| FUTURE(S) OF COHABITATION | #17 | MANIFESTA JOURNAL around curatorial practices |
Throughout these last few issues of Manifesta Journal the question of how to genuinely engage in an act of “affective solidarity”, as feminist critic Clare Hemmings would put it, remains—and with it, the concern that the still-prevailing white Western consideration of “global others” too often slips from empathy to pity. In her critical essay on the European “other” that inaugurates Future(s) of Co-Habitation, the seventeenth issue of Manifesta Journal, art historian Fatima El-Tayeb refers to Edouard Glissant and his renowned theory of creolization. In the poet’s writings, the Caribbean became a center of relational identities and situational communities exactly because of their inability to claim the “sacred roots” of these territories. This fact consequently excluded the inhabitants from a hegemonic world order in which both dominance and resistance were built on notions of sacred land. An origin that does not imply sacredness or authenticity is thus the point from which minoritarian resistance can be articulated. In order to arrive at this stage however, a different archive needs to be accessed: one based on the experiences of marginalized, silenced communities, without the usual dominating manifestations of Europeanness.

This active questioning of the overarching narratives of origin, rootedness and authenticity, as well as the prevalence of identitarian models (be they “European”, “Afropolitan”, or “post-black”) reverberates throughout the entire issue of this journal; in equal measure traversed by voices and bodies in diaspora and thus, necessarily, by the much debated concept of “hybridity”. In his own contribution, writer and curator Simon Sheikh brings forth Homi K. Bhabha’s germinal take on hybridity, undermining the positive, all-encompassing connotation that the term has symbolized in artistic, social and political language over the last few decades: “It is [thus] not a celebratory concept,” Sheikh writes, “as it has often been employed in biennial culture and major art events, but it is rather an ambivalent state of being in-between powers of authority, the authenticity of authorship, and the (im)possibility of cultural translation.”

Under the title “Future(s) of Co-Habitation,” Manifesta Journal has invited international artists, curators and thinkers to investigate this state of in-between from a trans-historical and trans-geographical point of view, with an emphasis on hyphenation in the term itself as well as on critical assessment of the legacy of the concept of “hybridity”; its contemporary relevance in the field of arts and humanities, and in society at large. Instead of focusing on the term itself, the contributors to this issue convene alternative vocabularies and positions that pay a tribute to post-colonial theory and criticism, and recent debates in cultural theory, such as the current revisitation of “Afrofuturism” or of what some have called “cultural cannibalism”. The content assembled here forges a different language and opens up visions, possibilities and realities for the future(s) that we, and hopefully you, the readers, wish to co-inhabit.

In their conversation, the writers and film-makers Raimi Gbadamosi and John Akomfrah underline the hierarchizing effect of the concept of hybridity on a world in which a certain kind of encounter becomes idealized and, thus, reductive. “There is nowhere in which anyone exists in a pure state or an uncontaminated whole,” concludes the latter. His position resonates dramatically with the recent hardening of global policies towards migration that flourishes on the foul breeding grounds of populist and right-wing forms of nationalism, which withdraw into obsolete notions of the preservation of “organic identities”. In that context, discourses and worldwide events celebrating “indigenerity” raise doubts on the viability of such a term if employed in a generalized way—a risk that the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa has challenged in its recent exhibition Sakanah—Indigenous Indigenous Art, dissected here by the artist and theoretician Aurogeeta Das. The metaphor of contamination (a term employed by Akomfrah) is also useful when examining the rejection of “allochtones” into a social body, and the step to a vocabulary of bewitchment, vampirization and haunting is quickly overcome. In Terre Thaemlitz’s film Canto II, the stories of disillusioned Philippine migrants to Japan are interwoven with local myths of vampires whose bodies experience another, yet comparable form of disjuncture; torn between their land and the necessity of pursuing the quest for blood and survival. Thaemlitz’s film is a parable that, according to writer Patrick Flores, highlights the occultation processes imposed on undesired bodies.

Voices are immaterial markers of displaced identities, bearers of accents and histories. Virginie Bobin’s polyphonic conversation with the choreographer Bouchra Ouziquen and the artists Blanca Calvo and Ion Munduate, Katarina Zdjelar and Lawrence Abu Hamdan stages different voices that resist control and bypass material borders. Bodies confined in space (or fixed identities) tend to turn to the realms of myth or, famously, to science-fiction, in order to project themselves in time. “If the term Afrofuturism has recently been criticized for perpetuating the prefix ‘Afro’, it has also produced an inspiring platform that allows Black subjectivity to re-imagine and re-define itself through the prism of fantasy and the transcendental, as well as through technology, alternative identities, realities and histories that engage the past, re-think the present and anticipate the future. Artist ruby onyinyechi amanze thus acknowledges the spirit of Double Consciousness espoused by the sociologist and historian W. E. B. Du Bois, and pushes the definitions of the hybrid and conjures up an alter ego. By invoking, at times, the identity of an alien, she takes on multiple identities that allow her to morph across time and space. Artist Kapwani Kiwanga poses as a scholar in Ancestral Earth Studies from the School of Galactic Anthropology at the Afrogalactica Institute. She projects herself and the readers into a dystopian future, where the influence of Great Zimbabwe on other stellar civilizations proposes an allegory of geopolitical relations and the circulation of cultural influences.”

Adriano Pedrosa’s conversation with the pioneering African-Brazilian artist and curator Emanuel Araujo provides a unique insight into a singular curatorial practice, which has over the past four decades confronted the racial complexities and tensions in the largest African diasporic community in the world. Araujo’s thematic concerns as well as his having set up the requisite institutional frameworks have highlighted the realized and unrealized relevance of African and cultural histories of the mestizos. So doing he provides a counter discourse to the entrenched fallacy of Gilberto Freyre’s ideology of a racial democracy (in which all races are equal) that, in reality, resulted in a situation that “ignores, forgets, puts aside and silences more than it [ ] outspokenly rejects, refuses or repudiates” non-white Brazilians. Moreover, Freyre attempted to define a regional specificity by creating the Museum of the Man of the Northwest. Art historian and curator Claudio Lamonti’s exhibition highlights the way in which Jonathan Kapwani’s exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada in Ottawa, Senegal, on July 26th, 2007. Editor’s emphasis.
space. In a more discreet but no less powerful way, Japanese artist Koki Tanaka’s series of Precarious Tasks also propose individual or collective experiences that may intensify one’s apprehension of a context, thus proposing ways of building new communities and bonds — inventing co-habitation beyond social traumas. Together with these authors, ‘Future(s) of Co-Habitation’ hopes to look beyond geographical boundaries, administrative borders and fixed identities by welcoming unconventional modes of existence, thinking, heterolingual expressions, resilient structures and science-fictional narratives. Our era is challenged by constant mobility and migrations where the forced geographical flexibility of the precarious worker is synchronous to the confinement of undesired migrants, and where Europe continues to struggle with acknowledging the consequences of the colonial past on its social, political and cultural fabric. If the futures of cohabitation that we hope for could be described in other words, they would no doubt take the form of verses by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish from his poem Edward Said: A Contrapuntal Reading (2007), with whose verses we would like to open this new issue:

By traveling freely across cultures those in search of the human essence may find a space for all to sit... Here a margin advances. Or a centre retreats. Where East is not strictly east, and West is not strictly west, where identity is open onto plurality, not a fort or a trench.  

(Translated by Mona Anis)

Being European without being white and/or Christian does not only put one in a strange place, but also in a strange temporality: Europeans who are both tend to read one as having just arrived or even as still being elsewhere—if not physically, then at least culturally. When working on racism and Europe, on the other hand, one is often faced with the assumption that the former is nonexistent within the continent—many white Europeans go as far as to claim that they “do not understand race,” usually when referencing a supposed American obsession with it. Europeans tend to see the relevance of race as one of, if not the central difference between Europe and the United States (religiosity being the other) and attempts at pointing to the important role of race (and racism) in European identity formations are frequently framed as enforcing an Americanized “political correctness,” a discourse that is meant to silence necessary critiques of migrant communities (a term covering all groups not perceived as European, including racialized Europeans) and their supposed innate sexism, anti-Semitism and homophobia. This move allows Europe to be presented as being more tolerant than both the U.S. (plagued by racism) and the Global South (plagued by intolerance of every kind). That is, despite that the origin of the very concept of “race” in Europe (in the explicitly race-based policies of both its fascist regimes and its colonial empires, the dominant assumption is still that this history has had no impact on the continent itself and its internal structures.

Indeed, at first glance it might seem as if Europe exists outside of the U.S. American (post-racial) temporality. While the latter is built on a narrative of having successfully overcome intolerance and discrimination, the myth of European colorblindness claims that Europe never was “racial” (anti-Semitism is still often analyzed as being both an exception and clearly separable from racism). This makes it hard to challenge the narrative from within a continental European theoretical framework that constantly externalizes race, i.e. places it outside of the domain of what needs to be theorized. Accordingly, the continental European Left has produced no theory of racialization. Instead, class remains central—which is ironic since class is deeply racialized in Europe. As a result, Europe, in its national and postnational variations, is maintaining a normalized, Christianized, secular whiteness through an ideology of colorblindness that claims not to “see” racialized difference. It thus both stabilizes and silences race as a framework inherent to the continent, all the while using race (currently expressed via religion and culture) to constantly produce non-white populations as necessarily non-European (instead, terms like “third (Third) culture) to constantly produce non-white populations as necessarily non-European (instead, terms like “third generation migrant” affirm that racialized populations permanently remain “aliens from elsewhere,” to use Rey Chow’s term). ¹ This ongoing racial amnesia, which is made possible through the erasure of the history of European racism and the history of Europeans of color, makes unspeakable the processes of internal racialization and the ways in which they are inseparable from the aftereffects of European colonialism. In this way, neocolonial economic structures increasingly posit racialized communities as disposable populations.

This narrative of “colorblind Europe” is closely tied to the success story of the European Union as representing many of the virtues and few of the vices of the nation states it is meant to replace. The rise of the American empire and neoliberal multiculturalism in the second half of the twentieth century coincided with the reordering of Europe after WWII into West

and East, the loss of colonial empires, and after 1990, another reordering, largely collapsing “Europe” into the European Union. The latter came to symbolize Europe’s successful reformation after the twentieth century crises of totalitarianism, confirming the continent’s place as the center and gatekeeper of universal human rights. This narrative was affirmed by the self-congratulatory designation of the EU as the 2012 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, while it already seems to be falling apart at the edges.

The current economic collapse of parts of the European Union enhances an existing structural violence, with housing segregation, unemployment, incarceration, and the collapse of the public school system all disproportionately affecting racialized groups, in particular Muslim, black and Roma communities. The particular histories of colonialism, migration in Europe have created intersections and overlaps between these three communities, who share spaces (housing projects, prisons, detention centers), cultures (see their key role in hip-hop music all across Europe), histories, and positionalities (as not being properly European). These connections are suppressed in dominant (policy-producing) discourses that identify each group as deviant in particular ways.

Muslims appear as the internal threat posed by migration, the other that is already here but remains eternally foreign; whereas “Africans” (including black Europeans) represent the masses who are not yet Europeans) (the prevalence of metaphors along these lines helps to normalize the extremely high death toll the EU migration regime produces on its external borders—about 5,000 per year, complimented by a growing trend of mass incarceration of undocumented migrants). This model is currently, but arguably, separated by theory, after all, and working on race produces desperately needed theorizations of the extremely violent anti-Roma racism that barely receives academic let alone public attention. The temporal dislocation of Roma people has clear parallels to the spatio-temporal placement of indigenous populations elsewhere, as do (ongoing) histories of “special schools”, stolen children and forced sterilizations. The different but related situation of Roma can further discussions on comparative racializations. Moreover, it can be used to further explorations of the intersection of Muslim and African diasporas in Europe or of our understanding of blackness in relation to Africanness, especially with regard to Europe’s population of North African descent or to the (self-)identification of Eastern European Roma as black.

Structures of domination do cross spaces separated by race after all, and working on race outside the U.S. context, a comparative approach to spatio-temporality is central: studying one location makes it possible to identify the dominant model of racialization and how it came out of and incorporates earlier models. This model is currently, but arguably, the U.S. model. Such an approach might create too linear a temporality, however. A comparative perspective complicates this linearly by accounting for the spatial distribution of coexisting different racial temporalities and the ways in which they continue to inform each other.

In my work, I have been interested in art and activism that aims at creating the conditions of “speakability” for minoritarian identities, art that works on the intersections of marginalized and “sacred” territory as it appears in dominant, internalist narratives: according to Glissant, the Caribbean became a center of relational identities and situational communities exactly because their inability to claim the “sacred roots” of these territories excluded its inhabitants from a world order in which both dominance and resistance were built on notions of sacred land. “This positionality is shared by racialized minorities in Europe. An origin that does not imply sacredness or authenticity is thus the point from which minoritarian resistance can be articulated; a position as subject of speech achieved. In order to arrive at this stage however, a different archive needs to be accessed, one that is based on the experiences of marginalized, silenced linoracial communities, those who are not present within dominant manifestations of Europeanness.

The poster utilizes an image of the cheap, sturdy and large plastic bag that was a staple in the baggage of migrant families who returned to work in Germany after the summer and thus is immediately recognizable to many of those interpellated as “Kanaken”.


I shall only give one example here: the nationwide German activist group Kanak Attak, which was most active from the late 1990s to the mid-2000s, was built around not race but the common experience of being racialized. They refused the normalized ‘culture of dialogue’ in which racialized subjects were granted a voice only when not speaking as Germans. They staged interventions into public space (and time) that refused the logic of progressive secular time. This was reflected in their name, “Kanak”—a German term for foreigners (i.e. those perceived as not belonging, whether they are German or not) that has its roots in the nation’s colonial empire (a fact that those who use the term as an insult are usually unaware of). Germany’s colonial past has only recently been “rediscovered” by academia and the mainstream, and its historization remains firmly within a discourse of progress that reflects original Eurocentric colonial structures unspeakable, I have explored a number of repressed histories to map an alternative spatio-temporal landscape, building Glissant’s poetics of relation, or in Cathy Cohen’s terms, “a politics where one’s relation to power, and not some homogenized identity, is privileged in determining one’s political comradries.” In the process they destabilize naturalized understandings of time and space that work in the interest of particular groups, thereby recovering “impossible alternatives”. In short, to riff on Audre Lorde, they are “the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.”

what Susan Suleiman calls a ‘crisis of memory’, a conflict over the interpretation and public understanding of an event firmly situated in the past, but whose aftereffects are still felt by racialized subjects from Glissant’s ‘point(s) of entanglement’ at which differences and discrepancies were suppressed and externalized. Most obviously so with regard to racialized and religious minorities, but as feminists of color since the 1970s (and earlier) have argued, these constructs depend on heteronomative conceptualizations of gender and sexuality that are no less restrictive in their negation of what is not acceptable as is the discourse of colorblindness with which they are interwoven. The queering of ethnicity, division, spatial and temporal landscapes and diasporic intersubjectivities employed by racialized minorities all work against the attempt to cohere them out of existence, resisting not only their erasure from the contemporary public space, but also from its past. The queering of ethnicity has the dual function of inserting European minorities into the ongoing debate around the continent’s identity and of reclaiming their place in its history, with the creation of alternative archives working as a bridge between the two. Since the dogma of racedness is centrally built on silencing identities, in which certain identities, processes, and structures are unspoken, I have explored a number of alternative languages, all circumventing the mandate to silence by making specifically European taboos around race speakable (see Kanak Attak, starting with the group’s name, which redefines what is speakable by whom in German). These sonic, performative, and visual languages use the haunting presence of repressed histories to map an alternative spatio-temporal European landscape, building Glissant’s poetics of relation, or in Cathy Cohen’s terms, “a politics where one’s relation to power, and not some homogenized identity, is privileged in determining one’s political comradries.” In the process they destabilize naturalized understandings of time and space that work in the interest of particular groups, thereby recovering “impossible alternatives”. In short, to riff on Audre Lorde, they are “the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought.”

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory—where I will lead you—may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the spatio-space of estrangement can only open the possibility for conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturality or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture’s hybridity. To that end we should remember that it is the ‘meta’—the cutting edge of translation and negation, the in-between-space—which carries the meaning of culture.1 Homi K. Bhabha States are certain loci of power, but the state is not all there is of power. The state is not always the nation-state. We have, for instance, non-national states, and we have security states that actively contest the national basis of the state. So, already the term state can be dissociated from the term ‘nation’ and the two can be cobble together through a hyphen, but what does the hyphen do? Does the hyphen finesse the relation that needs to be done? Does it mark a certain soldiering that has taken place historically? Does it suggest a falsity at the heart of the relation?2 Judith Butler 1 Homi K. Bhabha, The Location of Culture (London: Routledge, 1994): 38 2 Judith Butler and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Who Songs the Nation-State? (London: Seagull Books, 2007): 2–3.
in the understanding of the subject production of the contemporary artist, and can be seen as the crystallization of how the subject is recognized and becomes, precisely, inter-national. That is not a specificity which is what can be compared and thus exchanged. S/he comes from a specific generation, a specific place and medium-based practice, like many others, and is included, initially, into the international circulation of art discourse and commodities as a representative of the international art world and, therefore, a commodity that trades under the seemingly innocuous disguise of "art," which is also in terms of his or her circulation within global capital and politics. If this is not a split identity, then it is certainly a highly complex and multifaceted one, which trades under the seemingly innocuous disguise of "art." It is also indicative of a certain state of things, of the state that we are in, or, as it were, in-between.

If it is not the specificity of the subjects and practices that are primary, but rather their ability to circulate, then the artwork (as characterized by the biennial) is a circuit that transposes and transforms the subjects that are interpellated, where the subject is simultaneously the representative of a culture, an object of desirous projection of cultural value and futurity, and the extortion of surplus value from labor and audiences, and abstractly, creators, administrators and consumers, into a relation of power and knowledge. Summarizing Foucault on the apparatus, Giorgio Agamben has described it as the “intersection” between these very relations, and, furthermore as “the network that is established between these elements,” which sounds as accurate a structural description of contemporary subjectivity, with all that this implies of recognition and misrecognition. It is indicative of a certain state of things, of the state that we are in, or, as it were, in-between.

