

I CAN
CALL
THIS PROGRESS
TO HALT



I can call this progress to halt
is a project composed of an exhibition,
a series of screenings, presentations/
performances, and a publication at LACE
(Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions)

with
Ayreen Anastas & Rene Gabri,
Marwa Arsanios, Alejandro Cesarco,
Michelle Dizon, Shadi Habib Allah,
Sharon Hayes, Rosalind Nashashibi,
Nashashibi/Skaer, Georgia Sagri;

screenings looped weekly include
Chto Delat, Phil Collins, Jibade
Khalil-Huffman, Maha Maamoun,
Raqs Media Collective, Subversive
Film, Jalal Toufic;

presentations/performances include
Jessika Khazrik, Gelare Khoshgozaran,
Dylan Mira, Joanne Nucho, and Kandis
Williams with Josh Johnson

& publication contributors
Ayreen Anastas & Rene Gabri,
Marwa Arsanios, Alejandro Cesarco,
Chto Delat, Michelle Dizon,
Shadi Habib Allah, Adham
Hafez, Shoghig **Suzy Halajian** Halajian, Sharon
Hayes, Jibade Khalil-Huffman,
Jessika Khazrik, Gelare
Khoshgozaran, Dylan Mira,
Rosalind Nashashibi, Joanne
Nucho, Raqs Media Collective,
Georgia Sagri, and Jalal
Toufic, Kandis Williams.

the project borrows its title from Ayreen
Anastas & Rene Gabri's ongoing work,
The Meaning of Everything (2008).

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Suzy

Halajian

A dark, mysterious road opens the scene. An image zooming in on a map points us to the site of the militarized Sinai Peninsula where the action unravels. Shadi Habib Allah's video work, *Dag'aa* (2016), leads us into the unknown territories where a group of armed Bedouins follow the unruly laws of the desert, where rules and signs have a different order. The codes, symbols, and commands communicated in the dusty territory are beyond a viewer's knowledge, but appear perfectly legible to the Bedouin smugglers who remain invisible yet disciplined in their communication tactics. A covert exchange out of bounds is presented through grainy and undecipherable shots, pushing against what is plausible, acceptable, or even tangible. Fire, rain, snakes, hissing, and howling all animate the isolated scenes, along with the men who discuss life, death, and the harsh terrain. The work points to a space that operates outside of the known, or visible, political and economic realities, as the Bedouins tactically evade military patrols while remaining underground. This presents another way of surviving, another way of being.

The project, *I can call this progress to halt* at LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions), considers gestures of protest, unrest, and incendiary exchange as the starting point to a conversation.¹ It consists of an exhibition, a series of weekly screenings, presentations, performances, and a publication. The participating artists and filmmakers' multimedia works and formats represent images of conflict and strife that are often stripped of their original or intended context.² Considered together, they function as dispersed, floating representations of contested moments that refuse to stand fixed, and instead circulate and vehemently invoke another engagement with the world.

1

I can call this progress to halt was developed through extensive travel and research throughout the Middle East and North Africa between 2015–16. The project does not presume that the researcher has authority or universal awareness of the political turmoil in the region. Instead, it wishes to enter more gently, taking an approach of “counterbalance,” after early twentieth-century thinker Simone Weil who believed that whatever the situation was, it had to be offset in order for us to see the larger picture. Drawing from notions of dissidence in dictatorial regimes, the project aims to focus less on the overtly political, and more on the philosophy that underpins and endures in culture at these pivotal moments of societal change.

2

Alejandro Cesarco's installation takes on a different approach and rather offers a poetic introduction to the show. Composed of a fragmented text interspersed with reconstructed memories, the work proposes conjectures about the past that are balanced against promises of the future.

The project borrows its title from a drawing with the words “I CAN CALL THIS PROGRESS TO HALT” (2008), a work from Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri’s long-term, evolving collaboration, *The Meaning of Everything*, a manifestation of their research through a series of notes, questions, drawings, and diagrams that trace and map the questions they have shared over the course of their work and life.³ Here at LACE, the words reappear in delicate graphite pencil on the entrance wall, offering both a suggestion and an assertion, depending on how the “I CAN” is read. Within the presentation, the exhibited works, screenings, performances—as well as texts, images, poems, and tangents that extend out from the artists’ research—demand that the notion of progress to be called upon, re-thought, and challenged, in particular its capitalist logic of advancement. They assert that the effects of progress must be analyzed on an individual level as well as in a national and global context.

Borrowing the “I” in Anastas and Gabri’s project title, doesn’t forgo the “We” that must be shared in the larger conversation, but rather attempts to maintain a crucial tension between building the “we” based in a community of protest and resistance and the “I” that stems from the personal and the individual, raising questions around responsibility and organizing. Jessika Khazrik’s new sculptural sound piece, *C%/STAR Lesson 1*, calls upon this notion of progress directly and adamantly, a continuation of her work involving dances performed by scientists and engineers. As a computer circulates within the exhibition space, “I don’t want to teach the army...” is repeatedly voiced aloud while its screen shows that of another computer being degaussed; a moving object in protest affected by a human voice, a “command line that is being performed.”⁴

How the image is employed, understood, and analyzed in these works, while taking account of the current political moment, is pivotal. Many of the artists reference specific political and historical sites and engagements while oscillating between different chronological and performative layers.

3

Anastas and Gabri’s *The Meaning of Everything* takes its title from a series of books of the same name.

4

Email exchange with the artist, February 2017. Khazrik: “This automated technoperformance is part of a series of interdisciplinary works that look into the epistemological, ethical, and spatio-political spheres of value of the military and their influence on the academic institution, as well as the political economy of modern science and

computation. Building upon the development of the C2 command and control functions that are defined in ‘military science’ as ‘the exercise of authority and direction’ through the annexation of first ‘Communication’ followed by ‘Computers’ and ‘Collaboration’ into the acronym, the laptop was programmed to perform only one script and run without a hard-drive. The work circulates in the space carried over the body of an iRobot that was taught parameters of the exhibition space; it powers off each day in a different location depending on the amount of dirt it gathers in the space.”

Temporally distant events such as the Watts Riots of 1965 and the revolts in the Paris banlieues of 2005 are taken up by artist Michelle Dizon in *Civil Society* (2008), while the collaborative artistic duo Nashashibi/Skaer weave together photos by Margaret Thatcher and the landscape painting *Flight of the Magnolia* (1944) by Paul Nash in their film *Our Magnolia* (2009). Many of the works are documentary-based, expanding upon the ambiguity, and emphasizing curator Maria Lind and artist Hito Steyerl's co-written statement, "The documentary's ambivalent nature, hovering between art and non-art, has contributed to creating new zones of entanglement between the aesthetic and the ethic, between artifice and authenticity, between fiction and fact, between documentary power and documentary potential, and between art and its social, political, and economic conditions."⁵ As such, *I can call this progress to halt* does not situate itself within a single locale—rather, it considers a multiplicity of sites and temporalities through the layering of physical and imagined spaces, where timely topics can sidle in as wanted companions through the lens of the visual.

Indeterminate spaces are expanded, abolishing the truths of any possible version and privileging the imaginary. Georgia Sagri's installation, *Sunday Stroll*, performs this ambiguity through a collection of images of recent news events collected by the artist. Reordering and changing them throughout the show, Sagri's performative script muddles whether a past presentation has taken place at some point, if the images depict historical documents, or if they are depictions of factual events in the present. Time and news are layered and rethought. Sagri is invested in the experience of reinterpreting events repeatedly to reveal things that cannot be communicated, following the logic of Gilles Deleuze: "one ousts because one repeats."⁶ Repetition allows for new meanings to be created by eliminating what is retained in one's memory — not to bring the story forward, but because the story is too harrowing to be communicated otherwise.

5

Maria Lind and Hito Steyerl, "Introduction" for Exhibition Catalog, *The Greenroom: Reconsidering the Documentary and Contemporary Art*, Hessel Museum, CCS Bard, September 27, 2008–February 1, 2009 (Berlin: Sternberg Press and Annandale-on-Hudson: Center for Curatorial Studies and Hessel Museum of Art), 16.

6

Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition* (1968), trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 15.

call

this

Truth understood through official facts, archival and media sources, and objective claims is complicated and reconsidered. The image, as it can be employed to advance specific political narratives and agendas, is also thrown into question. Considering the politics of visibility and visibility, the project asks: What is forgotten, consumed, or destroyed along the way for both those represented and those left unrepresented by so-called advancement? And the more common inquiry: Whose loss is whose gain? The artists do not conceive the image as simply what is seen, nor as something representative of truth; rather, images are made up of a particular convergence of histories, subjects, discourses, contexts, associations, inquiries, and their complex relationships to one another.

Acknowledging our existence in a particularly mediated culture, artists employ various strategies of replication, dislocation, and obfuscation to explore the idea of the real. They re-use and re-frame documents, facts, and found footage to narrate their stories, as well as those of their communities. The works put forth objections to a simplistic understanding of representation, disorienting viewers to question the construction of their subjectivity and the constructed nature of cultural forms, in order to problematize their participation in political identification. Understanding of this material is framed as malleable, as images are deemed full of holes, partial, and as active producers, rather than sites, of knowledge.

Rosalind Nashashibi's poetic video work, *Electrical Gaza* (2015), presents everyday scenes of Gaza, starting and ending with images of the Rafah Crossing between there and Egypt. Common occurrences such as men singing in a room, children wandering the streets, taxis maneuvering, horses being washed in the sea, are recorded and manipulated, challenging expected notions of a war-torn locale. The montaged scenes, shot prior to Israel's assault on Gaza in 2014, are even more charged by the intermittent musical score and the transitions from animation to reality interspersed throughout. Nashashibi's

experimental documentary format dissects reality rather than representing one version of it. Similarly, the artistic duo Joana Hadjithomas and Khalil Joreige are not interested in “images of war but in what war does to images.”⁷ *Electrical Gaza* and other works provide a space for the political as a site of investigation that does not resemble the more defined parameters of candid documentary productions. Utilizing such deconstructive and disruptive strategies, artists call for a halt. This interruption, this blockade, provides the space necessary to reflect on constructions of political and social inequities that will not be accepted as the status quo. They uphold the agency of the individual and the collective act, to challenge notions of progress that are subsumed within a neoliberal and colonial agenda.

Effects on the individual, choreographed body, in motion and in action, are also analyzed, as the larger processes of protest and dissensus are scrutinized through the everyday acquired gesture. The notion of progress is considered through the labor of the dancer’s body in Marwa Arsanios’s video, *Olga’s Notes, all those restless bodies* (2015). Through dance, the work narrates a story composed of collected notes, written while reading *Al-Hilal* magazine—an Egyptian publication from the 1960s—and thinking about the disciplined body, labor, and the building of nation states. Arsanios considers the history of President Gamal Abdel Nasser’s modernization program and a new ballet school opened in Cairo in 1963 with goal of creating a better, trained body for the country. Weaving three very different dances—ballet, modern, and pole dancing—the artist’s voice narrates the relationship between exploitation and the body’s position of labor as molded by constant training: “the progress of the project is its very violence or the violence of progress.”⁸ She draws a provocative parallel between the damage done to the dancer’s body after years of stress and the emphatic nation-state building that accompanies capitalist ideology, an ongoing war between modernity and oppression.

7
Maria Hlavajova, Jill Winder, and
Cosmin Costinas, “In Place of a Foreword: A
Conversation with Rabih Mroué” in *A BAK
Critical Reader in Artists’ Practice* (Utrecht: BAK,
basis poor actual kunst, 2012), 17.

8
Narrated text from the video, *Olga’s Notes, all
those restless bodies*, 2015.

We also witness declarations of love and desire—both political and gendered—in a shared public space though Sharon Hayes’ video work, *I Didn’t Know I Loved You* (2009), developed in collaboration with participants from Istanbul who engage in a range of emotionally charged public speech acts in the heavily trafficked space of İstiklal Avenue. The work brings to mind political theorist Chantal Mouffe’s idea of agonistic confrontation, where the individual is “an ‘unencumbered’ self that exists prior to and independently of society... as a site constituted by an ensemble of ‘subject positions,’ inscribed in a multiplicity of social relations, the member of many communities and participant in a plurality of collective forms of identification.”⁹ Similar to Hayes’s interests, the project attempts to embody a self-reflexivity, considering how texts, words, images, and sounds are subsumed by a variety of political struggles in various localities, all directly tied to ideology.

I can call this progress to halt presents video, images, sound work, installation, and both new and appropriated texts and visual stories, to critically watch, listen, and understand the complex stories of scripted and imagined acts of protest and withdrawal. By deconstructing the images and their movement, circulation, and decontextualization, the works allow for viewers to create their own readings and interpretations from the various contexts, combined with what they have already seen and stored in their memory, and the traces or messages collected along the way.¹⁰ This allows for a productive and ever-shifting layering of material that leaves a viewer witness to the performative gestures, symbols, and sounds—now removed from the events through, and from which, they originated—offering material for another reality, an imagined world, a life that could be lived in another way.

—Suzy Halajian

9

Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London and New York: Verso, 1998), 97.

10

The project further considers the “screen,” a term expanded upon by critical theorist Kaja Silverman in *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York and London: Routledge Press, 1996) to describe the repertoire of images that form the visual unconscious and through which new understandings and perceptions take shape.

halt

Rosalind

Nashashibi



Rosalind Nashashibi narrates crossing from the West Bank into the Gaza Strip with her crew for the filming of *Electrical Gaza* (2015).

I'm with Emma the cinematographer and Kate the production manager. We are in the backseat of a taxi driving us from the West Bank, Palestine, to the Israeli border checkpoint at Gaza.

On arrival, we are stopped in the carpark outside the border by Israeli soldiers requesting ID and permits; after checking our passports and IDF-cleared press cards, they wave us in. The terminal is completely empty, a spotless hi-tech facility with pristine, metal surfaces. Clearly, they have the time to keep it exactly as they like it. Inside the terminal there is row of high booths, vacant under bulletproof glass. We wait, and presently a woman appears out of nowhere, steps into one of the glass boxes and turns to look at us. We move towards her.

An Account of Crossing the
Border from Israel into the Gaza
Strip, Palestine, on Thursday,
June 12, 2014¹

"One at a time!"

I pass through the gates first, which open and lock in sequence. I am under her window putting my passport into the slot with my Israeli government press card on top of it, exactly as I'd been told by the Dutch photojournalist.

She lets me in.

Emma is called forward.

"What is your paternal grandfather's first name?"

It takes some time for Emma to remember it—it's Peter. She is allowed in, and finally Kate.

We hesitate, faced with crossing the empty space of the terminal leading to a wall lined with identical closed doors. There are no others to follow, no personnel in sight, and yet they are there, and alert to every unconventional behavior. Eventually one of the doors displays an illuminated green sign and we go to it. The feeling is of a military detention center in an enchanted sleep. I push the door open, but don't remember the sequence of gates and doors after this. At some point, there is a tall turnstile, much too narrow for our suitcases and backpacks. I press an intercom bell.

"Ken."

"Please can you open the door? We have a lot of luggage."

Silence.

Another pause.

A green light shows above the door.

We push it open and see a large X-ray machine. This wasn't in

*

An earlier account of this crossing forms part of a text that was first published as "The Custodian and the Fixer" in *Allegory of the Cave Painting*, ed. Mihnea Mircan & Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei (Milan: Mousse, 2015).

¹

This was the day that three teenage settlers were kidnapped from the West Bank settlement of Alon Shvut in Gush Etzion. The kidnapping and shooting of the boys precipitated the Israeli bombardment of Gaza that summer, known as Operation Protective Edge.

the accounts we had read.

We quickly research on our phones: it will be harmless for our twenty-two rolls of 16mm film so we pass our bags through. There is a man, in the open with whom we are in direct contact—he could be Arab, or more likely Druze—but he obeys Hebrew commands from the intercom and searches the bags manually. Another turnstile at some point, this time we maneuver our luggage through without asking, not wanting to anger the gods by appealing to them twice.

Now we emerge onto a vast ramp in a high bunker, walking under invisible eyes. I find this passage the most difficult of all, and try to move neither too fast nor too slow. At the end, we catch up with a Palestinian mother and son.

The five of us are facing the huge back wall of the bunker, with a large pair of doors in it, locked. No one attends. We all wait in silence, noses to the doors until they show a green light above, and then we pass through.

The doors open to bright yellow sunlight.

We are at the start of a long, caged walkway, known as the “tunnel,” which cuts through a sunbaked no man’s land of rubbish, stones, and scrub. We can see Bedouins tending goats in the distance. Waiting for us are two Arabs, each with a buggy, wanting payment for transporting us along the walkway. No point in negotiating: we travel with them in one buggy, and our luggage goes in the other.

After the “tunnel,” we arrive at the border of the Palestinian Authority.

We are greeted by a friendly but confusing welcome. The policeman asks, “First time in Gaza?” But I hear, “Stamp your passport?” So I reply with a polite, “No!” (which, by chance, was the right answer to his actual question—I had been in Gaza when I was four, for a picnic on the beach). Not being able to communicate easily with the border policeman, I call our fixer in Gaza and hand over the phone. After he and the fixer talk, we are told to go away and wait, “It’s OK.” After fifteen minutes, both parties expecting the other to arrive, the fixer calls again and I hand the phone back over. The policeman explains that, since the reconciliation between

Hamas and Fatah, taxis can now drive from the Hamas border to the Palestinian Authority border and pick up visitors. We had been led to expect a mile-long walk between the two factions' edges, under the sun and over an unfinished road with our bags in hand.

The fixer, Sarhan, comes to the border in a taxi, and from then on we don't deal with any officials except through him. At the Hamas border, he shows only our passports and Hamas permits, and tells me to put away my Israeli government press card. Our luggage is not searched.

Once we begin driving again, I ask Sarhan if we have entered Gaza, and he smiles and says, "Yes, you made it."

We are now cruising on a Gazan road, now in Jabalia Camp, now Gaza City, now at the Mediterranean, the sea in Palestine!

I wish I had filmed this last part of the crossing, the first drive through Gaza, but we were so concerned with crossing the border and not failing that no thought of past or future came to mind. I would put a music score over that bumpy ride, something similar to one of the old Disney tunes showing that we had entered a magical place; because magical places like Gaza are sealed off from the world, they can't be entered without a coincidence of several opaque and ungovernable factors, sealed off from time and steeped in layers and layers of protocol. In Gaza, every street has a dead end, and yet it is open to the sea all the way along—a sea that turns out to be locked. It is impossible to control if and when you will find a way into that zone, and, for almost all Gazans, it is impossible to find a way out.

Shadi

Habib

Allah

Ali picked up a call from another friend, an elderly Syrian Bedouin named Noor who told Ali he needed a favor, right at that moment. I went with Ali and we drove to the suburbs on the outskirts of Amman. Noor was standing outside in the dark with a woman in full black veil and her seven year-old daughter—he approached our car and leaned in the window from the driver’s side. He hesitated when he saw me but Ali assured him that I was a new brother.

Noor told Ali that this Iraqi woman had no legal documents. We had to take her and the child up north, to a farm close by the Iraqi-Saudi border where her husband was hiding from a Bedouin clan because he had killed one of their people. They were looking for revenge. The husband had no papers in Jordan and Noor had no legal documents either.

The three of them got in the backseat, and Ali drove us east. Ali handed me two pills. He said they are called *barazeeli*, meaning “Brazilian” in Arabic, and would help me stay awake since we hadn’t slept for the past few days. I popped them both. Two hours later, driving on that long stretch of empty road, my chest began to hurt and my heart was beating fast. I couldn’t breathe. Ali noticed, realizing it may have been the pills. He asked if there was any hospital around, and Noor replied that the only things out there were military outposts. They would certainly have a clinic, but we couldn’t go because of the status of our passengers. My situation grew worse. Ali drove for the closest outpost, ignoring Noor.





halt

Alejandro

Cesarco





I

can

Dylan

Mira

call

this

APOLLO

viscous speed rushing to the wall of martial sky
What gets through the gate undoing not yet done
IN THE VERTICAL SCROLL IN THE SOFTWARE GLITCH
AFTER THE STATE IS STATELESS
YOU SAID A PSYCHIC SAID, OH I SAID IT, WE WERE NEVER MAN, THE PART OF ME
THAT KNOWS HOW LITTLE IT IS TO BE ONE

BU

THE DANCE OF DARKNESS BEGINS IN
THE SQUAT BODY AND AGAINST THE LONG STRAIGHT LINE OF THE WESTERN BALLET

some songs are only the sound a mouth makes after the word

a hole in the background a glove of bright juice
in the second dimension we can touch eye to eye
We were on the joke and riding it to the walls
the peeled moment lays out between

all your things are yellow

The Hong Kong Shanghai Banking Company is started
in 1865 with profits from the opium war. it is
one of the largest private banks in the world

i keep calling it the 90's
but it was up until this morning
yours was a history that really pulled the room together between nothing and something the
speed your plastic body
is she or isn't she?
ambivalences source a base note to build on

FACT FROM FACTUM FROM FACTUS FROM FACERE, THE LATIN MEANING TO MAKE,
TO DO until the 16th century its used to
describe committing a crime

MY MOTHER wearing Opium in the 80's bought at the duty free there is a picture never taken of
leaning against a 4 ft. display bottle on the salesfloor,
he said to the girl that there was not real perfume inside just water
then whats it for?
so we can see it better

There is a shop that lays gold bars raw pyramid of chicken breasts regal poodle pups marbling
Some people are from here, there is not some place they are supposed to go back to
A glass pain taped X to keep from cracking
Against the wall
Like we can stop the break
Looking over my shoulder at myself

CHRISTIANITY IS SPREAD TO CHINA THROUGH MISSIONARIES WHO ARRIVE
POPPY BOATS

the violence that undoes the subject constitutes her definition
SHO said the armenian affectation for someone you love is to call her your smoke
ANIMATE, FROM THE LATIN ANIMA, TO BREATHE LIFE, FROM JUNG, THE FE
UNCONSCIOUS

IN ANCIENT GREECE, THINKING WAS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LUNGS AND
IS NOT UNTIL PLATO THAT THOUGHTS ARE TIED TO THE BRAIN.

IN 1977 YVES SAINT LAURENT RELEASES THE PERFUME OPIUM. IT WILL BECO
OF THE MOST POPULAR SCENTS OF ALL TIME.

"what remains undomesticated not as problems but as desire" said bhanu kapil
The hourglass goes dark
our beach

HSBC

START

OPPIUM MOM

SMOKE

SET IN GREENWHI
tuffed on it's side hi
icting the sea
eat out of the frame
CTUS FROM FACE

IT DUREX
EAD THI
E DURE
TO S



Stars
Small details
can be done in
white out / white pen /
white ink w/ nibor brush

80's Macoto

80's Macoto

80's
24 Groups,
etc.

Adham

Hafez

“The one thing in common between the military and the Muslim brotherhood is their lack of humor,” said Egyptian political satirist Bassem Youssef at his speech marking the opening of the MENA/Future Arab performance festival in New York City in spring 2016. Originally a surgeon, Youssef’s fame reached its peak during the early months of the Egyptian revolution that began in 2011. Through intense and comical criticism of the country’s state of affairs, his digital performance videos earned him tangible political power for protests, eventually the state’s violent work and person. in self-enforced

Abla Fahita: Enclothment and Protest within Turbulent Egyptian Landscapes

him tangible mobilizing mass ally culminating in crackdown on his Youssef now lives exile in the United

States, after the airing and filming of his program was banned in Egypt, and after his person was deemed dangerous to “political stability” by the post-Tahrir Egyptian state. Youssef’s playful remarks during his opening speech in New York eloquently summarized his experience with the vibrant potency produced when mixing laughter, performance, and political activism while in States of panic. His is a laughter not for ridicule but for activating, reorganizing, and re-orchestrating our own feelings and prioritizing different actions differently—laughter that literally moves us into the streets. Youssef was often critiqued for masquerading and clowning during times of catastrophe; however, his followers continue to see masquerading and clowning as responsible political actions.

To many artists and activists, there is an ever-troubling relationship between the state and the Performer during times of political unrest. This text looks at such a problematic relation through the body of one of Youssef’s contemporaries: a small, handheld, stuffed puppet going by the name Abla Fahita who emerged right before the onset of the Tahrir phenomenon and continues to exist, critically. In “her” work we see practices of embodiment, laughtivism, and the performance of politics all incorporated for political dissent, violent discursivity, archival praxis, and modes of rallying masses. Ngugi Wa Thiong’o has written that “the struggle between the arts and the state can best be seen in performance in general and in the battle over performance space in particular.”¹ While the validity of this argument is reasserted each time the Egyptian state attacks, destroys, and shuts down physical performance spaces, practices of digital, televised, and mediated performance demonstrate that the battle between the Performer and the state is not only about space but rather more about the right to perform. A battle older than Plato’s *Laws*, older than Athenian poets and state representatives—the right to perform seeks survival during times of inquisition, as Abla Fahita shows.

