Sartre and *existentialism*, positioning negation as the index of repressed contents, a historical identification with what was denied and negated, vs. *negativity*, which is always placed in the dialectic position. These values come from the discussion of philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche and Georges Bataille, highlighting *negativity* as a form of aggression directed at the Other, with the compulsion to repeat as an embodiment of the death instinct. Moreover, Miki treated the surface of each cast ear in a different manner, making them singular, but also referencing Jaspar Johns's bronze casting of body parts, hence establishing a mode of intertextuality between American Pop Art and Japanese Neo Dada through the "metaphysics of vulgarity" (pp. 50–51), or, as put by Tōno Yoshiaki, "the metaphysicality of *objue*".[2] Miki's practice works well

[2] Tōno Yoshiaki, Han-geijutsu no chanpion-tachi (The Champions of Anti-Art), in: *Pasupōto* No. 328309, Tokyo 1962, 100–102.

with Tōno's theory of artists working within traditional media to produce criticism of contemporary society: his shift involved three different levels of change – from modeling to casting, from gypsum to aluminum, from singularity to seriality. The ear also provokes the tension between interiority (of the body) and externality, as a means of communication, but also, in relation to the space or landscape in which it is set. Miki has relied on several contemporaneous strategies, such as Claes Oldenburg's enlargements, and the initial method of choosing, as was introduced through Marcel Duchamp's practice, yet, arguing that the ear chose him, a statement that allows him to identify it with Van Gogh's persona and practice. He positions the ear in opposition to the search for meaning, as argued by Minemura Toshiaki, transcending both iconography and meaning entirely – the ear is not a fragment (in relation to a whole), but a complete standalone in its being. These elements emphasize the self-contained nature of the ear, or the melancholic qualities of *objue* as a Nietzschean object. Yet, the obvious association to Van Gogh's cut ear brings to the fore Kobayashi Hideo's reading of the psychological conditions of creativity as an autonomous phenomenon. This approach has developed on Kobayashi's side to a notorious justification of Japan's aggression during the years of the Asia-Pacific War, and in the postwar years, repelling criticism and protecting the solipsistic nature of the arts, echoing Bataille's take on the initial retreat from communication or socialization, and a withdrawal into an inner world of self-sacrifice. Miki always produces himself as *objue*, or as readymade subject, therefore, the ear is not the negation of art, but the realization of the impossibility of art. It is solipsist and recursive, signifying the passage from hysteria to melancholia, from the negation of signifying, and the ultimate denial through which a new collectivism can be built out of failure and defeat, and as a result, it is a masochism that seeks to influence through passivity.

The second part of the book reexamines the photographic images of Tōmatsu Shōmei, Hosoe Eikou, and Kawada Kikuiji, highlighting Muñoz's observation that their work in the late 1950s and 1960s embodies a deliberate rejection of photojournalism's commitment to visual accuracy, indexicality, and the dominance of realism rooted in time and space. Instead, Muñoz identifies among these works, a desire to create subjectivity and expression in photography, through the relation to the material quality of the photograph. This photographic expressivity existed already in prewar trends like *New Objectivism*, in the work of early practitioners, such as Kimura Ihei and Natori Yōnosuke, but Tōmatsu's departure from them relies on his approach to the materiality of the photograph. In other words, postwar artists such as Miki Tomio, Takamatsu Jirō, Yamaguchi Katsuhiro, and Sekine Nobuo, all sought to overcome the dichotomy between the mimetic image and the actual materiality of the object, or the ontology of the image that was nurtured by the practices of the avant-garde. In psychoanalytic terms, Muñoz points to a move from the hysteria of negation, the denial of realism, to a melancholic position that demanded a new