Hyphenation is thus invoked here, not to produce a new entity or identity out of old categories, but as a term that remains both old and new, as well as in-between, since it brings together two words or concepts, but without merging them into one. Rather, it accentuates the split, and sometimes jarringly, uncomfortably, and counter-intuitively brings together two different designations. The hyphen can conjure the fallibility of the relation between nation and state. She is here reminded of its dark side, as was already present in Homi K. Bhabha’s theorization of the term in the early 1990s. For Bhabha, hybridity was not a solution to a problem that could merge different cultures, but rather an effect of colonial power and its interpellation of the (post-)colonial subject, which resulted in a split sense of the self, what he termed a “negative transparency.” It is thus not a celebratory concept. Perhaps it is a kind of thesaurus which is often employed in biennial culture and major art events, but rather, it is an ambivalent state of being in-between powers of authority, the authenticity of authorship, and the (im)possibility of cultural translation. As noted in the epigraph, Bhabha highlights the “inter“, as in international and interstice (what he calls the in-between space), indicating a space between categories rather than a place that can unite, mix or blur categories and spaces. If this focus on the splitting rather the merging implied by hybridity can be recaptured, it is perhaps best done by abandoning the metaphor of the hyphen itself, since, as we know, one always runs the risk of becoming identitarian, as in the trading of subjects as new commodities. Instead, shall we replace it with the more obviously double-edged notion of the hyphen? Instead of international, we could begin to think of the inter-national, as in that which circulates in the forms described above.

7 Homi K. Bhabha, The Quest (1984), 112.
8 Judith Butler, op. cit.
Hyphenation as identity thus implies an irresolvable undecidability on the part of the subject, since the terms, or states of being, that are being hyphenated are unclear and in flux, and since, more importantly, that the very decision of hyphenation, of inclusion and exclusion, of identification or annihilation, happens elsewhere. It is imposed and enforced from the outside. It is not the result of a willful subject production of funky cultural hybridity, as is so often camouflaged by the cultural industry and the art system.

Moreover, this notion of hyphenation strongly implies interpellation: how the designations of any identity are provided from outside the subject. You are born as a citizen of this or that nation, or not—this is not a matter of choice, creativity or will, but an interpellation from state power, and indeed from supra-national power, which decides your status and belonging. It is, of course, possible to be a member of a nation that does not exist, that is virtual and trans-national, or, poignantly, to be a member of a nation-state with which one does not identify, and which one wants to revise, revolutionize, destroy or simply leave. Hyphenation in terms of designating and defining subjects thus implies linguistics, jurisdictions, identities, and not creativity and multicultural hybridity. Indeed, as the chosen example of identification, representation and interpellation, the international biennial confirms that we are not witnessing a proliferation of multi-culture in terms of difference and contestation, but rather that the whole endeavor becomes absurd and short-circuits the making of meaning.

Should we reject hyphenation, and no longer let our subjects be identified as both this and that, and as inter-national? As attractive as this non-identitarian exoticus might sound, it is hardly possible if interpellation already hails us from outside, and from the side of power. Rather, perhaps, we could try to embrace hyphenation, and do so through its additivity—adding so many possible and impossible designations that the whole endeavor becomes absurd and short-circuits the making of meaning. Hundreds of categories could be hyphenated. Or we could focus on the possible impossibility of joining the two words on each side of the hyphen. Instead of being inter-national, we would say: I am black-white, young-old, abled-disabled, man-woman, gay-straight, citizen-denizen, worker-employer, and the like. As hyphenated subjects, we are not only split subjects in a psychoanalytical sense, but also endlessly identified, named and categorized, expanded and compartmentalized. We are, in the words of Alexander Duttmann, presupposed, whether this presupposition in any way fits or not.5 There is a category for everyone within the law, even if that category does not fit the unrepresentable. Might this, in the current global political situation, makes them truly democratic?

In the Fabric of the Voice: A Polyphonic Conversation

The following interview was conducted via email in French, Spanish and English with choreographer and dancer Bouchra Ouzguen, artists and choreographers Blanca Calvo and Ion Munduate, artist Katarina Zdjelar and artist and researcher Lawrence Abu Hamdan. Numerous conversations in Aubervilliers, Stockholm, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, London, Berlin and Tangier have inspired and informed this discussion. It brings together a collection of voices and stories that emanate from diverse contexts and bodies, traveling through different mediums and spaces (such as the stage, the radio, the film, the exhibition, the book, the Internet), which compose a heterogeneous landscape for a common interest in the agency of the voice, and in turn, in the capacity of voice itself to act as an ongoing sort of laboratory.

The testimonies below more often than not expose a conflicted relation between voice, the utterer and the uttered, where voice is furred with eccentricities, interferences, leaps, and affects, thus voluntarily or involuntarily defusing attempts of control. They actively shed doubt on the alleged capacity of the voice to convey clear meanings and to assign defined identities, recalling that, in the words of cultural theorist Steven Connor, “the uploading of body into voice is never perfect.”6 In that sense, they call for intensified attention, where sensing and critical hearing are brought to play in a process of subjectivation that bounds the speaker and the listener into a space that is both affective and political.


10 Alexander Garcia Duttmann, op.cit.
Virginie Bobin: Bouchra, your last dance piece, Ha!, composed in collaboration with three ‘Aitas’; begins in pitch darkness. Slowly, white moving shapes emerge from obscurity, accompanied by rhythmic breaths and vocal sounds that progressively turn into series of cries and shouts, while the lights go up and the bodies appear in a form of trance. This first part seems to last for quite a long time, and produces a very strong effect on the spectator, who is caught into a sort of sonic hypnosis during which hearing overcomes other senses. The repetition of cries, and the alteration of the dancers’ voices provokes a form of disidentification, as if the voices had detached themselves from the bodies and acquired their own life and volume, or rather, as if they were a pure product of movement instead of a thinking process aimed at generating language. How did you and the dancers think of the role of the voice in Ha!, first as regards choreography, and then as regards the representation of madness, or again, finally, as regards the inadequacy to social norms that you explore in the piece?

Bouchra Ouzguen: Voice is experienced, sensed as being, being there; in movement. The balancing of our heads are the voices that inhabit ourselves, soothe us and overtake us. From this loss looms meaning, and movement. Losing one’s body; losing one’s voice. Abandon as madness. Ritual as support. Repetition, because everything has been done.

It doesn’t matter. A form of depth emerges from lightness; a cry arises from a nod. We don’t know who is who anymore, who directs who—we don’t care! We are at heart. They burn us.

V.B.: Later on in the play, the dancers start laughing inextinguishably, almost monstrously. Their laugh is foreign to any sense of joy: it has become a pure sound. Yet, as it is eructated by these women on stage, while they perform movements that they had primarily observed on men’s bodies (alcoholics, lunatics, beggars) in the streets of Morocco, this laugh also carries provocation, insolence, or even forms of resistance. The fabric of this laugh manufactures a form of hybridity between an inside (the body, the stage) and an outside (the street); between madness and its representation, between norms and their construction, between genders. Your voices deceive conventions and the spectator’s projections. Was this what you were seeking?

B.O.: YES.

We are multiple, We are alcoholics, We are the lunatic, the beggar. Not a representation of them.

2 Traditional cabaret dancers and singers in Morocco.

3 A trailer announcing the piece at the 2013 Juli Dans Festival in Amsterdam is available here: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m7b2YEEg1HQ (Accessed online November 2013).

We are always strange, estranged from something, from ourselves...
We identify ourselves in each one.
We are in the process of becoming others, for other lives to come.
Deceiving our own conventions, constructions.
Granting ourselves time in order to lose it.

V.B.: Blanca, Ion: After two editorial, radio and performance projects exploring the productive dislocation between body and voice in performance, When The Body Disappears and A Disembodied Voice, Towards Love, you are currently working on a third chapter entitled Being / Translation. How did you resonate with this idea of “being translation”, which I understand as a continuous movement from the inside to the outside and vice-versa?

In this process, what happens to “the otherness of the voice” that you have previously explored?

Blanca Calvo and Ion Munduate: At the inception of this project, which has kept us occupied for the past two years, we probably didn’t know where we would end up. We were however certain that the voice would be the vehicle to translate us throughout the journey. We use the term “translate” because it was indeed our intuition that in the course of translating the perception of performance to another medium, questions would arise, some of which would be answered and others would still be left unresolved. This is why we chose the radio—because, by means of the microphone, it allowed us to create a sense of being, in the air. The otherness of the voices explored has formed a tissue composed of different layers of sedimentation, where all these voices come to rest and are waiting to be reactivated possibly in a different way, or at least that is what we expect. They are implicit as well in the statements and essays by invited artists, as for example your text in Workbook 2 Being/Translation, which is about to be published.4 You take us on an intense and exciting tour of the works of several artists, films, and links to webpages and thereby elicit a comprehensive means to understand the voice and the dislocation between voice and body. Which is yet another layer of sedimentation. Accordingly, for this Workbook 2 we are publishing CDs with both radio emissions, which at the time were only broadcast by a pirate radio station with a radius of 1.5 kilometres. The CDs contain eighteen hours of live broadcast.

The choice to use both terms jointly Being/Translation is a logical consequence of the other two titles that frame this project. Also, as you mention in your question, it is not that we conceive voice and body as being separate, but rather that we wanted to get rid of the image. We needed to see the here and now from a point of ‘freedom’ that we didn’t have, so we thought of sidestepping the present. Execute a movement, go from A to B. In fact we rather need to ‘dodge’ the present and become suspended in another time, another present. We think of the term Being as linked to our interpretation of Gilles Deleuze’s concept of “being and becoming”; in our case and from the experience of the programs we have produced, this means a

4 A draft for this text is accessible here: http://www.specialissue.eu/field-notes-from-disembodied-voice-travels (Accessed online November 2013).
confirmation that we are not actually in the here and now, but that we move along, we translate, we transfer, and we transport ourselves continually. Deleuze begins his work The Logic of Sense by saying that, “The here and now lies in the simultaneity of becoming, whose characteristic it is to elude the present. Insofar as it eludes the present, becoming does not tolerate the separation or distinction of before and after, of past and future.” Consequently, in regard to the intention of the term translation, the idea is to activate a strategy, which within its own movement would select the elements, in turn recomposing it, and thereby creating from a very substance the embryo or the future base for work. Hence the need to dislocate certain elements implicit in the development of any performance: sound, voice, image and representation. It is and has been the goal of this process to recognize and open up new workspaces in full continuity with the interval that exists in the process of translation. Indeed the development of the radio programs with performances, conferences, concerts and workshops is based on the articulation between inside and outside in the development of the Mugatoxian project. In this case it has more to do with an order of things, breaking with certain mechanisms and freeing the movements from their own substance.

V.B.: Katarina, your last video, Stimme, follows a voice coaching session between a middle-aged woman and her younger patient. Although breathing and vocal exercises inhabit the entire duration of the work, the camera mainly focuses on and draws attention to the choreography of the coach’s hands, and the pressures, pokes, caresses they perform on fragments of the patient’s body: her belly, her chest, her neck, her head. The video operates a troubling dismemberment of the younger woman’s body, while these seemingly autonomous hands labor it into the delivery of a more performing voice. Can you talk about the specific gaze that the camera frame, the close-ups and the editing produce on these bodies at work, and can you tell us more about their relation to voice as construction?

Katarina Zdjelar: The piece considers when our voice becomes our personal property. Where does the voice begin and where does it end? Who is speaking when we speak, and who is entitled to speak? For that I have followed the sessions of voice modulation, during which the client is promised to gain her natural voice, that is, a voice which is released of its existing socio-cultural markers and constraints. The piece circles in the time and space of the vocal attribution. Oscillating between voices and never arriving at the desired destination, Stimme focuses on a liminal voice; a voice between culture and nature, something in between the material and corporeal act of producing voice, and the social process of receiving voice. Camera and editing work capture this process by cutting through that which enfolds in front of the camera, and by localizing the field of vision and sonic experience. They focus on visualizing the crafting of voice, thus mainly committing to the hand the work of the coach who manipulates the body of her client as if it were a musical instrument. I use filming and editing as a writing device and not as a representation.

The coaching hands firstly locate the voice in the body of her client, then instruct it, lead it, hold it. The hand work of the coach is akin to that of a conductor. They lead to as yet uninhibited zones of client’s bodies, they unblock pathways, they give push, then guide and bring the voice out. Hands make the contact with the client’s voices and give an access to the unreachable interior. We follow the way voice inhabits the body, the way it moves, awakens, twists parts of the body, and we hear the way the same body lies in the voice. On instances, the coach’s hands do the work of her client’s bodies and therefore appear as an extension, a prosthesis. Each body part has its own sound, which needs to be tuned. Thus hands become, in certain instances, a hearing aid of the coach, like an extra pair of ears that examine and adjust the sound of the voice. The camera is complicit to this act of processing the voice, as it is predicated precisely through an interplay between the client, the coach, the gaze of the camera and the sound. Yet, the camera lens, the sound, and the editing are not simply there to produce knowledge, nor are they there to serve as a commentary to an ideological apparatus. They co-produce a form of thinking, which is both guided by and which guides this tuning operation, it is both passive and active. Sometimes I would like to think of the role of the camera as a sort of intern in a physician’s practice—partly assisting and contributing to the activities, partly observing and internalizing the skills, and yet always running the risk of messing things up and therefore making apparent the prescribed relation between the physician and the patient.

V.B. The coaching session that we are witnessing in Stimme aims at helping women to recover their “natural”, “inner” voices, to tune into them. According to some studies, women socially acquire a higher-pitched voice than the one they originally have, thus inducing positions of weakness and dependency towards men, who in contrast are doted with a lower-pitched voice, whose registers are associated with power and authority, notably in a professional context. “You don’t speak with your voice”, says the coach several times. Does a voice belong to us? Is there such thing as an original, natural voice, hidden under the layers of culture and social construct?
K.Z.: What we witness in Stimme is the manufacturing of natural voice, the hard labour of producing natural sound. A contradiction in terms. We are situated in the middle of the power struggle fought on the battleground of language and voice, with all of its entrenched and enfolding history. Prior to the triumph of metaphysics, voice was in direct relation with thought, while thought was a corporeal affair, situated in the respiratory organs and connected with alimentation. Thinking was done with the lungs and not the brain. Therefore it was not surprising that the thinness of the voice was related to the lack of lungs and consequently lack of contemplative competence. Aristotle used to voice pitch as a tool to differentiate men from the elderly, castrato, children and women. He related authority with low-pitched voices and therefore (functional) testicles and removed the power from all other members of society, justifying it with the high pitch of their voice, which served as an evidence of their inferiority. Is it then safe to assume that here, thinking happens in the testicles and that by lowering the pitch of one’s voice, one may also develop a degree of virility? The first publicly known example of voice modulation is Margaret Thatcher, who recognized the need to lower the pitch of her voice to gain authority and to sustain political power. The current application of this method is mainly reserved for women who aim at leading (business) positions, promising them social and economic mobility. It has been said that once one begins to speak with one’s own voice, the entire body resonates. A particular kind of presence is roused through the voice, and a sense of totality and completion is achieved. It is difficult to tell if there is a voice without all its historical, cultural and social underpinnings, mostly because its destination is speech. But if there is such a voice, can we actually do things with it? Is that voice operational? And what remains when all markers are removed? Is there voice beyond representation and can voice be heard without its markers?

V.B.: Lawrence, last May at the Whitechapel in London, you talked about a new policy established in 2001 in the United Kingdom to test the accent of undocumented asylum seekers in order to verify that they actually come from that places that they affirm they do. You then told the story of a man who was born in Jenin, Palestine, before being displaced through several countries and ending in London where he acquired a strong local accent. How do these two stories relate to your exploration of voice as a bearer of national identity, legal borders and the politics of mobility? Furthermore, can this inscription be undermined by what Mladen Dolar calls “the spectral autonomy of the voice, this zone of indeterminacy... a principle of division... at the intersection between the inner and the outer,” the body of the speaker and the world around him?

Lawrence Abu Hamdan: The story of the accent analysis of asylum seekers can be seen very much as a technical and legal instantiation of the Dolar’s psychoanalytical reading of the division of the voice. Forensic linguist Helen Fraser says that we need to cling history and linguistic data from potentially biasing background [information] on the applicant’s ‘story.’6 Clearly in this expression of objectivity we see how linguists want to auscultate the accent and go beyond the potentially traumatic and pathetic “story” of a person’s flight; preferring to find in their speech another type of testimony. However, my argument is that for adept forensic listeners, this accent object (linguistic data) should also be heard as a ‘story’ in itself, one that could reveal an account that is just as traumatic. In other words—for listeners who are not content with drawing a border around a single phonetic article, the accent should be understood as a biography of migration, as an irregular and itinerant concoction of contagiously accumulated voices, rather than an immediately distinguishable sound that avows its unshakable roots neatly within the confines of a nation state. In the clear distinction between biographical data and linguistic data, we see how voice policy is used as a practice that does not seek to excavate the life of an accent, but merely revives the virtual impossibility of locating its place of birth. Finally, the amplification of these paralinguistic elements of testimony produces a division of the voice, which in turn establishes two witnesses within one voice. One witness speaks on behalf of language and the other witness speaks on behalf of what Dolar would call phone (speech-sound). Often the testimony provided by each of these two witnesses is corroborated by the other, but the two can also betray themselves in the same gesture. An internal betrayal between language and body; between subject and object; fiction and fact; truth and lie. This betrayal exists in a single human utterance in which the self gives itself away. This splitting of the voice into two selves, or into two witnesses, can also be seen as an extension of the well-established legal principle of Testis unius, testis nullus, which translates to ‘one witness, no witness’, and which means that the testimony provided by any one person in court is to be disregarded unless corroborated by the testimony of at least one other individual. The law, it seems, requires a certain doubling of testimony, and this doubling extends even as far as the singular witness. In the eyes of the law, the testimony of the single witness—be it that of the suspect, or of the state—is to be split into language and its bodily conduit, for it to be considered testimony at all.


V.B.: Indeed it does. Yet on the other hand, one could argue that the intrinsic unreliability of the voice opens up a space of resistance. In a society of control where movement is monitored by standardized protocols and technological tools with questionable scientific value, one’s voice can turn into a deadly enemy. One could be prevented from obtaining asylum, for instance. This is partly due to our growing reliance on prosthesis to listen: computers, recorders, and lie detectors, which perform a process of hearing whereby human interpretationcedes its power to the oppressive infallibility of machines. Might we close this discussion on the political agency of voice by reclaiming the political agency of listening?