1
 Ngūgī Wa Thiong’o, “Enactments of Power: The Politics of Performance Space,” *TDR* 41, no. 3 (1997): 11–30.

Context: Cairo

While examining cybermedia realities, Paul Virilio has stated that we have instantiated new formations of reality, new relations between self, space, and a sense of the real, whether we are individuals, state actors, or corporations. Psychologist John Suler discussed how the impact of the internet suspends our inhibitions and reconfigures our behavior to that which he terms “benign disinhibition.”² And Nobel Prize winner Isaac Bashevis Singer exclaimed, “What a strange power there is to clothing.” So, what happens when new protest realities formed through cybermedia meet with both the reconfiguration of behavior and powerful clothing? It was perhaps at such a nexus that a revolution was born through Cairo’s uprising in 2011, via a network of multiple actants and actors, violent and joyful, (re)organized but decentralized.

Alternatives

Cairo, capital of Egypt and the largest city in the Middle East, has a dense population of almost twenty million. Demographically speaking, it is said that over fifty percent of Egyptians are under the age of twenty-five, digitally literate, and active.³ With such a massive citizenry growing up in a police state, Egyptian youth figured out that virtual space was the only place where they might exist without state supervision. As if understanding that articulate problem of performance space that Ngugi detailed, the youth made cyberspace into a parallel city, for everything from socializing to protesting, from publishing to performing. A new reality formed to allow life to continue, amidst oppression and police violence.

The 2011 protests began on January 25, National Police Day. That same day in 1952, Egyptian police fought against the British Army that then occupied the city of Port Said, but the day was never commemorated until President Hosni Mubarak, in 2009, declared it a holiday, “Police Day.” The state’s careful reorganizing of history intended to give the impression that the day had been a celebrated part of the national sentiment since 1952. This *performance of nationhood* was necessarily wedded to the police because it came at a point in the Mubarak era when the atrocities committed by Egyptian state forces against civilians had reached a level impossible to cover up. After the assassination of President Anwar Sadat in 1981, Mubarak took over the presidency and announced a state of emergency that lasted for thirty years. The youth of 2011 had lived their entire lives under Mubarak’s police state, where local economies of army generals and regional-geopolitical obligations were prioritized far beyond the interests or wellbeing of citizens.⁴ According to the Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index, Egypt claimed some of the higher levels of corruption worldwide during 2008–09.⁵ It was during the

2

John Suler, “The Online Disinhibition Effect,” *Cyberpsychology & Behavior* 7, no. 3 (2004): 321–25.

3

Farzaneh Roudi-Fahimi, Shereen El Feki, and Tyjen Tsai, “Youth Revolt in Egypt, a Country at the Turning Point,” *Population Reference Bureau*, February 2011, <http://www.prb.org/Publications/Articles/2011/youth-egypt-revolt.aspx>.

4

“Report: Egypt,” *Freedom House*, 2005, accessed February 2017, <https://freedomhouse.org/report/freedom-world/2005/egypt>.

same year that new constitutional amendments were written without any legal referendum, accompanied by the illegal shut down of many NGOs throughout the country, the arrest and kidnap of several journalists, and a ban on press coverage of public governmental meetings—all which led Mubarak to renew his state of emergency and martial law, under which the government operated in a constant state of exception. Could one argue that a constant state of exception is a state of staged stately performances? Consequently, the uniform-clad police officers needed to redefine how the public saw them: given that the uniform itself only emphasized their recent and ongoing violence, an event was needed in order to stage a revived sense of belonging, of protecting the people of the nation.

Visibly deploying its actors in uniform-costumes through street patrols that questioned citizens and passersby, the state continued honoring its police forces and performing its conflation of anti-colonial struggle with the status quo of its capitalist military dictatorship. The attempt to collapse historical distance and imbue the state's violent enforcement agents with a heroic identity ruptured itself as it commenced, as the historical abyss between the Egyptian police of 1952 and those of the Mubarak era proved too deep. Same uniform, two very different realities.

Simultaneous with the intensity of exception granted to stately performances, the power to perform was denied even more so to citizens, with tightening regulations on the formation of any performance companies, programs, or events that operated outside the official "Ministry of Culture." 2010 marked unprecedented attacks and crackdowns on performance spaces—theatres, galleries, research centers, legal agencies—and activists (such attacks continue today). The murder of twenty-eight-year-old activist Khaled Said in June 2010—arrested at an internet café in Alexandria—would eventually motivate hundreds of thousands to go out and protest on the next year's National Police Day. The massive manifestation that would culminate in an unfolding revolution and shockwave of political unrest throughout the Arab World was, arguably, orchestrated entirely on Facebook, through a page that commemorated Said's death. First created as an act of online expression and mourning over this young activist's murder, the same page would announce the time and date of the initial Tahrir Square protests.

Morphing from virtual personae into a collective, enfleshed physical presence in the streets of Cairo, masses of people pooled together on January 25. The state—finally acknowledging the vast virtual city from which this massive population emerged⁶—responded by shutting down the internet. Attempting to stop any mobilization for anti-government protests, the country's official Domain Name System went dark and all web traffic out of the country was halted, almost completely disconnecting the country from the globe.⁷

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Transparency International and Ernst & Young, "Corruption Perceptions Index 2008" (Berlin, 2008), 6, accessed February 2017, http://media01.com-mpartners.com/acc_webcast_docs/TI_CP_Index_2008.pdf

6

Sahar Khamis and Katherine Vaughn, "Cyberactivism in the Egyptian Revolution: How Civic Engagement and Citizen Journalism Tilted the Balance," *Arab Media & Society* 14 (Summer 2011), <http://www.arabmediasociety.com/?article=769>.

7

Cam McGrath, "Mubarak Regime Shuts down Internet in Futile Attempt to Stop Protests," *The Electronic Intifada*, January 28, 2011, <https://electronicintifada.net/content/mubarak-regime-shuts-down-internet-futile-attempt-stop-protests/9794>.

While Egypt continues to witness sweeping changes, economic and political threats, and daily terrors since that moment, the one thing that has remained constant is indeed the state's lack of humor. Appearing online since the end of the Mubarak regime has been the



Abla Fahita on CBC TV, defending herself against espionage claims.

curious puppet named Abla Fahita. Her simple appearance invokes the representation of the vast majority of disenchanted middle-class, middle-aged housewives, highlighting another invisible Cairo where the household is a space of political dissent and housewives are invisible political subjects. Abla Fahita's performances are simple: having phone or Skype conversations with her friends (also housewives) and exchanging recipes for the best Tex-Mex *fajitas*. Unknown to the audience, and stating no name, viewers

called her Abla Fahita (hence the approximated spelling of *fajita* with an "h," as heard by Egyptians). She was never named by her artists or makers, whose identities, until recently, have remained undisclosed except to close collaborators and production teams. Through a falsetto voice and a set of ridiculous jokes, the puppet critiques the immobilized middle class from her gendered, sociopolitically nuanced perspective. Her routine also reveals the political angst this class has gone through, fearing a future of economic challenges and prosecution for those children of theirs who may be politically active.

The puppet became an internet sensation during the first wave of the revolution. Though her humor spoke of civil unrest, it did so with code words, leaving audiences trying to decipher what it was she actually meant to say, or which politician she spoke of, which event, what institution, which future. Troubled by her nuanced and acute political satire, and by her fleeting, mysterious comments, the puppet became a body for the state to attack—eventually through the form of lawsuits filed against her by several individuals collaborating with the government. Officials described her as a terrorist, a traitor, an Israeli secret agent, and as a spy delivering secret messages to insurgents through advertisements and riddles. Once, she even had to call in to a live political television program to defend herself against accusations. Despite several attacks on Abla Fahita, she has never been arrested, her studio has never been raided, and her various online and televised appearances have never stopped. What has she gotten right that others, for instance Bassem Youssef, got wrong? Perhaps the question needs to be asked differently: How has Abla Fahita survived not having her actual (maker's) identity disclosed, paraded, attacked, or policed?

At times of world-class political corruption, the media never shies away from character defamation, just as the authorities never hesi-



An image of Lamia Gouda's protest in Cairo was used as a promotional still for the activist film *The People's Girls* (2016) by Colette Ghunim and Tinne Van Loon.



Abla Fahita in her famous hair curlers, with her daughter Carolina.

tate about illegal detentions. Could it be that performance is what has saved the activist-artist(s) behind Abla Fahita? It may be similar to the U.S.-based artist-activist group The Yes Men, who have never been taken to court (with the exception of only one lawsuit that was thrown out before it was heard) because by taking the “clown” to court, the state (or the corporation in the case of The Yes Men) would only have exposed itself to further mockery. Abla Fahita's early digital protest performances continue to rupture the state, because they stay on a personal level that cannot easily be refuted or dismissed: a puppet that sings about how depressed she would be upon being forced to wear the Islamic veil if the Muslim Brotherhood stays in power; a puppet that discusses the rising prices for the basics needed to cook a meal for her child-puppet; a puppet that only discusses major political affairs in mysteries, puzzles, codes, jokes, and hints; a puppet that always dresses for the occasion. Abla Fahita has succeeded in remaining Abla Fahita. The puppet has never become a person, has refused to be en fleshed, has continued to be enclothed, has lived in virtual space, and has maintained anonymity. The only

name she has ever had is the one collectively given by her troubled yet faithful audience. A name given by the masses to a phenomenon that is nameless, that continues to exist in a state of enclothment.

If “empathy needs a face,” as psychologist Frans de Waal has argued, one could also contend that empathy needs a dress. It needs clothing like it needs flesh, feathers or voodoo dolls, Hugo Boss-de-



Abla Fahita in bathrobe and hair towel.

signed Nazi uniforms, or a judge's robe. The power that costume holds is archaic. De Waals wrote that “the sight of another person's state awakens within us hidden memories of similar states that we've experienced,”⁸ and so does the sight of a rag soaked in blood, or a disturbingly torn dress. Performer and activist Lamia Gouda's battle against sexual harassment and rape in Egypt only gained a larger platform in public debates after she took to the streets in a provocative dress with blood smudged

across her skin—the styling, costuming, and undressing all directing attention to greater violence.



Kitchen Knives
protest in Cairo on
February 14, 2013.

Affect theory, in the vein of philosopher Brian Massumi, helps to clarify what appearances can do to threats, and how threats are dealt with by the state at times of extreme violence. Massumi has written on the political ontology of the threat and has discussed its nature from the affective perspective within political contexts. A threat is a threat once it is identified as one. Abla Fahita is a puppet that was called a threat to the public, and in this magical act of performative utterance she

was given another nature, and thus has operated affectively as such.

With curlers in her hair and her puppet-daughter by her side, Abla Fahita's attire is part of both her "defense" and the political problematization of her demographic: How could a stay-at-home housewife and mother be a threat? In a strategy opposite to Gouda's responding to violence with alarming attire, Abla Fahita responds to violence through a detailed staging of the domestic and the docile, sites that have been assumed to be apolitical. Rather than negating the notion, she has ended up representing the potential of this group to be political dissidents, hence articulating mothers and housewives as "threats" to the state. The costuming of the puppet then has staged housewife-ness to the extreme, as the attacks on Abla Fahita have continued and the sight of an apron and hair curlers have become threats—a bathrobe has become an anti-government symbol. She has not argued against it, either, because it is indeed a thing to be feared by the state. Angry mothers and wives speaking on the phone daily, far beyond the state's imagination of a stereotypical opposition: these women fled from their assigned seats in the prewritten performance of compliant citizens versus the omniscient state, and have been secretly exchanging ideas for rewriting the future, sharing anger towards a present that threatens their daughters and sons, and calling for more mass protests. Women would take to the street eventually, enclothed as housewives and carrying domestic items like pots and pans and dusters and brooms on the streets of Cairo, culminating in the historic Kitchen Knives protest of February 2013.

Abla Fahita makes the motherly devouring, even when set entirely through fabric and cloth. She dispels the romanticized illusion that the "revolutionary youth" are the only driving force for political uprising and reexamines which spaces are ones of alterity and dissidence, reframing the household as explicitly engaged and proving yet again the ineptitude of authority's gaze. Her response to a government of affective terror has been to persist as un-enfleshed and therefore pervasive. Through her biting criticism, steady performance, and acute attention to costume details, Abla Fahita not only has saved herself from the burden of prosecution and imprisonment, she also has expanded the parallel invisible sites of disenchantment to, essentially, everywhere. Now the state cannot only consider and collect the few activists sitting in cybercafes blogging about authoritarian futures, rather they have to face every mother who is voicing the same concerns, and every housewife left to her means of self-expression: phones, pots, and pans.



Ablah Fahita having a picnic in Berlin, accompanied by Egyptian composer Hassan El Shafei.

With the limits on what is allowed by the state becoming perpetually tighter for certain domestic bodies, and looser for others, it is no wonder that the “digital age” is as much about the dissemination of information as it is about lived space and communities, about the creation of possible realities. Hence descriptions of a “Facebook revolution,” or “Twitter revolution,” are insufficient: it has been a revolt of the invisible, misrepresented, and oppressed, functioning as a new theater for replaying old performances of power vis-à-vis role-play and costuming.

It has been a revolt of the population under thirty, of women regularly subjected to sexual abuse and marginalization, *and* of the domestic as a self-governing economic institution trying to survive in a failing, militarized state economy. It has been a revolt of puppets, too, who have told of apocalyptic futures by staging them as real, living dangers—puppets described as threats by a regime that cannot see beyond its own panic, a regime that cannot laugh.

Massumi asks: “What happens when the fire is not falsely nonexistent, but nonexistent in a future tense? What happens if the smoke is that of fires yet to come? What happens if the sign-event is triggered by a future cause?” These are the semiotics of the “threat.” What would happen if Ablah Fahita was indeed a spy? This would only confirm the fragility of the state, vulnerable enough to be penetrated and parodied by a puppet. What would happen if Ablah Fahita did send codes to housewives about revolts through certain pendants she wore or her varied apron colors? This would tell of a future where housewives, mothers, and all politically marginalized subjects take to the streets and shape public opinion—that was what eventually happened. What would happen if tyrants were so terrified by humor that they tried to chase a puppet? Would they try to punish the puppet, and reveal more of their weakness, panic, and blindness to society beyond an ossified gaze? They have not taken the puppet to court; they cannot take the puppet to court.

While Ablah Fahita continues her online emissions, turning some of the performances into televised episodes, she also went through a period of doubt. In full strategic performative power, Ablah Fahita the puppet, not its makers, tired from the constant attacks against her, took a break in Berlin, and shot the music video for her hit song “Mayestahlosy” (They’re not worth it), in collaboration with composer Hassan El Shafei. The video was set against a montage of locations throughout the German metropolis that continues to play host to a large part of the creative intellectual community of Cairo (and other struggling Arab capitals). Commenting on the crises of refugees and self-imposed exiles escaping the violence of the crumbling regimes, Ablah Fahita (just like her many exhausted activist contemporaries) had a temporary moment of reflection, with her hair curlers in of course, before eventually returning to Egyptian TV. In her current show, “Live from the Duplex,” Ablah Fahita is as sour as she has always been, however the action takes place within a surprising and overtly capitalist framework that has not been written about yet.

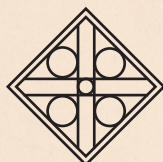
Raqs

Media

Collective

THE
~~CAPITAL~~
~~ACCUMULATION~~
OF

~~CAPITAL~~
ACCUMULATION



RAQS MEDIA COLLECTIVE

An abstract geometric composition featuring several overlapping rectangular shapes in various shades of brown, tan, and black. These shapes are arranged in a way that creates a sense of depth and perspective, with some appearing to recede into the background and others coming forward. Thin, dark lines intersect across the composition, forming a grid-like structure that further emphasizes the geometric nature of the design. The overall effect is one of architectural complexity and modernist abstraction.

Expansion;
Antagonism;
Protagonist;
Limits;
Outside

An abstract architectural photograph featuring a dark, multi-tiered structure with horizontal slats, possibly a staircase or a modern building facade. The structure is set against a light, off-white background. Several thin, dark lines intersect at various angles, creating a complex geometric pattern that frames the central structure. The lighting is soft, casting subtle shadows and highlighting the textures of the materials.

Voice 2: Inside, I am on the side of outside.

Voice 1: If you twist and fold a ribbon of space, what was inside a moment ago could end up as the outside. When a surface cracks, the crack is the surface. The outside is as much within something as without.





Voice 1: You have other plans. You have a get away car.

Voice 2: You're on a roll, aren't you? Your rear view mirror is so badly askew that you see far ahead whenever you look behind you. There's no escaping the future when you pursue the past.

Now try saying that in your head the other way round...

Voice 2: - Horizon. Two thousand fragments of possibility - foraging, quietly, for the future.

Voice 1: Across the mud flats there will be a special economic zone. A new mega-city, that takes six months, not sixty, nor six hundred to build. A six-lane highway will span the distance to a six-month city. The drawings are done.

Voice 2: Maybe two thousand flamingos have other ideas. They just turn up; to embarrass you with their obstinate attachments to this forsaken world. They refuse to leave, they mess things up, they say - 'deal with me, I was, I am, I will be'. And then what do you do? What can you do?



Voice 1: The earth moves sluggishly, and life takes its time, to grow, to move, to fly, to mate, to nest, to feed, even to die.

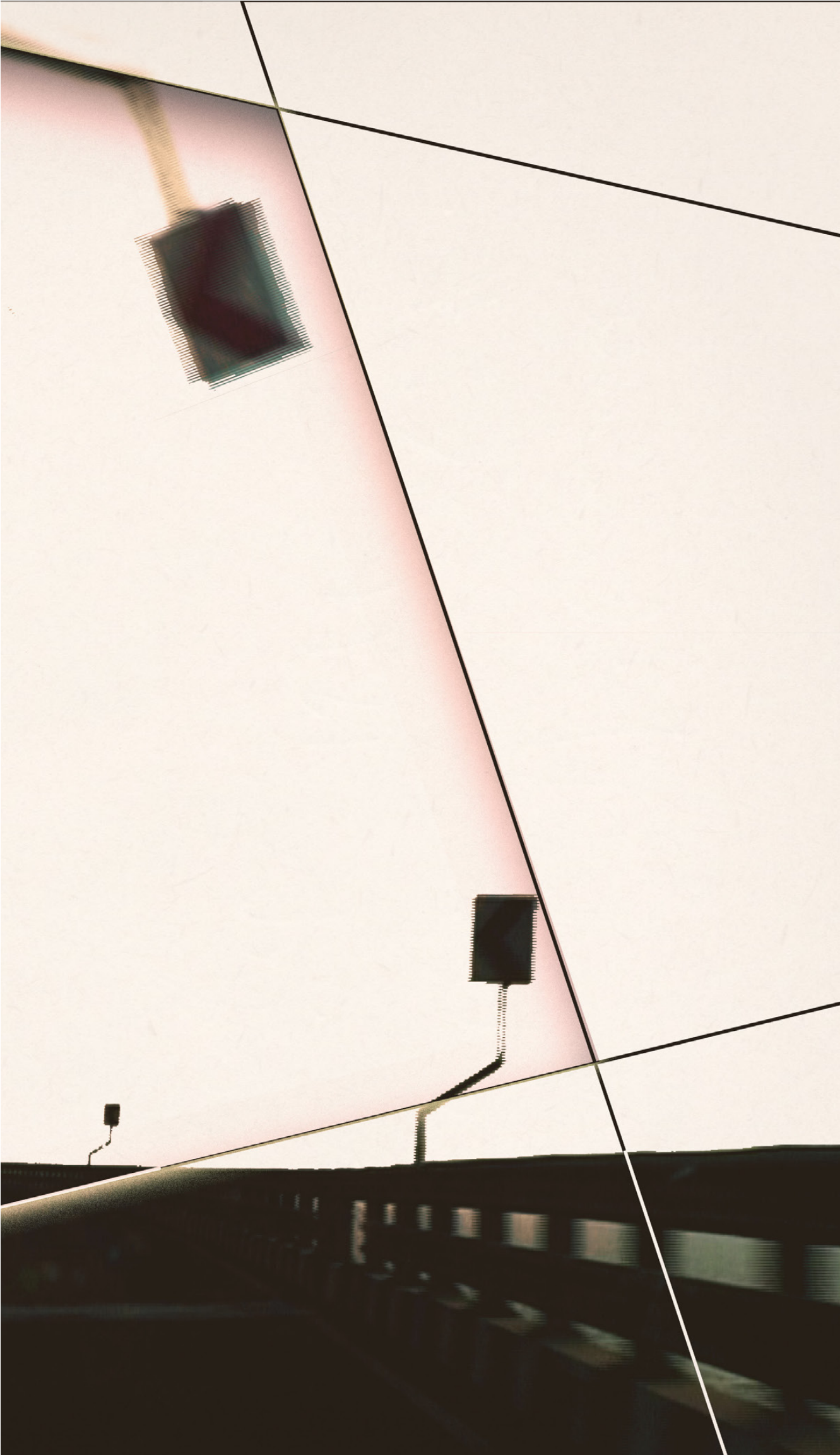
Voice 2: Capital needs a swifter wobble about the planetary axis, shorter seasons, brief lunch breaks, a snappier interval between one working day and another, something more pliable than that slow, variable capital, that wet mass called humans.

Voice 1: The city has gone so far, grown so fast, that the edge has come to the centre. The flamingos are now inside the city. The map is out of date.

Voice 2: How discontinuous, how surprising, how interrupted, how asynchronous, how mysterious, how quixotic things have been.

Voice 1: And there's no accounting for contingencies, either - for the perversity of protagonists distributed all across the mud flats of time, nourishing themselves on signs of life drowned in the water. Flamingos getting russet by the hour as they feed.

Voice 1: Someday, they'll be as red as Rosa.





The background is a light beige or cream color with a subtle, fine-grained texture. A prominent, dark, diagonal line runs from the top-left corner towards the bottom-right. Along this line, there is a bright, glowing orange-yellow light that fades into the dark line. Several other dark, geometric shapes are present: a dark triangle in the top-left, a dark trapezoid in the bottom-left, and a dark, irregular shape in the bottom-right. These shapes are defined by sharp, dark lines.

Voice 2: Comrade Crow,
Choose your flamingo.
Choose your time.
Fly.

Joanne

Nucho



“The random chances of existence have led me to live within a network rather than otherwise, by which I mean in another mode.”—Fernand Deligny

I realize now that I started a video project that lasted over a decade the very first time I stepped foot in Bourj Hammoud, Lebanon, in 2002, even though I did not do any filming that day. A cousin of my grandmother’s and I crossed the bridge over the stinking Beirut River filled with sewage and pollution, the dividing line between Beirut and Bourj Hammoud. I did that crossing hundreds of

A Mapping Memory and the City: Video, Drawing, Place

times over the years and never lost the sense of crossing over into a humming, buzzing network, a dense urban world that existed through extensionality to other places, sure, but felt so exceptional in its difference to anywhere around it. I was astounded, amazed actually, to hear that a very minor language, Western Armenian, not tied to any nation state nor spoken by a great number of people, was in this tiny suburb of Bourj Hammoud a major language. There were signs in Armenian; spoken Armenian was punctuated by Turkish and Arabic. This was precisely the dialect I grew up hearing as a child in Southern California, and yet I never imagined it could ever be tied to a place. It was something only a few dozen people spoke, not an entire city, or so I thought.

Bourj Hammoud is a neighborhood built in the 1930s by Armenian refugees of the Genocide in former Ottoman lands. Over the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first it became home to many internally displaced people in Lebanon, then Syrian and Kurdish migrant workers, and now, since 2011, displaced Syrians. It is a place characterized by displacement, produced by it, and yet it is far from transient. It was the first time I had really experienced a “neighborhood” where almost everyone seemed to know each other. There was little anonymity, for better or worse.



The river dividing Beirut (on the right) from Bourj Hammoud.