understanding, or a move from negation to *negativity*. For Takiguchi, photography is metonymic, animated by coexistence with the photographed object. He sees the medium as a unifying process that puts together separate objects on one plane. Therefore, the photographed object is always an *objet trouvé*, a found object. Since photography erases any tactile qualities of the image (as it exists in painting), it still relies on light and medium: while the impressionists sought to depict light, photography uses light to depict objects. The analogue qualities of photography allowed it to exist with the absence of objects. In being a light-based medium, it erased its own materiality while criticizing the realism of the represented referent, so that the photograph actually functions like a mirror. In mediating the object, it also mediates something else: the sur-real. Surrealist photography thought it could reach the surreal by denying reality, while photojournalism was convinced it allows the viewer to see only reality represented. This practice, therefore, did not deny photography's documentary quality, but sought to reaffirm the "fundamental ambiguity of the real" (p. 91). Takiguchi sees this system of tracing as writing, beyond the meaning of words, or even "a negation of words" (p. 95), for writing and painting are interchangeable media, definitely in the ink traditions of East Asia.[3] Therefore, in this context, the image (*eizo*) exists in opposition to materiality, and instead of 映像 he used the characters 影像, replacing the sun root with a shadow element, understanding the photograph to be an apparition of reality, created in the darkroom. A side effect of this was the emergence of the book as an object. Additionally, the stains on the walls in the Atomic Dome (in Kawada Kikuji's *Map*) create a trace of presence (of blood, of ashes, of being), registered on the walls, transferred onto the skin and surface of the photograph.

Chapter 3 looks into the work of Takiguchi Shūzō, exploring the passage from images to matter, to objects. These objects are unclaimed, animated by the camera's impartial gaze and its unique ontology: the photographic image cannot fully convey the essence of an object, but instead, reveals its skin and surface. To capture the materiality of the photograph, techniques such as harsh lighting, high contrast, and prints with a visibly grainy texture were employed.

Chapter 4 refers to a collaborative project between Hosoe Eikoh the photographer and Mishima Yukio the author, specifically relating to their baroque adventure titled *Barakei* and the question of the portrait, as a representation of death and desire, with the absent figure, or as Muñoz states: "*Barakei* deploys a mimesis that exceeds quotation or likeness – instead it proposes identification, subsumption, and coextension" (p. 104). The chapter looks at the value of portraiture in the context of intersubjective encounter, in a manner that creates it as a mysterious pagan ritual, or a reminiscence of what will happen a few months later in Mishima's *seppuku*,

[3] Takiguchi Shūzō, Jihitsu nenpu (Self-chronology), in: *Takiguchi Shūzō*, Tokyo 1985, 248.

which Muñoz sees as a similar event. Yet, Muñoz criticizes the genre of portraiture, seeing it as an ambiguity: representation of exteriority of the subject, yet seeing in it a vehicle to bring one's interiority. Therefore, portraits are always framed in connection to death, like Narcissus who embraced his own reflection in the fountain, learning to objectify himself, and see himself as other. *Barakei*, marks the limitations of *mimesis*, converging *desire* and *death* in the portrait. The introduction of St. Sebastian in *Barakei* links it back to Mishima's *Confessions of a Mask*, but also, foresees his own death. It demarcates the yearning of the self as Other, itself porous, emphasizing the difference between a photo-album (a collection of images) and a *photobook* – an *object* of art in its own right, inserting the graphic designer into an important role in the process. Therefore, the collaboration becomes a *modus operandi* of the project: subject-author (text), photographer-artist (image), designer-materialization (*objue*), reflecting the oeuvre and function of the three. Hosoe and Mishima had to choose between the documentary capacity (*kirokusei*) and that of testimony (*shōgensei*), between fact and fiction, therefore casting a mantle of ambiguity on the medium, while incorporating a large quantity of citations from art history, positioning photography as close as possible to painting and the expressivity of the medium. In the set of images, Mishima chose a reactionary approach, with admiration for past values such as *miyabi* ("courtly elegance"), as a mode of recovery of a lost fantasized past. The inability to mourn that loss takes shape as a void, or a ghost that returns to haunt the subject, in a foreclosure of the self beyond intersubjective fantasy, or the dissolution of the self in the other. The portraits of *Barakei*, therefore, function as encounters between author and photographer, self and Others, intercultural intersubjectivity, images, and viewers. Photography functions in this context as the phantasmagorical surface on which desire congeals as image.