L.A.H.: My project is titled Aural Contract, for exactly the reasons you suggest. The project intends to produce a body of material that allows us to move away from the predominant political rhetoric of ‘giving voice’ and “speaking out” in favor of listening and the political agency of audition. To shift from the oral contract to an aural one, which is to take more seriously our political participation and the relationships between listening subjects—as opposed to speaking subjects. My work tries to amplify the proclamation that we now live in an era in which the conditions of testimony have insidiously shifted; one in which the diminishing agency of words is being drowned out by the law’s amplification of accents, inflections, reflections, impediments and prosody. This shift in listening shows an emerging phrenology of the

voice—yet we must shift with it by extending the idea of ‘free speech’ to encompass the sonic quality of speech itself. Now it seems that the battle for free speech is no longer about fighting to speak freely but about fighting for the control over the very conditions through which we are being heard. To find ways in which we can fight for these conditions and thereby reclaim the political agency of listening, we need not look further than forensic listening itself. The political agency of forensic listening is at the moment occupied by regimes of control. Yet if we occupy these techniques and learn from them we can possibly reclaim their radicality. During my 2010 interview with the forensic linguist Peter French, he admitted that “Last week, a colleague and I spent three working days listening to one word from a police interview tape.’ Statements like this were exemplary of French’s radical approach to both listening and the theoretical paradigms that surround sound production. Unlike many sound theorists who focus on sound’s ephemeral and immaterial qualities, French’s approach was markedly material. The dominant contemporary school of audio culture is heavily influenced by Don Ihde’s 1976 text, Listening and Voice: A Phenomenology of Sound, which puts forward the impossibility of fundamentally grasping sound. The continuing prevalence of this school of thought is further demonstrated in Frances Dyson’s 2009 book, Sounding New Media, who states in her introduction: “As Don Ihde and Christian Metz pointed out decades ago, ‘a sound is always multiple, always heterogeneous, being neither visible or tangible: sound is never quite an object, never a full guarantor of knowledge.’” Yet French’s formulation renders sound dissectable, replicable, physical and corporeal in its object quality. The intensity at which French listens is actually the basis that enables his radical approach to sound. The audio object reveals a large amount of information about its production and its form: the space in which it was recorded, the machine that recorded it, and the ability to pinpoint an accent to a specific location—as well as the ability to glean the age, health and ethnicity of a voice. Occupying a radical and affective means of listening would be, for me, a step towards reclaiming the political agency of listening. Yet as with all cases of legal, social and ethnic profiling, French walks a thin ethical line. Ironically what allows him to maintain his credibility in a time were law enforcement increasingly reaches out to forensic linguistics in odious forms of surveillance and profiling that target huge swathes of the population, is his ability to listen thoroughly. French understands the limits of what can be detected through the voice, and in doing so does not exploit the law’s increasing demands for the empty promises of forensic science, which are so often accompanied by ignorance of its practical capacities. Today, forensic listening is applied on such a scale that law enforcement agencies and the security services cannot often afford the expert listening services of people like Dr. French. Hence, frighteningly, we are entering a time where there is both an excessive demand for the governance of the voice, and yet our means of producing the model of governance necessary is often either

7 Frances Dyson, Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 4–5.
Since 2001, immigration authorities around the world have been using accent and language tests to determine the validity of asylum claims made by thousands of people without identity documents in Australia, Belgium, Germany, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom. In most circumstances a private Swedish company is contracted and during a phone interview between the company and the asylum seeker the claimant’s voice is analyzed to assess whether the voice and accent correlate with the claim of national origin. On the 29th and 30th of September 2012, a group consisting of linguists, graphic designer Janna Ullrich, researchers, activists, refugee and art organizations and a core group of Somali asylum seekers, who had each been rejected by the Dutch immigration authorities because of the analysis of their language/dialect or accent, met to discuss the controversial use of language analysis to determine the origin of asylum seekers.

The project was commissioned by Casco – Office for Art, Design and Theory in collaboration with Stichting LOS.

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Translation from French: Virginie Robin
Translation from Spanish: Anke van Wijck
CONVERSATION

Adriano Pedrosa

The numbers alone are undeniable: with sixty percent of its population comprised of blacks and pardos, Brazil is the second most populous African country, after Nigeria. According to the most updated research on slavevoyages.org, a total of 3,800,000 Africans were brought to Brazil, which is more than ten times the number of arrivals to the United States (350,000), and which is even greater than the number of Portuguese who set foot in the country to colonize it (2,256,000, according to IBGE, Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística). Brazil became home to about forty percent of the Africans in almost four centuries of slave trade to the Americas, the largest dislocation of people in the modern era. With a different type of colonization than the United States, where the colonizer would move with his family to occupy the territory and there was little mixed breeding, Brazil’s male Portuguese colonizer often came on his own, and thus our mestizo histories began in the sixteenth century, with the blending of African, Amerindian and European ethnic groups.

The presence of Africa in popular Brazilian culture is immense if not dominating, and all things typically Brazilian have deep African roots: from carnival to samba, from candomblé (Afro-Brazilian religion) to feijoada (the national dish), from capoeira to football (which was imported by whites but only became masterfully Brazilian when blacks were allowed to play it), from the figure of the Baiana to Iemanjá. Underlying the powerful, sprawling and polyphonic African presence lies what is arguably the most important process in Brazilian history—slavery (Brazil was the last country to abolish it in the Americas, in 1888). Yet such profound, long lasting histories cannot veil the prejudices of color that still pervade much of Brazil, not so much through a loud, vocal racism, but through a silent one—one that ignores, forgets, puts aside and silences more than outspokenly rejects, refuses or repudiates. Again the numbers are undeniable, and as criminality, violence, poverty, exclusion and invisibility in the media and in government increase, our mestizo skin darkens.

In this context, the professional trajectory of artist, curator and museum director Emanoel Araújo is a pioneering and solitary one. For more than four decades, Araújo, who was born in 1940 in Santo Amaro da Purificação in the northeastern state of Bahia, near Salvador, the capital of Afro-Brazil, has researched, written, collected, exhibited and produced artworks around Afro-Brazil. Araújo’s deep knowledge and experience with our African histories would perhaps not have been so forceful if it weren’t for his vociferous and at times polemical character. A maverick, he was director of Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo for ten years, rescuing it from a deplorable state, guiding it through an award-winning renovation made by Paulo Mendes da Rocha (who won the Pritzker and the Mies thereafter), and pushing it to become what is today the country’s most successful museum. Araújo’s groundbreaking exhibitions A Mão Afro Brasileira (The Afro-Brazilian Hand, Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo, 1987) and Negro de Corpo e Alma (Black in Body and Soul, Mostra do Redescobrimento, 2000) gathered a colossal amount of material, much of which has been extended or has found its way into the collections of Museu Afro Brasil, in São Paulo. The museum is a dense fabric woven with loaded threads of material culture of diverse sorts: from modern to contemporary art, from colonial to nineteenth century objects, Brazilian, African or foreign, photographs and documents, costumes and jewelry, religious objects of different beliefs, all abundantly exhibited and accompanied by explanatory and contextual texts. None of this would be there if were not for Araújo.

Adriano Pedrosa: Tell us how your experience and practice as an artist brought you to curating exhibitions, collections and museums.

Emanoel Araújo: I first worked at the Museu Regional de Feira de Santana (Regional Museum of Feira de Santana) in Bahia, created by the Brazilian media mogul, Assis Chateaubriand (1892–1968) as part of his regional museum project, which opened in 1967. The museum was mounted by Chateaubriand’s media through a loud, Diários Associados. It held the "leather civilisation" artefacts from Feira de Santana, which is the gateway to the hinterland. There was also a collection of Brazilian art, assembled by Odorico Tavares (1912–1980), who was the director of Diários Associados in Bahia, as well as by Chateaubriand himself, through his friendship with artists such as DJanira (1914–1979) and Emiliano Di Cavalcanti (1897–1976). I was setting the museum up, working on the museography with the architects, whilst simultaneously working as an artist.  

Translator’s note: "Leather civilization" refers to the leather clothing worn by Brazilian cowboys in the northeastern hinterland, and to hides and tanning in general, which were an integral part of the cattle herding economy and culture.
A.P.: What is your educational background?

E.A.: I studied Fine Art at the Federal University at Bahia in Salvador, the state capital. But I didn’t finish my degree because I started working professionally. In 1965 I exhibited at the Bonino Gallery in Rio de Janeiro and the Astra Gallery in São Paulo, which were the most important galleries in Brazil at the time. In 1963, I worked with Lina Bo, the Italian-born Brazilian modernist architect, on the Civilização do Nordeste (Civilization of the Northeast) exhibition at the Museu de Arte Moderna de Bahia (MAM-BA). In 1972, I went to the United States at the invitation of the US State Department, and visited art museums from coast to coast—American, Chinese, European and African American art—and I had the good fortune to meet curators who showed me the museums and their storage spaces.

A.P.: Were you invited there as an artist or as a museum professional?

E.A.: As an artist. There were no museum professionals in Brazil then. In 1981 I was appointed director of the Museu de Arte da Bahia (Bahia Museum of Art, MAB), in Salvador, where I stayed until 1983.

A.P.: Is that how your curating career got started?

E.A.: Yes. I was also involved in remodelling and transforming the museum, because that was one of the conditions I’d set with the then-Governor of Bahia, Antônio Carlos Magalhães (1927–2007) for returning to Bahia from São Paulo. It was hard, but I formed a team to restore paintings, porcelain and furnishings, and created a museum in the current building in Vitória Palace, based on the perspective of design and decorative art. It was an eclectic museum—with paintings, porcelain, furnishings, religious images, jewellery—like the museums found in several Brazilian states, such as Bahia, Pernambuco, and Ceará. The remodelling process took a year, and when it was finished, I left. During that period, I organised some major exhibitions: the 400th anniversary of the Benedectine Monastery, the Bahia School of Painting, and in 1982, the África Bahia África exhibition.

A.P.: What was that exhibition like?

E.A.: I included performances in the opening programme, such as Filhos de Gandhy, the biggest afóxé (street Candomblé group) in Bahia’s Carnival, and an Afro-Brazilian dance group. Fifteen hundred people were at the opening, viewing photographs by the Franco-Brazilian photographer and ethnologist, Pierre Verger (1902–1996) and items from Candomblé among others. It was only later, in 1987, that I developed the theme in the A Mão Afro Brasileira, Significância da Contribuição Artística e Histórica (The Afro-Brazilian Hand: The Significance of its Artistic and Historic Contribution) at the Museu de Arte Moderna of São Paulo (MAM-SP), along with its director, Aparício Basílio da Silva (1936–1992).

A.P.: Tell us about the project at the MAM-SP, and about some of your first trips to Africa.

E.A.: The project began in Senegal. The first time I went to Africa was in 1976, with the art critic and historian from Pernambuco, Brazil, Roberto Pontual (1939–1992), as part of the Black Arts Festival in Nigeria. Then at the Second FESTAC (World Black and African Festival of Arts and Culture) in Lagos, in 1977 I showed some enormous reliefs in an exhibition organised by Clarival Prado Valadares, the Bahian art critic (1918–1983). It was pandemonium getting them there. Pontual wrote an essay about them, ‘A raiz localizadora’ (“The Localising Root”)—it was under those circumstances that I met a Brazilian called Mister da Silva, who lived there.

A.P.: A descendant of Brazilians, of the formerly enslaved people who returned from Nigeria in the nineteenth century?

E.A.: That’s right. But he didn’t speak Portuguese and he didn’t know anything about Brazil. For him, Brazil was an abstraction. He owned a travel agency, Da Silva Travel. We became friends and I arranged a trip to Osogbo, the land of Osun, with a group—the Bahian writer Gumercindo da Rocha Dorea, Roberto Pontual, and Cleusa (d. 1997 later Iyalorisa of Gantois), the daughter of Menininha do Gantois, one of Brazil’s most famous Iyalorisa and an Omonlosun (Maria Escolástica da Conceição Nazaré). We went to see the Osun River in Osogbo, travelling through Ile and Ibadan, and there I had the great surprise of meeting Susanne Wenger (1915–2009).

A.P.: Yes, the Austrian artist. I saw her work recently in the catalogue for The Short Century by Okwui Enwezor. Was she an interesting person?

E.A.: Extremely. I wrote an article about that trip. In the middle


of the forest, some large terracotta sculptures came into view. She produced a highly European version of the cult of Osun. They were large monuments, five to six meters high, completely surrealistic.

**A.P.** Did you go there with the expectation of reconnecting with Africa?

**E.A.** No. In fact, I got into an argument with Gilberto Gil, the Bahian singer / songwriter and former Minister of Culture of Brazil, who was there with Caetano Veloso, another Bahian singer / songwriter. He asked me what I was doing in Africa. I said, “I’ve come to see Africa.” And he said, “I’ve come to find my roots.” So then I replied, “You’re wrong, your roots are in Bahia, not here.” But what I meant to say was that Bahia was closest. We didn’t know anything about Africa, just as the Africans didn’t know anything about us. Take the travel agent Da Silva, who didn’t have the faintest idea of what Brazil was about. He knew about his ancestry, and that was it.

**A.P.** Had you visited Europe by that time?

**E.A.** Yes. In 1972 I went to Italy and Austria, and then I went to the United States and England. Although I was a son of Santo Amaro da Purificação, a town of sugar plantations where there had been many African slaves, my idea of Africa was of a very remote thing. I returned to the United States and England. Although I was a son of Santo Amaro da Purificação, a town of sugar plantations where there had been many African slaves, my idea of Africa was of a very remote thing. I returned there in 1967 sent to a conference in Dakar by the Brazilian President José Sarney. It was there that the idea of A Mão Afro Brasileira was born. Whilst visiting the Island of Gorée, the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire Museum (IFAN), a chaperone from a school saw us and told the students, “Look, they are our cousins from the other side of the Atlantic.”

**A.P.** What was the research for that exhibition like?

**E.A.** It was all done in six months. It was insane.

**A.P.** But there was a vast amount of material; it must have required a great deal of research, a lot of time.

**E.A.** Six months. Luckily there were things I already knew about, and had kept, collected. The research for África Bahia África was also very helpful to me.

**A.P.** The book is impressive—a truly pioneering study. I was looking at the sections you established in it: “Baroque and Rococo,” “Nineteenth Century,” “African Heritage in Popular Art,” “Modern and Contemporary Art,” and then “Multiple Contributions,” which are music, literature, cuisine.

**E.A.** I started out with the Baroque because that is the period with the greatest emphasis on that issue, involving Mestre Valentim (a sculptor from Minas Gerais, 1745–1813), Aleijadinho (Antônio Francisco Lisboa, a sculptor from Minas Gerais, 1730 or 1738–1814), Francisco de Paula Brito (a writer from Rio de Janeiro, 1809–1861), and José Teófilo de Jesus (a painter from Bahia, 1758–1847). The arts in eighteenth-century Brazil were completely Black because Black people created them, although the standard is European, Portuguese. There was also Thebas (Joaquim Pinto de Oliveira, 1733–71), for example, who was a slave and then became a master builder here in São Paulo, who built the Sé cathedral.

**A.P.** What got you interested in this subject?

**E.A.** I had studied Manuel Querino, the Bahian art historian, ethnographer, and Black vindicationist (1851–1923), who was a pioneer when it came to Black and Bahian artists. He wrote about religious art, food, and Africans as colonisers. Another important scholar on the subject was Marieta Alves, one of the few historians who provided information about the person’s background and colour. Although I refused to mention skin colour, I still think about it as the basis and starting point. When I curated the exhibition on the Timóteo brothers, for example, that was what interested me.* That, and the discovery of these extraordinary nineteenth-century painters from Rio de Janeiro, Estevão Silva (1844–1891), Antônio Rafael Pinto Bandeira (1863–1896), and Firmino Monteiro (1855–1888).

**A.P.** Then there is the issue of the pardo—the Brazilian term for ‘mixed-race’ or ‘brown’, used in the census, which can refer to African or Amerindian ancestry. If there is something African about every mixed-race or pardo person, then they also have an African hand. But tell me, if all Brazilians are mixed-race, could the museum also be a Museu do Brasil?

**E.A.** It is indeed called the Museu Afro Brasil. It isn’t the Museu Afro Brasileiro (Afro-Brazilian Museum), because I created the concept so we could discuss African, mestizo, Brazilian issues, including other peoples who are also Brazilian—people of Italian and Japanese descent. Sometimes people call it the Museu Afro Brasileiro, but that changes the concept completely, because this is not a ghetto museum.

**A.P.** What about Negro de Corpo e Alma (‘Black in Body and Soul’, which was one of the twelve exhibitions in the Brasil 500 anos: Mostra do redescobrimento (Brazil 500 years: Rediscovery Exhibit) in 2000, and whose catalogue is the largest?

**E.A.** I wanted to take a look at the imagery of Johann Moritz Rugendas (1802–1858), of Jean-Baptiste Debret (1758–1848), and others, to include it in the process. Lasar Segall (1891–1957), José Pancetti (1902–1958), and Cândido Portinari (1903–1962) were also
included. Then I organised an exhibition at the Museu Afro Brasil in 2007 called *Imagens Inocentes e Perversas* ("Innocent and Perverse Images"), which is about the type of portrayal that reinforces prejudice. A *mão afro brasileira* is the exhibition that includes the imagery that is not perverse but portrays Black people, and shows Black people portraying themselves. These are intersecting points that create new fields of study.

A.P.: Alberto da Costa e Silva, the Brazilian diplomat and scholar of African history, writes in *Um rio chamado Atlântico* (A River Called the Atlantic, 2003), that something of the slave has remained in all of us Brazilians; a comment that the anthropologist Darcy Ribeiro (1922–1997) has also made to some extent, in his 1995 book, *O povo brasileiro, a formação e o sentido do Brasil* (The Brazilian People: The Formation and Direction of Brazil).

E.A.: Costa e Silva would like that to be so, but it is not true. Or I should say, I think it is true, but people won’t admit it. Otherwise Brazil wouldn’t be the prejudiced country that it is. When you watch Brazilian TV, it looks like we’re in Sweden, with no Black people. The main television network in Brazil, Rede Globo, only puts Blacks in the worst roles, and actors accept that because they have no alternative.