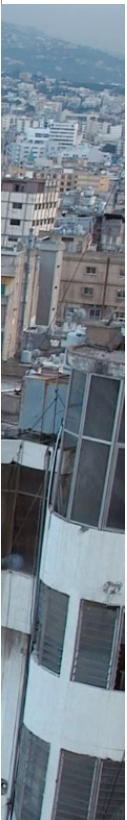


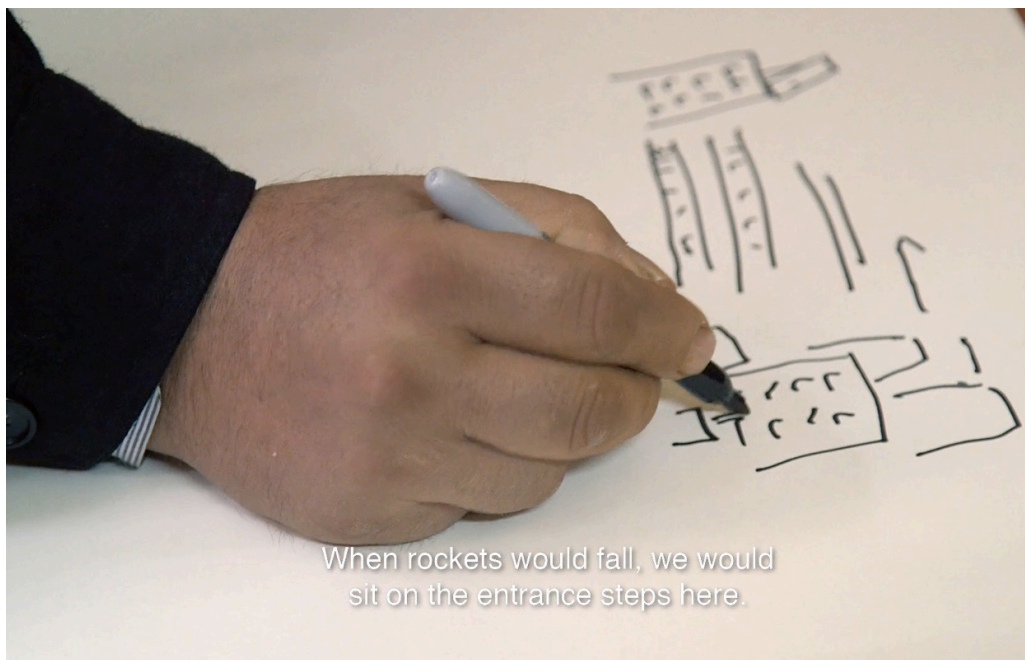
I did not have any real questions back in 2002. I was just intrigued. I wanted to spend more time in this place, absorbing its energies, the patterns of its days and nights. The smell of incense lit by shop owners in the morning and the sound of children playing in the narrow alleys after school. The dense tangles of electricity cables dangling over the street and the strangely comforting hum of generators kicking in when the national grid cuts out (a pattern occurring several times a day). Over time, my experience with the place changed that early perspective somewhat, but many of the people I spoke with share the romantic imaginaries of the place, even and despite the difficulties of living there. It is a city of *survivors*, a concept repeated and celebrated and mourned and remembered daily. It is a city where a language that should not have survived was actually *taught* to refugees of a Genocide who mostly did not speak it, but instead spoke Turkish. My grandparents spoke a minor village dialect that is now totally disappeared. But Western Armenian, the standardized dialect of Istanbul Armenians one hundred years ago, survives in Bourj Hammoud. Even if the present conditions are difficult, if water and electricity were scarce and the usual trades of shoemaking and jewelry making are no longer a means of living, my friends insisted that still this is Bourj Hammoud and it is a *safe* place.

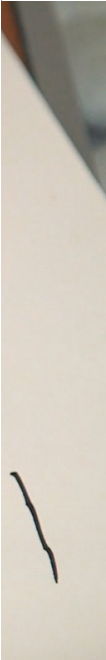
That safety was more meaningful during the war, many people told me, but for many of my friends and interlocutors, it is still true today. They referred to the Lebanese Civil War that raged from 1975–90 and claimed so many lives and destroyed so much of the city. Those were the days when boys, and a few girls, patrolled the parameter of the city with guns, when people hid in basements (if they were lucky enough to have them).

Can I admit that I, too, understood what they meant by safety? When I crossed that bridge and was able to speak the language that ensured that I belonged there, safety was part of it. But it was something else too. And this became, primarily, my main question over the years: What was that “something else” that seemed to give people a sense of safety, of belonging, in this place and in its small close-knit network of clinics, schools, workshops, stores? And would that feeling of safety survive the newest threat to the neighborhood: the rampant real estate speculation that was eroding residents’ ability to stay in formal and informal properties, even in places they had lived for decades?

One way of thinking about that sense of safety, belonging, or meaningfulness is to turn to the question of movement. In Lebanon in general and in Bourj Hammoud especially, movement and mobility is profoundly social. There is no individual body in space, navigating by map. I only ever saw non-Lebanese doing that. The maps do not work well, the streets outside of Hamra have no names and there are no addresses either. Movement is always in relation to others, to landmarks. “Turn right at the building with the blue awnings,” or “I live across the street from the XYZ Bank in Ashrafiyeh.” One simply cannot navigate the city without talking to people. In some ways, that perhaps more generalizable wariness about straying too far from familiar routes and parts of the city is exacerbated in Beirut by memories of the long civil war, and compounded by more recent conflicts and fears about security.







I was filming in Bourj Hammoud from 2008–15, but only in the final few years of filming did my co-filmmaker Rosy Kuftedjian and I decide to turn to drawings. There was something about that relationship between memory and space, narrative and place, that could never really be articulated in words. The film could do some of the work, but I knew my interlocutors' images and image-making had to be part of it too. Interviews and words were hopelessly flat, often shaped into a straight line with a beginning, middle, and end. Drawings could be a way to interrupt the usual thinking about space and place and ask our interlocutors and friends to create their own visual representation of this place. This would create a pause, a gap, a break, a moment of reflection that would entangle experience with place in a way that had not yet been articulated.

Instead of filming interviews, we started filming people drawing a map or drawing representations of the space of the neighborhood with only two prompts: What has changed in this place? What do you remember?

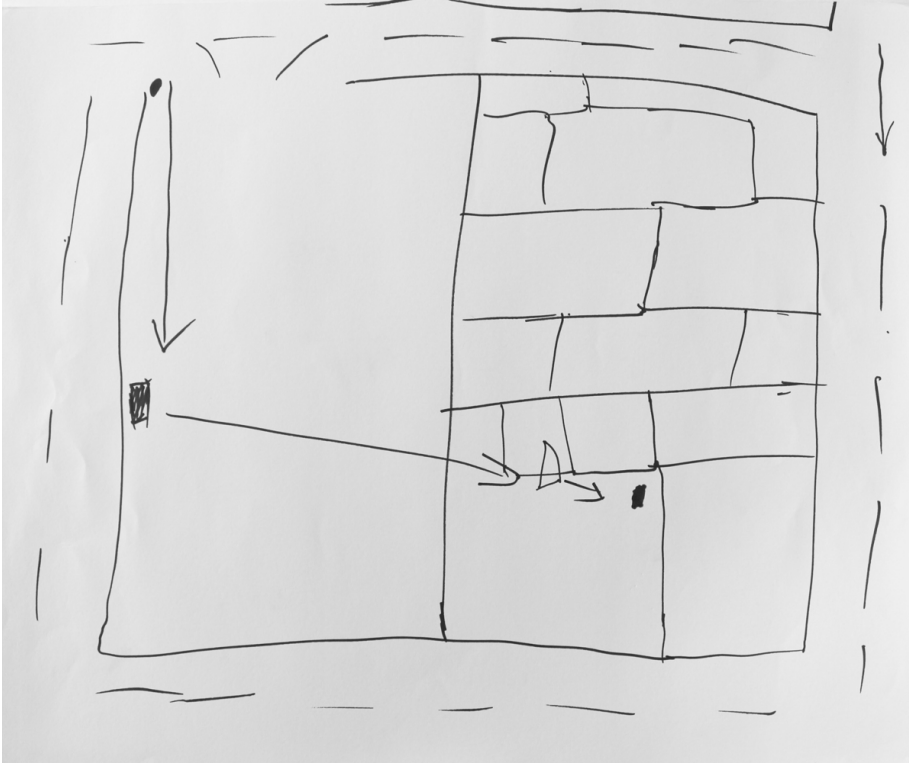
The project was never about creating a representation of a real object or a "real" history. It was about connecting to the ambiguous nature of what is most singular, a creative drawing made by a person and collectively generated, an urban space like Bourj Hammoud. When I say that these drawings or the interviews that resulted are not corresponding to a "real" history, this is not to say that they are not "true." In other words, they speak to a positionality or characteristic that is unique and exclusive to the drawing.

In these drawings are memories from the past that contradict each other, repetition of popular narratives that change in each context over time, nods to changes in infrastructures and technology (for example, someone says while drawing that they know that the internet now has maps of everything).

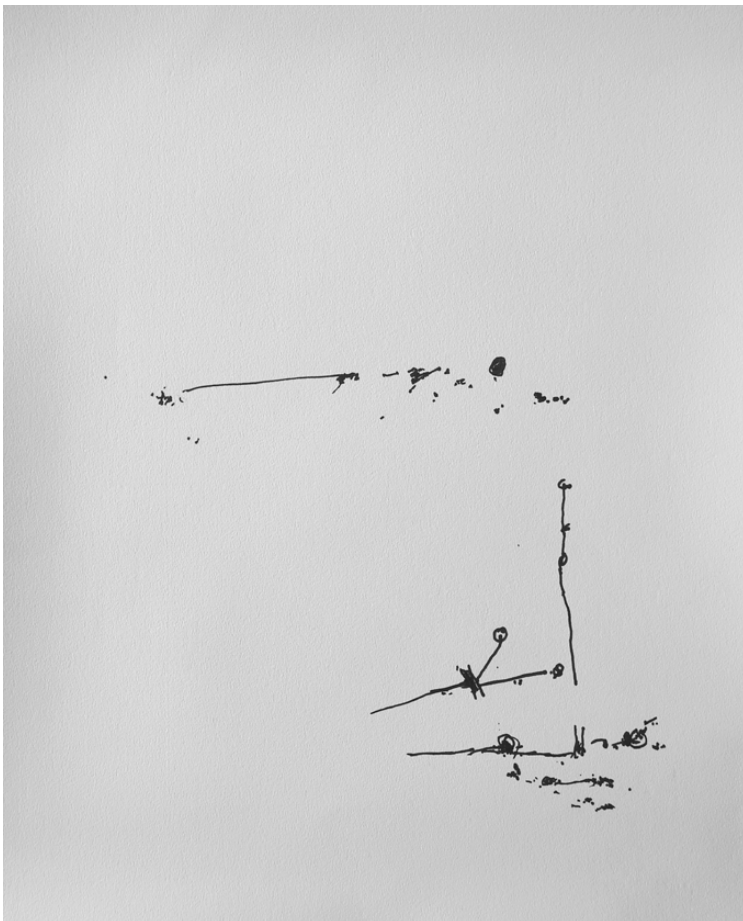
But these are not just drawings, as visible in a still showing someone drawing and talking. The video itself becomes a palimpsest, different layers visible through the act of drawing, which also links the past, present, and future through the narration of the artist who is making the sketch. I found myself with layers of texts (drawings, narrations, video) that were talking about a city in terms of its layers of time and space—the first generation of displaced people who built the city, the war which displaced others, and the aftermath of war which brought many people back to reclaim squatted properties, and finally the current war in Syria which displaced over two million people to Lebanon, a country of four million.

The project, finally, was not to try to get to the *center*, but to think about these layers. The layers themselves are the meaning. The singularity of each map and drawing, even as it corresponds to the experience of others, is another distinct layer, and the temporal dimensions are rich.

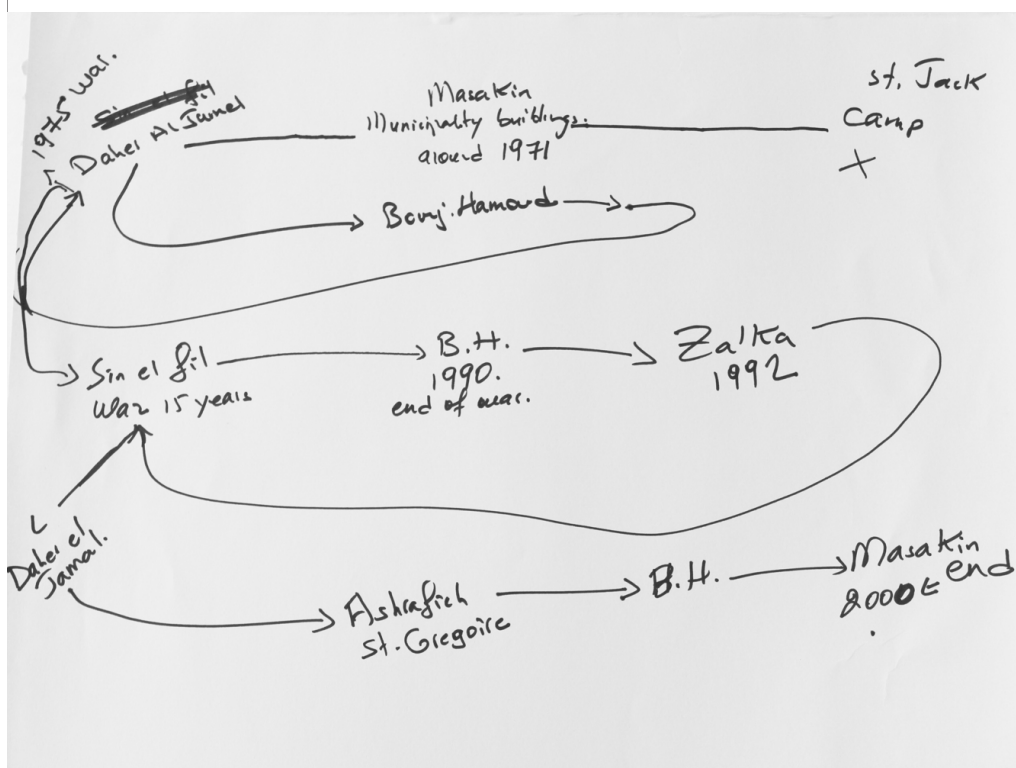
"They made a parking lot on one side and left some houses on the other. Now there are eighty-five families here . . . We are still here. What will happen, we don't know."



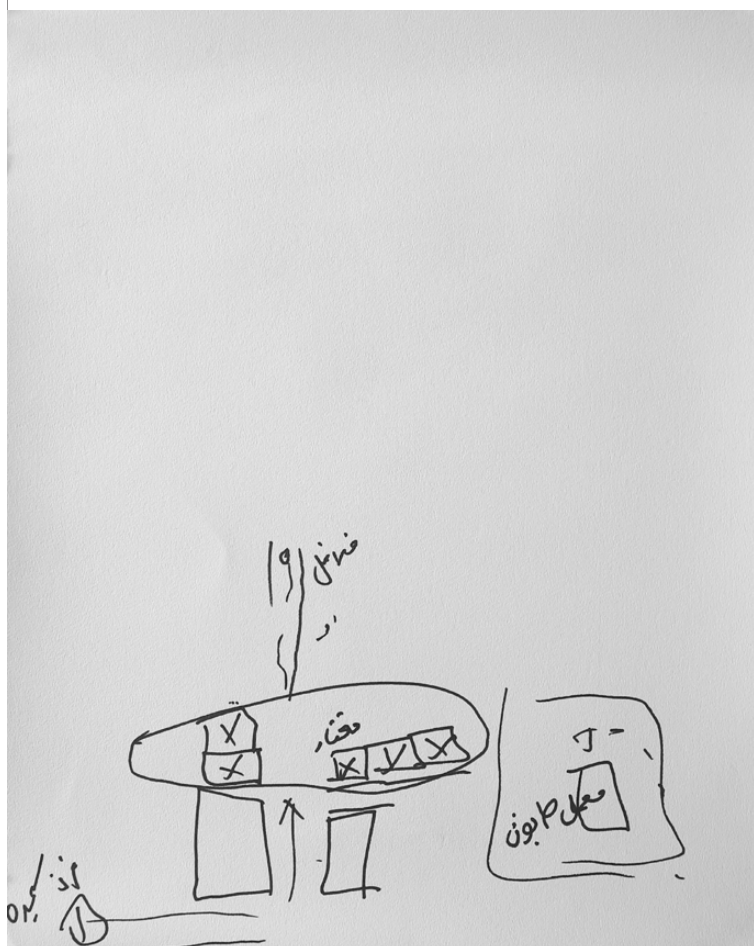
"In 1976 when the militias attacked, they attacked from all sides. From here they entered Naba'a."



"We moved a lot—don't use us as the example. . . . During the war . . . Yes it was squatted, the home did not belong to us . . . fifteen years later the owners started coming back."



"The war changed the demographics of the area . . . there used to be a soap factory over there."



halt

Jibade

Khalil-Huffman

1.

You can make anything, eventually, into a euphemism for genitalia. Or you can, similarly, underline every excuse for being crude so this crudeness is more legible in the middle of so much other explanation. You can begin any invasion of a territory with an introduction or can find things in situ or you can start with a humorous anecdote.

This first slide is the slide the lecturer stays on during the introduction and you get tired of looking at it and wish she would move to the next slide. This first story, or missive, depending on your generosity and depending on the day of the year, is a sleight of hand designed to lull you into attention.

This doesn't look like beekeeping as much as it looks like letting some bees grow out of control.

That is to say, there are less involved ways of harnessing bees, other instructions for instilling chaos, different and no less nuanced ways of highlighting the form of the structure. There are less roundabout methods, ways made up of danger, to be sure, though more reasonable in their explosion and intent.

There are ways of describing art, a trade winds of the same, a dozen patterns scattered over the path to many holdings, varying in duration and assault, depending on the medium, the time of day, the conditions set in motion long ago. Principal in any attempt is the idea of relating to the thing, in at least one sense, whether on an emotional level (that your hijinks are like those depicted in these photographs, which in the example I am using, have, of course, nothing to do with "identity" but rather catalogue youth in a more generic or, "universal" way) or, intellectually, as an idea or set of ideas that support a kind of thesis formed in this way collaboratively by artist and writer, in this case, as a stand-in for the public.

However in line the opinions this writer/stand-in may be with the general consensus, this viewpoint is always informed by the directives of, again, conditions already set in motion that include: the hiring of professors who, once more, in relating more formally or intellectually, though with a casualness that is not outright exclusion, to favor a certain kind of art that can be defined at once specifically and yet encompasses, as the default, nearly all of at least one version of the art world.

And so this in turn becomes what is poached immediately out of graduate degree programs or slips gradually into the mainstream through years of perseverance. This in turn becomes the primary subject matter of these same writers, which in turn influences the museum curator who nominates, as it were, the artist for the canon.

It is not that simple, it is that simple, a kind of likeness like stunt doubles that you barely notice, that you barely notice. That

the “universal” is then placed, once more, at odds with identifiers that make other kinds of works and artists more worthy of suspicion, that this never or rarely happens via actual engagement but instead is played out through a series of misunderstandings (this meaning that when, of course, we all know it really means that) wherein the onus always falls on the artist, never on the person who does not understand; that she, the artist, is withdrawn or that the work is obtuse, not that these are conscious decisions, but are, instead, the failure of the work to connect in a “universally” appealing way or in a way that specifically points to the drawing out of some sort of philosophical wager.

2.

I want to talk about certain things that are seemingly or eventually at odds with gatekeeping (whether casual or overt), with this perpetuation of the same. I want to talk about the #Running Man Challenge, I want to talk about the #MannequinChallenge, I want to talk about Vine stars and certain strands of Black creativity, spontaneity and planning, modes of address, the limitations of various platforms in relation to themselves as well as to what might still be called the dominant media, validation, the value and insignificance of validation, I want to talk about the films of Hype Williams or an imagined future body of work by Hype Williams and just to keep things interesting I want to relate this back to the novels of Toni Morrison and reading this and other kinds of lyricism as a continual protest, to stake such claims and support them with an “anti-grammar,” a momentum designed to corrode any semblance of the construction.

I want to fail at really voicing my concerns.

I want to fail at making certain connections any more clear than they need to be or else put any more emphasis on justification as being justification enough.

This is a commercial but also a masterclass on waiting your turn.

This is just a good song.

If you go by, say, the demographics of the shows featured on Contemporary Art Daily (a website some may dismiss as meaningless coverage, without commentary, but that, of course, has great influence nonetheless) or simply look at the rosters of most galleries, it can feel, sometimes, that they will never allow any other version, on a national level, of the events and what followed and how this was reported and how we first heard and thought about it, which is to say, the specific context for receiving this information, that this was, in itself vulnerable to being or already a part of the power structure.

That we can make our own communities and make without validation or make our own validation is both heartening and beside the point. When the national level still subscribes to a whitewashing or

normalizing of whiteness as the default, an inquiry into the subject of visibility becomes a crucial if not necessary flashpoint for disrupting and dismantling white supremacy and not, though your instincts may tell you otherwise, a good time to prove how over it all you are by dismissing these seemingly more momentary concerns as being trivial at this or especially in this moment and so many other moments in history.

Within an art world that continually depicts whiteness or the conditions for producing the objects that abstract whiteness, to achieve even simple mention can start to seem like an achievement we have internalized as achievement but that is, in truth, at most, a minimal engagement with the subject. We are happy to perform grief or suffering or be called upon to speak only under dire circumstances, we are happy to be angry to be happy to be there. A Black Avant-Garde, which, quickly, in this definition or non-definition, might include: Kanye West, Julie Mehretu, John Akomfrah, Alice Coltrane, Solange Knowles, Young Thug, Renee Gladman, Jlin, Ornette Coleman, Mark Bradford, Sam Gilliam, Ellen Gallagher, Kevin Beasley, Alma Thomas, and, say, Julius Eastman, among so many others, is as ever, on both the periphery and in the mainstream, coursing throughout the whole of Black Consciousness, buoyed (because, after all what can one really say in light of so much wonder, crisis and all that is in between, except perhaps via an abstracting of the events and players along this spectrum), buoyed and pushed back by real concerns about police brutality and the ever deadened and resolute depictions of the black body.

In light of so many practical concerns, why then is a Black Avant-Garde so crucially important? The answer is two-fold or three-fold or four-fold depending on your mood and schedule. As a means of enacting other forms of language, as a means of, not simply or only dispelling, but, enlivening long held truths, as explosion, as balm in an aisle of sticky directives, an avant-blackness, as is the case in the vanguard of any other-ed subject, must contend both with itself and a relationship with the entire cohort. If contemporary blackness, ideally, means myriad ways of being, the dominant mode is still a rigid line of depiction that can readily inspire with an accessibility that can perhaps reach more people but that often excludes more radical methods of revealing similar truths. The judgement of the black intelligentsia/collector very often bears the weight of class in this regard (in a reasonable protection of imagery, in a justifiable pressure to be or to be seen as a credit to the race) and an internalized racism that can, at its extreme, seem to overcompensate for this self effacement via an overt and overlong heralding of the most obvious affirmations about history and the momentum or more specifically, kinds of momentum needed going forward.

In the interest of time I am going to spend less time defining what exactly constitutes a Black Avant-Garde and more time invest-

ed in connecting certain gestures to a primary-ness that the status quo may one day not deny. I am going to wage an attack on certain forms of good taste not to simply undermine the comfortable space of one part of the Black intelligentsia, but to point at the frailty of a capitalist condition that would place a weighty and rather domineering kind of importance on affirmation when indeed the world and how we relate to it is messy as fuck and would perhaps benefit from an approach that was more inclusive along the lines of class, outlook and motivation.

From Audre Lorde:

“What does it mean when the tools of a racist patriarchy are used to examine the fruits of that same patriarchy? It means that only the most narrow perimeters of change are possible and allowable,” in “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” (1979).

If the recurrence of the question of why there is so little representation is annoying to those charged or priveleged with the task, think of how maddening it is to the underrepresented to find this strand of white supremacy ever manifesting itself, though you are told things are or have already been made different.

It is the lie you keep believing. That there simply aren’t enough numbers or really, that these numbers do not conform to a default, national consensus, invented and yet incapable of changing.

And yet.

As orde puts it her seminal essay, this “is the same evasion of responsibility, the same cop-out, that keeps black women’s art out of women’s exhibitions, black women’s work out of most feminist publications except for the occasional “Special Third World Women’s Issue” (the point about the journal, though not exactly the same as the art, being a kind of ghettoization of black artists if they are indeed allowed some space in the mainstream).

And so.

Stop me if you’ve heard this one before: American city, prone for too long to the temptations associated with its homegrown industries, is “discovered” by some writer at the *New York Times*. Among the so-called creative class, certain, more conventional plans are scrapped in favor of moving to this city, at which point rents start to rise as quickly, if not more quickly, than they had in the cities from which these same citizens were forced to move. Think pieces are written, as is inevitably the case.

Lost in this scramble of culture turning itself over and over again (to meet the demands of the few who would deign to support or at least supplement this, as well as the more savage demand for commentary, which is to say, more think pieces on the effect of this

all) is the perspective of (?) criticality and, more crucially, a criticality that actively addresses the subject of countering white supremacy. Race (and gender or the idea of no gender) is, to be sure, a focal point of the contemporary, good liberal's sense of self. And yet. There is always an "and yet."

It is, perhaps, too much to expect any one place, to expect a community, to take, for example, Los Angeles to task for not really leading the charge, as it were, in undermining heretofore conventional power. Given the potential (the indeed, problematic potential, filled as it is with the repercussions of gentrification), in this moment, of Los Angeles as a space for making texts (by which I mean the many versions of the practice of making critically; writing, film, and painting included, for what are the paintings of, say, Mark Bradford, if not harrowing condemnations of various power structures, including the tendency to work, via abstraction, through these issues) the reality of living and working in such a space can come to feel like a disappointment in this regard, though this maybe has more to do with buying into the very idea of potential as inspired by, perhaps, one's encounter with a still another think-piece concerning Los Angeles.

This potential is, of course, the heart of the matter--for the arbiter of taste and for commentators on these and other formulations--there is nothing so edifying as language and what it can do over time in a space.

And yet.

Much as any other position is defensible, so too the good liberal behavior of bookmarking and sharing articles can come to substitute for real and lasting arbitrations of taste and meaning. Instead of perpetuating new myths we get, again, the same rehashings of trauma. We get a month; we get a section of the lesson plan. Newer, more specific, singular holidays are invented. More think pieces are written, as is inevitably the case.

If you are interested in new myths and you are outside of the heretofore "normal" purview of potential, you can either dance in and around these guidelines or be damned for trying to do otherwise. You can enter the stream of commentary and you can comment formally, on your own or on your friend's blog or unofficially in the comments section of one of the above, as is inevitably the case.