The third part looks at issues of *absence*, through the work of Hi Red Center and Akasegawa Gempei, Nakanishi Natsuyuki, and Takamatsu Jirō, in relation to Nakahara Yusuke's book, *The Aesthetics of Nansensu* (1962),[4] suppressing rationalism, moving beyond "common sense". This was potentially "overcoming modernity" through a reconfirmation of Duchamps's readymades as a form of non-subjectivity, and the erasure of individuality, combined with an analytical approach to *anti art*, as a premonition of conceptual art.

Chapter 5 looks into the dilemma of landscape, relating to it as a verb (rather than object), undoing the conventions of perspective *à la* Alberti, problematizing the notion of history as objective reality. In the arts, history emerges as a specific type of object relations mediated by vision. Muñoz brings Tōmatsu Shōmei's sea pictures, which for the contemporary viewer echo Sugimoto Hiroshi's ongoing and well-known *Seascapes* series, positioning it in relation to that cultural memory. Muñoz is using Taki Kōji's argument, contending

[4] Nakahara Yusuke, *Nansensu no bigaku* (The Aesthetics of Nansensu), Tokyo 1962.

that Tōmatsu's seas can only be grasped as a sign, gaining a point of view which is freed from the rigid rules of *linear perspective*,[5] therefore, reflect an analysis about the nature and whereabouts of photography, since the photograph is placed between the viewer and the world (pp. 130–131). Muñoz claims that these seascapes are not pictorial, but offer a phenomenological consciousness of the world, of the sea as absence. Therefore, Tōmatsu's sea photographs perform the sensuality of the gaze, or the impossibility of the sea within, which can only be performed by the gaze. The photographs, therefore, present the dilemma of landscape as subjective, rejecting notions of landscape as a documentary, but understanding it as a projection of interiority that creates the world. The horizon line is also a beginning and an end, between past and future, creating the sea as a concept and absence, an anti-object that condenses into the end of history. To this, Muñoz adds an important layer of discussion among Japanese art circles: landscape theory (aka *fūkeiron*). Matsuda Masao, a central figure to this discussion, sees landscape as an ideological apparatus and a site of domination, resonating with the political stance of the students' demonstration against the Vietnam War. Landscape, therefore, was a *method* that educated the viewer in how to gaze at the world, and how to see it being represented, while the adoption of perspectival practices in Japan signified its subordination to Western methods of seeing and describing, exposing the gaze's ideological assumptions: European painting enforces a singular fixed point of view, while Japanese practices had fluid approaches of multifocality and a moving point of view.

Chapter 6 continues the discourse of landscape in relation to Arakawa Shūsaku and his mode of organizing lines as landscape. The line is a crack, states Muñoz, and exists beyond one-dimensionality, suggesting a negative sculptural quality. This is not a drawing of a concept, but a rendering of an object before it becomes form, indebted to surrealist theorization of the object, including chance encounters, eroticism, movement and multidimensionality, and Arakawa's interest in the formless possibility prior to the formation of actual existence, indicating his fascination with the gap between object and idea. In this context, shadows and silhouettes came to be of central value for his painting, creating images that were distant from the real world, yet existed as a kind of *index*, a liminal space between subject and object, between the actual object and its perception – positioning art itself as a shadow of the world. Yet, both Takamatsu Jirō and Arakawa were aspiring "to call for attention to absence through the effacement of the extra-pictorial referent at the origin of the trace" (p. 164), in the post ANPO demonstrations, in a plan for the expansion of the world, through the actualization of absence, slowly nullifying objects (*fuzaitai*), and

[5] Taki Kōji, Eizō no genten. Tōmatsu Shōmei 'Warera o meguru umi' no bigaku (Origins of the Image. The Aesthetics of Tōmatsu Shōmei's 'The Sea Around Us'), in: *Dezain Hihyō* 2, March 1967, 105–113, 106.

rendering the world into *objue*. In the case of photography, this absence is reintroduced through the image – which first holds the *negative* as its initial record of presence. Interestingly, Muñoz identifies in the shadow a paradoxical return to materiality, dislodged from the discourse of vanishing in the arts.