A.P.: Do you think that is changing? Isn’t the Museu Afro playing a role in that regard?

E.A.: No. The museum is just nine years old, and Brazil moves very slowly. The Brazilian art world is prejudiced. When I was appointed director of the Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo in 1992, people said, “What, a Black, a Bahian?” And I’d say, “Not just Black but homosexual, too.”

A.P.: But today everyone knows that Paulo Mendes da Rocha’s remodelling of Pinacoteca is a turning point in the museum’s history. Don’t you think things have improved in the last thirty to forty years?

E.A.: They’re worse. There is still a great deal of prejudice, but it is a silent thing. Brazil is silent. It’s perverse. For Brazil, Africa does not exist.

A.P.: But the fact that this museum exists is important. Even if it is just nine years old.

E.A.: When I arrived at the Pinacoteca in 1992, I started out my administration with a project to remodel the museum; making the São Paulo public aware that the museum was in a disgraceful state. For me, this museum is an investment in the future, a tribute to my past.

A.P.: To the Africa that is within us! Did you organise Afro-Brazilian exhibitions at the Pinacoteca?

E.A.: In 1993 I organised *Vozes da diáspora* (Voices of the Diaspora), and then in 1994, *Herdeiros da noite: Fragmentos do imaginário negro* (Heirs of the Night: Fragments of the Black Imaginary), and in 2001 a retrospective of Rubem Valentim (1922–1991), called *O artista da luz* (The Artist of Light), curated by Bené Fonteles. I also brought works by Black artists into the collection, and acquired works Hélio Oiticica and Willys de Castro and expanded the museum’s sculpture collection.

A.P.: What was it like to create the Museu Afro Brasil in 2003, occupying this large building in Ibirapuera Park in São Paulo?

E.A.: Marta Suplicy, who was the mayor of São Paulo from 2001–2005, and who is currently the Minister of Culture, had thought about setting up an Afro-Brazilian museum but she didn’t know how to get started or with which collection. The secretary of culture asked me if I would put my collection on loan. So then a group was formed to develop that concept; they debated the museum—anthropologists, sociologists, and I don’t know what else. I said, I’m not falling into your trap. I applied the idea of the Afro-Brazilian hand.

A.P.: There are Amerindian objects here as well.

E.A.: It is a matter of indigenous art, because the Africans always saw the Amerindians as the gods of the land. So much so that every Candomblé temple in Bahia has its Caboclo.5 It is the Caboclos that make the orixás (the Afro-Brazilian divinities) of that land, it is the Caboclo that gives them significance. Almost every Candomblé temple—though Ilê Axé Opo Afonjá is a notable exception—every mãe de santo, the high priestess, worships the Caboclos, which is a way of honouring that heritage. That is why, here at the Museu Afro, our exhibition begins with the Caboclo, with the Amerindian. That history is very complex, but it is also very clear: it is possible to read it, but you must want to do so.

A.P.: Do you think Brazil is a Western country?

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A.P.: Do you think Brazil is a Western country?

5 Amerindian divinity, but also the word for a person of mixed Amerindian and European descent.
A.P.: It seems to me that anthropophagy as was promoted in the 1928 Manifesto Antropófago by Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954), is an incomplete project, because it was too focused on the cannibalisation of European references—on Léger, on constructivism—and could have devoured other ancestries, the African and Amerindian, which would replenish its energy.

E.A.: That was the mistake of the 1924 Manifesto da Poesia, Pau Brasil, and the 1922 Semana de Arte Moderna (the Modern Art Week, São Paulo). That Week was organised by elitists, and just one individual, the writer and critic from São Paulo Mario de Andrade (1893–1945), who had a Brazilian outlook.

E.A.: Yes and no. There is so much here that has yet to be discovered.

A.P.: Tarsila do Amaral, the painter from São Paulo (1886–1973), came from an elite family, but her paintings... Do you think A negra (The Black Woman, 1923) is perverse?

E.A.: I think it is extremely perverse. She transfigures the image of the Black woman with prototypes of perversity, accentuating features, the breasts, the mouth. Portinari is perverse too. The only one who escapes that somewhat is Segall.

A.P.: Segall, a Lithuanian immigrant, paints himself as a Black man, a mestizo.

E.A.: Indeed. The illustrations he did for Jorge de Lima (1895–1953), for the 1947 Poemas Negros (Black Poems), show that he understands Brazil, even better than the Brazilians. Indeed, to understand Brazil, you need to be a foreigner. During Brazil’s first 500 years, ever since Caramuru Diogo Álvares Correia (1475–1557) and his wife Catarina Paraguaçu (a Tupinambá Indian, Bahia, 1495–1583), Pernambuco and the Dutch, there has been a long, complex history, a mélange. We held the exhibition of the Bijago of Guinea Bissau (A arte dos povos da Guiné Bissau, The Art of the Peoples of Guinea, Bissau, Museu Afro Brasil, 2008) and discovered that the first Africans who arrived in what is now the northern Brazilian state of Maranhão were the Bijago, who planted rice in Maranhão, because they grew that crop in their homelands. But no one knows that.

A.P.: There is tremendous ignorance. Do you think Portinari’s O mestiço (The Mestizo, 1934) is perverse too?

E.A.: No, I don’t.

A.P.: O mestiço is a dignified portrayal.

E.A.: Yes, it is. But Portinari is much better than Tarsila in that regard.

A.P.: What about Christiano Júnior, the Portuguese photographer (1832–1902)? He treats slaves with dignity.

E.A.: He portrays them naturally, although those are studio photos, and we don’t know if he added something to them. The fact is that they are important. Militão Augusto de Azevedo, the photographer from Rio de Janeiro (1837–1905) is even more important, because he shows that there was a Black society in the late nineteenth century whose members had the power to have themselves photographed:7 There is a great deal that is still hidden. Both of them are important, as records of Brazil...

A.P.: We need to know more.

E.A.: But there is no money for research. The universities are not investigating that area.

A.P.: But that gap between academia and the general public, it seems to me that museums could bridge that, particularly when it comes to visual history.

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E.A.: It is unlikely. The Museu de Arqueologia e Etnologia of the Universidade de São Paulo doesn’t do it. There is a dichotomy between traditional African art and contemporary African art, which does not reach these shores.

A.P.: But one day it will.

E.A.: One day we’ll no longer be alive! And Brazil will become white, following that theory of whitening.8 The university could play a fundamental role if it weren’t so eugenic. As you will see, dealing with this issue in Brazil is a complex matter. I’m not discouraged because I

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7 Translator’s note: Militão produced business cards for well-off Black individuals and families.

8 Racist ideologies of “whitening” emerged in Brazil in the nineteenth century, arguing that over time, the mixed-race Brazilian population would become whiter by encouraging European reproduction and immigration and better living conditions for their descendants in that country.
committed to my skin colour, and I have to move forward. But I think it is all extremely difficult. And I’m an optimist, I’m stubborn, I go all the way.

**A.P.** Do you think there could be exchanges and residencies, for example, between Brazilian and African artists? Rosângela Rennô and Paulo Nazaré have been to Africa. I tell people that there is nineteenth-century Brazilian architecture there and they don’t believe me.

**E.A.** We are doing that. They also hold a Carnival in Porto Novo, the Brazilian community there. Except that they are entirely neglected. I want to give them money so they can keep that association going. They have a lovely Roman Catholic mass, which is given in Portuguese. The extraordinary thing is that there is still a Brazilian community there after 200 years. There are Brazilian families there in Benin, there are lots of Regos, Sousas, Oliveiras. It’s incredible that all that is still in existence, alive. That connection is what is missing. It seems very remote, but it is not. It is very close. The level of ignorance in Brazil is astounding.

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**Bewitched Migrants**

Soulnessless is announced on Terre Thaemlitz’s website as the WORLD’S LONGEST ALBUM IN HISTORY & WORLD’S FIRST FULL LENGTH MP3 ALBUM. It includes thirty-two hours of audio materials, eighty minutes of video materials, 150 pages of text, and is distributed through a 16GB microSDHC card by Comatonse Recordings, Thaemlitz’s label. According to its author, as published on the website, “Soulnessless could be summarized as an attempted deconstruction of soul music. More precisely, a deconstruction of notions of spirituality, meditation, superstition, and religiosity perpetuated through audio marketplaces that insist upon judging audio in relation to ‘authenticity’ and ‘soul’. And like Lovebomb/愛の爆弾, this album approaches its central theme from a variety of vectors—in this case, the various tenuous points of connection being gender, electronic audio production and spirituality.” A complex, restless endeavor with multiple ramifications and a viral distribution scheme that defeats the all-digital, Soulnessless performs and displaces multiple ranges of critical hybridity. For this issue, we have chosen to address, through the sensitive words of Patrick Duarte, the chosen specific question of disjunction and haunting that is at play in “Canto II”.

Read more at [http://www.comatonse.com/writings/2012_soulnessless.html](http://www.comatonse.com/writings/2012_soulnessless.html)

The Editors

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A telling scene in the work of Terre Thaemlitz’s “Canto II — Traffic with the Devil” of the Soulnessless project gathers the mileage of drifters, and at the same time, frames a catachresis. The deported Philippine worker flies home on board a plane and upon descent, the country is glimpsed through the window. The vessel and the voyager, who does not appear on screen though is indirectly present as the one peering into or even the one hovering alongside the aircraft, condense as winged figures that intercut with an excerpt of a popular horror film depicting the flight of the manananggal.

The latter is the viscera sucker of local lower mythology whose body splits at the waist so that the torso can morph into a bat and search for prey until daybreak when it must return to its truncated corpus. In this relay of images, the Philippine migrant, earlier alienated from native land, is severed from work in Japan and comes back to the tropical archipelago, the vampire, on the other hand, roams the realm for fetus and reunites with human life and limb with only the waxing moon as witness. For this enigmatic body not to cohere any longer, salt must be poured into the fissure—this thing out of joint.

The film runs like an allegory of documentation even as it etudes
the typical language of the documentary. It turns to text (instructions, billboards, quotations) that cuts across the image and barely resorts to sound. In doing so, it sustains the tension between documentation and disappearance. This is the first moment of the thesis: that the legal regime of immigration in Japan and its apparatus of surveillance have rendered those without official documentation ghostly, a condition to be replicated within the undocumented self who verisimilarly experiences haunting. This is the structure of feeling of migrancy: bewitching, prone to the phantasmatic. The reinscription of this haunting across public and private sites threatens the norms that govern aliens and their rights to settle. The horror—and the terror—stems from this ubiquity as well as from the agency of the manananggal, the alluring woman/predator (played in the film by a dusky soft-porn star) or the heroic overseas Filipino worker, to inhabit both domestic and civic spaces. Thus, intense surveillance becomes necessary to ensure both intense dematerialization and the dissipation of intense proximities. It is at the intersection of folklore and film that this subjectivity is harnessed, technologies that are conveniently instrumentalized by the rituals of the state and the artifice of representation, but also keen to spin mutations, as evidenced by the plural versions of myth and the multiple sequels of the film *Shake, Rattle, & Roll* (1984) from which certain sequences are culled.

The second moment comes in the comparison between the material situation of the Philippine worker and a character in folklore, which becomes visible, or visual, through the cinema. Otherwise, it would remain merely oral in the same way that the worker would remain occult. This presence in the cinema complicates the absence of the worker, who is rearticulated through theory, statistics, and montage. The abovementioned popular film trilogy proves to be a salient point of comparison. This procedure of comparison is inherently spectral because it tempts equivalence, an enchantment of affinities, or of semblances, as the Philippine National Hero Jose Rizal would phrase it in his 1887 novel *Noli Me Tangere*. This is largely brought about by a trick of the eye or malikmata, which conjures double, quick-change, polytropic vision.

1. The most reprised horror film in Philippine cinema, with fourteen sequels to date, was first released through Athena Productions in 1984 but since 1990 has been produced by Regal Entertainment, a dominant production in the 1980s in the Philippines. It is structured as a trilogy, with multiple personnel and without common thematic and stylistic orientation. Except for one, all titles opened on Christmas Day for the Metro Manila Film Festival.

2. It was originally written in Spanish in Berlin. The title is translated as *Touch Me Not*, a phrase pronounced by Jesus in the Gospel of St. John. It is also known in some translations as *The Social Cancer* and *The Lost Eden*. It speaks of colonial life in the Philippines under Spanish rule. It was influential in shaping the Philippine Revolution in 1896, the year Rizal was executed.

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This is a story about aliens, ghosts and hybrid creatures.

Ada was a cultural misfit who carried around in her pocket several identities. The term “alien” is often used by people who find it difficult to interact with anyone who appears to exist in a space unknown to them; a space outside of their static reality. Harriet described the foreign plant sprouting outside of her home as invasive. A “non-native” species. For this reason, she found it beautiful.

Perhaps this is our story also. Invasive, non-native, beautiful in a seeming strangeness.

Where are you from?
Nowhere.
How can you be from nowhere?
I am from everywhere, so I am from nowhere.
That doesn’t make any sense.
Neither do I, but there are many of us.

All of Ada’s life was one ongoing movement; never sleeping in one place long enough to call it home. In the formative years, this was difficult and isolating territory to linger in; constantly losing people, meeting new ones, constantly explaining why she knew nothing of the land. But along the way she met others; transient, kindred hybrids who flirted between borders and assumed no singular identity. The reasons for their being were as varied as they were. Choice, circumstance, adventure, curiosity, necessity, desperation, freedom, escape, boredom, angst, work, play... She understood these creatures, and finally felt as if she belonged. Not in a physical place, because one was as good as any other, but surrounded by others who, by their lack of cultural uniformity, formed a new country where being many things all at once was the norm.

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We are hybrids of that place we grew up, the language that Mom speaks, the country in which we once spent a decade before relocating to the next (quite unlike the first), to perhaps partner with a fellow hybrid and debate at dinner where to eventually raise the multilingual children.

Children suffer if you keep uprooting them.
That’s what you said.
But maybe the children will be okay?
You can’t listen to everybody,
But some people are just so loud.

Looking for more, Ada ran. Ran away home.

Where is home?
I really wish you would stop asking me that.

To that place where she was born, but of which, she knew so little.
It was there that she became an alien, because everyone else seemed the same. Despite the discomfort, there was an inherent sense of authenticity. Of belonging, if only in her head.

If you feel as though you have a right to be somewhere, then you do.
No one can take that from you.
Remember that, Ada.

I will.

Are you still an alien when everyone around you is also an alien?
No, you are only an alien when you are “thrown against a sharp”¹ homogenous background.
You are always a hybrid, but alien only sometimes.
What of ghosts?
Ghosts are coming.

So many of us go through this world straddling space. It is not necessarily about being uprooted, although for some, “roots” are as abstract as aliens. Yet even within any semblance of belonging, however temporary or permanent, there is always an underlying angst for somewhere/something else. The here and now tend not to suffice because there is more.
There is always more.
We know this because we are comprised of so much...

A hybrid is slightly different from an alien. It moves in space and transcends boundaries more easily than an alien. To its advantage it is equipped with what biologists would call hybrid vigor; pulling strength from multiple, heteroclite sources.

¹ Inspired by Glenn Ligon’s (b. 1960), Untitled If I Feel Most Colored When I Am Thrown Against a Sharp White Background (1990), Oil stick, gesso and graphite on wood.
Suddenly it ended and Ada returned to her other home with her perspective in flux. Her eyeballs had grown large. They held more light, and saw more magic—because one cannot move around and yet remain the same. Hybrids have this thing about compartmentalization; the ability to separate all the parts they adopt. There is room for you to stay and amalgamate with me, maybe because one day I will leave.

Now she floats in between these spaces, suffering daily from hallucinations. At one point, some of her only existed in theory. Going “home” solidified these abstractions, upsetting the balance of everything she thought she knew. In the blink she is here, wherever that may be. In the next blink her mind has gone to that other place, the one that became real.

Learning to fly was the most necessary skill to acquire. To be okay at living in between, it was imperative that she remain light, leaving as gentle of a mark on the surface for fear it might crumble beneath her. This is how she became a ghost. Always a hybrid. Sometimes an alien. Borders are just pencil lines.

How can you divide something that is fluid (space)?

The whole world is mine.
What I am more interested in is the notion of the hyphen. How hyphens of a metropolitan cosmopolitanism say it—enthusiastically Hegelian manner in which it is deployed to speak. The problem is not the concept but rather the overly prescriptive and—dare I say it—enthusiastically Hegelian manner in which it is deployed to speak. These are the kinds of problems that for me are built-in with issues of hybridity that I have written about. Pointing out that hybridity, as an idea, has had its moment, and I think one could look back in history—and you’ve already sort of alluded to history—as it allows us to think about change in a particular way, over a length of time so we’re not necessarily a singular set of people bringing about change. It happens because change has to happen, to a certain extent. There is a way “the wave” and “hybridity” merge together in a subtle fashion; that the longer the time the ‘colonial’ spends in the mother country (to use those rather overloaded terms) the more they acquire an ability to speak. That, I think, is one of the lingering problems, for me amongst others, and we will get to the others about questions of hybridity in just a moment. The reason why I am linking the two is that one cannot but see that it is longevity that allows the fourth wave to emerge.

J.A.: I don’t share your disquiet with the notion of hybridity. I understand why that disquiet is there because I’ve tried over the last decade or so to not align my thinking directly with what one might call the “theorists of hybridity”. If there is a problem with hybridity, it is that for me, it participates in this hierarchisation of the world in which a certain kind of encounter is elevated above others and made into the equivalent of a sort of holy union. If you take the West African coast, it is clear to me looking across that coast that one cannot understand it without some resort to the notion of the hybrid. These are hybrid spaces in which Akans are mixing with Ga people. My name, for instance, is supposed to be Ga but it only means something in Akan, and is completely meaningless in Ga. In other words, the notion that somehow certain parts of the world are foreign to the hybrid seems to me to be wrong. I think what we have had all along are overlapping definitions of the hybrid. There is nowhere in which anyone exists in a pure state, as a kind of uncontaminated whole. So for me, the problem is not the concept but rather the overly prescriptive and—dare I say it—enthusiastically Hegelian manner in which it is deployed to speak of a metropolitan cosmopolitanism.