You can, I suppose, drop out or move back to where you left. Or you can simply take the meeting and embrace the thing you were trying to escape, the thing everyone is afraid to admit: that, as the joke goes, they just really want to direct, or in this case, write the script. And yet. Here is the pitch: "its like Hamish Bowles meets Sally Bowles meets Sally Jessy Raphael, like Jesse Owens meets Owen Wilson like Orrin Hatch meets Orel Hershisier like over the moon meets over a bad cold like nowhere meets nowhere meets nowhere."

Shoghig

Halajian

There is a Polaroid of my father that was taken one month after his arrival in the States: he is shown leaning against a car, arms crossed against his chest, releasing a big burst of laughter up to the sky. His head is awkwardly tilting back, eyes closed shut. Somehow, this image has become the primary visual marker of my father’s relocation from Syria; though in no way does it comply with familiar narratives of immigration and displacement. Posing with a confident stance, comfortable and buoyant, suspended in mid-laughter, he looks as if he was always already here. The photograph captures an ecstatic moment that one might assume to be un-photograph-able, taken at the precise instant in which his body is overcome with so much excitement, anxiety, life force—whatever it was—that it ruptures in a force so strong that he instinctually directs his face up to the sky, giving his laughter the space to spread out.

Reflections on the
Migrant Image

The image has a violence to it, but of the good and necessary kind that the philosopher Jean Luc-Nancy calls “loving violence, interpretative violence, revolutionary violence, divine violence.”¹ Its violence is one of actuality, a break revealing something not present at first, hidden from view but which had to come out. It is a stubbornly interventionist gesture that disrupts the photographic act, and in turn defines it.

There is a landscape of photographs that have defied common conventions of representation. The now well-known image of Aylan Kurdî, a three-year-old Syrian boy whose drowned body washed up on a beach in Turkey, reveals the repercussions of such disavowals.² According to Hugh Pinney, Vice President of Getty Images, “the reason we’re talking about [the image of Kurdî] after it’s been published is because it breaks a social taboo that has been in place in the press for decades: a picture of a dead child is one of the golden rules of what you never published.”³ The staggering violence of this image (the violence of neglect) is the exact condition that once made it undesirable, and therefore un-representable. But now that we are in a state of perpetual exception, wherein the normal rules of representation, citizenship, and human rights no longer apply, these social codes are rightfully broken. Once, we could have decided that certain images are digestible, while others not. We had the privilege to decide not to see.

The appalling image of Kurdî revealed recent realities to the world and led to tangible changes, albeit insufficient ones. Donations to refugee-focused charities surged. Because the Kurdî family reportedly had been trying to reach Canada, the 2015 Canadian federal election prioritized the refugee crisis and eventually opened up Canadian borders to Syrian refugees and increased funding for settlement and integration programs.

¹ Jean-Luc Nancy, “Image and Violence,” in *In the Poem about Love you don’t Write the Word Love*, ed. Tanya Leighton (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2006), 132.

² Photographed by Nilufer Demir, September 2, 2015, Doğan News Agency, Turkey

³ Olivier Laurent, “What the Image of Aylan Kurdi Says About the Power of Photography,” *TIME*, September 4, 2015, <http://time.com/4022765/aylan-kurdi-photo/>.

Just one year earlier, the image of eighteen-year-old Mike Brown, shot dead and left lying face down in the street for hours in Ferguson, Missouri, fueled public outrage against police violence and loudly asserted that Black Lives Matter, giving the message space to spread out.⁴

The violence in both images is a racist violence that does not like the look, and so denies it its very existence. Each uncannily mirrors the other: head to the left, feet to the right, face titling down so that the chin tucks into the chest. Young bodies parallel, suspended in a horizonless space that could be any *space*, if not for the fact that location determines so much.

The killing of unarmed Mike Brown took place simultaneously on the streets and online through Twitter. St. Louis resident @Thee-Pharaoh live-tweeted a photograph of Brown's body on the ground, with the first caption, "I JUST SAW SOMEONE DIE OMFG." Many more statements followed, narrating the event unfolding before his eyes and the feeling of watching it happen. The image was already circulating by the time mainstream news outlets arrived. Later debates over Brown's likeness stressed the stakes of images. Which one is preserved and pushed to the fore: his body, one depicting events leading up to his death, his portrait at graduation, a school snapshot of the Gentle Giant, or a selfie as Big Mike?

The image of Mike Brown's murder continues to present Mike Brown to us, re-presenting him again and again, bringing him to us at any possible point, even if we are not prepared for it, if we did not seek it out. Luc-Nancy writes that "violence always makes an image of itself, and the image is what, of itself, presses out ahead of itself and authorizes itself."⁵ Which is to say that violence completes itself through the image. It shows itself, its act, and its victim—a dead child with sneakers still on—in more ways than we want, or perhaps even expect, to see.

These images show what it is like to be deprived of movement, to be stripped of the possibility to grow, to transition, to roam, to change one's mind, to feel a life force moving deep-down inside. They show bodies systematically deemed carceral and illegal. While those who transgress nation-state borders were once referred to as "illegal agents" or "illegal migrants," they are now labeled simply "illegal." The empty label propels their bodies outside of the law, outside the bounds of human rights, and outside of presence. We are then left with their ghostly likeness, still there on the street, on the beach, asserting their presence again and again.

Twenty million people saw the image of Kurdî within the first twelve hours of publication. It spread from Turkey through the Middle East to the Emergency Director at Human Rights Watch in Washington D.C., Peter Bouckaert, who helped the story go viral. As it moved, the caption evolved: the child acquired a name, moving from "dead

4

Photographed by Thee Pharaoh, Twitter post, August 9, 2014.

5

Need this footnote, not in the doc... (TR)

child” to being identified and remembered. The vocabulary changed, too: the discourse started with empathy for “migrants” and soon moved to consideration of “refugees.” Later, artists would reanimate Kurdî with their own interpretative renditions, depicting his larger-than-life body laying on the floor of the UN headquarters, playing on a beach, dreaming in bed—all to articulate the surreal and inexhaustible tragedy. Questions and comments lined these images: “Do you see it now?” paired next to his body at the UN headquarters; “How this story should have ended,” with him in bed; “Just sleeping,” his body on the shores of a beach. Moving between media, the manipulation of the image lifted Kurdî’s body up in the image, turned into a motif, and capable of movement yet again.

In an era of abstraction where money is freed from the products to which it was once attached—and globalization has supposedly opened borders (but only to capital)—the project of concretizing and realizing lost presence has true urgency. Ghostly, the images haunt us with Kurdî’s drowned body, with Brown’s shot body, with the once hidden raw specifics, the after-effects—the victims—of abstraction that surface to the top and reveal themselves to us in the present. These intractable specters follow us with the likeness of the deceased in order to show us there is something to be done. “Haunting,” according to the sociologist Avery F. Gordon, “is the way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with.”⁶ This haunt refuses the reductive belief that individuals exist in a mere sequence of instantaneous events that leave no trace behind. After the Second World War, photography’s indexical relationship to events haunted the collective psyche of Europe with the burden of documentary Holocaust imagery (and the looming question: Why did we not see it before?). The history of racial slavery haunts the US imaginary through the image of a hooded teenage boy marked unsafe because of the blackness of his skin against the dark of an evening sky. Haunting is the excess of the past: that which was supposedly done with seeps into the present through images, forcing open a whole system of relations. It is a counter-amnesiac intervention—a violent act, the good kind—that pushes against the systematic abstraction of individuals, culture, and their distinct variations of norms, in order to provoke us.

These images dispel the belief that invisible bodies can be done away with more easily than visible ones.⁷ They reproduce themselves with resilience, and offer a model for resistance to the imperviousness of power’s varying modes of making one invisible, and against the violent fiction that time is linear and time moves forward. Shifting and changing, these images demonstrate that the ghost has its own desires and unfulfilled potential, a body suspended in mid-laughter. As the image interjects, it remains foreign, and in this otherness, its life.

6

Avery F. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), xvi.

7

This statement is inspired by William LaFleur’s “Hungry Ghosts and Hungry People: Somacuity and Rationality in Medieval Japan” (1989).

In his study of phenomena and the ghosts of Japanese Buddhism (*gaki*), LaFleur states that invisible bodies can be done away with more easily than visible ones, because they take up no physical space. He describes the depiction of these ghosts in paintings and prints as figures with swollen bellies and scrawny necks. Signs of malnourishment and hunger underscore the desire and needs of the ghostly subject.

Chto

Delat



Dmitry Vilensky examines the situation in Russia and considers where one might turn when the possibilities and promises of both politics and art begin to disappear.

In the Chto Delat Collective's 2014 exhibition, *Time Capsule: In a Moment of Danger*, we were searching for a visual language capable of reflecting our state of shock at a moment when the foundations of our work—together with social and personal relations and our belief in the possibilities of politics and art—began to collapse before our eyes. The situation might have been described as extreme, critical, or exceptional, and gradually became the norm for our everyday existence.

Our activities were
the rapid narrow-
sphere, the con-
marginalization
value, the de-
associates, the

On the Possibility of Light
Dmitry Vilensky, Chto Delat
Collective

forced to reflect
ing of the public
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of the ideas we
parture of close
loss of any way

of distinguishing fact from fiction (post-truth), and the disappearance of friendly institutions and core funding structures for our work. If the concept of the crisis situation as a norm through political history had always been present in our earlier analyses, it now began to control our entire lives, wielding its own absurd sovereignty.

Nowadays, having since adapted to this new condition, we perceive the situation through the despairing lens of Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan: "What was on the extreme right has crept into the enlightened center.... And what was on the extreme left crumbled into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The Left, the diehard post-Soviet Left, famished materialists, anemic educators, fine-boned humanists. How is it beyond the fringe? How is the darkness? Can you make out each other's figures? Is it too late to be afraid?"¹

Earlier, this may have sounded like a diagnosis of the Russo-Ukrainian state of affairs, wherein we perceived an exceptional or excluded position—we see now that the condition has crept and spread throughout the world, so that you can no longer discern which country the Facebook post you are reading is from: Might it be from England, Hungary, Poland, Egypt, Israel, Turkey, or the United States?

*

The text reflects recent discussions and publications, and the author would like to express gratitude to those who participated: Mikhail Kurtov for his text "Рассеянность, растерянность, пористость: три режима эстетического" (Absentmindedness, Confusion, and Porousness: Three Regimes of the Aesthetic), the collective behind the journal *Просторы* (Expanses) for our discussion of darkness, and Taus Makhacheva for her poetic observations.

1

From Nikita Kadan's text "Зерна" (Seeds), published on the internet in the journal *Просторы* (2017), <http://prostory.net.ua/ua/avtorski-rozdily/sections/32-zerna/64-zerna>.

call

this

The situation in Russia remains unique because of the low level of resistance, calling to mind Bertolt Brecht's gloomy remark in the poem *To Posterity* (1939), where he writes of "despairing / When there was only injustice and no resistance." But even here (in Russia) the question is not yet settled, however, and many scenarios have yet to play out, and we still have the chance to speak, to find like-minded people and to struggle together as we have throughout all these years, full of exciting creative work, obsessive energy, inspirations, and hopes. The darkness—which, following Christian tradition, has always been a major subject on the Left—has not yet closed in. Rather, we are living through a prolonged twilight of reaction, a period of global transformation.

Some speak of the collapse of the humanist project, others of the menace of the darkening Enlightenment, a return to the Middle Ages. Many have no firm grasp on anything other than a general feeling of disorientation, depression and powerlessness. It is important to acknowledge this condition: not as the latest outburst of a moribund conservatism familiar to us from history, but as the scenario of a different global condition where the ideas and values on whose behalf we long ago decided to fight are not provided for—they are simply not needed. In their place, ideas of progress and contemporaneity have been put forward which no longer require equality and justice. The Enlightenment tradition has once again been revealed to be fragile and abandoned, in need of new reinterpretation and defense.

Perhaps this threat will force us to reconsider many things and band together with renewed vigor?

After all, we have nowhere to flee: there is no place left where the old Enlightenment consensus is not in jeopardy. The challenge of encroaching darkness must be taken up.

This can be done mystically, as Giorgio Agamben proposes: “Is darkness not an anonymous experience that is by definition impenetrable; something that is not directed at us and thus cannot concern us? On the contrary, the contemporary is the person who perceives the darkness of his time as something that concerns him, as something that never ceases to engage him. Darkness is something that—more than any light—turns directly and singularly toward him. The contemporary is the one whose eyes are struck by the beam of darkness that comes from his own time.”²

Or we can turn to Hannah Arendt and her re-reading of the tale of Danko:³ “Even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect some illumination, and that such illumination may come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time-span that was given them on earth.”⁴

Or, as Leonard Cohen sang: “There is a crack in everything / That’s how the light gets in.”⁵

Light—you never know where it comes from.

To become more poriferous. To drink some phosphorus. To produce more holes, cracks, and lighthouses.

January 2017

2

From Giorgio Agamben’s article “What is the Contemporary?” in *What is an Apparatus? and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 45.

3

A tale written by Maxim Gorky (*Danko’s Burning Heart*, 1895) about a hero who, in order to light the way out of slavery for his people, tore out his heart, which shined like a flame.

4

From Hannah Arendt’s book *Men in Dark Times* (New York, Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), xi.

5

From Leonard Cohen’s song “Anthem,” on the album *The Future* (Columbia Records, 1992).

progress

to

Sharon

Hayes

I didn't know I loved you
August 2009

My dear lover,

I am stopping again to speak to you. This time on Istiklal Caddesi.
Eleven days of weary walking in shoes that were not intended for such abuse has exhausted me, to say nothing of all the other tiring troubles, primarily that you have disappeared once again and I have no other way to speak to you than this.

When you stopped visiting me, I thought I should give you space.
When you stopped answering my phone calls, I thought, maybe we can be clearer in writing.
When you stopped sending emails, I settled for fewer words.
But now that you refuse to answer even my text messages, I don't know what to do but to wander the streets in the hope that you might hear me.

Where have you gone my sweet?
Are you in danger?
You must have known I would worry?
Did you leave on your own?
Can't you find some way to get me some word?

The last time we saw each other, you were angry at what you call my placelessness, my indecision about where I am and where I'm going. You told me that you don't understand why I want to stay in this city that never seems to belong to me. I know you think that is why I am silent, why I pull the shades in my flat closed, why I won't touch you when we are on the street.

We are a product of our external environment, you said, and that's all.
You told me I should stop trying to escape mine.
You kissed me sweetly on the cheek and said maybe it was time for me to go home.

But you act as if I know where my home is.
There is no such thing as an external environment and that's all. An environment gives to you and it takes from you. Do you think I am naïve enough to think I can escape anything. The only way I can escape is to surrender and if I were going to surrender I wouldn't be covering the earth to do it.

I want to understand where we come from so that I can understand where it is we need to go. Why does that threaten you so?

After a week of not hearing from you, I left my parents house in Kadikoy early in the morning. I didn't know how to handle my mother's questions. It is not true what they say that one away from the eye is also away from the heart. You've moved neither from my eyes nor my heart and my mother is both confused and suspicious about my state.

I wanted to take a walk; to clear my head. I wanted to see other faces and to get yours off my mind.

But as soon as I was outside, I found myself looking for you. From my flat down to the ferry, across to Karakoy, and up to Istiklal.

Every day after that I woke early, left the house to walk the streets in search of you. At first, I followed a different route each day, trying to guess where you might have gone, tracking clues I found on pieces of paper you left behind. "Esra, 11:00, corner of Mis Sokak." And another I found in my coat pocket for a gathering on Küçük Bayram Sokak. And then as the notes ran out and the days continued, I found myself following the routes that we walked

halt

together. From my house to the ferry to Karakoy, up Necatibey, past the İtalyan Hastanesi, past Firuzağa and winding along little streets past the park, across the back of the Alman Hastanesi, down Pürtelaş and up again on Ülker Sokak to Taksim, all the way down İstiklal to arrive back where I had started.

Day after day, I followed the same path, treading again and again on those streets we have walked. Each day pushing my feet harder into the sidewalk as if trying to form your footsteps myself. As if trying to carve a map into the concrete; a map to lead me back to you.

You told me once that I expect to be loved as much as I love. But you are wrong. What is dry does not necessarily desire to become moist but rather to move on its own—toward and away from water—regardless of whether the rain comes or goes.

It was you who told me that love is not a feeling but that first there is a feeling and then you have to live the feeling in order to learn what the love is. Only then can we move to a more meaningful level you said. So why have you given up, my love? Why must we be rooted? Why not let our living carry us somewhere that we can't even picture right now?

You told me, the last time we saw each other, that I think too much and speak too little. About politics and the future, about where we will make money and when we will find liberation. You told me that our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter. You found that quote on the internet but you said it so many times that it became your own.

And now that you are gone, my love, I see that you are right. I have no thoughts that are not thoughts of you. No words that are not words I learned from you.

we continued and will continue our struggle
we have gained a lot, paid a lot, suffered a lot
we will not hide our love away
we are neither wrong nor alone
its not over yet, our fight goes on
organize or starve
get your hands off my body
we need a law for liberation
we know a different world is possible
love is to get organized
the revolution is my girlfriend

You told me that the ears are the only orifice that can't be closed.
I love you and I will say so until I run out of the breath I need to shape
these sounds I send your way.

You must be near, my sweet.
In all these people passing.
You must be passing too.

Are you close enough to hear me?

Seni Sevdigimi Bilmiyordum
August 2009

Biricik sevgilim,

Seninle konuşmak için bir kez daha duruyorum. Bu sefer İstiklal Caddesi'nde. On bir gündür yorgun argın yürümek beni bitirdi.

Bu ayakkabılar boyle ağır muamele gorsun diye yapılmamis ki! Basta senin yine ortadan kaybolmus olmanın yanında; diger yorucu sikintilardan hic bahsetmiyorum bile. Seninle konuşmak için bundan başka yolum yok.

Ziyaretlerini kestiginde seni biraz rahat bırakmam gerektiğini dusundum. Telefonlarıma çıkmamaya başlayınca, belki yazırsak kendimizi daha açık ifade edebiliriz diye düşündüm.

Sen e-mail göndermeyi de bırakınca, daha az söze razı oldum.

Ama sen artık mesajlarıma da cevap vermeyi reddedince, beni duyarsın umuduyla sokaklarda gezmekten başka ne yapabilirim bilmiyorum.

Nereye gittin tatlım?

Başın dertte mi?

Seni merak edeceğimi biliyor olmalısın.

Yoksa ayrılıp gittin mi?

Bana haber ulaştırmak için bir yol bulamaz mısın?

Son görüştüğümüzde benim mekânsızlığım dediğin şeye kızgındın. Nerede olduğum, nereye gittiğim konusundaki kararsızlığıma. Asla bana aitmiş gibi durmayan bu şehirde neden kalmak istediğimi anlamadığını söylemiştin bana. Biliyorum, sanıyorsun ki bu yuzden sessizliğim, dairemdeki jaluzileri kapamam, sokakta sana dokunmamam...

Hepimiz dış çevremizin bir ürünüyüz, demiştin, başka birşeyin değil.

Benim de kendi dış çevremden kaçmayı bırakmam gerektiğini söylemiştin.

Beni tatlı bir şekilde yanağımdan öpüp, belki de eve gitme vaktim olduğunu söylemiştin.

Sanki ben evimin neresi olduğunu biliyormusum gibi!

Dış çevre diye bir şey yok, başka birşeyin değil. Çevre dediğin sana bir şeyler verir ve bir şeyler alır. Benim herhangi bir şeyden kaçabileceğimi sanacak kadar saf olduğumu mu sanıyorsun? Tek kaçış yolu teslim olmak ve teslim olacak olsaydım bunu yapmak için dünyayı geziyor olmazdım.

Nereden geldiğimizi anlamak istiyorum ki nereye gitmemiz gerektiğini anlayayım. Bu neden senin için bu denli bir tehdit oluşturuyor?

Senden bir hafta haber alamadıktan sonra, annemle babamın Kadıköy'deki evinden sabahın erken saatlerinde ayrıldım. Annemin sorularıyla nasıl başa çıkacağımı bilmiyordum. Gözden ırak olan gönülden de ırak olur derler, doğru değil ama. Ne gözlerimden ne de kalbimden uzaksın sen, annem ise halimi hem anlamıyor hem de şüpheleniyor benden.

Yürüyüşe çıkmak istedim; kafam açılsın diye. Başka yüzler görmek, seninkini de kafamdan çıkarmak istedim.

Ama dışarı çıktığım gibi kendimi seni arar buldum. Evden vapura, Karaköy'e geçerken, ta İstiklal'e kadar.

Ondan sonra her gün erken kalktım, sokaklarda seni aramak için evden çıktım. Başta her gün başka bir yoldan gidiyordum, nereye gitmiş olabileceğini tahmin etmeye çalışarak, geride bıraktığın kağıt parçalarında bulduğum ip uçlarını takip ederek. "Esra, 11:00, Mis Sokağın köşesi." Sonra Küçük Bayram Sokak'ta

bir toplantıyla ilgili bir not daha buldum paltomun cebinde. Sonra, notlar bittikçe ve günler geçmeye devam ettikçe, kendimi beraber yürüdüğümüz yolları takip eder buldum. Evden Karaköy vapuruna, Necatibey'den yukarı, İtalyan Hastanesi'nin ve Firuzağa'nın önünden, dar sokakları dolandıktan sonra parkın önünden, Alman Hastanesi'nin arkasından, Pürtelaş'tan aşağı, sonra Ülker Sokak'tan yukarı Taksim'e, İstiklal'in hepsini yürüyüp, başladığım yere geri dönüyordum.

Her gün aynı yolu takip ettim, beraber gezdiğimiz o sokakları tekrar tekrar ayaklarımın altında çiğneyerek. Her gün, ayaklarımı kaldırıma daha da sert bastım, senin ayak izlerini ben oluşturmaya çalışıyormuşumcasına. Betona bir harita oymaya çalışmışçasına; beni sana geri götürecek bir harita.

Bana bir keresinde sevdiğim kadar sevmeyi beklediğimi söylemiştin. Ama yanılıyorsun. Kuru olan ille de nemlenmeyi arzulamaz, asıl arzuladığı kendi başına hareket etmektir –suya doğru, veya sudan uzağa– yağmur gelse de gelmese de.

Bana aşkın bir duygu olmadığını, önce duygunun ortaya çıktığını, sonra aşkın ne olduğunu öğrenmek için o duygunun yaşanması gerektiğini söyleyen sendin. Ancak o zaman daha derin bir noktaya ulaşabiliriz demiştin. Öyleyse neden vazgeçtin, sevgilim? Neden ille de kök salmalıyız? Hayatımızın bizi şu anda hayal bile edemeyeceğimiz bir yere taşınmasına neden izin vermeyelim?

Birbirimizi son gördüğümüzde bana çok fazla düşündüğümü ve yeterince konuşmadığımı söylemiştin. Siyaset ve gelecek hakkında, nerede para kazanacağımız ve ne zaman özgürleşeceğimiz konusunda. Önemli şeyler hakkında konuşmayı bırakıp sustuğumuz an hayatlarımızın bitmeye başladığı andir demistin bana.

Ve sevgilim, şimdi senin yokluğunda, haklı olduğunu görüyorum. Tüm düşüncelerim senin düşüncelerin. Tüm sözlerim senden öğrendiğim sözler.

mücadelemize devam ettik ve devam edeceğiz
çok şey kazandık, çok bedel ödedik, çok acı çektik
aşkımızı saklamayacağız
ne yanlış ne de yalnız
henüz bitmedi, mücadelemiz devam ediyor
ya örgütlen ya da aç kal
ellerini bedenimden çek
bir özgürleşme kanuna ihtiyacımız var
başka bir dünya mümkün
aşk örgütlenmektir
devrim benim kız arkadaşım

İnsan bedeninde kapanamayan tek deliklerin kulaklar olduğunu söylemiştin bana.

Seni seviyorum ve sana yolladığım bu seslere şekil veren nefesim tükenene kadar bunu söylemeye devam edeceğim.

Yakında bir yerde olmalısın, tatlım.
Geçen bütün bu insanların arasında bir yerde.
Sen de önümden geçiyor olmalısın.

Beni duyacak kadar yakında mısın?

call

this

Georgia

Sagri



Text from the poster for Georgia Sagri's installation *Sunday Stroll* (2016) is followed by a poem written for the artist's *Sunday Stroll Undone and Redone* performance in February 2016, a work at the Sculpture Center in New York that reordered and reanimated news items and images as a call for empathy.

Mimesis, the term,
is introduced by Plato in his book the Republic. In particular Plato invented this word in order to clarify the distinction between *ideas* which are, according to Plato, the highest forms of existence because they are infinite, autonomous and the source of all the things constitute our reality. Even if we humans create things, they are mimetic objects, which are always copying the *ideas*.

Literature, poetry, and visual arts produce mimetic objects, and that's why artists are taking the third and the lowest part in what Plato seemed to understand as the construction of the ideal society.

For Plato, representation is the worst mimesis. Painting, and in general the visual arts, is accused of presenting only the one side of things and of excluding reality's multiplicity.