Muñoz reads the art in the context of art events that were written about in real time, in regard to a psychoanalytic process, but also, in regard to questions of psychiatry negation, fragmentation, as well as the question of absence – much in the way Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak has analyzed the question of *Echo* in the Freudian context.[6]

Spivak's *Echo* offers a compelling lens for a concluding reading of Muñoz's book. Spivak's text underscores Freud's blind spot – Echo's absence from his discussion of narcissism, despite the fact that Ovid's mythology entwined both *Narcissus and Echo*. Spivak identifies Echo as the silenced woman, emblematic of the marginalization of women, particularly those in the "Global South". Muñoz links and contextualizes the *fragment* and *castration*, *absence* and *uprooting*, maintaining a masculine approach that echoes the psychoanalytic trends in which women are signified as absence, such as in the Lacanian discourse, for example. In many parts of the book I felt, as a woman, excluded. In spite of the plethora of examples of women artists and activists in Japan in the 1960s (or Japanese women artists active outside Japan during those years), the transparency of their presence, and the exclusiveness of the text in the masculine realm, felt painful. Spivak has opposed Freud's exclusive take on a masculine point of view, and argued that Echo's absence from Freud's text is the evidence of Freud's own narcissism. Thirty years after Spivak's text was published, I wish this critique would have been better echoed in Muñoz's text. In many parts I felt like a voyeur into a masculine process, in the way Laura Mulvey described the viewer in the cinema, sitting passively in the dark, watching the protagonists play their parts.[7] This experience makes the book itself participate in the modernist and solipsistic views it introduces, much like the artists and art critics it analyses – without taking the necessary, contemporary discourse on the relationship between the viewer and the work of art, the reader and the book, out of the scope of the analyses offered, which is outstanding in its own right.

6
Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Echo, in: *New Literary History* 24/1, 1993, 17–43.

7
Laura Mulvey, Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema, in: *Screen* 16/3, 1975, 6–18.

PAMELA KARIMI, *WOMEN, ART, FREEDOM. ARTISTS AND STREET POLITICS IN IRAN*

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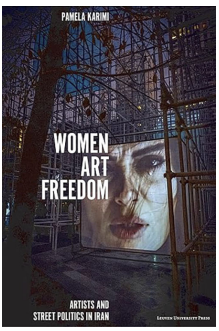

Reviewed by
Verena Straub

Beginning in September 2022, women in Iran and around the world rose up against gendered violence and oppression under the Islamic regime. The protests erupted after the brutal death of Jina Mahsa Amini – a twenty-two-year-old Iranian Kurdish woman who died in police custody after being arrested for allegedly violating hijab regulations. United by the Kurdish slogan *Jin, Jiyan, Azadi – Woman, Life, Freedom* – protesters called for an end to systemic repression and the overthrow of the Iranian regime. As the title of her book *Women, Art, Freedom* already suggests, art historian Pamela Karimi centers the vital role that art played (and still plays) for this political movement. At first glance, replacing "life" with "art" in the book's title may seem bold. However, throughout the chapters, Karimi compellingly argues: What distinguishes the recent revolution from previous protests in Iran is not only "its feminist perspective and the remarkable courage of the youth", but also "the unprecedented volume of visual imagery and art it has produced" (p. 9). That is why, from the outset, Karimi asserts her strong belief that "[m]ore than any texts or reasoned arguments, it was the universal language of art that potently conveyed the essence of this unfolding uprising" (p. 11).

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What images remain when we think of the 2022 *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement? From an outside perspective, the movement is mainly associated with the global spread of visual content on social media. In a recent contribution to *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual* Kerstin Schankweiler and I analyzed the widely shared memes that significantly fueled and shaped the protests, including selfie-videos of people around the world cutting their hair in solidarity with the Iranian women.[1] However, Karimi offers a different and far less familiar perspective to readers outside Iran by focusing on the site-specific contributions of artists within the country. Her primary concern is not the global distribution of protest images online, but on local artistic interventions. Through in-depth interviews with artists, curators, art students, and academics in Iran, the book gives an invaluable insight into the intersections of art and political resistance on the ground. Karimi investigates how artistic street politics functioned as both a form of defiance and a catalyst for change: before, during, and after the 2022 revolution.