What I am more interested in is the notion of the hyphen. How hyphens come about: that seems to me to be much more suggestive, and it seems to escape some of the raciological trappings of hybridity. It is those raciological trappings that I can sense that you have a certain discomfort with. I do too, but I don’t share them because I don’t believe quite as much in the explanatory power of hybridity as maybe I did twenty years ago.

R.G.: I think you are voicing some of my discontent quite clearly, because a hierarchy is implied, and a hierarchy to a certain extent is stated. I understand that each wave, so to speak, acquires greater agency through the length of time that one is within this post-colonial space. Each generation acquires greater confidence. As I pointed out before your mooring, those hierarchies lead to problems. It means that a particular set of individuals can never quite reach this point of satisfaction, and one would expect that the next generation of artists after Ofili, they (artists of Ofili’s generation) are going to be the ones being pointed to. I think this is problematic. These are the kinds of problems that for me are built-in with issues of hybridity that I have written about. Pointing out that hybridity, as an idea, has had its moment, and I think one could look back in history—and you’ve already sort of alluded to history—as it allows us to think about change in a particular way, over a length of time so we’re not necessarily a singular set of people bringing about change. It happens because change has to happen, to a certain extent. There is a way “the wave” and “hybridity” merge together in a subtle fashion; that the longer the time the ‘colonial’ spends in the mother country (to use those rather overloaded terms) the more they acquire an ability to speak. That, I think, is one of the lingering problems, for me amongst others, and we will get to the others about questions of hybridity in just a moment. The reason why I am linking the two is that one cannot but see that it is longevity that allows the fourth wave to emerge.

R.G.: You see the hyphen is fascinating. When I think of the place where the hyphen is used the most, in the United States, it still carries a particular code of entitlement and power. Some people do not have to hyphenate themselves, others do. And so, yes, while the hyphen provides an alternative to the hybrid, it also points to the fact that you are what you attach yourself to. The hyphen in this case does become a form of attachment, rather than it being about ownership. I share with you the opinion that the question of race, to do with hybridity, is one that bothered me the most. It is however interesting to listen to you speak about the western coast of Africa and the idea of the hybrid. I’ll get back to you about that. But the thing is, when the hybrid is evoked the most often, it is when the West African coast—just to stick to one part of Africa—finds itself in contact with the Western world. That is, when hybridity is actually evoked; otherwise people talk about syncretism for instance, or probably just an easier term to use with regards to the way that cultures come into contact with each other and new things emerge. It is syncretic rather than it being hybridized. As I said, I would get back to the issue of West Africa, I agree with you; there is this thing about different parts of that coast just simply exist and people come into contact and things seem easy. Recently, I was with a group of people from Sierra Leone who have Yoruba names. These are just their names, that’s what it is. I met someone from Ghana who
thought I was Ghanaian because my name is Gbadamosi and I just see it as a Yoruba name. But he said: No, there are lots of Gbadamosis in Ghana. I think that is about human existence. It is very difficult for me not to engage with hierarchies when we start discussing the hybrid because somebody has to declare this form, this new accepted form, as being hybrid, and that bothers me.

J.A.: I've turned circles around this notion of the hybrid, since the 1980s. If we remove it from the field of identity politics for the moment and apply it to the question of aesthetics, the question of hybridity has been very important for us. It implies that we have necessarily had to swear allegiance, for instance, to the existing set of genres and modes of address and cultural practices which were available to us. People would endlessly ask me. Do you make art or cinema? Are you doing documentaries or feature films? Where is the place of the historical in these works, which clearly flirt with notions of historicity, but which also seamlessly attempt to weave them with fictional scenarios?

I would routinely say that we have a kind of agnostic relationship to a number of these genres. I can't swear full allegiance, let's say, to the documentary because most of the documentaries in its origins — because the modes of address that it sets up — have not been flattering to people of African descent. I have no reason, unlike some of my European counterparts, to feel that the history of the documentary is one that I feel kinship with. We all know and we've talked over the years about Anticolonialism of some of the early founders, D.W. Griffiths and so on. My point is this: since the history of the forms that I work with are already 'contaminated', an appeal to the hybrid becomes both the defining gesture as well as the conditions of existence of one's engagement with those forms. One of the ways in which one tries to see through the impasse is by working with what used to be called a 'recombinant aesthetic', whereby every element from these available narratives and genres was drawn upon, without swearing wholesale allegiance to them. Now it seems to me that in that sort of context, the notion of hybridity does have a use because it connotes a certain descriptive accuracy when it is applied. My problem with it is when it begins to migrate from that space and into the field of identity, and particularly into the field of identity formation. I disagree with the deploying of hybridity essentially for what Paul Gilroy calls 'racialogical purposes'. I don't want to completely get out of the notion of the hybrid, I just want to limit the area of its use and the values that one ascribes to it.

The reason why I say that I am much more interested in the hyphen is also because it poses cultural and intellectual challenges for me that I am trying to get my head around. Take, for instance, the notion of the Afropolitan. The notion of the Afropolitan has exactly the same sort of problems that hybridity had before. As a descriptive category, the afropolitan is trying to understand patterns of traffic, both cultural and ideological, across the world. It is trying to find a way of discussing and understanding how someone such as David Adjaye might come about: someone born in Ghana, raised in Dar es Salaam, and who works in Europe, et cetera. We have to find ways of describing these identities without then setting up a hierarchy in which they appear to be more civilized, more 'advanced' than the so-called 'common' African who hasn't had the experience of living in Dar es Salaam and other places. I can understand the ethical dimension to the problems we have got but I don't want to put the cart before the horse. Both terms are trying to understand patterns across the post-World War planet and we need to turn our attentions to how to do that without them becoming the problem that you are describing. What would you be happy with?

R.G.: If I just latch on to the 'Afropolitan', I understand the desire to coin the term, but what is wrong in this instance is almost a contradiction in terms, and I'll explain what I mean. It's not that we didn't have to swear allegiance, for instance, to the existing set of genres and modes of address that it sets up — have not been flattering to people of African descent. I have no reason, unlike some of my European counterparts, to feel that the history of the documentary is one that I feel kinship with. We all know and we've talked over the years about Anticolonialism of some of the early founders, D.W. Griffiths and so on. My point is this: since the history of the forms that I work with are already 'contaminated', an appeal to the hybrid becomes both the defining gesture as well as the conditions of existence of one's engagement with those forms. One of the ways in which one tries to see through the impasse is by working with what used to be called a 'recombinant aesthetic', whereby every element from these available narratives and genres was drawn upon, without swearing wholesale allegiance to them. Now it seems to me that in that sort of context, the notion of hybridity does have a use because it connotes a certain descriptive accuracy when it is applied. My problem with it is when it begins to migrate from that space and into the field of identity, and particularly into the field of identity formation. I disagree with the deploying of hybridity essentially for what Paul Gilroy calls 'racialogical purposes'. I don't want to completely get out of the notion of the hybrid, I just want to limit the area of its use and the values that one ascribes to it.

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rescue something from it, for a minute, by returning to that debate on "futurority" which afrofuturism is about. If you remember... neither term, either afro or futurist, were indeed new.

R.G.: No, of course not!

J.A.: The recombinant ethic there was to try and force two sets of seemingly mutually exclusive categories to talk to each other, and in the process, yield something new. The prize was that one gets to re-read questions of science fiction through the lens of race. In the process, one gets to re-read and re-transcribe notions of futurity. The implication of that, however, is the change that happens to the substance of the debate about what race constitutes the past and the future. Coining the term allowed one, for instance, to work across a temporal line that questioned which came first. We were able to say, as Greg Tate would, that when you look for instance at the slave sublime, the modes of existence that slavery threw up, certain narrative scenarios emerge: here is a narrative in which people are forcibly removed, relocated somewhere, and they now have to exist in this strange and foreign land and make their way through it. Greg always asked, what could be more fitting for a science fiction scenario then that? Once you turn to the genre, the futurist genre of science fiction, one finds echoes that apply and in some ways, better describe certain conditions that are supposed to be historical. It was a provocative way of allowing that form of trespassing into territories in which one would otherwise not go. I believe in that co-mingling. I believe in the idea that if you force two words or two concepts or categories to collide or converse with each other, it tells you something about both.

R.G.: Yes, but you see, I've been doing some work on Afrofuturism recently, and it's interesting being here in South Africa. Someone like Fagunwa, for instance, who wrote The Forest of a Thousand Demons—to read that book now is to know that people have always been aware of a particular type of travel that exists in the imagination. Out of this contact with these alien and alienated bodies, something else emerges. You know, Amos Tutuola also does a similar thing. Certainly, science fiction as a form, which is almost always seen as the domain of the white spotty male... it's supposed to be a geek in his or her bedroom, totally anti-social. Certainly it comes into collision with another type of existence, and out of that, comes Afrofuturism. I think Afrofuturism as an idea is really important. I think it's very useful. I think it does help to explain the inexplicable. If anything, it is a form of escape from a type of containment. The escape comes from saying: "Well actually, there are other possibilities. If this world doesn't work, then there's another one, somewhere. Not the religious sort of other world, but other dimensions where I can function."

J.A.: In the early 1990's, when it became clear that there was a cluster of concerns both in literature, in music and so on, that one could bring together to formulate a kind of Afrofuturist manifesto, what was very clear was that first and foremost, this was about trying to privilege forms of African address that are unpopular—non-traditional and not non-diegetic. In other words, this was a kind of bringing Marcel Griaule's Conversations with Ogotemmeli, African cosmological musings together with Sun Ra's music, with Amos Tutuola's novels, via a detour through Detroit Techno music. Basically, non-traditional, not-popular forms of black performative address. Very quickly, Afrofuturism became linked to them and I think unfortunately, it became overly linked with the notion of science fiction. Black science fiction was a part of that, and Afrofuturism told you something about the ways in which science fiction could be commandeered to speak other truths. Yet it was certainly not a sub-genre of science fiction, as it became for many people. The reason for that is to do with this protean possibility, when you force an untidy conjunction between these two categories. It was never wholly a futurist debate around questions of fictions; scientific or otherwise. It was really an attempt to pull together a lot more, both a sonic, cultural archeology of artifact and of sensibilities that were just beyond the pale. The kind of stuff that questioned what the borders and boundaries of what one could call "black culture" or "African culture." This was supposed to introduce the notion of the porous into those categories and force them to take on the itinerant, the outlaw, the troubador manifestos and ideas. I still believe that this is what happens when these protean possibilities are at their best. If you force two categories together in that way, it does begin to have a certain subversive value for forms of practice.

So, what is the connection with identity? Well, there are ethical implications in those forms of practice bricolage which can then become a discussion about identity. Yet only as what I would call "the second question". Too often that second question finds a way of inserting itself as the first.
R.G.: I do want to look at this questionable, tentative identity. This is of considerable interest to me. I’ll use a very recent example. I went to the first national conference on albinism in South Africa. I was with government officials and “activists” who were saying that people with albinism were fundamentally disabled from the moment they are born, and a host of other things. I just wanted to wrap up what I think is an issue of alternative identities, as suddenly I was forced into a position which is almost alien to the discussion we are having now. A situation where the person, their identity, their structure, everything they assume about themselves has to be reconfigured to fit into another’s desired paradigm. I am using this example as a probe, as to what you might envision to be an “alternative identity”; considering the existing complex understandings and relationships that you recognize in the making of artwork, and in discussing it. In engaging the world, whether we like it or not, we are able to, and made to, speak from a pre-defined platform of our own or others’s making.

J.A.: I’m really glad you raise this question and I’m very, very happy to have done this with you, Raimi. We should do it more often. To sum up, this is what I would say: we’ve got to coexist in narratives and they do have overlaps and affinities but there are clearly two narratives that are preoccupied with their own unique, self-contained questions. If you were to push me even further, what I would say is this:

Over the years there has been a way in which identity has been attached to the work I’ve done. People have tried to link it to the question of identity politics in various ways. I’m against that use of the term to describe the work, for the very simple reason that it closes off all the things I am trying to explore. I’m instead interested in a politics of identity; I’m interested in probing the limits of beings, the limits of identities or even how identities come into being because I don’t accept that they are natural, biological, or otherwise. I know that those “eternal categories” play into the formation but I don’t want to give them the entire responsibility. Which then means that the work is invariably about how someone could say to me, “Well, you’re a black person.” What does that mean? When did this come into being? Because I remember not being black! I remember being Negro, Coloured, African and all sorts of not-so-flattering descriptions! I’m trying to understand the traffic between these moments of naming, all of which have appeared “natural” and “universal” at their inauguration. We could have this conversation, no doubt ‘till we die, because we are interested in the same things, though we come at them differently. So I thank you very much and hope to speak to you again soon.

R.G.: Thank you, too.
Chronicler Okul Equiano travelled to Vela before the supernova’s implosion and wrote of bird symbolism amongst Vela’s secret societies. This document was long thought to be a hoax in academic circles as no material evidence of such symbolism was found in earlier Vela periods. However, recent findings from x-ray archaeological surveys beg one to reconsider Equiano’s account as a legitimate archive; it is even, perhaps, one of the last records of this bygone civilisation during its Accretion Age.

Comparative analyses of eight soapstone bird carvings from Late Iron Age Great Zimbabwe and similar artefacts from Vela affirm that Vela culture was directly influenced by Zimbabwean aesthetic and social concepts.

It is a widely accepted hypothesis that rank-based social organisation in the Milky Way galaxy first developed in the Vela star region shortly before its supernova transformation.

The Vela civilisation, which took its name from the abovementioned stellar mass, has received a large amount of scholarly attention because of its stratified social structure. However, the civilisation of Great Zimbabwe, the other half of Vela’s earth-star complex, has often been neglected in such analyses. Such omissions have done a disservice to our understandings of this early age and have entrenched a methodological bias that disregards earth civilisations in the fields of archaeology.

Records state that the religious leadership of the defunct Vela civilisation unsuccessfully attempted to arrest the nearby star’s advancement toward a supernova state. Failing to avert this cataclysmic threat, the population began to hold the priestly caste in contempt. The burgeoning political elite seized the opportunity to consolidate their leadership and galvanise class stratification.

During this period of social reform, exchange between the complex’s stellar (Vela) and terrestrial (Great Zimbabwe) units increased considerably. Amid emissary visits to their earthly confederates, Vela’s new leadership shaped their ideas of rank distinction. Evidence of this ideological shift is found in the emergence of human-bird symbolism in Vela high society. Hitherto found exclusively in Great Zimbabwe, this imagery was employed to represent royalty in its African context. The rising galactic gentry used analogous emblems to distinguish their group.

1 Otari Cruz. “Vela bird hybrids”. In Interstellar Archeology 183 (00), 134–142.
The conical structure of Great Zimbabwe's Great Enclosure was also built at the time of increased contact between stellar and terrestrial communities. Richard Wade, archaeologist-astronomer of the twenty-first century at Nkwe Ridge Observatory in South Africa, conjectured that this stone structure was built in the Shashe-Limpopo basin to mark the position of the progressively brightening Vela star as it went supernova.

As I argue elsewhere, one must consider this structure not as an astronomical instrument, as Wade has suggested, but as a politically motivated construction. It was, in fact, a monument erected to mark the end of the Vela-Zimbabwe complex, thereby commemorating the beginning of new societal orders both on earth and in space. The act of monumental commemoration, although rare in stellar communities, is a reoccurring practice amongst earth societies.

Whether it be the conical structure of Zimbabwe's Great Enclosure or bind relics from Vela's secret societies, studies of ancient Vela civilisation cannot fully be appreciated if the terrestrial component of its earth-star complex is not adequately considered. The same holds true for all other earth-star social complexes, past or present. The Vela-Zimbabwe case clearly illustrates that the role of terrestrial civilisations ought not be downplayed; for it may create blind spots in our galactic heritage.

I have been away from South Africa for the last two years and every time I visit, some new artistic / cultural venture has emerged. While government funding for individual artists remains as sparse as ever, new private galleries and artistic enterprises, as well as individual or collective initiatives are challenging the discipline of visual arts. Even while structural racial inequalities exist in every field in South Africa, including the arts, these are exciting times to be living and working as an artist in South Africa with what is possibly the largest number of opportunities we have ever seen in our history.

Interestingly, in recent years, visual arts productions have courted controversy and generated some of the—occasional—public discourse that there is on race-gender-class-sexuality representation. Some of these include the public criticism of the use of blackface in the "transgressive" works of Afrikaner artist Anton Kannemeyer by curator Khewzi Gule (2010) and in the subsequent responses defending Kannemeyer's modus operandi. Brett Murray's Spear painting of President Jacob Zuma with his penis exposed, which elicited public protests and death threats, and resulted in the defacing of the work in a Johannesburg gallery (2012); and more recently, artist Ayanda Mabulu's painting, Yakhal'inkomo (Black Man's Cry), which features Zuma trampling on the head of a Marikana miner, which was removed before the opening of the 2013 Joburg Art Fair. Much of this follows on the heels of a very public spat between political satiric cartoonist Zapiro (Jonathan Shapiro) and Zuma, who tried to sue the cartoonist for defamation for his representation of the president, pants open, approaching a Black lady justice being held down by other Black political allies (the case was later dropped in 2012).

1. The Joburg Art Fair has concluded its ninth edition, and the Cape Town Art Fair has concluded its first. South Africa now has its own pavilion at the Venice Biennale while ever-crudging the hope of a resurrection of the Joburg Biennale. Art South Africa, the country's leading art publication, is turning its head towards the rest of Africa and opening minds to the wealth of history and talent on the continent. The Mail and Guardian newspaper has created an online platform focusing exclusively on women, and the second year of the Mbokodo Women in Arts Award has recognised the immense creativity and legacy of South African women cultural producers.


3. This refers to the miner's strike at the Lonmin Mining Company in Marikana, South Africa, in 2012. Protests in which the miners were demanding increased wages turned into a violent confrontation with the armed national police force, which resulted in the death of over forty-four miners. Increasing evidence in the subsequent legal hearing shows that policemen likely instigated the violence and in some cases, even executed the miners while they were restrained.

4. This text employs South African racial categories: White, Black, Indian, Coloured. “Black” signifies indigenous African ethnicities, while “black” is used to denote the previously disadvantaged groups of Black, Indian, Coloured and Chinese (and instead of the term “non-white”).