Plato never spoke of the objects that exist on stage. His philosophical texts however were dialogues, and they seem to take place on a stage with objects having a significant role in the creation of the scenes: tables, chairs, glasses, etc., are there to flourish the set of his characters' fictional meetings and discussions.

The staged objects, are not exactly useful but they are not really useless either. They are not *ideas* but they are also not works of art. They gain purpose when they are activated within a performance, on a set. Mimetic objects can be useful and can be works of art. The staged objects though are something between. They are vaguely nothing and something at the same time.

In a narrative, on a painting, the objects are mimetic. No one could go on and drink water from a glass in a painting or be hydrated from a glass of water described in a poem; but with the staged glass of water there is an impression that it can be used, and not only by the actors in a play but by everyone.

Similarly to the performer's body, the staged object implies use, even if it cannot be used in any other moment than that of the performance.

The substance then of the objects, which are neither mimetic nor *ideas*, is that they don't need to have a purpose, but to suggest one, and to not be useful but to admit a potential use.

They are staged.

Sunday Stroll Undone and Redone

When the cat miaows
A Government orders shootings
A child cries
And an ambulance screams

Traffic
Back up
Get up

When a mother shaves her kid
A lover scratches a woman's thighs
Stronger and stronger
A tree bursts more leaves

Snow storm on the north east

The dogs bark
The food is served
Looking at the mirror

When there is a painful death of a friend
There is the smile on a baby's cheek
My mother says love is important

When the mountain stays still
Houses get built

When the phone is off
The rain falls and the sea grows
The oil flows, the perceptions change
When the text is finished
The smell of sweat, the soul departs from
a man's body, the crowd gathers
The voices are heard

When I am not alone
The train arrives
You cry, she cries we all cry
The war is not over

The wars continue and
We do nothing
Housing is an issue
Police violence is an issue
And we do nothing

When you leave
There is space for another.

progress

to

Jalal

Toufic

Nietzsche: “Monsieur Renan, that buffoon in *psychologicis*, has appropriated for his explication of the type Jesus the two *most inapplicable* concepts in this case: the concept of the *genius* and the concept of the *hero*. But if anything is unevangelic it is the concept hero. Precisely the opposite of all contending, of all feeling oneself in struggle has here become instinct: the incapacity for resistance here becomes morality (‘resist not evil!’ . . .). . . . To make a *hero* of Jesus!—And what a worse misunderstanding is the word ‘genius’! Our whole concept ‘spirit’ whatever in the in. To speak with the physiologist word would here: the word

Jesus May Talk like an Idiot
and Look like an Idiot but
Don't Let That Fool You—He
Really Is an Idiot¹

cept, our cultural
had no meaning
world Jesus lived
the precision of
a quite different
rather be in place
idiot. . . . One has

to regret that no Dostoyevsky lived in the neighbourhood of this most interesting *decadent*. . . .”² Deleuze: “Dostoyevsky’s characters . . . are in general very troubled. A character . . . says, ‘Tanya, the woman I love, has called for my help. I must hurry; she will die if I do not go to her.’ He goes downstairs and meets a friend or sees a dying dog in the street and . . . he completely forgets Tanya is waiting for him. . . . He starts talking, meets another acquaintance, goes to have tea at his home and suddenly says again, ‘Tanya is waiting for me. I must go.’ What does that mean? Dostoyevsky’s characters are constantly caught up in emergencies, and while they are caught up in these life-and-death emergencies, they know that there is a more urgent question—but they do not know what it is. That is what stops them. Everything happens as if in the worst emergencies—‘Can’t wait, I’ve got to go’—they said to themselves: ‘No, there is something more urgent. I am not budging until I know what it is.’ It’s the Idiot. It’s the Idiot’s formula: ‘You know, there is a deeper problem. I am not sure what it is. But leave me alone. Let everything rot . . . this more urgent problem must be found.’”³ “Now a man named Lazarus was sick. He was from Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. . . . So the sisters sent word to Jesus, ‘Lord, the one you love is sick.’ When he heard this, Jesus said, ‘This sickness will not end in death.No, it is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it.’ Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So when he heard that Lazarus was sick . . .” (John 11:1–5) he rushed to save him, but then quickly

1
To use the words of Groucho Marx as Rufus T. Firefly in Marx Brothers and Leo McCarey’s *Duck Soup* (1933).

2
Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols; The Anti-Christ*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968), 141–143.

began to wonder why it is this sickness that is not to end in death that “is for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it” rather than the two other sicknesses that did not end in death since he resurrected the two who died from them (the young man from the town of Nain [Luke 7:11–16] and the only daughter of Jairus, a synagogue leader, a girl of about twelve [Luke 8:41–56]). And “so he stayed where he was two more days” pondering this matter, and then, once he had fathomed in what sense that death and resurrection would be, unlike the other two he had already performed, “for God’s glory so that God’s Son may be glorified through it,” “he said to his disciples, ‘Let us go back to Judea. . . . Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going there to wake him up.’ His disciples replied, ‘Lord, if he sleeps, he will get better.’ Jesus had been speaking of his death, but his disciples thought he meant natural sleep” (John 11:7–13). I imagine that one of them (Judas?) must have muttered (as the devil must have done on Jesus Christ’s not getting—rather than resisting—his *jouissance*-related temptations in the desert), “What an idiot!”⁴ But he would have been mistaken to characterize Jesus thus based on his words “Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep; but I am going . . . to wake him up” rather than on his preoccupation with a question deeper and more deserving of being addressed than the emergency of Lazarus’s grave sickness. “So then he told them plainly, ‘Lazarus is dead . . .’” (John 11:1–14). It is then that another one of those who heard him felt, “What an idiot!” for he considered, this time wrongly, that it is idiotic to have delayed going to moribund Lazarus for two days, until the latter died. Lazarus had left his fate in the hands of someone who was both God and an idiot, Jesus Christ. Jesus arrived late for the sickness, but in a timely manner for the resurrection, in other words, too late for resurrection⁵ (by arriving late, Jesus Christ did not make Lazarus undergo something he was not undergoing anyway, simultaneously with his life, for Lazarus, as a mortal, was already dead while alive—Jesus never arrived late for a sick man whose sickness was not unto death, for example, blindness, for such a sickness is not our condition anyway even while healthy).

3

Gilles Deleuze, “What Is the Creative Act?” in *Two Regimes of Madness: Texts and Interviews 1975–1995*, ed. David Lapoujade; trans. Ames Hodges and Mike Taormina (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e); Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 322.

4

See my book *Undeserving Lebanon* (Forthcoming Books, 2007 [available for download at: <http://www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads.html>]), 66–68.

5

On the timeliness of arriving too late for resurrection, see “Arriving Too Late for Resurrection” in the revised and expanded edition of my book (*Vampires: An Uneasy Essay on the Undead in Film* (Sausalito, CA: Post-Apollo Press, 2003 [available for download at: <http://www.jalaltoufic.com/downloads.html>]): “Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. Yet when he heard that Lazarus was sick, he stayed where he was two more days” (John 11:5–6). The narrator of Blanchot’s *Death Sentence* writes: ‘I think in saying that, she was announcing that she was going to die. This time I decided to return to Paris. But I gave myself two more days.’ By the time both arrive, the moribund is already dead. The moribund persons are bound to feel consternation that these people who were always there for them, now, at the

hour of greatest need, have uncharacteristically deserted them. *Death Sentence*’s narrator must have intuited that he can do nothing to save the dying person, and that he may not recover from his complete helplessness to prevent her death. *Death Sentence*’s narrator arrives only once the doctor, who, at least until now, functions in the timely, and who has center stage as long as the patient is still struggling to maintain her life, now that she was dead, has withdrawn. Jesus Christ and *Death Sentence*’s narrator arrive just in time for the resurrection. Jesus Christ would have been uncaring about Lazarus and the narrator of *Death Sentence* about the dying J— — only if, having arrived too late, they did not go on to resurrect them.”

call

this

Gelare

Khoshgozaran



Connecting Tehran to L.A.'s Tehrangeles neighborhood, Gelare Khoshgozaran's text re-contextualizes excerpts from an Iranian reformist political text and originates the psychological landscape of Iran's current totalitarianism in the 1953 U.S. coup and subsequent colonial projects of the 1950s–1970s.

An alien walks into a cafe on Vestwood Boulevard that is famous for its Mesopotamian-style pizza, traditionally served with ketchup. The cafe’s name has been transliterated from the Persian pronunciation of a French dessert. All accents have been removed through the process: the name arrives in English and becomes *impossible to pronounce*. The alien is beyond taste; the alien is gluten-free; the alien is post-wheat; and inconsistently so. The cafe-sans-pronunciation is an imaginary place for the alien to walk home to, the faux temporality of homecoming.

Like a sub-		marine out of still
waters, the cafe	The Scar of Winter’s	only resurfaces
once every few	Cold Slap	years, by way of
the glitches in		the registration
of time on the		bodies belonging

to those who invented it—a “year” as an indicator of how long one species has been intimate with its own death. The cafe is only open during those gaps in time between events and the news of events. The last time it appeared was in May 2009, and it remained open only for as long as it took the event of the killing of a protester in Tehran to become the news of the killing in Los Angeles. In 2017, it appeared between the event of the beardless Ayatollah’s death in Tehran and the report of his death on the west coast.

The alien looks outside the window: on Vestwood Blvd there is no news, event, nor any Ayatollah. She turns inside to the sign that reads “We reserve the right to refuse service to anyone” and checks the time on her phone. She knows for her to sit down waiting for her food means an agreement has been already established, an acknowledgment of the rights reserved, rights practiced.

The white plate arrives and, like a UFO, spirals down and lands on the table. Three steaming kotlets are arranged diagonally in a row, splitting the plate in half. Steam escapes from the microwaved hearts of each, as if the molecules are fuming at their inability to become anything more than kotlets.

A man puts the plate down, then grabs a large bottle of lime juice and puts it on the table next to the five condiments already there. Reluctantly, he brings a bottle with the top portion labeled “olive oil” and the bottom “vinegar” and puts it on the table as he mumbles an explanation of the built-in technology of the double-decker bottle that produces vinaigrette.

She puts her book down to grab the vinaigrette machine, shakes it slowly, and pours the dressing all over the pale salad next to the row of kotlets, which she then starts to slice. More steam coming out with each cut making the kotlets smaller. She gets up and walks toward the condiment stand next to her table, grabs a bottle of red Tabasco sauce and pours it over the steaming pieces, then puts it next to the six other bottles of condiments already on her table.

The alien has said nothing to the man except, “Merci, mamnoon,” twice, for each time he brought a dish and a condiment. Feeling the weight of his occasional glances, she sits there eating her food in silence. When done, she contemplates saying, “Thank you,

goodbye.” Instead, she grabs her bag and leaves the cafe without saying a word.

Passing two nail spas, a beauty salon, a FedEx office, and an empty storefront for rent, the alien walks into the nearest bookstore, The Book Company, located on Vestwood Boulevard in Tehrangeles.

The following has been translated from page 195 of a book subtitled *A Pathology of the Transition toward a Progressive, Democratic Government*:

The Elections and “the Scar of Winter’s Cold Slap”

The whole of the authoritarian political structure is a labyrinth of haunted chambers. Khordad 2 of 1376 (May 23, 1997) was the last day of the winter season and a harbinger of the beginning of a new spring season. Since then, the bottle has been opened for all sorts of genies, monsters, and devils, who were trapped inside its authoritarianism to be released, singing their malodies and awful tunes. Individualism, human rights (especially the right to dissent), and democracy were unveiled under the light of freedom, challenging the arbitrary power and arbitrary wealth of the monopolist. But His Excellencies in Gray, who were not fond of the spring, joined forces with the other evil spirits of the haunted house and set their hearts to reproducing the winter freeze. Every day they created a new crisis and new chaos. In the most inhuman ways, over the course of one month in Azar 1377 (December 1998), they assassinated six dissident thinkers, and in Tir 1378 (June 1999), on a warm summer night, like bats in the dark of night they raided the university housing units to oppress the students’ movement. They constructed the continuous “Project Chaos: Havoc and Insecurity” so the democratic, progressive government would not move a finger, and the people would continue to despair under the burden of unemployment, inflation, and economic depression. Thus, out of despair, and in the midst of the never-ending fights between the conservatives and the reformists, they would welcome Louis Bonaparte and his coup d’état. By *bonapartizing* the situation, His Excellencies in Gray sought the revival of authoritarian times and the Louis Bonaparte School of Inflections. But who was Bonaparte?

In his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852), Marx writes, “Bonaparte would like to appear as the patriarchal benefactor of all classes. But he cannot give to one without taking from another. Just as it was said of the Duke de Guise in the time of the Fronde that he was the most obliging man in France because he gave all his estates to his followers, with feudal obligations to him, so Bonaparte would like to be the most obliging man in France and turn all the property and all the labor of France into a personal obligation to himself. He would like to steal all of France in order to make a present of it to France.”



He stole all of France and took it out of the hands of the French people so that he, himself, would ferociously and affirmatively determine their fate. First, they changed the circumstances to halt any progress; and after that, everybody was already anticipating the coup d'état. Then Bonaparte arrived, and with convincing slogans promised order and security and economic prosperity to the people—but:

He is fooling you
this is not the maroon of the sky at dawn.
Take this from a comrade
with his ear cut off from the cold
the scar of winter's cold slap.

There is supposed to be “balance” and “moderation” between the conservative and the monopolist. However, there are fundamental obstacles in the way of this balance being achieved.

First: The people are demanding fundamental reforms; therefore, the slogans of the reformists are music to their ears. Totalitarians demand that the past be preserved: a past that, lacking a “competitive participation” of the citizens, would bear no fruit but arbitrary power and wealth. It appears the moderates, in order to maintain balance, want to share the power and influence equally between the conservatives and the totalitarians. But does power not belong to the people? Do they not have the right to grant it, lawfully and temporarily, to their elected ones?

Second: “The scar of winter's cold slap” has made a comeback, revitalizing the age of authoritarianism by rebottling the genies. This tradition is in fundamental contrast to democracy, as project democracy is one of freeing the genies, devils, and melodies.

Three: “The scar of winter's cold slap” demands the entirety of power. It wants everyone to obey. It does not dialogue with anyone; it is, rather, only a condescending monologue, the result of Man's relationship with the gods. He is the one that gives himself credit for all the hallucinatory victories and blames all material losses on his opponents. Whoever is on his side is on the side of moderation; whoever criticizes him is a radical extremist, hence the enemy.

Putting the winter of authoritarianism behind and revitalizing the political sphere is only possible with the presence and active participation of the people. If we desire freedom, democracy, human rights, and security, we all have to show up at the elections. If we want the dissolution of the illegal, Ruhaniat Judiciary; if we demand a fundamental restructuring of the judiciary; if we want to shed light on the cases of the Serial Murders (Ghatl-haye Zanjireyi) [of dissident writers and journalists]; if we want the military to keep its hands off of the government; if we want freedom for the press, for all parties, for books; if we believe in the legal-judicial equality of women and men; if we want the rulers to change: these are only achievable through the change of the law in peaceful and legal ways. If thirty

million Iranian citizens show up at the ballots and elect the democratic reformists for the Majlis, it will be possible to amend all the anti-human rights and anti-citizen laws in the constitution, and His Excellencies in Gray will ultimately leave the political scene. Massive participation of the people will render “the scar of winter’s cold slap” irrelevant. People don’t need a godfather. People will create a new Dovom-e Khordad on [the upcoming Majlis or “The Islamic Consultative Assembly” election of] Bahman 29 by showing up in millions, and the meaning of this epic participation will be above and beyond any “godfather’s” imagination and illusions.

Postscript

Akbar Ganji’s book, *His Excellency in Red and His Excellencies in Gray: A Pathology of the Transition toward a Progressive, Democratic Government* (also translated as *The Red Eminence and the Gray Eminences*) was first published in 2000 in Iran. It was then reprinted in fifty-two editions within the first two years of its publication and it has been banned in Iran since 2005, the last year of Mohammad Khatami’s second administration. The author translated selected parts from Persian.

Upon his return from a conference titled “Iran After the Elections,” held by the Heinrich Boell Foundation in Berlin, Ganji was arrested in Tehran. In January 2001, he was sentenced to ten years in prison, followed by five years internal exile on charges of “collecting confidential information harmful to national security and spreading propaganda against the Islamic system.” After multiple hunger strikes, some lasting up to eighty days, Ganji was released, and eventually left Iran in June 2006. While in the U.S., despite repeated invitations, reports state that Ganji “has refused to meet with any member of the Bush Administration, on the principle that the struggle for democracy in Iran must be waged from within the country, without foreign governmental support.” As an investigative journalist in Iran, Ganji wrote about the murder of writers, journalists, and political dissidents that began during the last years of Hashemi Rafsanjani’s administration.

Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani died of a heart attack in Tehran on January 8, 2017, during the last days of the Obama administration.

The scar of winter’s cold slap یادگار سیلی سرد زمستان and other parts of this translation are taken from *Zemestan زمستان Winter*, a poem by Mehdi Akhavan Sales, written in response to the 1953 Iranian coup d’état orchestrated by the United Kingdom and the United States, known as Operation Ajax in the U.S. This famous allegorical poem draws parallels between the extremity of cold winter, the psychological state of the Iranian people, and the condition of Iranian politics after the coup.

Dovom-e Khordad, دوم خرداد, May 23, 1997, was the seventeenth presidential election of the Islamic Republic of Iran, where reformist Mohammad Khatami won office with sixty-nine percent of the popular vote. Khatami was following the eight-year tenure of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who was ironically known as “Kooseh” کوسه (shark) among Iranians for his lack of facial hair as a Ruhani (Muslim clergy). All puns in his nickname were evidently intended.



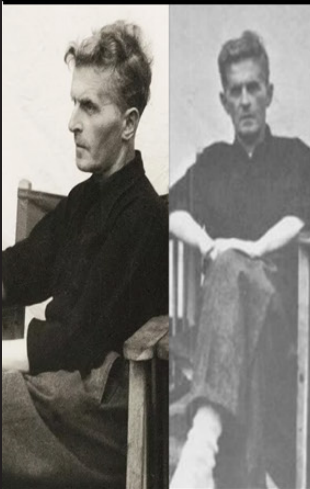
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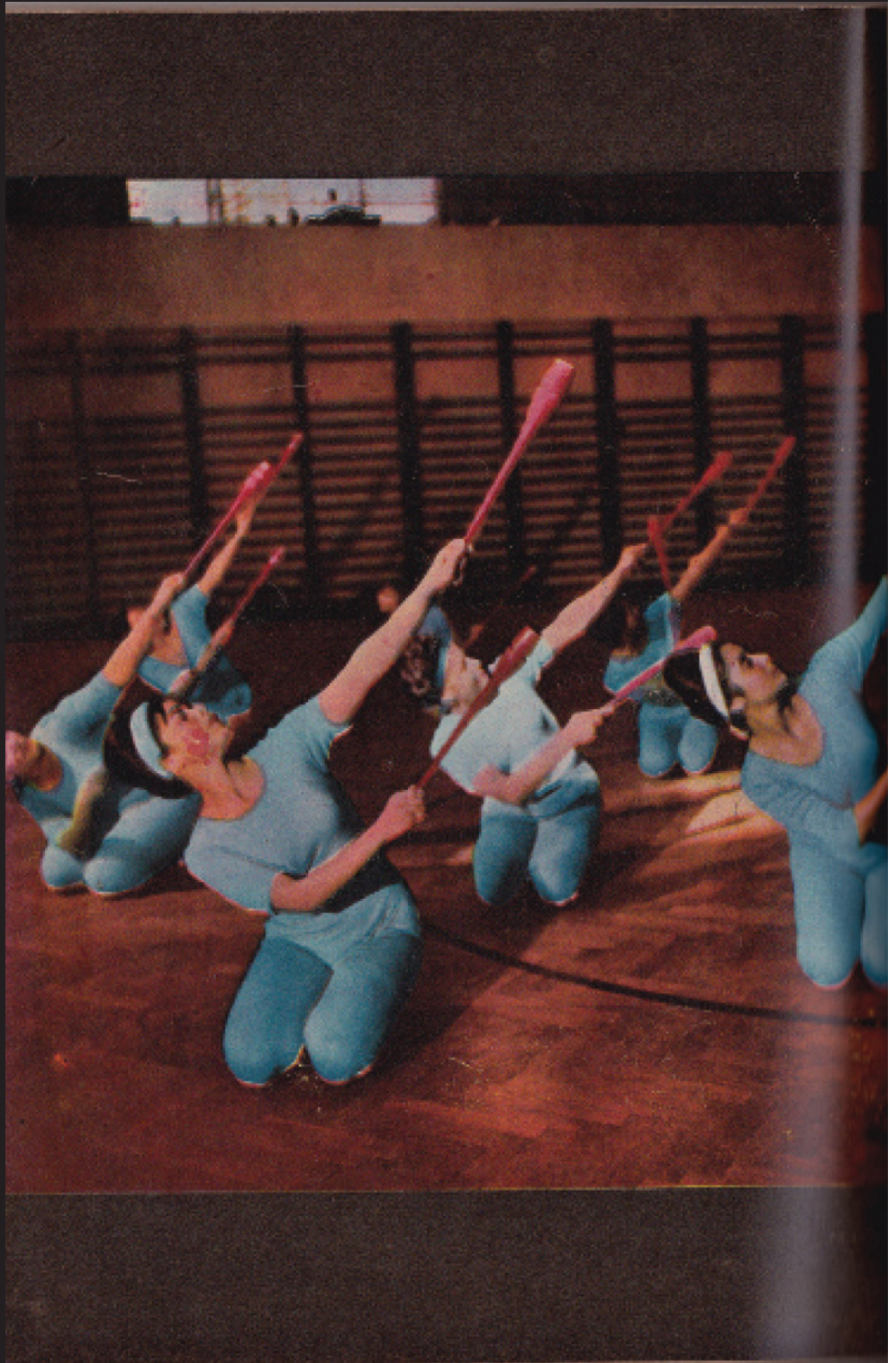


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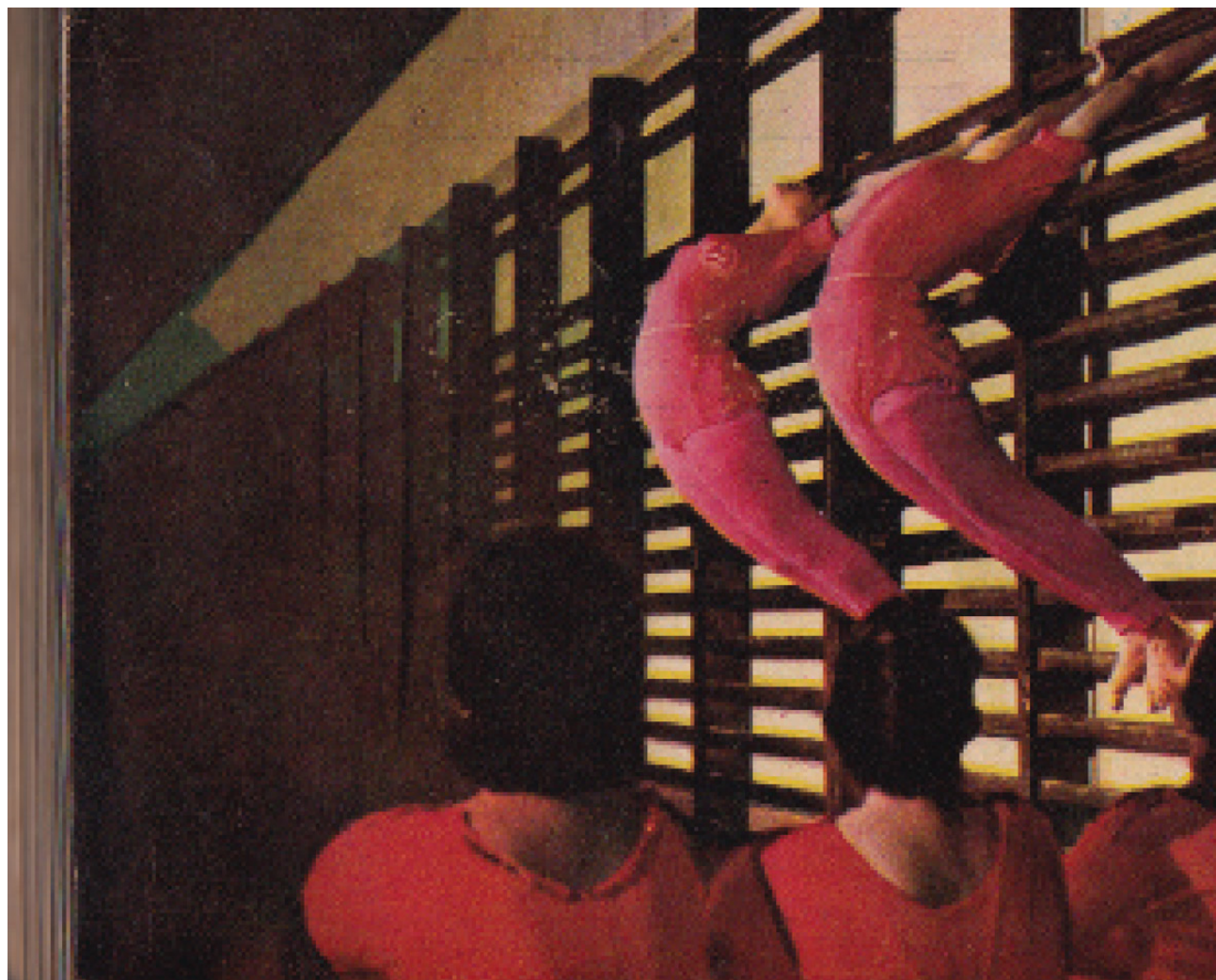
Marwa

Arsanios



Marwa Arsanios contributes excerpts from the original script of *Olga's Notes, all those restless bodies* (2015), along with selections from a text she wrote for *ARTMargins* (February 2015).