The book is structured around ten thematic "acts, each representing a distinct performative quality" (p. 41). By invoking the language of theatre, Karimi once again emphasizes her focus on "the physical body's central role in art making" (p. 33), highlighting the work of artists who are primarily engaged with physical interventions in public space. The large number of chapters makes the structure of the book appear confusing at times, especially because the referenced strategies seem to blend into each other. For greater clarity and to avoid repetition, a stronger focus would have been helpful here.

The majority of chapters deals with the question of how physical performance is used as a tool for political intervention. *Act One. Parading the Body on Sidewalks* explores how women in Iran have "tactically employed their bodies to draw attention to the injustices of street politics" (p. 59). Now famous is the 2019 performance by activist Vida Movahed who stood on a utility box in Tehran, unveiled, while waving her hijab tied to a stick. Her image became an icon of the protest against mandatory veiling. The *artivist* practices discussed in this chapter show how the public presence of the female body alone can become a powerful, yet highly risky, political instrument in Iran. As a more subtle example of the non-conforming female body in public space, Karimi discusses a performance by Nasrin Shahbeigy. In response to the death of Mahsa Amini, the artist rolled her body along the streets, parks, and other busy places around her home city of Mashhad. What might seem like a trivial performance elsewhere, in the Iranian context, Karimi argues, this unconventional visibility of the female body can be interpreted as an "attempt to reclaim urban spaces that women are barred from accessing freely" (p. 66). Similar art performances are also analyzed

1 Kerstin Schankweiler and Verena Straub, Bildproteste für die Freiheit im Iran. Die Memefication des Widerstands in den Sozialen Medien, in: *21: Inquiries into Art, History, and the Visual* 4/1, 2023, 97–110.

in *Act Five. Reenacting Street Battles*. Here, Karimi discusses the film *Until...* (2023) by Tanin Torabi, which uses reenactment to capture the energy and essence of the uprising, one year after its outbreak. Filmed only with the front and back camera of a mobile phone, the film shows four people, amongst them women with uncovered hair, who seem to be part of a protest on the streets. In short, breathless interactions, the camera is handed from one person to the next, conveying an unsettling atmosphere. Karimi argues that instead of just reenacting a street battle,

> *Until...* could be seen as an act of street protest in its own right. [...] The film exemplifies how real-life activism can be presented as art. The very act of participating in the film was risky: the performers could have faced arrest and interrogation for their unveiled hair and their unconventional behavior both on camera and under the watchful eye of the city around them. (p. 147)

Once again, the fusion of art and activism becomes very tangible here.

In contrast to performances in which artists put their bodies and lives at risk by becoming visible in public space, several chapters discuss how some artists in Iran choose strategies of anonymity and invisibility instead. Particularly compelling are the examples Karimi explores in *Act Two. Hiding in Plain Sight*. Many artists and art students joined the protests by sharing photographs of themselves with their faces obscured by written protest slogans, stained bandages, or their unveiled long hair. The choice to remain anonymous is not solely for reasons of safety. As many tragic cases illustrate, "even under the cloak of anonymity, artists are not safe" in Iran (p. 74). Rather, anonymity reflects a deeper desire among artists to dissolve individual identity and become part of a collective that often operates beyond visibility. Karimi's exploration of prison art is especially striking, emphasizing its deep-rooted tradition in Iran and its renewed significance within the *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement. Behind bars and mostly hidden from the public eye, political prisoners have been engaging in subtle, often abstract, and opaque performances, which have "allowed young detainees to create a space they can call their own" (p. 77). In Iranian prisons, conversations with guards inspire rap songs, at mealtimes "the inmates might use poetic and coded language to reimagine their situation or to mock the lives of their guards" (p. 82). This very unique form of theater has also been described as *Truth Theater* or *Life Theater*. It demonstrates how art has become a survival strategy for many protesters, or, in other words: how "art" and "life" are inextricably linked.