5. Ex-African National Congress (ANC) Youth League President Julius Malema, ANC Secretary-
All of these cases point to problems of representation in post-apartheid South Africa, and necessarily highlight the intersectionality of categories of race-gender-class-sexuality. For instance, Kannemeyer’s use of blackface is seen by critics as that of a privileged White cultural producer utilising demeaning racial stereotypes of underclass Black African natives to critique fellow White Afrikaners. For me, the humour in his parodies can only be had if one disregards the bodies of his Black characters as props in his endeavour to expose White paranoia, and then aligns oneself with the gaze of the White characters, the White audience, and the producer. Murray’s controversy presented a unique case when the coding of visual artworks within the safety of the white cube was deemed offensive and disrespectful when forced into the wider culture.

At some point in the discussions elicited by these different cases has emerged the rhetoric of “freedom of speech” (which is equated with the ability to criticise whomever, however) being under attack currently in South Africa. This “freedom of speech” rallying cry has, to a certain extent, been racialized in that there is a persistent claim by White artists that they are not only being silenced, but victimized. Such perspectives align with what Critical Whiteness Studies scholar Melissa Steyn has called a resistant “White Talk” in South Africa, as White South Africans have to negotiate the change from apartheid privilege to post-apartheid redress. Characteristics of this “White Talk” include a pessimistic view on Black / African governance, the stacking up of negative tropes of the living conditions of Africa, the idea that Whites are disproportionately affected as a community by criminality, corruption and black economic empowerment policies, as well as the belief that when they criticise such issues they are standing up for more universal conditions which all liberal minds would agree with. Much of this exemplifies a spirit of victimhood that is persistent in “White Talk”.  

However, criticisms of the artwork of Zapiro, Kannemeyer and Murray have not tried to silence the critique of these artists directed at Black / African governance (which are often conflated), but rather, have tried to question the choice of iconography by the artists. This choice, which

General Gwede Mantashe (with a speech bubble that says “Go for it Boss”, South African Communist Party President Blade Nzimande and Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) chairperson Zwelilezima Vavi.

6  In my current PhD research on postcolonial strategies of masquerading in South Africa I elaborate on this critique of Kannemeyer’s use of satiric parody in his Pappa in Afrika (2010) book.

7  Ever since apartheid, the South African visual arts field has been dominated by White producers, galleryists, writers, “critics”. Historians, collectors and other mediators. White visual artists are unaccustomed to being challenged on their perspectives and aesthetic considerations by Black intellectuals and artists.


9  The South African 2011 Census found that Black-headed households earned on average an annual income of R60 000 while White-headed households earned per annum an average of R365 000, and that White men still maintain the most privileged economic spaces (highest level of education, the best jobs and the highest salaries).

10 None of these problems are particular to South Africa or the African continent. They are all problems that various governments have faced throughout history, and they manifest themselves in a multitude of ways in postmodern democracies. It is however important to note that critiques of these issues take into account their particularities in South Africa.
discourse. While the liberal media would like us to believe that these instances symbolise a fundamental blow to free speech in South Africa, contradictorily they signify a win for democracy—even the President of South Africa has been unable to bring any action against these public criticisms of his character.

The most recent case of the withdrawal of Ayanda Mabulu’s painting at the 2013 Joburg Art Fair indicates another situation of cause-and-effect that must be highlighted.11 The controversies around visual racial stereotypes have created a tender ground on which to tread amidst a climate of political-racial tension. The Fair’s organisers withdrew the painting from the opening, unwilling to upset governmental and private sponsors. In doing so, the organisers were able to do what our despot and legal system weren’t able to manage. Censorship becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in this private censorship of state criticism. This incident evidences the need for the constant unpacking of racial-gender-class-sexuality representations, so as not to cultivate an environment that dredges up easily accessible stereotypical fodder. This is not about dictating to artists what they can produce, but rather is about pointing to the need for wider education on the insidiousness of racism in visual culture. Black feminist bell hooks reminds us that “transgressivity” is not an end in itself and does not denote “progressivity”, as it offers little for upholding long-accepted knowledge systems. Rather, the keyword should be ‘transformation’: Part of that transformation is a critical creativity, which is not only outwardly critical of society and its beings and doings, but is committed to inwardly examining and probing its own modes of production, critique and contextual relevance.

All of the artworks discussed above circulate not simply as objects of commercial art, but are given currency locally and globally by an inherent criticality that we invest in visual artworks. In doing so, I like to think of artists not simply as “creatives”, but as creative intellectuals with a duty within the larger commoditized fields of visual arts, popular culture and global visual representations to “speak truth to power”, and thereby break down “the stereotypes and reductive categories that are so limiting to human thought and communication” (Edward Said).12

It is not often enough that as an artist one is able to be involved in national debates on identity and representation. As bell hooks aptly reminds us, this is not the task of any one group:

Creating new and different representations of blackness should not be seen as the sole responsibility of black artists, however. Ostensibly, any artist whose politics lead him or her to oppose imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, white supremacy, and the everyday racism that abounds in all our lives would endeavour to create images that do not perpetuate and sustain domination and exploitation. The fact that progressive non-black artists who make films, especially experimental work, challenge themselves around this issue is vital to the formation of a cultural climate in which different images can be introduced.13

Present-day South Africa presents such an opportunity and it is therefore not one to be taken up without serious consideration of our roles as cultural producers and visual makers.

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11 Ayanda Mabulu’s Yakhal’inkomo (Black Man’s Cry) which showcases President Zuma’s dogs attacking a miner and him stepping on another miner—referencing the 2012 Marikana mining strike in which least forty-four miners were gunned down by the South African police—was taken off the display before opening night. With headlines decrying censorship, it took a certain amount of time to realise that it was actually the organisers of the Art Fair themselves who had felt uncomfortable with the work and had thus decided to self-censor. Subsequently, veteran South African photographer David Goldblatt, in solidarity with Mabulu, decided to take down his exhibition of works, prompting a rethinkning of the act by the organizers. Mabulu’s work was reinstated the day after the opening, and the directors admitted that they had not considered the full implications of their initial decision. Where Zuma and the ANC have been unable to use the legal system to impose censorship, private individuals with economic interests are now doing so. Mabulu’s work did not merit censorship, but, I believe, the irresponsible use of Black stereotypes by artists such as Kannemeyer, Murray and Zapiro have created the present climate of racial tension around representation.


One of the lingering consequences of the failure of the postcolonial state is the inadequate investment in the development of education. With the rise of authoritarian and dictatorial regimes from the late 1970s to the late 1990s, the frontline attack was on academia and any form of intellectual life. The plethora of journals, magazines and reviews that were propelled by the euphoria of the independence period were soon to be consigned to obsolescence. Nonetheless, a few have been able to reinvent themselves, outside of the continent. Some of the well known pan-African titles—which focused on art, culture, politics and society—included Drum Magazine, Black Orpheus and Transition, and they complemented the scholarship that was coming out of the dynamic University presses from across the continent at the time.

My discovery of New Culture: A Review of Contemporary African Arts highlights the informational vacuum that exists with regards to critical endeavors in the past. Until Janet Stanley, Chief Librarian at the National Museum of African Art, Smithsonian Institute, offered to provide the library of the CCA, Lagos with copies of the publication, I was not aware of the existence of the review. Only eleven issues underline its brief existence over a fifteen-month period in the late 1970s. During this period in Nigeria a handful of defunct magazines stood out for their focus on the arts, such as Nigeria Magazine and Uso: Nigerian Journal of Art. New Culture: A Review of Contemporary African Art placed a particularly strong emphasis on the visual arts. It started with an illustrious editorial team that consisted of important artists based both on the continent and elsewhere as part of the diaspora, such as the American sculptor Melvin Edwards, the London based artist Taiwo Jegede, and Nigerian artists such as Demas Nwoko (founder) and Uche Okeke, who were subsequently joined by Ola Oloidi, the art historian and professor at the University of Nigeria.

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1 Volume 1, no. 1, November 1978, through Volume 1, no. 11, October 1979.
2 Drum Magazine (initially called African Drum) was started in South Africa in 1951 by Bob Crisp and Jim Bailey. It was a lifestyle magazine that targeted the Black population. However it became popular for its coverage of township life under apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s. Black Orpheus was founded in 1957 in Nigeria by German expatriate Ulli Beier as a journal of African and Afro-American literature. Transition: A Journal of Arts, Culture and Society was started in Kampala, Uganda in 1965 by Rajat Neogy as a platform for East African intellectuals.
4 Nigeria Magazine may be the longest running arts and culture magazine in Africa. It was founded in the 1930s and the final volume was in 1990.
5 USO: Nigerian Journal of Art came out sporadically, only managing to release three publications in three Volumes (one edition per year) between December 1995 and December 2001.

The review delved into many such issues such as identity, colonialism, post-colonialism, as well as history and tradition as they came to highlighting the new African reality, and the way these were engaged by the artists in their work. The key section of the review focused on the aesthetics of African Art and Culture, which propounded a return to the study of traditional art— which the founder, artist, architecture, poet and writer, Demas Nwoko (1935 – ) considered to be the ‘only one art stylistic idiom… valid to the African and the Blacks of African descent the world over, its origin being the too well-known form of traditional African arts, a form that was created and nurtured to maturity by African people themselves, with a history that dates beyond 2000 years.” In espousing a return to the past he also acknowledged the need for “a new aesthetic position relevant to our time.” To achieve these objectives, the reviewers covered the arts across the continent. The drawings by Sudanese artist Ibrahim El Salahi (1930– ) that were featured in the May 1979 issue are such an example, as they reached out to the diaspora. The eleven editions are filled with reviews and essays, in addition to containing a vibrant children’s section that makes palpable the dynamism of the cultural and creative sector of the period. The exhibition review I found to be the most illuminating was that of Theresa Luck-Akinwale (1934– ), one of the few trained female artists in Nigeria who still remains inadequately represented in the history of Nigerian Art. As such, the eleven editions constitute an indispensable archive of our cultural life in a context where such information remains difficult to find.

6 New Culture Magazine (November 1978), 1.

We create ourselves through language yet what we say at one moment can at any other be overturned.

Does this disrupt a constancy of being or reflect inherent changeability? Is language confirmation or distortion?

In the Akan language, knowledge was constituted anew with each retelling; elasticity of silence as important as authority of sound.

History as an affirmation of collective memory.

History as the constructed projection of the future. I will be, because I am, and was History as a narrative of subjugation and disruption: Pre-Colonial, Colonial, Post-Colonial.

The Definity of Language in the spaces of silence.

Geographies massed by land and boundaries.

Geographies separated through histories of language and becoming.

Geographies reduced by language to one or other Story: Hopeless Scar, Rising Renaissance.

The Authority of Sound, not the elasticity of silence.

The Cultural Encyclopedia as narratives of histories flowing in and out.

The Cultural Encyclopedia as mapper of continuities and disruption.

The Cultural Encyclopedia as collector of remnants.

The Cultural Encyclopedia as re-interpreter of language.

The Cultural Encyclopedia as re-examiner of boundaries.

The Cultural Encyclopedia as act of recreation.

How does theory flow into practice?

How does knowledge make itself felt?

How does language approximate what cannot be spoken?

How are foundations earth and not cement?

The Cultural Encyclopedia is a fifty-four volume Encyclopaedia that traces cultural trajectories in each of the fifty-four countries of the African continent, on subjects ranging from Art and Archaeology; Philosophy and Science; Drama, Theatre and Film; Politics, Sociology and Anthropology; Music and Literature; Mathematics and Economics; and Design, Fashion and Architecture. For now, the paradigm is that of country, though it is possible this will be overhauled. Every six months, a new Encyclopaedia—with entries ranging from classical to contemporary oratures, literatures, and art forms, to alternative mathematical models—will be distributed to schools and higher education institutions; excerpted on radio, television; in magazines, newspapers; and via mobile phones. The first volume, GHANA, will be launched at Da’art 2014. The printed versions will consist of: selections of essays from published and unpublished manuscripts, theses, and essays by leading thinkers from each country, chosen by a team of editors. The online versions consist of: conversations, portraits, writings on contemporary cultural output, and a database of links to the complete research. Throughout the process, workshops, seminars, and talks will discuss and explore expression, methodology, process, implications, implementation, co-operation and collaboration.

http://anoghana.org/cultural-encyclopaedia.
Inside, Immediately Outside

The impression that Jonathas de Andrade’s exhibition at Kunsthalle Lissabon begins or expands outside depends on one’s physical location: on the stairs of the building where the art space occupies an apartment, or on the street, if one looks up at one of the gallery’s windows. The ambiguity of borders defining an inside and an outside is first perceived spatially, via one’s own itinerary in, through and out of the exhibition space.

Making reference to an existing institution, the Museu do Homem do Nordeste in Brazil, de Andrade’s posters explore the possibility of creating an imaginary visual identity for the museum. Through this process, they open a literal, multilayered space to question not only how the museum historically participated in the construction of specific representations of the ‘Man of the Northeast’, but also how it could hypothetically choose to represent itself today as an institution. Who is the ‘Man of the Northeast’ in the museum’s name? Who could he possibly represent? Who articulates this representation?

Vânia Brayner observes that the Museu do Homem do Nordeste, a museum of anthropology and history created in Recife in 1979, is associated with Gilberto Freyre’s museological ideas and is historically linked to his engagement with the preservation of regional culture.  


3 “[…] museums of a new type: that gathered expressive values of the culture and ethos of local peoples in a Brazilian way.” Freyre’s desire for the constitution of regional museums in Brazil and more specifically in the Northeast (which would be, in his own words “[…] museums of a new type: gathering expressive values of the culture and ethos of people who are regional in a Brazilian way”) is first expressed in the twenties at a time of regionalist struggles to affirm a specifically “Northeastern” identity within the national context. “Drawing Spaces with a Space.” Freyre expressed the desire for museums that display not only traditional historic objects but everyday local objects, popular creations and local productions, and more specifically, a remark on the desire for a regional museum. When, in 1948, as a federal deputy, Freyre proposed the creation of the Museu do Homem do Nordeste, the project included the creation of a museum of regional ethnography, “popular art” and “cottage industry” (www.fundaj.gov.br/geral/diadic/g/diak-jhj.pdf September 23, 2013). The Museum of Anthropology of the Instituto do Homem do Nordeste was finally created in 1961 and in 1979 the gathering of three museums (see note 2, above) gave rise to the Museu do Homem do Nordeste whose varied collections include photographs, objects related to the sugar industry and slavery, domestic objects, tiles, works of visual art, ex-voto objects associated to the Afro-Brazilian religion, “things and arts that Indians made, and related material. The exhibition of long duration was inaugurated in 2008, and was titled ‘Nordeste. Territórios Plurais. Culturas e Direitos Coletivos’ ” (Northeast. Plural and Cultural Territories, and Collective Rights). It opened a space for questioning regional identity, and made space for difference, complexity and reciprocity in its museological discourse. Vânia Brayner
upon this set of histories and representations, de Andrade’s project invites the public to temporarily occupy an ambiguous and shifting position. One is not inside the Museu do Homem do Nordeste, but one is not completely outside of it either. The artist’s work engages with the symbolic space associated with its name and history.

**Distance and Proximity**

Instead of obliterating stereotypes, Jonathas de Andrade’s project sets them in motion. The posters juxtapose the museum’s name to photographs of a variety of male participants in different poses and locations, performing everyday activities. As a consequence, they ironically de-universalize the word “man” and reduce it to a marker of masculinity. How have these “men” come to participate in the project?

The methodologies adopted by the artist in the making of the work are disclosed by a set of framed newspapers pages and the projection of slides on which he took note of his interactions with potential participants. Ethnographic writing, in the form of field notes, is ambiguously convened by these texts. Their accurate listing of dates and places, in addition to their descriptive writing style suggest a distant positioning, possibly framed by a scientific perspective. At the same time, the announcements in the newspapers, which are meant to find “candidates” for the photographs in the posters, draw on some of the features stereotypically associated to men of the Northeast: a strong *moreno*, a worker, someone who works with his hands, a descendant of slaves.


5 “[…] What I really want,” said de Andrade in an interview, “is to dive into this stereotype and implode it from the inside”. Trans. mine. “[…] o que eu quero mesmo é mergulhar nesse estereótipo e implodi-lo a partir de dentro”. In José Marmeleira. June 28, 2013. “Corpos que deslizam num museu clandestino”. In Ípsilon, O Público, 12.


7 These are some of the words used by the artist in the announcements. Trans. by the author.

The formulation of the announcements is, I suspect, also meant to instill doubt. One particular message does not mention the museum’s poster but an anthropological research project that seeks men for an archive of nude photographs. The distance implied by the subjective position produced by the field notes is destabilized here, inferring an emotional or even a sexual proximity. An article by José Marmeleira on the exhibition suggests “a sexual ambiguity”. This palpable effect is produced, in my view, by the spatial interplay of photographs in which male bodies—dressed entirely or only partially, facing towards or away from the camera—are portrayed in a variety of positions ranging from distant to close proximity, from the whole to the fragment. Similarly, close proximity to the stereotype (operated through processes of selection and (self-) identification) appears to compromise the identity of the “Man of the Northeast” as the product of an “anthropological imagination”; thus engendering both visual heterogeneity and spatial dissemination.

**Negotiating with a Legacy**

Rather than shaping a plural or more inclusive image for the ‘Man of the Northeast’, the artist’s project primarily confronts the very strategies of representation of cultural identity embedded in museum practices. Visually juxtaposing the name of the Museu do Homem do Nordeste itself to heterogeneous images of masculinity, and symbolically mobilizing it in an art space located in a different geographical and cultural context, effectively dislocates the museum. The institution is thus rethought of as a place where representations and identities are negotiated through a multiplicity of perspectives involving various degrees of reciprocity. This “contact zone” to use James Clifford’s terminology, is crossed by a complex net of relations that engage, among other factors, specific historical legacies and power geometries associated, for instance, with class and gender.

8 Marmeleira, 2013.


Jonathas de Andrade’s take on regional stereotypes cannot be dissociated from the participants’s identification with some of the features of the representation, but also from the way that the men imagine they are interpreting regional identity when posing for the camera. “I seek a worker capable of representing the Northeast [...],” says one of the announcements. “He imagines himself in the museum’s poster taking care of closing a burst pipe,” writes the artist in one of the slides. The possibility for the public to intervene in the material configuration of the exhibition adds another layer of complexity to this dialogic process. A simple display system allows for changes in the positions of the posters. Some of them, selected from stacks laying on supports placed on the floor, will eventually replace others, and the slides can be placed on the overhead projector in whatever configuration best suits their reading.