Excerpt I

The dancer will imitate the astronauts by doing the slow moon dance. She will not fly but rather follow a certain slowness and gravity-less walk, gravitating between walking, flying, and dancing on a borderless stage. By imitating everyday mundane bodies walking on the streets, the dancer's body transforms everyday gestures into motion and form. Imitation is the main key for collecting gestures and movements. Imitation and dance, or imitating dance, or imitating the dancer, or the dancer imitating the other dancer, imitating the other one. And so on.

Silences in dance are cut by the dancer's body-sounds. Silences in writing are erased.

We put on Yvonne Rainer's Trio A, as Sandra said this would be a good exercise—she learned it in dance school, one of the first they studied. Rainer herself had relinquished authorship of Trio A by announcing that anyone who had performed it could teach it to anyone else. We followed Yvonne Rainer. It was hard to follow her intentional hesitation. Right, left. We thought she was going right when she turned and went in the opposite direction, unexpectedly turned back again, and then went right. It was a game of switching directions. She stumbled as if she would fall, but doesn't, but perhaps she would. She stumbled again, held herself and doesn't fall, and then suddenly she did. We saw her on the floor. With this twisting, we followed her back and forth, back and forth, until we learned the move. We repeated it so many times, but always got stuck on the stumbling. The fall used a lot of muscles. To let oneself fall powerfully, one needs a lot of muscle and strength. Without hesitation, we kept following Yvonne. We stumbled, not powerful enough to fall. We skipped the fall.

Excerpt II

Learning to dance

"The most beautiful industry in our country" is the title of an article about a dance school.

"If you pass next to an industrial building, don't think this is a new metal or car factory! No! It is a big hangar, but nothing of what you expect. It is a place where bodies are trained to dance in a certain manner and join the national troupe."

Learning in a factory, as mass learning and producing a mass that has learned—bodies in masses that have learned to dance ballet to become ballerinas, or not. The article describes a newly built ballet school as "the biggest industry that has been built in the country," and continues, "this is not a steel industry, this is a place that will surprise you. It is an industry of the body, it is a ballet school". It promotes the school and its activities in the same manner one would promote a building development project. Building bodies that can dance in a certain manner. The opera house and the ballet school have become part of the nation's modernization process. But why ballet? Ballet as a tradition coming from industrialized countries—ballet as a tradition that would disrupt local folkloric and traditional dances. But why ballet? Ballet as a colonizer—ballet for decolonization from traditional dance.

The national dance school aimed to produce national dancers who would enter the national troupe and dance for official occasions. These bodies of dancers would become representatives of the country, with its specific borders. Beyond borders, traveling for spectacles and performances, the industrial dancers' bodies will have to dance the dance that represents their country and their people—a specific gesture or dance movement representative of a country and the people living within specific borders mapped by human hands and fingers, colonial hands. What do colonial hands look like?

Similarly, spectators start identifying with the dance group that they think represent their country. The ballet school was implemented in 1958 with the help of experts from the Bolshoi Ballet in Moscow. In 1966, Leonid Lavrovsky flew to Cairo to stage the first big production, *The Fountain of Bakhshisarai*. Gamal Abdel Nasser attended the opening, on December 3, and awarded the lead dancers Orders of Merit. One year later, Lavrovsky died. One year later, the Six-Day War happened. The bodies had to learn and adapt to this dance. The industrial body had to learn ballet. The body of the ballerina can fly. It learned to fly. After certain conditioning, it can do the jump in the air, and fly.

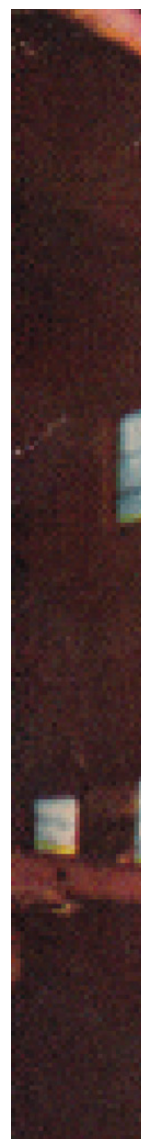
If the modern project gave birth to democracy and totalitarianism at once, then perhaps the dancer's body was trapped between the two projects. Don't worry, though—we are not here to save it. Perhaps the dancer will decide to break away when she rebels against the choreographer. In any case, we are not here to save her.

Excerpt III

There is always some ethnographic work when one is watching a dance performance, or at least anatomical observation. The difference between a dance performance and ethnographic work, however, is that the body is taken out of context and put on stage. The ethnographer is an audience, but the audience watching a dance performance is not necessarily made up of ethnographers. Or, perhaps the audience is simply looking at the dissection of the body and its skeletal articulation.

It is one thing to adopt the ethnographer's gaze, as Magda did, and another to be part of an audience, and yet another to be looking at a body with the purpose of studying its anatomy. In fact, this is the difference between the viewer, the observer, the audience, the witness, and the ethnographer. Though perhaps the ethnographer is all of those at once.

I am looking at myself in the mirror while dancing. The dancers are looking at themselves in the mirror dancing. I witness a dancer moving her hip in circles. Magda is looking at herself flying. The spe-



cialist is looking at the dead body, or convicted body, or operating on an open body, or dissecting a body. The bones are cracking while we are looking at ourselves trying to do the rotation. How do the bones move while we are doing it?

Excerpt IV

Learning to work

When a certain position—whether sitting in the library or working at a machine in a factory—molds your body—when you have to sleep as if you are sitting, or you have to stand up as if you are sleeping—this means your body has been molded to the position of labor. This productive force is nothing but the molding of your own body until it hurts.

You can see the violence of a project on the body of the people who take part.

The nightmare of the project can be seen in the building, in how the building has ended up. You see it in the paper, how yellow it is. You see it in the words that are like ruins. The nightmare of the project is that it has a specific time. And with its violence, it imposes this time, its own time. The progress of the project is its very violence. Or, the violence of progress: of labor, of reading, of writing. In every act, the violence manifests by imposing the time of the project. The violence of adapting your body to a seat in the library.

The body being trained like steel, shaped and formed so that it dances in a certain manner.

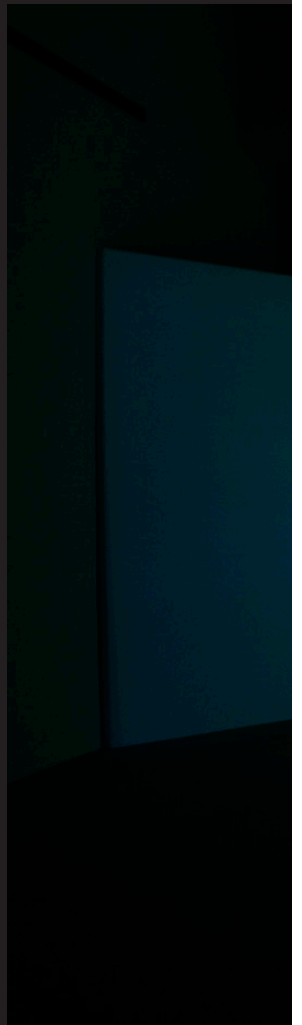


call

this

Michelle

Dizon



*I am the daughter of immigrants
I am no one's daughter
I have no needs
I see nothing
I will forget
And this makes it possible to continue
And this makes it possible to continue
—from Civil Society*



CIVIL SOCIETY

halt

Videre, in Latin, means “to see.” The word video can be traced as the first-person singular present form of *videre*, or “I see.”

Etymology reveals what is assumed in the apparatus of video as we know it. It tells us that deep within the linguistic foundation of video is the presence of an “I” who sees. But, who is this “I” and what are the politics of seeing and not-seeing, being seen and not being seen? While the politics of visibility and invisibility might be related to images, it might also be related to the way people become fixed as image, modeled in a colonial project of Western modernity through temperings and enframings of space and time. After all, a necessary counterpoint to the colonial expansion of space was precisely that the colonized might fall out of time, an operation that marked the colonizer a subject of the present—a properly historical subject—contemporaneous with the progress of history and the nation-state. For the rest remained the fall out of time, exteriorized to the other side of History.

Civil Society began for me in 2005, when Hurricane Katrina and the revolts on the outskirts of Paris happened within a month of each other. As these events reached me through the television, I had just moved back to Los Angeles, the city where I was born and raised. Both Katrina and the revolts in France revealed something important about the idea of race: far from being essentialized in the body, race was more clearly what the scholar and prison abolitionist Ruthie Gilmore describes as “the state-sanctioned and/or legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies.”

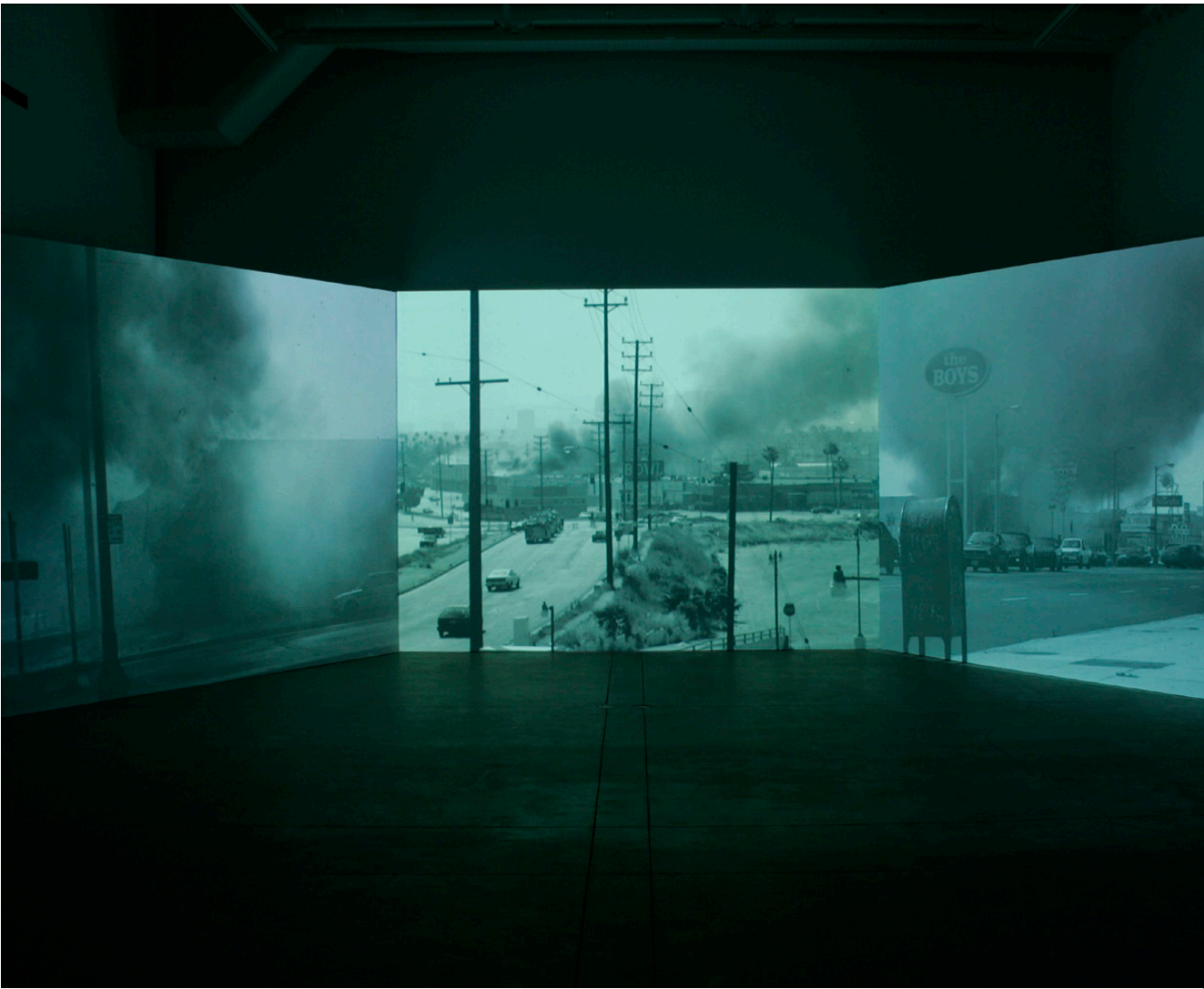
Just as this constellation of occurrences between Katrina and the revolts threw the operations of race, racism, and racialization into relief, they also reminded me that the city in which I was living had been the site of an event with similar resonance: the 1992 Los Angeles Uprising.





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can





Even as I was born and raised in Los Angeles to parents from the Philippine diaspora, and even as I was a teenager at the time of the uprising, when I tried to remember anything about the event I found, nothing. Try as I might, I had no real memory of it—no real memory, except for the Rodney King tape. Some twenty-five years later, I began to try to understand what had happened in this lacuna.

I discovered that the Rodney King video had taken center stage in the trial. The jury viewed three versions, one in real time, one slowed to 12 percent of real time, and one slowed to 6 percent. In these three temporalities is a sense of the video being offered as evidence, as if with this slowing down, time might expand, or dilate, to allow for the jury to “really see” and make sense of what happened. The veracity of this seeing was thus based upon a certain malleability of time, which, given the etymology of video in “I see,” we can understand as the construction of evidence that creates the condition for judgment based upon “empirical” examination. It is also a condition of collective judgment, for in this instance the “I see” of video becomes a condition for the “we see” of the jury. Yet, this collective judgment was also proved to be contested by what those on the streets during the uprising revealed as a profound difference at the site of this “we.”

What these events throw into relief is a sense of how there is no transparency to the image, how there is no universalizability to the “I” who sees, how there is no claim to the I who sees apart from a correlate in terms of knowledge, and that we are posed with a fundamental question of how it is that we think that we know what we know. Indeed, the use of video in the events of 1992 holds a specific understanding of time, which is the time of the now, a present tense, the belief that the camera was there.

I started to think about the Rodney King tape, not so much as an eyewitness or as the truth to an event, but rather, as a kind of repository for cultural memory. In this repository lay not only the event of the beating caught on video, but a whole set of apparatuses like the technology of video, the juridical and legal frameworks through which video was used, and the fundamental question of interpretation that cut through all understandings of how it is that we think that we know something.

I also started to ask questions about time and the kind of malleability of time evidenced in the use of the tape during the trial. In this instance, video allowed for a dilation of time that was immediately bound up with seeing and empirical knowledge. In this sense, when we consider the way that the lens of the camera is often compared to an eye, we might begin to think about the time of that eye.

"I see." When an eye is dilated, the pupil is enlarged to make the rest of the eye more visible for a doctor's examination. With dilation, sight gradually escapes the seer, and what is in front begins to appear blurred and indistinct. The subject whose eyes are dilated grows vulnerable, both subject to the examination of the optometrist and to the flood of light that illuminates nothing more than vision itself, at its limit.

The lens of a camera, so often compared to an eye, might be analogized here, but one cannot consider the camera apart from the network of forces that constitute it. Video is not only an eye just as the patient being examined is not only an eye. At the optometrist, we have not only a naturalized eye, but a whole technology of health, the discipline of medicine, the machines or chemical compounds that enable this science, the various metaphors for vision and extensions of masterful subjectivity that inform them, the economy of health care, and the questions of knowledge and power that determine how it is that the examiner gained the credential to be able to examine this eye and formulate an assessment of its condition. In other words, we have a whole apparatus that speaks of the inextricable web that creates this instance of the dilated eye. Here too, there is an apparatus, but it is a juridical and legal one, just as it is an instance of vision and its metaphors, just as it is an instance of understanding of subjectivity and how it is that we think that we know something.

What this event reveals about video is that it alone, in fact, sees nothing. It sees nothing except time itself. Video, when thought through its assumptions in terms of "I see," dilates time not so that we might see better, or see more clearly, but rather so that we might encounter something fundamental about the assumptions of this first-person singular present tense and its relation to history, so that we might understand that this first-person singular present can only be so by installing itself as a universal fact. With each use of video, we might suggest that there are many lives that can neither live as this "I" nor as "not I."



Civil Society is a video that deals with the revolts in the *banlieues* of Paris in 2005 and the uprising in Los Angeles in 1992. Even with two events present in the work, rather than calling it a comparison, I think that the word “resonance” might be more apt. There is no causal relationship in the piece and there is not so much a telling of the events as there is a question of the subject, and of subjects, as they see or do not see, are seen or are not seen—processes which direct us toward the imbrication of aesthetics and politics.

Civil Society, the video, works as the limit of our understanding of democracy, for what uprisings and revolts ask is: Who speaks for whom? Who speaks in the name of “civil society” and what is considered a viable or legitimate form of contestation? Why are uprisings and revolts so often de-politicized and subsumed within a colonial logic of barbarism and incivility? The events in Paris in 2005 were triggered by the deaths of two teenagers in Clichy Sous Bois, Bouna Traoré and Zyed Benna. They had been running from the police whose abuse of power and outward racism is experienced as an everyday occurrence in the city’s suburbs. One day, rather than being subject to these everyday violences, the two young men ran and hid in a power substation where they were electrocuted. Their deaths sparked the revolts that would continue for three weeks and would spread throughout France. A state of emergency, whose legitimacy dates from the French occupation of Algeria, was declared. The revolts were met with a de-politicization of the actions that were happening in the streets and an erasure that exists until this present day of not only the anger and frustration at the systematized violence of everyday life, but also, at the grief and loss that exists in the name of these two young men.

In Clichy Sous Bois there are many words that exist in the landscape. They are written on the walls where Bouna once lived, standing clear as a call to justice.



progress

to

It is the irrecoverable loss, the cry, in which the dead are summoned by name. Who hears this cry? This is the question and commitment that remains for me. I struggle to understand the way that “life” is shaped in this world and to understand the forces that come to make so many lives vulnerable and precarious.

In *Civil Society*, I deal with this question by re-imagining the work of assembling images. Rather than thinking about editing as a dialectical movement of montage, I wanted to ask how I might hold open a movement in which the dialectics of seeing are laid bare. How might it be possible to invite a consideration of the losses that are still not seen and stories that remain to be told? How might video approach the work of telling a history filled with absence and lacunae? If the “I see” of video means to accept the languages and histories that currently exist to describe the world, then *Civil Society* imbues video with a subjectivity that refuses this positioning. It starts not from the site of saying “I see” but rather, “I don’t see”—a work from the site of ruins and a demand that we might begin to see again.





halt

Maha

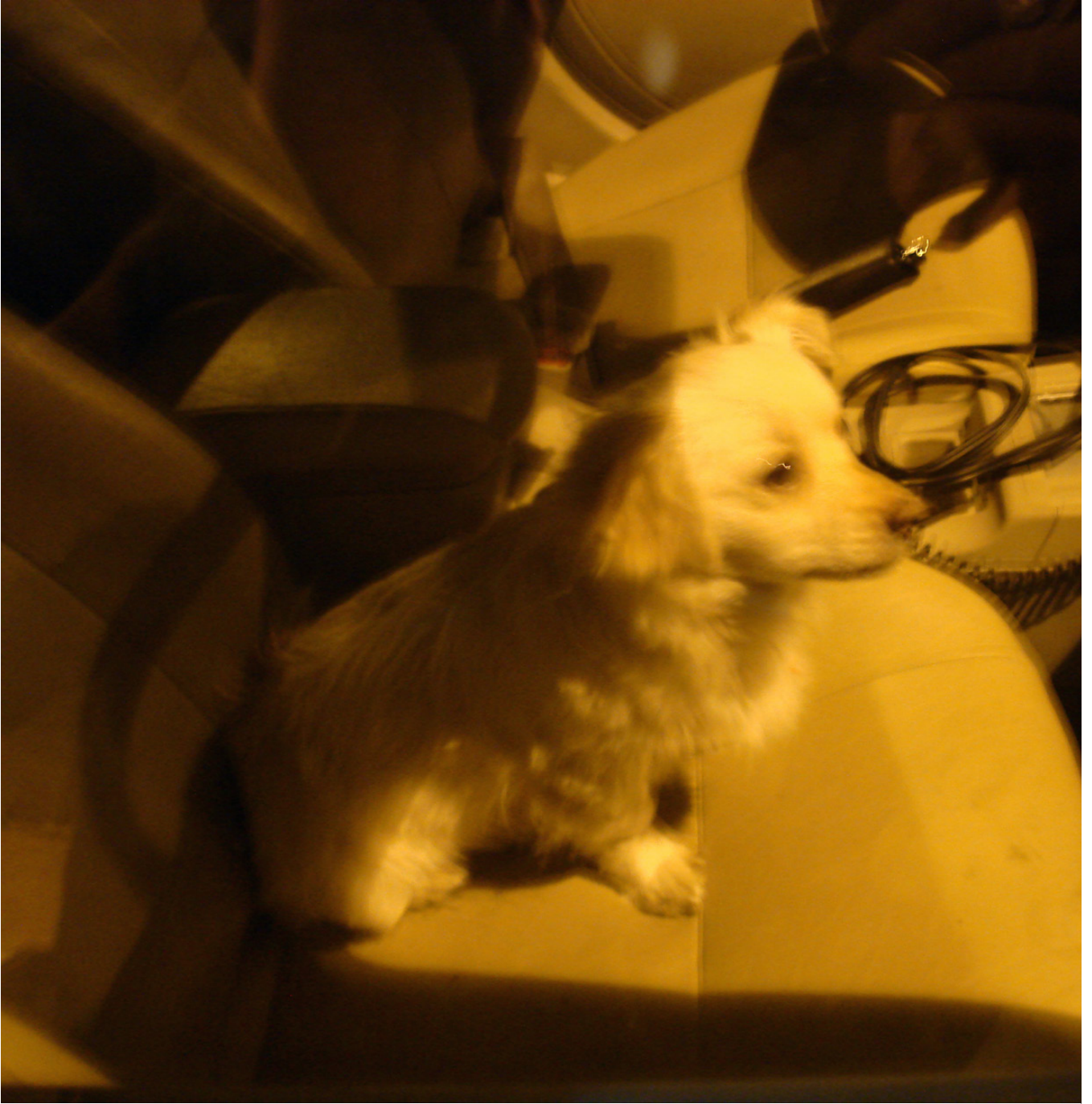
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Ayreen Anastas & Rene Gabri

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NOT TO CRITIQUE THE OCCIDENTAL POLITICAL
BUT AIM TO DEPLACE
ART MATURES DIS PLACE THE PLACE OF POLITICS
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MAYBE,

SINCE, SIMILAR TO THE YOUNGLING,
LONG TIME THIS MEANS LOCALE OF POLITICS IS LIFE BUT
POLITICS IS UNDER CERTAIN MODALITY

LIFE CAPTURED UNDER CERTAIN MODALITY
ALREADY THE PRODUCTION OF THE DIVISION
FERNETED, SOON

SILENCE, TRANQUILITY
STILLNESS OF
BEAUTY

BE NOTHING BUT DEVOTIONAL, LIKE THE
GREEK WAS!

LOVE THE GODS & THINK
FRIENDLY
(OF THE
MORTALS!

HATE THE FRENZY
AT THE FROST!

TEACH AND DO NOT DESCRIBE!

WHEN THE
MASTER
BRINGS YOU ANGST
CAUSES

ASK
THE
GREAT NATURE
FOR COUNCIL

HOWEVER, WHEN YOU
GLADLY
ALREADY, WILLINGLY
DENOY RENOUNCE DISAVOW
YOUR

WHAT HAPPENS

CIVIL WAR

oikos / polis

CITIZENSHIP, BIRTH OF NOTION

CONCEPT APPEARS

WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT
IS LIFE

WE LEAVE
STATION

KNOW VERY WELL HOW TO
DIVIDE IT

NON-CITIZEN

CIVIL WAR

THROUGH EXCLUSION
OWNING LATTER INCLUDING
LIFE IN
SYSTEM
BY EXCLUSION

ORIGINAL LOCATION
AN OPERATION ON LIFE

CONCEPT OF
EXCLUDED THING

THINKING
SOMETHING IS
EXCLUDED
THE OTHER

EXCLUDED THING
TO BE USED
INCLUDE

ZOE / BIOS COMPLEX LIFE
EXCLUDED
POLITICIZED

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INCURRED

THINKING OF CIVIL WAR
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KNOW VERY WELL HOW TO
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NON-CITIZEN

CIVIL WAR

oikos / polis

CITIZENSHIP, BIRTH OF NOTION

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KNOW VERY WELL HOW TO
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NON-CITIZEN

CIVIL WAR

oikos / polis

CITIZENSHIP, BIRTH OF NOTION

CONCEPT APPEARS

ONE OF THE CHARACTERISTICS - I THINK YOU GET MY DRIFT
OF WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SHOW
OUR AGE

TAKE INTO
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POST 1900
POST 1900
POST 1900

FOR THE
SAKE OF
SOME THINGS
THE BREAKDOWN
OF
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[illegible][illegible]

HUMAN - POST-FASCISM

TO THIS CRITIQUE
COULD BE
ENLARGED
TO AVE
HEALTH
RACE
SEXUAL
ORIENTATION

Journal of Management Education

70377V-01 NEVA
100-111-100

WE CAN CALL IT
POST-FASCISM
AFTER A LONG REGENERATION, INTELLECTUAL

W GO BACK TO — NINETEEN — EXPLAIN'D — CHRISTIANITY SHOWN TO BE GOOD — THINGS — PEOPLE WILL — RINGING TIME

FAMILY
 GREAT
 ENEMIES
 CONSIDERED
 SOCIAL HELP IN INTEREST OF WEAK
 CIVILIZATION
 WILL DESTROY

MACHINEGUN - VIRTU > NOT ALL GRAND " PAISON
 ANTIPOLO-NALITE " MIND
 "NOT ALL LEADERS EXCELLENT"

WE'LL REVEAL NAZI ORDER OF ANY RELEVANT ADMIRAL
 REVEALING THE UGLY
 EQUALITARIANISM, GIVING

GROSS WEAR 32%
PUN/JINING STRONG CLEVERA FLEXIBLE
REWARDING STRIVING FOR
TINN

NO ADVERSARY
FOR FIRST TIME IN
HISTORY.

