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Q-NOTES is a series of publications that gathers transcribed seminars and artists' talks given at the Hangar Centre for Artistic Investigation as part of its research, the exhibition, publication and public programme. In this series we also publish artists' thoughts and the papers they have shared with Hangar. The neologism 'Q-notes' is a riff on the idea of keynote. Keynotes are talks that underscore a conference or meeting theme. Keynote also signifies the main idea. Both these meanings derive from the role of keynote in music. The keynote is the first note in a diatonic scale, the one that anchors the melody and the harmony. The 'Q' in 'Q-notes' is short for question and the interrogative. For us, questions are key. These talks ask questions and interrogate what have become the common sense of the art world and artistic practice.

This first Q-NOTE publication offers innovative and interrogative thinking from the artists, curators, and cultural theorists that presented their work at Hangar between 2017 and 2019. With Q-NOTES, we are creating a platform that brings actors in various areas such as art theory, curating, anthropology and political science together in conversation. We hope that this new series deepens critical analysis in cultural studies of artistic practices and the art world by asking questions that center the geographic, gendered, and sociopolitical stakes that trouble our current moment. This inaugural Q-NOTE publication includes thoughts and reflections by Irit Rogoff, Grada Kilomba, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, Paul Goodwin, Filip de Boeck, Sammy Baloji and Luis Camnitzer.

In the 2017 lecture SCALING UP – LOCAL DENSITIES AND GLOBAL ART CIRCULATIONS, IRIT ROGOFF reflected on the existence of the very rich and dense art histories and local practices that involve the specificity of place – its historical designation as well as social, political and cultural particularities. She stated that as soon as these practices enter wide circulation, they are reduced to a simple, digestible language that can be accepted by the international art world. In this lecture, Rogoff suggested that the totality of local specificity cannot be reproduced in the circulation of a work, but at the same time, we must try to find a mode of presentation that has meaning at the international level. Rogoff brings the work of contemporary thinkers from a variety of disciplines, like Saskia Sassen,

Achille Mbembe, Neil Smith, and Judith Butler, among others to disrupt contemporary museum practice. She asks: what are the tools that we have at our disposal to rethink how local arts circulate in the global museum and art world?

PLANTATION MEMORIES was a public conversation with the artist GRADA KILOMBA moderated by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches in 2017 for the release of her book *Memories of the Plantation: Episodes of Daily Racism.* Kilomba reflected on her artistic practice in relation to the book, which stages the reading and compilation of racist episodes by approaching racism as a psychological reality and an everyday life experience. Her work offers psychoanalytic stories, linking postcolonial trauma with lyrical narrative. The combination of the two words, plantation and memories, describes racism not only as the re-enactment of a colonial past, but also as a current traumatic reality. Everyday racism, Kilomba argues, is experienced as a violent shock which suddenly places the Black subject in a colonial scene – severing the link of the person with society. Unexpectedly, the past comes to coincide with the present and the present is experienced as if one were in that agonizing past, a slippage indicated in the title *Memories of the Plantation*. Linking postcolonial theory, psychoanalysis and poetic narrative, Kilomba provides a new and inspiring interpretation of everyday racism, memory, trauma and decolonization in the form of short stories that question the pastness of the past.

In 2018 Hangar co-organised a conference entitled EPISTEMIC DISOBEDIENCE with The Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT). The conference addressed the main issues and challenges related to the production of knowledge in the arts and in curatorial practices. Here, BONAVENTURE SOH BEJENG NDIKUNG and PAUL GOODWIN reflected on the tensions and conflicts generated by the dichotomies between South and North, geographical divisions and cultural assimilations, as well as the urgent need to decolonise thought, curatorial processes, and artistic production. Ndikung and Goodwin argue that decoloniality or epistemic disobedience calls into question the basis and control of eurocentric systems of thought. Furthermore, epistemic disobedience is crucial in fostering an emphasis on the knower (enunciation) rather than the known (enunciated) and in staying grounded in lived experience and connection to others and their context.

In 2018 Ana Balona de Oliveira and Mónica de Miranda organised a conversation with SAMMY BALOJI and FILIP DE BOECK called URBAN REALIGNMENTS: ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ARTISTIC VENTURES INTO CONGO'S CITYSCAPES. During this conversation, Baloji and de Boeck discussed their book *Suturing the City: Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds* (Autograph ABP, 2016) and their exhibition *Urban Now: City Life in Congo*, then on display in Lisbon at Galeria da India. The work they do together is a question in action. The collaboration between Baloji and de Boeck enlivens the intersection of anthropology and contemporary art practices and provides an excellent example of the parallel occurrence of the ethnographic turn in the contemporary art field and the sensory turn in anthropology. Both thinkers are fascinated by the way in which past and present glide across each other in today's large Congolese cities. In their exhibition and publication, Baloji and de Boeck present the results of an artistic and ethnographic study of the 'urban now': African metropolises at a tipping point between the broken dreams of the colonial past and the resounding promises of a neoliberal future. In the resulting gap, new social spaces emerge, invented by the inhabitants themselves in order to circumvent and overcome poverty, exclusion, and violence.