The role of the Museum of Anthropology at the Instituto Joaquim Nabuco, which would in 1979 become part of the Museu do Homem do Nordeste, was described by Freyre in 1960 as being “[...] a synthesis of rural life of the rural North of Brazil or of the culture—culture in the sociologic or anthropologic sense—of the region thus characterized.”

Jonathas de Andrade’s negotiation with the historical and cultural legacy of the museum involves the creation of zones of tension between this imagined synthesis of regional identity and the material processes of the making of representations, which is always a conflicted and multiple one. If the first supposes an idealized position, the second engages entanglement, ambiguity and close contact.

Post-scriptum: On Translating and Writing, from Lisbon

I recall seeing works by Jonathas de Andrade on display in various cities throughout the occidental world: in New York, at the New Museum’s 2012 Triennial, in Lisbon, and in Venice for the Future Generation Art Prize at the 2013 Biennial. It strikes me how strongly these works relate to their context of production and to specific historical material. The diary of Ressaca Tropical (2009), found in the trash in Recife and the heterogeneous photographs to which it is associated, is one example; the 1970s educational posters in Educação para adultos (2010) that were used by the artist’s mother when she was a teacher, is another. The works travel relatively easily considering their geographical, historical and cultural rootedness. It is as if their complex structure somehow prepared them for it, as it is multilayered and often inhabited by tensions and ambiguities.

The ways in which cultural decontextualization may negatively affect the articulation of the meaning of an artwork were the subject of an article by Nelly Richard, who commented on Latin American art in an international context in the mid-1990s. Envisioning this process of transplanting as a form of intercultural “translation”, and the
Of Umbrella Terms and Definitions: Diversity Within a Framework?

Sakahàn is an ambitious exhibition at the National Gallery of Canada (NGC), which opened on May 17 and closed on September 2, 2013, and was conceived of as the first of the NGC’s planned quinquennial surveys of international indigenous art. The scope of this article will not permit discussion of the artworks featured in the show, so I will instead attempt to assess and place Sakahàn within the narrative of exhibition histories.

In theory, a curatorial selection process for a themed exhibition might deliberate on what is to be included, but in practice, it often begins by determining what to exclude from within a broad framework. Sakahàn’s principal concept is the “indigenous”, a term that is most frequently understood to mean “original inhabitants native to a land.” Notwithstanding the fact that the non-indigenous are rarely identified as such, those excluded at Sakahàn were metropolitan artists of non-indigenous descent. Sakahàn also excludes rural and folk artists who in some instances may share enmeshed histories with indigenous artists, such as India’s Kalighat and Bengali pataua (scroll) artists whose art shares a genealogy with that made by the indigenous Santal peoples. When an exhibition focuses on indigeneity, the curatorial process is potentially contentious because it must necessarily negotiate issues of race, identity and tangled histories. Each presents its own conceptual challenges. These complexities multiply when the term “indigenous” applies to “art”, itself a much debated and progressively ambiguous term, referring to bewilderingly varied objects and practices that engage with distinct concepts and make use of wide-ranging media. Traditionally, the inclusion of indigenous cultural objects and practices within Establishment or White Cube museum and gallery spaces has been problematic because of the seemingly oppositional approaches of Western...

1. Despite the fact that Merriam Webster’s dictionary recognises only the noun “indigenousness”, “indigeneity” is preferred here. At the most basic level, I think myriad attributes make up the state of indigeneity and it seems to me that indigenousness appears to suggest that a single quality or attribute qualifies the indigenous; I therefore prefer the term indigeneity. For an argument focusing on the distinctions between indigenousness, indigeneity and indigenism, especially one that takes into account post-colonial debates, see Jace Weaver’s chapter “Indigenousness and Indigeneity” in Companion to Postcolonial Studies: An Historical Introduction, Eds. Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden (MA): Wiley-Blackwell, 2004).

2. I use the word Western here, despite it being a problematic term to use in this context. It connotes predominantly White Anglo-American museum practices, which have traditionally excluded or at the very least marginalised cultural objects and practices by indigenous peoples within the West as well as non-Western practices elsewhere, whether indigenous or otherwise.

In this sense, it seems to me that it is precisely Jonathas de Andrade’s determination not to erase incoherencies, failures of translation and ambiguities that facilitates the circulation and intercultural reading of his pieces. These explorations are envisioned as significant to the very functioning of the artwork, to the articulation of meaning, and to its communication. While walking through the artist’s exhibition in Lisbon, or in writing about it, its very material construction reminds one of the “situatedness” of her/his own perspective. It is from this specific position that one begins to articulate relations between objects in space, objects and one’s own body; words and images, and images and memories, and to weave together a narrative— but one of many.

Author’s note: I would like to thank Jonathas de Andrade, Kunsthalle Lissabon, and Cristiana Tejo, for their generous support.

17 “No hay por qué pensar que esas faltas de traducción pueden o deben ser eliminadas.” “Al multiplicar ‘experimentos de traducción’, estas faltas se pondrán de manifiesto como una manera de llamar la atención sobre la problemática del sentido.” Translation Giulia Lamoni.


1994, 1013. Consulted online: http://icaadocs.mfah.org/icaadocs/. Richard’s argument takes the spectator’s repertoire [...] “Al multiplicar ‘experimentos de traducción’, estas fallas se pondrán de manifiesto como ‘failures of translation’ […] By multiplying ‘translation experiments,’ wrote Richard, “these failures will emerge as a way to call attention to the problematicity of meaning.” Many of the visitors of Jonathas de Andrade’s exhibition in Lisbon have probably neither read about nor visited the Museu do Homem do Nordeste in Recife. In Portugal books about the museum are hard to find (though one exhibition catalogue can indeed be found in the National Library). Yet one may consider these words from the artist’s website, referring to the panel of Educação para adultos: “This final collection detaches itself from the process that generated it, and it can be read according to the spectator’s repertoire [...]”

Sakahàn features over 150 artworks by more than eighty indigenous artists originally from Australia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Finland, Greenland, Guatemala, India, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Taiwan and the United States. According to the NGC, it is "the largest ever global survey of contemporary indigenous art." This is a claim that does not appear to be overly far-fetched but it nevertheless raises questions, particularly due to the use of the word "global"—a word that is much bandied about of late, being that it is divergently interpreted and that it continues to elicit mixed responses. Sakahàn may be critiqued for the omission of African and Middle Eastern indigenous artists: for example, the Berbers were not represented. The exception is Wangechi Mutu, a Kikuyu artist originally from Kenya, who lives and works in New York. One would hope that the next quinquennial will rectify such glaring omissions.

However, Sakahàn curators Greg Hill, Christine Lalonde and Candice Hopkins self-reflexively apologise for having neglected Africa, clarifying that the first of the planned quinquennial shows could not possibly do justice to indigenous artists from all continents. The curatorial trio felt that a superficial inclusion would be disrespectful and that they would prefer to wait until they have developed the necessary knowledge and expertise required to select indigenous artists from regions they currently do not specialise in. Given Sakahàn’s not insignificant reliance on curatorial advisors from a number of countries, one may wonder why the same model could not be adopted for Africa. At any rate, this is perhaps why—despite the NGC’s claim—the curatorial trio refrained from using the word “global” in the exhibition title, instead choosing to qualify the term “indigenous” with “international”. As Errington has pointed out in her essay, “Globalizing Art History”, terms like “worldwide”, “international” and “global” do not mean quite the same thing.

While Errington poses pertinent queries with Arts of the Arctic, an early programme of five travelling exhibitions of indigenous art from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Russia and Sápmi, was held between 1984 and 1995. With participation in Sakahàn triggering her memory of participating in Arts of the Arctic, Ingunn Utsi recalled how the earlier exhibitions’s production, planning and implementation taxed the personal resources of organisers. Some may regard Arts of the Arctic as being, on a smaller scale, a precursor to exhibitions like Sakahàn. Despite the existence of the Sámi Art Museum in Norway, perhaps what distinguishes Sakahàn and other large-scale exhibitions is not just their more expansive international scope but also the extent of the institutional support these receive when compared to earlier efforts.

3. Note from the editors: We agreed with the author that this critique should be attenuated in the aftermath of recent large-scale exhibitions such as Anselm Franke’s Animism (Antwerp, Bern, Vienna, Berlin 2011–2012), Okwui Enwezor’s Intense Proximity (Paris, 2012), Documenta 13 (Kassel, 2012) or Masimiliano Gioni’s Palazzo Enciclopedico (Venice Biennial, 2013). Far from solving the issues of the ambiguous relationship between works of contemporary art and anthropological or cultural objects, these exhibitions nevertheless emphasized an inclusive desire for non-art objects in the field of contemporary art.

4. 4. Arts of the Arctic, an early programme of five travelling exhibitions of indigenous art from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Russia and Sápmi, was held between 1984 and 1995. With participation in Sakahàn triggering her memory of participating in Arts of the Arctic, Ingunn Utsi recalled how the earlier exhibitions’s production, planning and implementation taxed the personal resources of organisers. Some may regard Arts of the Arctic as being, on a smaller scale, a precursor to exhibitions like Sakahàn. Despite the existence of the Sámi Art Museum in Norway, perhaps what distinguishes Sakahàn and other large-scale exhibitions is not just their more expansive international scope but also the extent of the institutional support these receive when compared to earlier efforts.

reference to “global” art history and art historians, similar questions may be asked within the specialised arena of curatorial practices in major museums.

The use of the word “global” in occidental museums increasingly appears to take into account the general perception that the prominent shows they have assembled thus far have had a primarily Euro-American focus. Undoubtedly, with changing and uncertain economies, such institutions are now under pressure to demonstrate a global relevance for their temporary exhibitions. Apart from the participation of artists originating from sixteen different nations, some Sakahàn artists may be called “global” citizens in that they have moved around and may be based in more than one major metropolis at the same time. Maria Thereza Alves, for example, is a Kaingang and Guarani artist originally from Brazil who now lives in Rome and Berlin, much like the Cherokee artist Jimmie Durham, who admittedly has well-recognised claims to international recognition; Mestiza artist Teresa Margolles lives in Madrid and Mexico City; the late Jangarh Singh Shyam, a Gond artist born in Pattangarh village in India, died in Tokamachi, Japan. The country of residence for several other Sakahàn artists differs from their country of birth. Does this mobility make them global/international artists? Or should it be the global/international relevance of their artworks that should determine whether they may be qualified as such?

Leaving aside the difficulties of deciding who qualifies as an international artist is the task of determining who may call him/herself an indigenous person. One could, for instance, follow national governments’s definitions of indigenous peoples. In Australia, the three criteria for determining who may lay claim to indigenous identity are descent (Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander), self-identification and community acceptance. In India, rather than a clear-cut definition, certain characteristics are broadly considered with reference to those who may request “Scheduled Tribe” status. These are geographical isolation often caused by inhospitable environments; poor sanitation, health and literacy; social backwardness; a closed economy and a distinctive culture, language and religion. Problems that are common among tribal people in India are demands for agricultural reforms; environmental concerns; rights to the use of natural resources; political rights, especially those that relate to autonomy and finally, timidity of contact. One might say that many—if not all—of these problems are shared by indigenous peoples the world over to a greater or lesser degree. Indeed, several of the artworks in Sakahàn engage explicitly with indigenous peoples’ distinctive cultures, languages and religions; environmental concerns; rights to the use of natural resources; political rights, and additionally, violence, which is often caused by struggles against oppressors. Given the diverse interpretations of indigeneity that different governments have adopted, perhaps the Sakahàn curators’s decision to address the definitional challenge by focusing only on those artists who identify themselves as “indigenous”, was a wise one. The reason Bengali patua artists were not included in the show was indeed because they do not identify themselves as indigenous even if others may do so occasionally. Nevertheless, since their art touches upon indigeneity, it may well be worth including such artists in future exhibitions. The Sakahàn curators seem open to considering such a move. Conversely, the question of whether all art made by indigenous peoples counts as indigenous art begs to be asked. While self-definition may prove to be a better basis than others, and one that to a certain extent sidesteps the inevitable minefield of race and identity politics,
it does give rise to inclusions that some artists and visitors may argue with. Sakahàn artist Nadia Myre, for example, averred that she would not necessarily consider Mestiza artist Teresa Margolles as indigenous. The Australian government and the Aboriginal people themselves emphasise that skin colour is not a factor for consideration in determining who may lay claim to indigenous identity. Despite this, indigenous artist Janelle Lalonde quotes David Garneau in the show’s catalogue:


Skeptics will find that the Sakahàn catalogue states not only the country of origin and the country of residence for each artist, but also the name of their tribe(s). Mellor, for example, is (self)-identified as Mamu, Ngajan and Ngagen. The listing of individual tribes is a politically strategic decision that is aimed at resisting colonial definitions and terms. It also, just as importantly, resists homogenisation and reminds us of the many individual tribes that make up indigenous plurality. favouring the U.N.’s use of the word “indigenous” over other less inclusive terms, Lalonde quotes David Garneau in the show’s catalogue:

> “The long gestation of the indigenous as meta-discursive beings means, for example, the end of traditional anthropology—in the sense of People’s in need of dominant others to read them into being. We read, write, and critique ourselves into contemporaneity. This is self-determination. Figuring out what is or who are essentially indigenous is no longer a Settler issue, it is an indigenous problem.”


8. For a discussion on some of the prejudices that further entrench divisions between art and anthropology, see Aurogeeta Das, “Metropolitan and Traditional: An Exploration of Semantics in Contemporary Indian Arts Discourse”, In Ethnographic Imagination, eds. Birgit Meyer and Rob van Ginkel (Guest eds. Andrew Whitehouse and Petra [t]iseke Kalshoven), Amsterdam 22 (1): 118–135.


In this sense, the curators show a keen understanding of the entrenched divisions between art and anthropology, between perceptions of the dominant Settlers or Colonisers of the indigenous “others”, and the indigenous peoples themselves. The only clearly non-indigenous person included in the show is Dutch artist John Noestheden, who collaborates with Canadian Inuit artist Shuvinai Ashoona. His participation raises the question of whether or not a non-indigenous person can create indigenous art. What is important is that Sakahàn appears to have invigorated existing discussions on what constitutes indigeneity. Indeed, as Lalonde asserts, the term indigenous should be viewed as a constantly evolving one. Neither the discussions nor the exhibition itself provide definitive answers, but that they give rise to revitalised debate is a sign of the exhibition’s relevance in Canada and elsewhere.

Given the increasing awareness of visitors and artists of the above-mentioned pressure on major museums to “up the ante” vis-à-vis global perspectives in their shows, curators are now also obliged to demonstrate a long-term commitment to diversity. Several Sakahàn artists questioned the basement location of the Inuit gallery in the
NGC’s permanent display, shrewdly wondering whether this somewhat marginal position reflected the NGC’s broader policy towards indigenous art and whether, therefore, Sakahàn was merely about fulfilling a diversity quota in the short-term. The full programme of events, including educational activities and the curators’s own enthusiastic plans for quinquennial global exhibitions of indigenous art indicate that such cynicism may be misplaced. In this instance, it will be interesting to observe how the NGC develops upon the impetus gained at Sakahàn. In her essay, “Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada”, Whitelaw traces the history of the inclusion of indigenous art at the NGC, which she dates back to the late eighties, when the NGC began to show the works of First Nations artists.10 Although this inclusion came relatively late, considering the significant indigenous population in the country, it was nevertheless more robust in comparison to countries like India, for example, where indigenous art is still often relegated to “crafts” institutions—a situation that is admittedly changing.

The NGC’s symposium, which accompanied the opening week of the exhibition saw spirited participation by visitors and artists alike. Speakers included Diana Nemiroff, who mentioned both the NGC’s Land, Spirit and Power, which she curated with Robert Houle and Charlotte Townsend–Gault (NGC, Ottawa, 1992) and Centre Pompidou’s Magiciens de la terre (Jean Hubert Martin, Paris, 1989); the latter, she felt, was a “starting point” for shows such as Sakahàn. Indeed, I would propose that the practice of having a large team of international advisors may well have started—or been cemented—with Magiciens de la terre. Barring smaller solo shows like the NGC’s Norval Morrisseau: Shaman, Artist (Greg Hill et al, 2006), what is perhaps most pertinent about Sakahàn is how radically its treatment of indigenous art differs from previous large-scale international shows that have featured indigenous cultural objects. While MOMA’s Primitivism (William Rubin, New York, 1984) did not even bother to name the indigenous artists whose creations were regarded as mere inspirational fodder to Western modernists, Magiciens de la terre exoticised indigenous artists and clearly set them apart from modern Western artists, problematically implying through the selection process and the modes of display that non-Western artists were solely indigenous, engaged with distinct subjects that did not relate to those that Western modernists grappled with. Consequently, and despite Jean Hubert Martin’s intentions to express the contrary, they were not portrayed as “contemporary” as artists from the so-called established centres of art.11

In contrast, Land, Spirit, Power celebrated the richness of art by First Nations people in Canada, but notwithstanding the appropriateness of the subject, the scope of the show was nevertheless limited by focussing it on a theme that has somewhat distorted and exoticized interpretations

10. Anne Whitelaw. 2006. “Placing Aboriginal Art at the National Gallery of Canada” in Canadian Journal of Communication 31 (1). However, Lalonde mentions in the Sakahàn catalogue that the NGC started collecting First Nations sculptures in the 1950s. Whether these were shown soon after acquisition is unclear but it does put into question Whitelaw’s identification of the NGC’s earliest acquisitions of indigenous art.