EGALITARIAN MOODS
EXPERIMENTS BY POST
FOR OUR KIND

EQUIDIRECTED
w/ NATURAL
A / ORDER

NE THINKER
TOMAL LEFT
ALWAYS BOUNDED
BY DIA...
CENTRIFUGAL
UNIVERSALISM OF FORMER
CONTRADICTIVELY ESTABL.

M. — EQUALITY & LIBERTY
 WORKING POOR
 DEPENDENT ON THEIR EMPLOYERS
 "BEING INDEPENDENT" — NOT SEVILLE COULD PAY TAXES
 UNWORTHY OF HIGH TITLE

THE INTEREST-TAKENOUT BY (THE
PRESERVING MINUTIST
THE HYPNOTIC TALKER WHO
SAYS "I'VE ORGANIZED"
MULTIPLE "BODIES"
/ ARE FINISHED
IN WHICH MORAL WORTH & BIOLOGICAL
ATTITUDE

SUPERIORITY INFERIORITY
GAIN LOSS
MEMBERSHIP
UNIVERSAL CITIZENSHIP
BIOLOGICALLY
NATIVE
TOTALLY INCREASE
NATIVE ACTIVITY - NATURAL

SOMETHING TO ALL
ORDER
IS THE
NEW COLLECTIVE
ADVANCEMENT
TRANSFORM
HENCE
END TO EQUITY
CLASHES
INTO BIOLOGICAL

MAY NOT BE TOTALITARIAN
MAY NOT BE MILITARISTIC
THAT IS WHY IT'S
NOT CALLED "POLICE STATE"
IS OK

TO PUT AN END TO ENLIGHTENMENT
THE END OF THE CONCEPT

PROBIA

CIVILIZING MILLION OF OLD INDIAN
 BACCHAD SHIFF INSTAINED
 OF PUT NOT NOT PERMITTED JEMTIDIM
 OF PUT NOT NOT PERMITTED JEMTIDIM

SOCIETIES "REGULUM" "ADMONITION" "COUNCIL" "MAN" "CLOURED" "CALLED IT" "MORALE" "KRYLING WOULD HAVE CALLED IT" "IDEOLOGICAL" "MUTATION" "TODAY" "17 ARTISTS" "UNWRITING" "WILLY AT AMOUCOUR"

NO REAL NEED FOR
FUNDA. MALT. LIBERAL DEMOCRACY
— SIMILAR TO
FRATILMO
— MPTT

[illegible]

GOED BY WHAT IS PERCEIVED BY THESE RADICAL CONSERVATIVES

SCIENTIFIC
MANAGEMENT
LIVING
ACROSS THE BIRTH
COGNITIVE LEVEL
= EVILNANNA FLAMMULATED
GOOD NAME &
NATURE OF SOCIETY THAT
IN THE MIDDLE-CLASS

COMMUNISM
COME BACKS!!
BURNED BY COMMUNIST CANNON

DEFENDING / LOOKED AT
 VIOLENCE / BY LINE
 A TREMENDOUS CHANGE!
 REMOVING - FIGHTING SPIRIT
 DRIVING - ACTION AS OPPOSED TO (WARREN), LOW CULTURE OF VIOLENCE
 - FIGHTING SPIRIT / - TO EMULATE
 - SUSTAINED / - INACTIVE

WE ARE
UNIFICATION
OF COERSON

NOT SO CLEAR
EVIDENT

IN LONG ESCAPE
OF EGALITARIANISM IT CLAMOUR

RECONQUERED

OBSCURED -
A LOST -
PRIDE OF BELONGING
TO THE WINNERS

RESILIENT
MAKE
AMERICA
GREAT AGAIN

TEN NOTES ON
THE UNMAKING OF ART
(IN THE EPOCH OF CIVIL
WAR AND A POST-
FASCISM)

IN 1946 A POST-
FASCISM
KARL JASPERS
BE SHOULD DISTINGUISH
BETWEEN NAZISM AS AN
IDEOLOGICAL EVENT
AND CONTEMPORARY
FASCISM

IN THE LAST
LETTERS WE
WERE THROUGH
CRUCIAL
DYNAMICS OF A SOCIAL
LEVEL SIMILAR TO 2003
IN ITALY/GERMANY
CONSIDERED SIMILAR.

WHAT IS THE
CRUCIAL
DYNAMICS?
BY THE ORDER OF
ECONOMIC SYSTEM
1. ABOLITION OF
A DEFERRED IMPROVEMENT
2. ABOLITION OF
A DEFERRED IMPROVEMENT

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

DON'T THINK OF YOURSELF...
AS IMPROVISED... THINK
AS WHITE WARRIORS
AND YOU WILL WIN!

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
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THE WORLD

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

TO MAKE ANYTHING, ESPECIALLY ART TODAY,
ONE MUST FIRST HAVE A RELATION TO THE
MAKING'S UNMAKING.

2. UNMAKING, ASKS OF US TO NOT-HOLD
BACK-TO LET A WAVE OR TWO OR THREE
PAST-TO DO NOTHING (THOUGH THIS REMAINS
IMMANENT IN ANY DOING), RATHER IT ASKS
OF US TO RADICALLY QUESTION THE
CONDITIONS, MERITS, USES, FUTURES, PASTS
OF ANY MAKING.

3. BUT THIS UNMAKING IS NO NAVAL-
GAZING, IT IS NEITHER AN ORDER, CODE
OR LAW NOR AN INJUNCTION THROUGH
GUILT, COERCION, DUTY - IT IS NOT
A SELF REFLEXIVITY FOR THE
SAKE OF ITSELF, IT IS NOT
AN ETHICS OF STASIS

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

THE POINT NOW
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THE PLANET FROM USA
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THE WORLD

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

4. UNMAKING BRINGS THE WAR HOME, "SO TO SPEAK"
5. IN THE UNMAKING THE PRIVATE PRINCIPLE OF WORK IS BROUGHT TO A
PUBLIC WHEN DOES NOT YET EXIST, WITHOUT A DEMOS
"THE PEOPLE IS MISSING"

6. IT IS NEITHER
A RESOLUTION OF THE DISSENTION, OF THE CONFLICT
NOR ITS CULMINATION, ITS REPRESENTATION, IT ABSOLUTION
A TAKING SIDES WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ALTER
THE SIDES WHICH TAKE PART.

7. UNMAKING IS A WEIGHING IN
A TAKING SIDES WHICH HAS THE POTENTIAL TO ALTER
THE SIDES WHICH TAKE PART.

8. ONE IS CONFRONTED WITH THE UNMAKING
CONDITIONS OF AN INTERMINABLE
WARFARE
ON THE LAND NOT KNOW
ON THE PEOPLES, RECOGNIZE
ON THE DIFFERENCE THEMSELVES AS
ON THE EARTH
UNCONQUERED PART-TAKERS
AT MULTITUDES

ANY MAKING IS A TAKING SIDES
TACITLY THOSE WHO WAGE WAR
IN THOSE NAMES

WHAT HAPPENED IN THE--
LAST 20-30
YEARS
AND DEVELOPMENT
OF TECHNOLOGICAL
AUTOMATION
THE MAIN EFFECT IS
GROWING
FROM
REAL LIFE OF THE 20th
CENTURY
BUT WE ARE IMAGINING
A FUTURE
OF THE 21st
CENTURY
WE ARE IMAGINING
A FUTURE
OF THE 21st
CENTURY

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
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THE WORLD

THE POINT NOW
IF WE LOOK AT USA
THE PLANET FROM USA
WE HEAR THE SAME THING
BUT THEY WILL DESTROY
THE WORLD

9. UNMAKING IS THE UNWORKING
AND MAKING VISIBLE THIS SILENT
COMPLICITY. (OF THE MANNERS OF WAR
AND THOSE OTHER MANNERS)

10. WE ARE NOT ABLE TO MAKE ART IN
THE MIDST OF THIS EVER EXTENSIVE AND
DETERRITORIALIZING WAR. WE CAN
ONLY UNMAKE IT.

[illegible]

BREAK

3 EXPECTATION REAL LIFE
SELF IMAGE

SHIFT EN
MENTARY CONDITION
HALVING OF SALARY
WHILE AVERAGE WORKTIME
DOUBLED

LINKED WITH POLITICAL
THAT HAS BEEN

OF ENUNCIATION
HUMILIATED
PARTICULARLY
WHITE WORKERS
HAT BEEN

FORM IN WHICH
YOU OBLIGE A PERSON
TO BECOME AWARE OF
THEIR INABILITY TO FULFILL
HER SELF IMAGE

③ ISLANDS
OF A SITUATION
RACIAL IDENTITY
BY FINANCIAL DICTATORSHIP
THEY ARE TAKING REVENUE
FIRST AGAINST THE LIBERAL LEFT

NO WAY OUT
REVENUE OF WHITE
AND
REVENUE OF NON WHITE PEOPLE
OF THE WORLD

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1. BREAK

2. EXPECTATION REAL LIFE

3. SELF IMAGE

4. HUMILIATED

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9. YOU OBLIGE A PERSON

10. TO BECOME AWARE OF

11. THEIR INABILITY TO FULFILL

12. HER SELF IMAGE

13. ③ ISLANDS

14. OF A SITUATION

15. RACIAL IDENTITY

16. BY FINANCIAL DICTATORSHIP

17. THEY ARE TAKING REVENUE

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91. 23. OF THE WORLD

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157. 89. 21. AND

158. 22. REVENUE OF NON WHITE PEOPLE

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217. 82. 14. OF A SITUATION

218. 83. 15. RACIAL IDENTITY

219. 84. 16. BY FINANCIAL DICTATORSHIP

220. 85. 17. THEY ARE TAKING REVENUE

2

"OUR FREE COMMUNITY
IS BEING THREATENED"
— SHOULD WE DEFEND YOUR SYSTEM?
WHY ARE PEOPLE TO NEUTRAL TO
WHEN LIBERALS SAY UP IN ARMS!
— THEN?

SAVE MARKET CAPITALISM
SAVE INEQUALITY
SAVE ... FROM THE INCURSIONS
OF ALL THAT IS UNJEREMY PEOPLE

HYPOCRISY
RETARDANCE
AND FINAL
DEFEAT OF INTERNATIONALIST WORKERS MOVEMENT

GO TO CITY
LEG (WOMEN
BAR - YOUR PEOPLE
CONGREGATES

LEISURE ALWAYS BEEN
A SOCIATED
INDIVIDUAL FREEDOM

THIS IS HOW THE RIGHT IS
WINNING
THIS WOULD AS IT IS NOW
IS NOT WORTH LIVING

THE CONTEMPT FOR TRUMP
VOTER OR BACKLATER
IF NOT JUSTIFIED
WE HAVE COME TO A POINT
WE DON'T RETIT
NOT WORTH DEFENDING

SHOULD WE
SAVE A SYSTEM
THAT DOESN'T LIVE
OF ANYTHING WISE
BEIDES
SMALL MERCHANTS

HAD HIGH LULU.
Genuine Lit.
— Philodromia, Teleence
— CONQUERED
DILIGENT
THOUGHT

THIS ALTERNATIVE
THROUGH DIFFERENCE
IN A CAPITAL
COMMUNITY
YOU CAN OF COME TALK
BUT A LIMIT - ALWAYS THE SAME
WHAT YOU WANT
ARE BEAUTIFUL DREAMS

DO WE CONTRIBUTE
THROUGH DIFFERENCE
IN A CAPITAL
COMMUNITY
YOU CAN OF COME TALK
BUT A LIMIT - ALWAYS THE SAME
WHAT YOU WANT
ARE BEAUTIFUL DREAMS

SCIENTISM
CONVICTED
THAT

JOKE
CONVICTED
THAT

WORK - A SERVILE CONDITION / EXAGGERATION OF ANCIENT SOCIETIES
 POLYANI ASKS WHAT WAS THE
 FACILITATOR TRIED TO DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FAUCILM AND COMMUNISM?
 GENERALIZE THE ECONOMY
 TO THE RETIREMENT
 OF POLITICS ALL IND. - CAUSE RULE OF CAPITALISM WERE SUPREME
 ACTIONS OF POLITICAL COMMUNITY COMMUNISM WAS EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE
 LIQUIDATED THE EXTENSION OF POLITICS TO ALL REALMS
 INCLUDING THE ECONOMY
 WE'VE THE INCREASE OF THE POWER OF THE CAPITALIST
 THE WHOLE PHENOMENON OF NEOLIBERALISM KEEP GOING ON...

[illegible]

TO LOBE, BECOME
PAINFUL, FRAGILE
WHAT THEY DO TO THE
OTHERS, THEY DO TO
THEMSELVES
TAKEN BACK
NITE
TO PROTECT
NANTS
UNCLE PRESENCE
AT A VOICE
IR
E FELT
BACK TO SLEEP.
WOULD MEAN
A MROS THINK
IES
ELVES
PLACE IN THE WORLD.

THE TAP OF
ANY CAPITALIST
SYSTEM
BASED ON
RACE ROOTS
NOT CLASSLESS IDEALS
VALUES
CAPITAINE
ALEXANDRE

FAIR TRUTH
CULTURE
REBELLIOUS
ON THE MOVE
LA LIBERTE
LIBERTY IS NOT
HAS NO N
GUARD L'IMAGI
WHEN THE IMAGI
LA LIBERTE
LA QUETE DE LA
QUEST
both e
expert,
the ca
other
of the
modern
2008,
to be
the th
New fu
IN THE

in the time of the events which hold us and break us

to perceive or redefine the conventi

unrelated with words

sentiments

of the world

the worlds which hold us together

the words of another, some times

middle passage, refusal, acts of

the plantation system spread us

world systems smother themselves

we write to write and to inter

how a system that was so fragile

to what are seen as the modern

exchange concepts THE ONLY ONE

reputable, all, none, old

on a word as we share words

relation

of our early

beauty is a word that is removed

to the world of writing

the nonsense of the news

at each page is filled, then

have you refused to make sense

the page begins again, undoing

again the given, but some

Rhetorically, ideologically, legally

to say to each page another

Each page another moment, time

of day, light, wind, push

the flood of the written, the

the things holding and releasing

limits, holds, effectively, com

tered, bump, bump, preside

when the evidence is president

crash, president crash, a lie

anyway, president deot

you must change your life

not flash, liberal management

translates, news flash,

opacity, endures, the riddle

if the payment is not there,

today is the day or striking,

DEAR FRIENDS

WHAT

THE

RE:

MY WHEN ONE TRIES

NOT A THEORY

CONVINCING

March 8 – April 23, 2017



Los Angeles
Contemporary Exhibitions



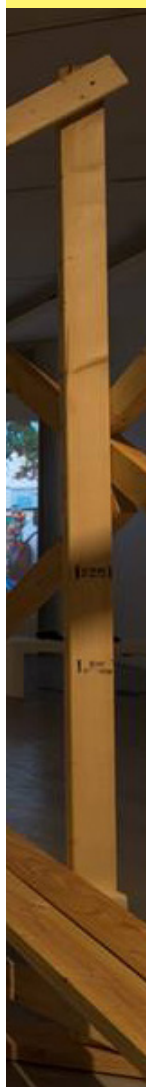
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Los Angeles
Contemporary Exhibitions

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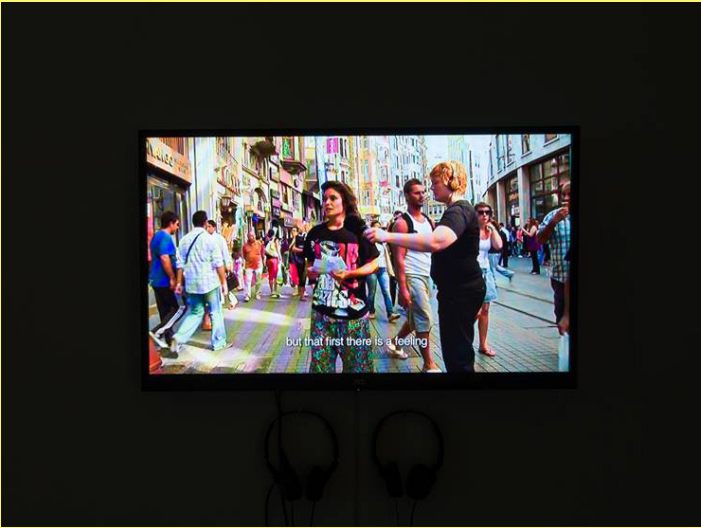


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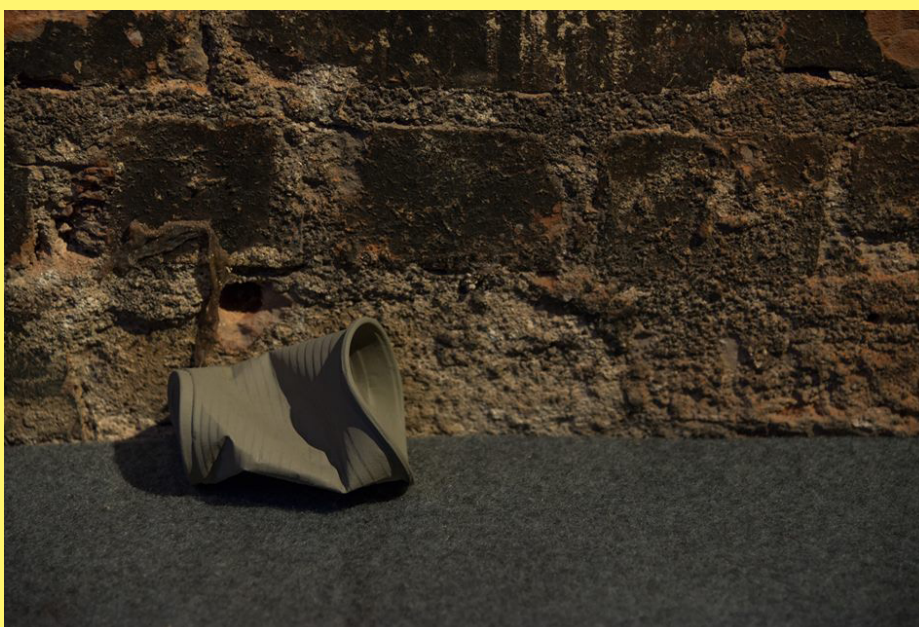
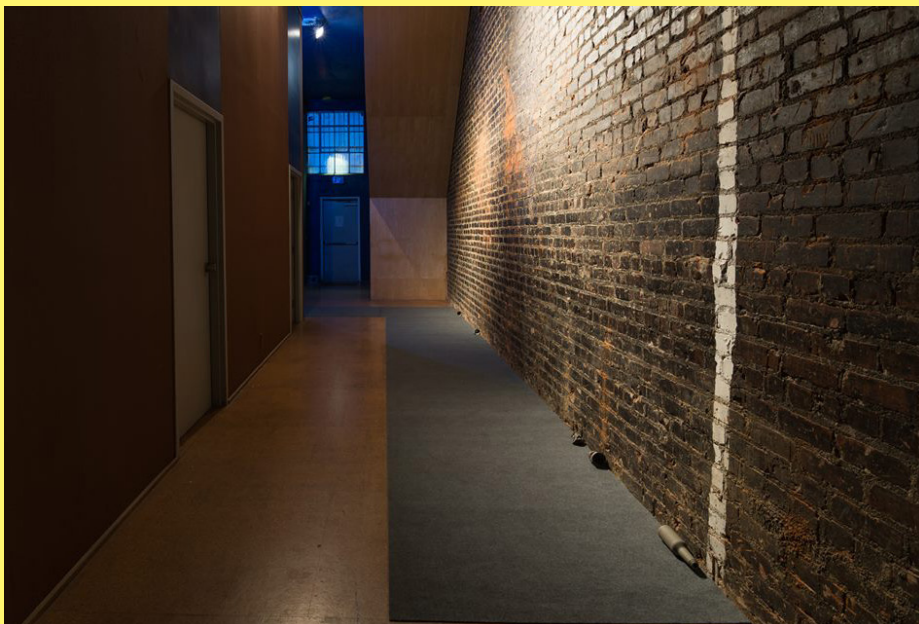
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particular Plato invented this word in order to clarify the distinction between ideas which are, according to Plato, the highest forms of existence because they are infinite, autonomous and the source of all the things constitute our reality. Even if we humans create things, they are mimetic objects, which are always copying the ideas.

Literature, poetry, and visual arts produce mimetic objects, and that's why artists are taking the third and the lowest part in what Plato seemed to understand as the construction of the ideal society.

For Plato, representation is the worst mimesis. Painting, and in general the visual arts, is accused of presenting only the one side of things and of excluding reality's multiplicity.

Plato never spoke of the objects that exist on stage. His philosophical texts however were dialogues, and they seem to take place on a stage with objects having a significant role in the creation of the scenes: tables, chairs, glasses, etc., are there to flourish the set of his characters' fictional meetings and discussions.

The staged objects, are not exactly useful but they are not really useless either. They are not ideas but they are also not works of art. They gain purpose when they are activated within a performance, on a set. Mimetic objects can be useful and can be works of art. The staged objects though are something between. They are vaguely nothing and something at the same time.

In a narrative, on a painting, the objects are *mimetic*. No one could go on and drink water from a glass in a painting or be hydrated from a glass of water described in a poem; but with the staged glass of water there is an impression that it can be used, and not only by the actors in a play but by everyone.

Similarly to the performer's body, the staged object implies use, even if it cannot be used in any other moment than that of the performance.

The substance then of the objects, which are neither mimetic nor ideas, is that they don't need to have a purpose, but to suggest one, and to not be useful but to admit a potential use. They are staged.

to

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Los Angeles
Contemporary Exhibitions

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FRONT SPACE, CLOCKWISE**Ayreen Anastas and Rene Gabri***I can call this progress to halt, 2017*

Title wall, graphite pencil, 7.5 x 7.5 ft.

Courtesy of the artists

Alejandro Cesarco*Allegory, or, The Perils of the Present Tense, 2015*

16mm film transferred to digital, color, silent, 10:30 min., wall treatment

Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin

MAIN SPACE, CLOCKWISE**Marwa Arsanios***Olga's Notes, all those restless bodies, 2015*

HD video, color, sound, 23 min.

Courtesy of the artist

FLEXIBLE VIEWING SPACE

PLEASE SEE SCREENING AND PUBLIC PROGRAMS FOR SCHEDULE

Michelle Dizon*Civil Society, 2008*

Three-channel video installation, color, sound, 37:23 min.

Courtesy of the artist

Sharon Hayes*I Didn't Know I Loved You, 2009*

Video, color, sound, 10:30 min.

sound recorder: Becca Blackwell; speakers: Aybike Esin Tumluur, Gizem Aksu, Tuna Erdem, Sema Semih, Sanem İlçe, Barış Ger, Seyhan Arman;

camera: Özcan Vardar

I Didn't Know I Loved You was originally made for the

Istanbul Biennial, 2009, curated by

What, How & for Whom/WHW

Courtesy of the artist and Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin

Rosalind Nashashibi*Electrical Gaza, 2015*

16mm film, animation, color, sound, 17 min.

Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London

Shadi Habib Allah*Dag'aa, 2016*

HD video, color, sound, 18:53 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Green Art Gallery, Dubai

Nashashibi/Skaer*Our Magnolia, 2009*

16mm film, animation, black & white/color, sound, 5 min.

Courtesy of the artist and LUX, London

Jessika Khazrik*C%I STAR Lesson \, 2017*

Technoperformance, robotics and code: Lenovo ThinkPad X200s notebook, iRobot Roomba, X-Boom Speaker, color, sound, 13 x 13 x 10 in.