Shifting focus from bodily performances, several chapters also explore the significance of archival practices, the role of poetry and language, or material interventions. *Act Six. Documenting Urban Unrest*, for instance, examines how methods of documentation and

archiving have increasingly emerged as artistic strategies, following the concept of "resistance through recording" (p. 159). *Act Seven. Camouflaging Defiant Words*, on the other hand, explores the significance of the written word, with a particular emphasis on the contested visibility of graffiti in Tehran. In a similar way, *Act Three* examines the *Staging of Protest Props*, highlighting how everyday objects became potent symbols of resistance during the uprising. Here, Karimi explores not only the prominence of headscarves and women's hair as protest icons, but also the striking use of menstrual pads, which anonymous activists attached to security cameras in a Tehran metro train. Beyond obstructing surveillance, these flower-like objects introduced traditionally feminine – and often taboo – items into public spaces, challenging societal norms. Other material interventions explicitly draw on Iran's long history in visual politics. In *Act Four. Reclaiming Old Themes for New Protest Arts*, for instance, Karimi discusses how the symbolism of blood repurposes the regime's own visual propaganda. At the height of the *Woman, Life, Freedom* protests, several fountains in Tehran were stained red to resemble blood. Similarly, art universities used blood-like fluids on classroom floors, doors, and bathroom mirrors to protest the regime's brutality. Following the Iranian Revolution, red-colored fountains were used by the regime to signify national sacrifice and unity. Now, activists have reclaimed this imagery to expose state violence, transforming it into "a powerful assertion of resistance against government oppression" (p. 126). Similar tactics of challenging the regime's visual politics are discussed in *Act Nine. Opposing Art with Art in City Spaces*. In this chapter, Karimi examines how art is used as a means of resistance against state-sanctioned or prescribed artistic expressions, producing works that directly challenge and disrupt them.

A theme that runs throughout the book is how religious matters and freedom of expression are constantly negotiated amongst artist-activists in Iran. *Act Eight. Clashing with Faith in Broad Daylight* sharpens the focus on these issues and explores the complicated and multifaceted "clashes" between issues of faith, individual choice, and gender. Countering accusations of Islamophobia – which have been raised in some Western intellectual circles against the *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement – Karimi presents a very nuanced portrayal of the resistance and its artistic expressions. Particularly noteworthy is her extended focus beyond "secular-minded artists" and her inclusive consideration of "believer artists" who have been part of the movement as well (p. 203): a fact that is sometimes obscured by international media coverage. Even if they choose to wear the hijab themselves, artists like Mehri Rahimzadeh fully support women who struggle for their right against mandatory veiling.

Karimi's focus on offline interventions in Tehran is well justified and offers a much-needed corrective to the over-emphasis of the importance of digital protest for the *Woman, Life, Freedom* movement. Nevertheless, one might question: Is it even possible to

consider art practices inside Iran without their digital mediation, without their dissemination and transformation on social media? Most activists and artists in Iran rely on social media not only to document their public interventions but also to reach a broader international audience, urging them to "be our voice" and amplify their messages. Karimi herself acknowledges the fact that her main source of getting in contact with artists in Tehran was Instagram. Instead of treating the two spheres as separate, a more insightful approach might have been to analyze *artivist* practices offline and online as inherently intertwined. This limitation becomes especially apparent in the final chapter, *Act Ten. Forecasting the Future*, where Karimi presents a series of case studies exploring potential futures for Iran. To fully grasp "the ways art can predict, envision, and even shape the future, especially in contexts where legal and political avenues for change are closed off" (p. 239), a deeper exploration of online spaces – their potential and risks – could have provided additional, and perhaps alternative, insights.

Despite this, *Women, Art, Freedom* offers a valuable perspective on how artists have been at the forefront of this movement for change. Now, more than two years after the uprising and in view of the current situation in Iran – where wearing the hijab is even more surveilled in public, where many activists have been punished, lost their lives or remain in prison – it is impossible to predict what direction dissident art will take. What Karimi's study ultimately demonstrates is that, even in the face of a grim political reality, activist art in Iran has continually reinvented itself for decades, embracing new and creative forms of resistance. In the end, her book stands as a powerful (and hopeful) reminder of the enduring resilience of artistic expression.

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