11. It is pertinent to emphasise here that MOMA’s Primitivism; Pompidou’s Magiciens de la terre; the NGC’s Land, Spirit, Power; and Sakahàn do not all necessarily use the term “indigenous art”. MOMA, not surprisingly—given the title of the exhibition—used “primitive” and “tribal”. Although Jean Hubert Martin sought to avoid the term “art” and “artist” altogether, and hence used “magician”, the exhibition material did use both “tribe” and “aboriginal”, Land, Spirit, Power, on the other hand, used “First Nations art”, and art by artists “of native ancestry”. Others frequently use the terms “aboriginal” or “native”. Another exhibition, one that I have not discussed here (Histoires de Voir, Paris: Fondation Cartier, 2012) uses the term “ naïve” with reference to interpretations of some of the show’s artworks, which include indigenous art from India. “Indigenous” now seems to be emerging as a strong replacement for all these terms, revising earlier connotations of previously used words and one that is viewed as politically more effective and more global in its dimensions. However, while there may be changes in the practices and objects that demand scrutiny (especially, perhaps, with regards to media and these influence terminology in some instances, it is predominantly the viewer’s interpretations that have caused changes in the terms used. In other words, changes in terminology appear to have occurred more because of shifting and continuums in the context of reception (display and critique).
Gayatri Spivak’s theory of “strategic essentialism”, which has since been disavowed but not entirely rejected by the writer herself, was touched upon in Jolene Rickard’s essay in the Sakahàn catalogue. In principle, Spivak’s concept refers to the practice of groups (ethnic groups for example) adopting a position of solidarity for a brief period, despite internal differences, for the purpose of strengthening their voice for advancing social action. Despite Spivak’s own reservations about the term being misused and misappropriated by others, this concept may be key with reference to Sakahàn, because one of the questions that was raised by visitors and participating artists alike was about the merits and demerits of “pigeonholing” indigenous artists in the distinct category of “indigeneity”. However, as Greg Hill pointed out, such limitations appear to be highlighted only when issues of ethnicity or race are involved, whereas other subject-based shows do not appear to be regarded as being in any way constrained on the basis of a thematic framework.

Rather than regard the term “indigenous” as a limiting label, the co-curators of the show have chosen to celebrate the richness of diverse indigenous cultures. The myriad perspectives, media and approaches adopted by the artists in the show testify that the effort is not only well-intentioned but to a large extent successful. Certainly, the artists of the show were pleased to be participating, despite the questions they raised. One of these was hybridity. At a roundtable during the symposium, Sakahàn artists were asked about whether they felt the concept of hybridity was relevant to the exhibition. Whether regarded as a critique of essentialism or as a cultural by-product of globalisation, unresolved debates about the term may have led to Samoan artist Shigeyuki Kihara’s dismissal of it, a wariness that seemed to be endorsed by her colleagues. Kihara felt that comparing indigeneity to hybridity was meaningless and offensive, and that it may even refer to the political inefficacy of the term. What emerges from both the show and the artist’s own outspoken articulations is how much more complex and specific indigeneity is—historically, culturally, politically and racially—than could possibly be explained away by hybridity, itself prone to essentialist stances. Instead, and despite the umbrella terms used in the show’s title, the artworks seem to defy categorisation. While Sakahàn’s use of umbrella terms continues to sit uncomfortably with long-term goals to integrate (not homogenize) indigenous art into a broader mainstream, it is this defiance of pigeonholing that the show expresses, and which turns it into a landmark show. Sakahàn means “to light the fire” in Algonquin. In the catalogue, Greg Hill positions himself in 2038, as if he were looking back at how Sakahàn will have lit the fire for future quinquennial exhibitions. While some of his ambitions seem undesirable (such as wanting the show to achieve biennial-type status), other contemplations are pertinent. He situates “indigenous” as a term and concept in diverse political and historical contexts, teasing out the specifics of how they developed in relation to colonial experiences. What is most useful is his reminder that the term “indigenous” must remain mutable, both as a term and for the meanings it connotes. The rest of us must wait to see how future quinquennial shows planned at the NGC will explore both the possibilities and challenges of that plasticity.
In 1492, Genoese sailor Christopher Columbus was credited for the discovery of the Americas for the Kingdom of Castile. A couple of years later, German theologian Sebastian Brant wrote The Ship of Fools (Das Narrenschiff) against the abuses of the Church. 1 Caravels and slavers, ships of discovery and ships of servitude alike, began crossing the Atlantic to conquer, capture or settle so-called Indians, lowly Europeans, and Africans, while Ships of Fools continued to crisscross the seas and canals of Europe to detain the madmen and other deranged denizens of the late-Medieval world. Was the same folly let loose on the Ship of Fools as was unleashed on slave ships? Was Le Passage de la Ligne—a traditional ritual on board European ships consisting in a pagan baptism conducted by a costumed Neptune upon crossing the “line”, i.e. the Equator—a ritual of the Middle Passage as well? On the line or in the middle, lives of sailors and slaves cut through. How many nautical miles and imaginary tales between the canals of Europe to detain the madmen and other deranged denizens of the late-Medieval world. Was the same folly let loose on the Ship of Fools as was unleashed on slave ships? Was Le Passage de la Ligne—a traditional ritual on board European ships consisting in a pagan baptism conducted by a costumed Neptune upon crossing the “line”, i.e. the Equator—a ritual of the Middle Passage as well? On the line or in the middle, lives of sailors and slaves cut through. How many nautical miles and imaginary tales between the canals of Europe to detain the madmen and other deranged denizens of the late-Medieval world.

This carnivalescape tentatively periodizes a first carnival phase in Europe, during the Middle Ages, fueled by servitude and feudalism and, a second phase in the Americas, powered by colonization and slavery. It identifies a third phase as a return to Europe through a process of retro-colonization, whereby colonial subjects (in the late 1950s and soon-to-be-independent Caribbean populations (with the independences of the early 1960s) migrated to the former colonial center (London) and its satellites (i.e. New York, and Toronto) throughout the first half of the 20th century. These movements gave rise to the Harlem Carnival in New York in the mid-1940s (ancestor of the present-time Brooklyn Labor Day Parade), the Notting Hill Carnival in London in the late 1950s and Caribana in Toronto, among other diasporic carnivals (in this context, carnivals of the Caribbean diaspora in North America and Europe.) This periodization ponders a subset of this third phase, or a fourth phase of its own, with the emergence, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, of immigrant and multicultural carnivals in the Nordic countries, (e.g. Sweden), following the migration of Latin American political refugees. If this carnivalesque charts a periodization of carnival according to the power dynamics of European colonization and its aftermath, however, the art historical alternative it presents goes beyond historical and geographical boundaries, and the counter-curatorial model it offers knows no creative confines.

Sailing the Ship of Fools: A Carnival Trilogy

pursues this longstanding investigation into the modernity of Carnival, the contemporary uses of the carnivalesque and the topicality of both Carnival and the carnivalesque as performances of protest and demonstrations of dissent, artistic practice and interventionist action. This trilogy of projects is the pendant to an ongoing reflection on Carnival’s many turns (as delineated above). It provides the basis for a re-reading of Carnival history starting from Modern times, and a re-writing of Carnival theory after the Russian literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin (author of the reference volume for the theory of the carnivalesque, Rabelais and His World1 and the Brazilian anthropologist Roberto Da Matta (author of the landmark title, Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes), 2 It also proposes an alternative genealogy of performance practices beyond the European avant-gardes of the last century, and an experimentation with display methodologies outside of the exhibitionary complex (as presented below). As a whole, it considers a radically different history of performance that leads not to the theatre stage or the gallery space but to the streets, with its marches, processions, parades and demonstrations. A history of performance that addresses not the few but the many, in keeping with the turbulent increase of global citizen’s access to and re-creation of public space.

https://independent.academia.edu/ClaireTancons

2  Eric Williams, Capitalism and Slavery, 1944.
4  Roberto DaMatta, Carnivals, Rogues and Heroes: An Interpretation of the Brazilian Dilemma (1979), 1991 for the first English translation (Notre Dame (IN): University of Notre Dame Press).
SPRING
September 5, 2008 / May 18 Democratic Square and Geumnamro

7th Gwangju Biennale

SPRING was inspired by the May 1980 Democratic Uprising or Korean Spring and analogized into the fountain, or indeed spring, of the May 18 Democratic Square around which it took place on September 5, 2008, on the opening day of the 7th Gwangju Biennale. A ninety-minute mass public processional performance of around 200 participants and countless members of a mostly local public with a sprinkling of international audience, it was also fueled by the unlikely combination of the Spirit of May and the resistant ethos of the modern carnivals and other public rituals of the Americas, from Trinidad to Brazil, and a hint of New Orleans and the French Caribbean.

Public assembled around the May 18 Democratic Square, watching in awe and surprise the spectacle of the first performances. Photo: Akiko Ota.

Karyn Olivier, Grey Hope. Photo: Akiko Ota.

Marlon Griffith, RUNAWAY/REACTION. Photo: Akiko Ota.

Mario Benjamin, Le Banquet. Photo: Akiko Ota.


MAP Office (Laurent Gutierrez & Valérie Portefaix), The Final Battle. Photo: Cheolong Mo. Courtesy of Gwangju Biennale Foundation.
The outcome of an ongoing dialogue with artist Marlon Griffith, "A Walk into the Night" performed a ritual return of black and Coloured populations once displaced by Apartheid-era Forced Removals, and extended an invitation to all current residents to join into the city center of Cape Town. A night walk whose title was inspired by a novel by Alex La Guma, it took place in the Company Gardens of colonial memory, on May 2, 2009, the opening day of CAPE09, the second (and last) Cape Town Biennial. The masquerading traditions of the Cape Town Carnival, a New Year’s tradition from the city’s Coloured population, underwent a radical transformation through Griffith's designs and display: performance participants, hidden behind screens, projected shadow images, eschewing prevalent associations between skin color and race.
**ANARKREW**  
**September 6, 2013 / Götaplatsen to Esperantoplatsen**  
&  
**ANARKREW: An Anti-Archives**  
**September 7—November 17, 2013 / Göteborgs Konsthall and Hasselblad Center**

7th Göteborg International Biennial of Contemporary Art

**Artist’s Notes:**

Since the 2011 Fukushima nuclear disaster, hundreds of thousands of Japanese have participated in protests against the use of nuclear energy. Even though more than two years have passed, the protests continue to take place every Friday in front of the Prime Minister’s Residence and National Diet Building in Tokyo. Of course, even if we wanted to do so, it would be difficult to participate in every protest each Friday. We have our lives, our everyday jobs. Yet I wonder if there is some way for us to participate in the protests whilst maintaining our lives.

Since I live in LA, I cannot participate in the Friday protests in Tokyo. I feel too distant. However, in 2012, as the anti-nuclear movement was gaining momentum, a leading artist and thinker based in Tokyo, Kenjiro Okazaki, tweeted the following proposal. He wrote, “Even if you can’t join the protests on site, in simply wearing a yellow T-shirt, no matter where you are, you can show that you are protesting.” (As in Germany, yellow is the symbolic color of the anti-nuclear movement in Japan.) This idea could be a key for continuing to participate in the protests whilst remaining committed to our responsibilities, no matter where we may be. Keeping conscious of this idea in our everyday routines is critical to this proposal. If we are conscious that we are participating in the protests, then the everyday itself could become a political action.

To promote such an everyday consciousness, I’d like to introduce a historical artwork. One of the most influential artists in post-war Japanese art, Jiro Takamatsu (1936-1998) was interested in how we could keep fresh eyes in our daily routines. One of his instruction pieces, Remarks (1974), is a proposal for liberating both the body and mind from daily routine. I will reuse Takamatsu’s universal idea in order to update and connect the political moment of Japan in the 1960s and 1970s to the current state of political awareness in Japan.

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**Friday, August 30, 2013 at 5 p.m. in Nakameguro, Tokyo**

I prepared yellow cloth, scissors, safety pins and drinks on a table in the gallery space. In a gesture against electricity dependence / nuclear power, I also turned off the lighting and air conditioning, providing instead candles and paper fans. Printed on a wall was Takamatsu’s instruction piece Remarks 5 with my own instructions added to it.¹

The day was extremely hot, around 97°F/36°C. Participants came and went throughout the day and night. They cut the yellow cloth as they liked and they wore it. Some participants didn’t touch the yellow cloth at all, which suggests that there were a number of different interests. Some came to observe the gesture against nuclear power, some came to observe a historical artwork and its reinterpretation, and some came to observe other audience member’s reactions to the work. Some were just passing by. Other participants sat and talked, some stayed for a bit and then went out into the city. However, all the participants—as well as all the people in Tokyo that day—perspired a lot. Divided across different positions, we nevertheless experience the same bodily responses. The project ran until midnight, but because of the heat I had to lay down for an hour’s rest. Having embarked upon a political action and reconsideration of art history, the bodily response of sweating was ultimately what remained.

This project is an extended project from the Japanese Pavilion at Venice Biennale, 2013.

http://2013.veneziabiennale-japanpavilion.jp

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¹ Jiro Takamatsu, REMARKS 5 (1974). Try to repeat the content of a specific consciousness as many times as possible. I have added the following above Takamatsu’s instruction: Try to keep conscious about a specific social issue, in this case “anti-nuke,” as long as possible while you are wearing yellow color, 2013. Photo courtesy of the artist, Aoyama Meguro, Tokyo and Vitamin Creative Space, Guangzhou.
Koki TANAKA
Precarious Tasks 7 (2013)

Note 9: TANAKA adds an additional proposal onto “REMARK 5” by TAKAMATSU below.

Try to keep conscious about a specific social issue, in this case “anti-nuke,” as long as possible while you are wearing yellow color.

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Jiro TAKAMATSU
REMARK 5 (1974)

Try to repeat the content of a specific consciousness as many times as possible.

Note 1: As far as they remain true to the spirit of the Remark, any number of conditions may be added, by anyone.
Note 2: The experience described in the Remark may be acted out by anyone, at any time, in any place, under any circumstances.
Note 3: Either one, or more than one, participant may act out the experience. The Remarks offer no conditions to mutual relationships that may arise among plural participants.
Note 4: Any object(s) may be used in acting out the experience.
Note 5: In the strict sense, it is impossible to repeat the content of a specific consciousness exactly, but it is possible to make an effort to do so. In terms of time, cyclic similarity is an integral part of the experience. Since precision is unattainable, however, the attempt should be the participant(s)’s goal. Physical measurements by clocks and other things are, therefore, unnecessary. Similarly, where time unrelated to the experience is involved, such time must be considered as outside the experience and cannot be included in the cycle.
Note 6: The content of consciousness to be repeated must be determined by the participant(s). The Participant(s) may receive instructions relevant to the Remark from another party.
Note 7: The Remark sets no conditions to bodily movements.
Note 8: The interpretations of these sentences and those of the problems that might arise from the things left unsaid, depend ultimately upon the participant(s)’s judgment.

*Above English translation from original Japanese text is as-is of Takamatsu's unpublished material. Which is published later in his book “Sekai Kakudai Keikaku,” (Project for Expanding the World) 2003 after he passed away.
London-based artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan’s recent solo shows include The Freedom Of Speech Itself (2012) at Showroom, London, The Whole Truth (2012) at Casco, Utrecht and Tape Echo 2013 at Beirut in Cairo. Abu Hamdan is one of the four artists comprising the group Model Court and is a PhD candidate and lecturer at Goldsmiths College.

John Akomfrah is a director, writer and theorist who creates documentaries, feature films and exhibitions. He was a founding figure in the influential cine-cultural group Black Audio Film Collective and set up Smoking Dogs Films in 1999.

Ruby Onyinyechi Amazic is a Brooklyn-based artist of Nigerian birth and British upbringing. She holds a BFA from Tyler School of Art and is a 2012–2013 Fulbright Scholar with a focus on drawing.

Nana Oforiatta Ayim is a writer, filmmaker and cultural historian. She has an MA in African Art History and is completing a PhD in African Languages and Literature at the University of Minnesota Press, 2011) as well as of numerous articles on the interactions of race, gender, sexuality, and nation. Before moving to the U.S., she lived in Germany and the Netherlands, where she was active in black feminist, migrant, and queer of color organizations.

Patrick D. Flores is Professor of Art Studies at the Department of Art Studies at the University of the Philippines and Curator of the Vargas Museum in Manila. He is Adjunct Curator at the National Art Gallery, Singapore. He has published works on Asian Art and curatorial practice.

Bouchra Ouziquen is a performer and choreographer born in Morocco and trained in France. Since 2007, Ouziquen has been a co-organizer of the annual festival Recontres Chorégraphiques in Marrakech.

Adriano Pedrosa is an independent curator and writer based in Sao Paulo. He was co-curator of the 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011) and is director of Programa Independente da Escola São Paulo (PIESP).

Dr. Simon Sheikh is a curator and theorist who lives in Berlin and London. He is Reader in Art and Programme Director of MFA Curating at Goldsmiths, University of London. He is a correspondent for Springerin, Vienna, and a columnist for e-flux Journal, New York. A collection of his essays is forthcoming from b_books.

Bisi Silva is an independent curator and the founder/director of Centre for Contemporary Art, Lagos (CCA, Lagos) which opened in December 2007. She curated the Dakar Biennale in Senegal in 2006 and co-curated The Progress of Love, a transcontinental collaboration across three venues in Nigeria and America from Oct 2012 – Jan 2013. Since 2011 she has been the curatorial advisor for Tiwani Contemporary, London.

Claire Tancons is a curator, writer and researcher who was a curator for the Göteborg Bien- nial in 2013. Since 2012, she has been teaching a curatorial seminar at IUAV University, Venice and she is the recipient of the 2012 Emily Hall Tremaine Exhibition Award.

Katarina Zdjelar (www.katarina-zdjelar.net) is an artist based in Rotterdam and Belgrade.
fleeing from conflict and famine.
irreducible the voices and
show how complex the situation in
a digestible form, yet here we
as their way of speaking. Usually
both peoples way of life as well

1. Accents say about our place of
birth; how we change and adapt
acents would be after a lifetime

2. How the history of somalia,
rather than the south of the

3. Affected Areas:

- South Somalia
- Staying in a
- Escaping War
- Safe Region

4. Competition against

5. Campaign against

6. Government since

7. The north of the country.
relatively stable legitimate and functional
governmental or economic infrastructure.
(2nd operation of United Nations operation
southern and Central Somalia. The UNOSOM II
mass outbreak of famine once more, largely in
1995, American Aid was removed causing a
famine continued in 1992, claiming the lives

8. Mortality had risen threefold in a few months.
High as the set emergency rate and infant

9. Reportedly 920,000 Somalis fled to neighboring
countries, 440,000 refugees found their way
reportedly 920,000 Somalis fled to neighboring
Central regions fled to the north and south.
Affected all of East Africa. Somalis from

10. In 2011, the worst famine was recorded in