Courtesy of the artist or The Society of False Witnesses

call

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PROJECT ROOM & HALLWAY

Georgia Sagri

Sunday Stroll, 2016

**Glass, paper, plastic, wood, aluminum, LED strips, Taos taupe paint,
five overhead projectors on non-slip rug, four painted wooden ped-
estals, dimensions variable**

Courtesy of the artist

to

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WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8, OPENING NIGHT, 9PM

PERFORMANCE **Kandis Williams with Josh Johnson**

Whereof One Cannot Speak, one must remain silent. A choreography by artist **Kandis Williams** and performer **Josh Johnson**, music by **SAD**. 20 minutes. A context game of boxes and clouds played through and against settled images on a moving body.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 22, 7PM

FILM SCREENING & TALK **Joanne Nucho**

The Narrow Streets of Bourj Hammoud is an experimental non-fiction film about a working class suburb of Beirut, Lebanon, called Bourj Hammoud. Filmed over a period of seven years (2008–2015), the film explores how residents experience rootedness and displacement through their own movement as well as changes in the built environment. The result is a lyrical ethnographic reflection on history and the materiality of urban space narrated by longtime residents and recent arrivals.

SUNDAY, APRIL 2, 2PM

WORKSHOP **Dylan Mira**

LACUNA / NOUN / AN UNFULFILLED SPACE OR INTERVAL;
A GAP / FROM THE LATIN LACUS, MEANING LAKE
/ so what they call absence is also a body

a guided somatic writing object exercise
a non knowing now practice
a lateral improvised texture together
a performance with no audience
a workshop reimagining parts and labor and care
20 spots

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 5, 7PM

PERFORMANCE **Gelare Khoshgozaran**

DEAVANAH / دیوانه remembers an event that occurred in the past, in one language, as it unfolds in the present, in another. The two are only ever consolidated in the state of lunacy, while the *deav* (demon) in *deavanah* (lunatic) attests to the inalienable right of the alien to bestiality.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 19, 7PM

PRESENTATION **Jessika Khazrik or The Society of False Witnesses**

Debe Be (2015–ongoing) is a choreography performed by scientists, students, and engineers as dancers that investigates the relationship between militarization and the production of knowledge. The project is based on the *debebe* game in which kindergarteners join hands in pairs and emulate the sound and movement of military tanks. In the Arabic language, “debābā/debebe” means military tank. In this presentation, Khazrik danced and ruminated on an interdisciplinary thinking that is in constant negotiation with its potential spatialization in relation to the cognitive and hidden arrangements of life, war, and trace. The first iteration, *Instead of a Turret on Top*, was performed as part of the *Leap Before You Look: The Black Mountain College 1933–1957* exhibition at the ICA Boston in fall 2015.



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MARCH 8 — 12

Raqs Media Collective

The Capital of Accumulation, 2010

Video diptych, color, sound, 50 min.

Courtesy of the collective

MARCH 15 — 19

Maha Maamoun

Night Visitor: The Night of Counting the Years, 2013

Video, color, sound, 8 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Gypsum Gallery, Cairo

Domestic Tourism II, 2008

Video, color, sound, 60 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Gypsum Gallery, Cairo

MARCH 22 — 26

Jibade Khalil-Huffman

First Person Shooter, 2016

HD video, color, sound, 23:02 min.

Courtesy of the artist

If This Means You, 2016

Video, color, sound, 5:45 min.

Courtesy of the artist

MARCH 29 — APRIL 2

Chto Delat (What is to be Done?)

Perestroika-Songspiel. The Victory over the Coup, 2008

Video, color, sound, 26 min.

Courtesy of the collective

APRIL 5 — APRIL 9

Jalal Toufic

The Lamentations Series: The Ninth Night and Day, 2005

Video, color, sound, 60 min.

Courtesy of the artist

APRIL 12 — APRIL 16

Phil Collins

use! value! exchange!, 2010

HD video projection, color, sound, 21 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Shady Lane Productions

marxism today (prologue), 2010

HD video projection, color, sound, 21 min.

Courtesy of the artist and Shady Lane Productions

APRIL 19 — 23

Subversive Film (Reem Shilleh)

Perpetual Recurrences, 2016

HD video, black & white/color, sound, 57 min.

Courtesy of the collective

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Ayreen Anastas and **Rene Gabri** are artists currently living between a megalopolis and a small mountain village. Taking life as a form of writing, engaging, playing, experimenting, inhabiting planes of consistency with fellow commoners, and struggling to engage and confront dominant forms of subjectivity, the two emphasize processes that nurture a common and multiply the paths of singularization and autonomy. They work collectively or with friends (e.g. 16 Beaver Group, e-Xplo, Centre for Parrhesia, Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, Un Groupe Comme les Autres).

Marwa Arsanios (lives and works in Beirut) has had solo exhibitions of her art at Witte de With, Rotterdam (2016), Kunsthalle Lissabon, Lisbon (2015), and Art in General, New York (2015). Her work has also been shown at the 55th Venice Biennale (2013); 12th Istanbul Biennial (2011); Home Works Forum, Beirut (2010, 2013, 2015); New Museum, New York (2014); M HKA, Antwerp (2013); and nGbK, Berlin (2012). Arsanios's videos have been screened at the 60th and 65th Berlinale (2010, 2015); e-flux storefront, New York (2009); and Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011). In 2012, she was awarded the Special Prize by the Future Generation Art Prize. Arsanios is a founding member of the artist organization and project space 98weeks. She received her MFA from the University of the Arts, London and was formerly a researcher in the Fine Art Department at Jan Van Eyck Academie, Amsterdam (2011-12).

Alejandro Cesarco (lives and works in New York) utilizes different formats and strategies to address his recurrent interests in repetition, narrative, and the practices of reading and translating. His work has been featured in solo exhibitions at A Tale of A Tub, Rotterdam (2016); Midway Contemporary Art, Minneapolis (2015); Murray Guy, New York (2015); Frac Île-de-France/Le Plateau, Paris (2013); mumok, Vienna (2012); Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2012); Uruguayan Pavilion, 54th Venice Biennale (2011); and Tate Modern, London (2010). Group exhibitions include *Question the Wall Itself*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2016), *Under The Same Sun*, Guggenheim Museum, New York (2014); and *The Imminence of Poetics*, 30th São Paulo Bienal (2012). He was the 2011 winner of the Balloize Art Prize at Art Basel 42. Cesarco is the director of the non-profit arts organization Art Resources Transfer.

Phil Collins (lives and works in Berlin and Wuppertal) is a visual artist and filmmaker. He is Professor of Video Art and Performance at the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne.

Chto Delat (What is to be done?) (founded in 2003, works in St. Petersburg) is a collective of Russian artists, critics, philosophers, writers, and choreographers. The group formed with the intention of merging political theory, art, and activism. Working across a range of media—from video and theater to radio programs and murals—their activities include art projects, seminars, and public campaigns. Core members include: Tsaplya Olga Egorova (artist), Artiom

Magun (philosopher), Nikolay Oleynikov (artist), Natalia Pershina / Glucklya (artist), Alexey Penzin (philosopher), Alexander Skidan (poet and critic), Oxana Timofeeva (philosopher), Dmitry Vilensky (artist), and Nina Gasteva (choreographer).

Solo exhibitions of the collective's work have been presented at KOW BERLIN (2015) and the Secession, Vienna (2014). Recent group exhibitions include *Really Useful Knowledge* at Reina Sofia Museum, Madrid (2014-15) and *Art Turning Left* at Tate Liverpool (2013-14). Chto Delat runs a space called Rosa's House of Culture and, in 2013, initiated their educational platform, the School of Engaged Art, both in St. Petersburg. From its inception, the group has published an English-Russian newspaper called *Chto Delat?*, focused on the politicization of Russia's cultural sector and the adjacent international context.

Michelle Dizon (lives and works in Los Angeles) is an artist, filmmaker, writer, theorist, and educator. The violence of imperialism and the intimate spaces of resistance within globalization form central pivots in her work, which takes the form of multi-channel video installations, expanded cinema performances, essay films, photographs, discursive events, pedagogical platforms, and writing. Dizon has exhibited and lectured at the Center for Women's Studies, Zagreb; Caixaforum, Barcelona; Copenhagen International Documentary Film Festival; Jeu de Paume, Paris; IASPIS, Stockholm; Metropolitan Museum of Art, Manila; Sumaryo Art Space, Jakarta; Para/site Art Space, Hong Kong; Queens Museum, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; and the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, San Francisco. She is the founder of at land's edge, an experimental platform for visual research and catalyst for decolonial thought and action. She has taught courses at the California Institute of the Arts and served as co-chair and core faculty in the Visual Art program at the Vermont College of Fine Arts. She earned an MFA at the University of California, Los Angeles, and a Ph.D. in Rhetoric from the University of California, Berkeley.

Shadi Habib Allah (lives and works in New York) has had exhibitions of his artwork at Reena Spaulings, New York (2016); Rodeo Gallery, London (2015); Palazzo delle Esposizioni, Rome and Galerie Thaddaeus Ropac, Paris (2013); Artists Space, New York (2013); and Palais de Tokyo, Paris (2013). Allah has been a featured participant at the New Museum Triennial, New York (2015); Art Statements at Art Basel 43 (2012); and at the Palestine c/o Venice at the 53rd Venice Biennale (2009). His films have been screened at the International Film Festival Rotterdam; Courtisane Festival Belgium, Gent; and the 40th Norwegian Film Festival, Haugesund. He was twice awarded Second Prize for the Young Artist Award from the A.M. Qattan Foundation, was nominated for the Luma Award in 2011, and was the 2012 recipient of the Louis Comfort Tiffany Award. He has attended residencies at Cittadellarte-Fondazione Pistoletto, Biella and at Gasworks

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in London. Allah received a BFA from Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design, Jerusalem, and an MFA from Columbia University, New York.

Adham Hafez (lives and works in Cairo and New York) is an artist working within the fields of choreography, sound, text, and performance. Founder of the ARC.HIVE of Contemporary Arab Performing Arts based at Lincoln Center, New York, and the German Dance Archives, Cologne, Hafez also established Egypt's first performance studies platform HaRaKa, the publication *Cairography*, and is director of the TransDance Festival in Egypt. He continues to stage transdisciplinary performances between Cairo and Europe. Engaged internationally as a guest lecturer and researcher, his work has been presented at venues including UNESCO Dance Research Congress, Athens; Damascus Opera House, Damascus; Impulstanz, Vienna; MoMA PS1, New York; Hebbel Am Ufer, Berlin; and Silahatara, Istanbul. Awarded First Prize for Choreography by the Cairo Opera House in 2004, his company toured extensively in the European-Mediterranean and Arabic-speaking regions for over ten years. Hafez studied contemporary dance, opera, and literary theory at Cairo Opera House and Ain Shams University, and holds an MA in Choreography from Amsterdam Theatre School, and an MA in Political Science and Artistic Experimentation from Sciences Po, Paris. He is a Ph.D. candidate at New York University, completing research on Arab performance studies.

Shoghig Halajian (lives and works in Los Angeles) is a curator and writer. Recent projects include *DISSENT: what they fear is the light* (co-curated with Thomas Lawson) at LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions) (2017) and *At night the states* (co-curated with Suzy Halajian) at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017). She co-organizes the *invitation of sorts* talk series with Anthony Carfello and Suzy Halajian, serves on the Board of Directors at Human Resources, Los Angeles, and was Assistant Director at LACE from 2013-16. Halajian is currently a Ph.D. candidate in Art History, Theory, and Criticism at the University of California, San Diego.

Sharon Hayes (lives and works in Philadelphia) is an artist whose video, performance, and installation work investigates intersections between history, politics, and speech, and interrogates the present political moment as one reaching simultaneously backwards and forwards. Selected recent solo exhibitions have been presented at Studio Voltaire, London (2016) and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2015).

Josh Johnson (lives and works in Hamburg) is a dancer who joined the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, New York, from 2008-10, and has done work for commercial, TV, and film outlets. He collaborated with William Forsythe as a dancer and external agent, directed the Bernhard Willhelm Mens A/W Paris show (2014), and choreographed the video *Do you feel the*

same for Hercules & Love Affair. He has also performed with artist Anne Imhof, in her works *forever rage* and *Angst*, and with Kandis Williams for *Affect:Network:Territory*. Johnson is the Co-Artistic Director of Sad, founded in 2013, which has created performances, DJ sets, video works, and installations throughout Europe, the U.S., and Indonesia. He studied dance in Los Angeles and New York at the Robinson Project and Alvin Ailey School.

Jibade Khalil-Huffman (lives and works in New York) is the author of three books of poems, including his most recent publication *Sleeper Hold* (Fence, 2014). His art and writing projects—spanning photography, video, performance, and poetry—have been exhibited and performed at MoMA PS1, Mt. Tremper Arts, and Scaramouche, New York; Machine Project, Public Fiction, Night Gallery, and Eighth Veil, Los Angeles; and Southern Exposure, San Francisco. Other exhibitions include *Third Person* with Anthony Pearson at Marianne Boesky, New York; *The Four People You Meet at Every Drug Deal* at Samuel Freeman, Los Angeles; and his presentation at the 2014 Made in L.A. Biennial at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles. Khalil-Huffman was recently an artist-in-residence at the Studio Museum in Harlem. A graduate of Bard College and Brown University, he holds an MFA from the University of Southern California.

Jessika Khazrik or The Society of False Witnesses (lives and works in Beirut and Boston) occupies disciplines through collaborations, writing, performance, and cryptography, producing interdisciplinary work that investigates the correlation between the production of space and the production of knowledge in language, performance, and trace. Recent works include a radio play on the Lebanese Broadcasting Station (2016); a tour at the Sursock Museum, Beirut (2016); an exhibition at the Edgerton Center, Boston (2015); dance at ICA, Boston (2015); and performances at Beirut Art Center (2015); and Theater der Welt, Mannheim (2014). Her writings have been published in *Bidayat*, *Kohl*, and *Almodon*, among other journals, magazines, and edited anthologies. In 2016, Khazrik was granted the Ada Lovelace award from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she is currently pursuing a Masters of Science in Art, Culture and Technology. She holds a BA in Linguistics and a BA in Theatre from the Lebanese University, Beirut, and was a participant in the post-graduate "Home Workspace Program" at Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2012-13).

Gelare Khoshgozaran گلاره خوشگذران (lives and works in Los Angeles) is an interdisciplinary artist, writer, and translator working across media in video, performance, installation, and writing. She envisions the city as an imaginary space between asylum as "the protection granted by a nation to someone who has left their native country as a political refugee" and the more dated meaning of the word, "an institution offering shelter and support to people who are mentally ill." Khoshgozaran was the recipient

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of the 2015 California Community Foundation Fellowship for Visual Artists, the 2015 Creative Capital/Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant, and the 2016 Rema Hort Mann Foundation Emerging Artist Grant. She is the co-founder and editor of *contemporary.org*.

Maha Maamoun (lives and works in Cairo) examines the form, function, and currency of common cultural visual and literary images as an entry point to investigating the cultural fabric that we weave and are weaved into. Her artwork has been shown in solo exhibitions at the Sharjah Art Foundation (2016); SALT, Istanbul (2015); Rosa Santos Gallery, Valencia (2015); and the Fridricianum, Kassel (2014). Maamoun has participated in group exhibitions and biennials such as *Here and Elsewhere*, New Museum, New York (2014); *Forum Expanded*, 64th Berlinale (2014); *Objects in Mirror are Closer than they Appear*, Tate Modern, London (2012-13); 9th Gwangju Biennale (2012); *Momentarily Learning from Mega Events*, Makan, Amman (2011-12); *Second World: Where is Progress Progressing*, Steirischer Herbst, Graz (2011); *The End of Money*, Witte de With, Rotterdam (2011); *Ground Floor America*, Den Frie Centre of Contemporary Art, Oslo (2010); and *The Future of Tradition/The Tradition of Future*, Haus Der Kunst, Munich (2010-11). She also works collaboratively on independent publishing and curatorial projects, and co-founded the independent publishing platform Kayfa-ta in 2013. She is a founding board member of the Contemporary Image Collective (CiC), an independent non-profit space for art and culture founded in Cairo in 2004.

Dylan Mira (lives and works in Los Angeles) records affect and accident. Recent projects have been presented at the Drawing Center, Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts, Film Society of Lincoln Center, and Performa 15, New York; Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles; and ICA Miami. In 2016, she was commissioned by the Portland Institute of Contemporary Art to create a live video essay that was performed at TBA:16, Portland and LAXART, Los Angeles. She holds an MFA from the University of California, Los Angeles and a BFA from The School of the Art Institute of Chicago.

Joanne Nucho (lives and works in Los Angeles) is a writer, filmmaker, and teacher. Trained as an anthropologist, her interests include urban space, human and material infrastructures, and the activation of memory in everyday life. As a filmmaker, she places landscape and materialities of space at the center of her artistic and aesthetic inquiries, examining the relationships of things like bridges and roads, houses and buildings, electricity wires and pipes, to processes of subjectivity formation, and the construction of a sense of community, self, and other. Her films have shown worldwide, including at the London International Documentary Film Festival (2008). Her book, *Everyday Sectarianism in Urban Lebanon: Infrastructures, Public Services and Power*, was published by Princeton University Press in 2016. Nucho currently holds a Mellon-

Chau Fellowship at Pomona College. Previously, she taught at the Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies at New York University.

Rosalind Nashashibi (lives and works in London) is a filmmaker and painter. Her film work describes the qualities of experience, things, and locations, asking questions about how we take care of one another and how we can navigate our own institutions. Recent shoot locations highlight two artists living in exile in Guatemala and a delivery man in Antwerp. Nashashibi's paintings find abstract forms for qualities between and around us, as language substitutions. Solo exhibitions have been presented at University of California, Irvine (2016); the Imperial War Museum, London (2015-16); Objectif, Antwerp (2013); ICA, London (2009); and the Chisenhale Gallery, London (2007). She participated in Sharjah Biennial 10 (2011); Manifesta 7, Trentino (2008); Momentum: Nordic Biennial of Contemporary Art, Moss (2006). She represented Scotland in the 52nd Venice Biennale (2007). In 2014, she received the Paul Hamlyn Foundation Award for Artists, and, in 2003, was the first woman to win Beck's Futures Art Prize.

Nashashibi/Skaer (founded in 2005, works in London and Glasgow) was formed by artists Rosalind Nashashibi and Lucy Skaer after meeting in Glasgow. Their collaborative films have shown internationally, at venues such as Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York (2012); the Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh (2010); Tate Britain, London (2008-09); and Berlin Biennial 5 (2008). They are represented in public collections including those of the Metropolitan Museum of Art; Centre Pompidou, Paris; FRAC Marseille; and British Arts Council, UK.

Raqs Media Collective (founded in 1992, works in Delhi) has been variously described as artists, media practitioners, curators, researchers, editors, and catalysts of cultural processes. Founded by Jeebesh Bagchi, Monica Narula, and Shuddhabrata Sengupta, their work locates them at the intersections of contemporary art, historical enquiry, philosophical speculation, research, and theory—often taking the form of installations, online and offline media objects, performances, and encounters. The collective's efforts have been featured at Ashkal Alwan, Beirut (2015-16); Art Unlimited, Art Basel 43 (2012); Centre Pompidou, Paris (2011); Tate Britain, London (2009); Serpentine Gallery, London (2008); and Mori Museum, Tokyo (2008). Raqs has participated in the 56th Venice Biennale (2015), the 29th São Paulo Biennial (2010), 10th Istanbul Biennial (2007), Liverpool Biennial (2004), and documenta 11, Kassel (2002). They have curated shows both in India—*INSERT2014* at IGNCA Delhi (2014) and *Sarai Reader 09: The Exhibition* at Devi Art Foundation, Gurgaon (2012-13)—and in Europe, including *The Rest of Now* for Manifesta 7, Trentino (2008). Raqs remains closely involved with the Sarai program at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, an initiative they co-founded in 2000.

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Tanya Rubbak (lives and works in Los Angeles) is a graphic designer and educator working with design as a site for engagement with visual culture, language, and belief systems. She makes publications, installations, and identity systems and has worked with leading cultural institutions, including the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions); and the Pomona College Museum of Art. She is currently the Assistant Chair for Communication Arts and Graduate Graphic Design at Otis College of Art and Design.

Georgia Sagri (lives and works in New York and Athens) explores performance as an ever-evolving field within social and visual life. Her work is influenced by her continued engagement in political movements and struggles, on issues of autonomy, empowerment, and self-organization. Her work was presented in a solo exhibition at Kunsthalle Basel in 2014, and has been featured in recent group shows at documenta 14, Kassel (2016); Manifesta 11, Zurich (2016); Sculpture Center, New York (2016); KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2016); and the Museum of Modern Art Warsaw (2016). She participated in the 14th Istanbul Biennial (2015); Biennale de Lyon (2013); EXPO 1 at MoMA PS1, New York (2013); and the Whitney Biennial, New York (2011). She is the founder of the audio-only magazine *FORTÉ* and SALOON, an ongoing curatorial project. Sagri initiated 'Υλη[matter] HYLE, a semi-personal/semi-public space in the heart of Athens.

Subversive Film (founded in 2011, works in London and Ramallah) is a nomadic cinema research and production collective aiming to cast historical works related to Palestine and the surrounding region in a new light. Their work engenders support for film preservation and investigates archival practices and effects. Other cine-historic projects include the re-circulation of previously overlooked films, the curating of rare film screenings, the subtitling of rediscovered films, and the production of publications.

Jalal Toufic (lives and works in Beirut) was born in Beirut or Baghdad and died before dying in 1989 in Evanston, Illinois. He is the author of *Undeserving Lebanon* (Forthcoming Books, 2007) and *The Withdrawal of Tradition Past a Surpassing Disaster* (Forthcoming Books, 2009), along with other titles, and was a participant in the 9th Shanghai Biennale (2012-13); documenta 13, Kassel (2012); in Sharjah Biennials 6 (2003), 10 (2011) and 11 (2013); 3rd Athens Biennale (2001); and *A History: Art, Architecture, Design from the 1980s until today* at Centre Pompidou, Paris (2014-16). In 2011, he was a guest of the Artists-in-Berlin Program at DAAD; in 2013-14, he and Anton Vidokle led Ashkal Alwan's third edition of the Home Workspace Program in Beirut. He has been the director of the School of Visual Arts at the Lebanese Academy of Fine Arts, Sin el Fil, since 2015.

Kandis Williams (lives and works in Los Angeles and Berlin) is an artist whose recent presentations include solo exhibitions at SADE Gallery, Los Angeles (2016); St. Charles Projects, Baltimore (2016); and a performance and workshop at Human Resources, Los Angeles (2016). Her work has also been shown at the Studio Museum in Harlem; the Underground Museum, Los Angeles; Neu West and 68 Projects, Berlin; and The Breeder, Athens. Williams maintains an active curatorial and writing practice, and runs Cassandra Press with artists Jordan Nassar and Taylor Doran. She holds a BFA from the Cooper Union School of Art, New York.

Kim Zumpfe (lives and works in Los Angeles) is an artist whose work moves between objects, images, and politicized space in order to interrogate encounters where there is a collapse of identity, intimacy, and power structures. Through collaborations and individual work, Zumpfe expands the potentials of resistance by producing psychological spaces that contain porosities of bent time(s), including the provisional, temporary, transient, unstable, and the illegible. Her work has been exhibited at DiverseWorks, Houston; LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions); Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Culver Center for the Arts, Riverside; University Art Gallery, Irvine; Visual Arts Center, Fullerton; and several public and online sites. Zumpfe is a member of Emily O, a free-floating artist collective that questions the relationship between individual and collective processes and identity through organizing artist projects.

About the Curator

Suzy Halajian (lives and works in Los Angeles) recently curated *At night the states* (co-curated with Shoghig Halajian) at the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles (2017); *Harry Dodge: The Inner Reality of Ultra-Intelligent Life* at the Armory Center for the Arts, Pasadena (2016); *The Closer I Get To The End The More I Rewrite The Beginning* at Human Resources, Los Angeles (2015); *Nothing is forgotten, some things considered*, co-curated with Shoghig Halajian at UKS, Oslo (2012); *Maybe it's the light that has to change and not much else* (co-curated with Janine Armin) at Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York (2012); and Lawrence Weiner: *Impeded Time* (co-curated with Marlies Wirth) at Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna (2012). Halajian co-organizes the *invitation of sorts* talk series with Anthony Carfello and Shoghig Halajian, and serves on the Programming Committee of Human Resources. In 2014, she received a Curatorial Travel/Research Fellowship from the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts. She holds an MA from the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York, and a BA from the University of California, Los Angeles.

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I can call this progress to halt has been curated by Suzy Halajian from March 8 - April 23, 2017 at LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions)

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LACE (Los Angeles Contemporary Exhibitions)
6522 Hollywood Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90028
323.957.1777
welcometolace.org

As part of the ongoing project, Suzy Halajian presented a talk on her research at the Sursock Museum in Beirut, Lebanon on May 25, 2017, and a two-day film program followed on June 29 and 30, 2017. Artists featured in the film program included Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, Basma Alsharif, Marwa Arsanios, Phil Collins, Shadi Habib Allah, Sharon Hayes, Jibade Khalil-Huffman, and Rosalind Nashashibi. www.sursock.museum

The project is supported by an Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Research Fellowship awarded to Suzy Halajian, which granted her extensive travel throughout the Middle East and North Africa. Additional support is provided by the Pasadena Art Alliance. Special thanks to LUX.

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