LUIS CAMNITZER WROTE ART AND DISHONOUR and shared it with Hangar at the time of his 2019 solo exhibition *Cuaderno de ejercicios* (Hangar, Lisbon), curated by Bruno Leitão. Here, he argues that knowledge is power, and power is not always distributed either democratically or ethically. Furthermore, if the equitable distribution of power can be done by art, it becomes a tool of balance in the distribution of power. This paper queries the relationship between art and ethics, arguing that when ethics are deprived of creativity, they may end in dogma or a dead code of morals.

Irit Rogoff

OCTOBER 2017 HANGAR, CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO ARTÍSTICA

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Scaling Up: Local Densities and Global Arts Circulations

I want to start by apologising for the 'very serious' nature of this presentation. This 'seriousness' is one of my only weapons in dealing with the predominant narratives of how the arts merge into the overwhelming forces of financial, commercial and legal globalisation. This particular form of 'seriousness' has to do with the fact that I am trying to think about two sets of problematics together. And so, it emerges from the effort to frame the thinking process, rather than to identify an issue and comment on it.

The first problematic concerns a certain postcolonial understanding of globalisation that charts an ongoing hegemony of cultural/political domination and the exploitation of resources. The other has to do with an attempt to think through global art circulation and to ask whether it is, at all, possible for things to be truly known outside their own context. Bringing together these two really different bodies of thought, makes it impossible to talk about the art world 'on its own terms'. This idea of the art world 'on its own terms,' framed by concepts of value and regard, of financial investments, of reputations established on the basis of international prominence, privileges a market logic, thus obliterating

what I call 'local densities'. It contributes to absolutely nothing, except to particular forms of navel-gazing and self-absorption, which feed into notions of a unique economy not held to any other critical analysis. Instead, I am trying to consider what I see around me as forms of artistic circulation through other bodies of thought, about advanced capitalist practises and certain kinds of postcolonial states. What I am trying to do is to think of art and postcolonial conditions away from their discourses in order to make them engage as non-representational practises. By this, I mean that art does not illustrate the conditions, and such conditions should not become the explanatory context for art.

Thus, this discussion deals with a particularly contemporary phenomenon. What happens to the locally dense knowledge that scholars, activists, and artists have researched and produced, experienced and performed in distant locations around the globe? What happens once it begins to circulate globally and is celebrated as insightful knowledge? At this late stage of the postcolonial world, local knowledge is not simply a regionally varied version of a mainstream hegemonic knowledge. It is a situated knowledge, organised through different imperatives, achieved through different protocols, instantiated by different structures. The infrastructures that sustain such activities vary greatly. Classrooms across the world are not similar or equal; neither are libraries, museums or archives or cultural policies. And this inequality is not simply a question of distribution of means and privileges. If we think of this set of differences beyond an evaluative model that upholds a standard for what is sufficiently 'good' – away from international standard – we achieve other forms of appreciation and communion. We might, instead, have a chance to consider the differences in how and why people produce knowledge and to recognise that it is virtually impossible to reproduce it for immediate consumption in some other location.

This is the dilemma that I am trying to think about: that you cannot simply transplant knowledge and cultural practises that come from such different trajectories, and think that they might

just be able to signify somewhere else. But it is not as simple as I have posed it either – for culture always radiates outwards, travels and connects, but such fluidity does not presume instant comprehension and effective translation. To unpack the question, opens the Pandora's box of complexity that is particular to disciplines and practises, to an understanding of 'research' and 'context' and 'example' within the curatorial sphere, and that promises what it cannot deliver. We cannot bring this dense knowledge along, lay it out, and assume that it can find an interpretative community in its new location.

In addition, I am trying to think about global art circulation operating either through market logics – the system of art fairs and galleries, international exhibitions, publications, and so on – or through the cultural diplomacy of nation states that send out exhibitions or construct national pavilions to represent them.

In each case there is an underlying desire to bring the world to an audience that feels the need to be informed. This is the logic by which art works are circulating. But it is a logic that assumes universal equality around art. Equally it assumes that art is a universal signifier that it will mean the same wherever in lands, by virtue of its universal comprehensibility. This is the great dilemma: art should not operate as a context, or as a lesson on somebody else's conditions, or as a native informer on tragedies of the 'other'. That is not what art is meant to do; it is meant to do something transformative to both the conditions and the modes for their comprehension. And yet the mechanisms that might convey those conditions are not available because of this universalising, flattening effect that artistic circulations have. I am trying to think about how to work with that, against that, and to see what tools I have to regain the complexity that is flattened out when art becomes an imported commodity that is supposed to tell you something about Mexico or Russia, or any other global hotspots of concern, when it is perceived as a form of consumption or of cultural tourism. It is not a question of building a better context for work – we have to deal with things at the heart of the problem.

The heart of the problem is a universalism that assumes that culture can transcend the conditions of its production and the effects it has on different places as it is exposed. The concept is that if it is good enough, powerful enough, persuasive enough, it will transcend the conditions of its production and equalise the responses of its audiences.

How, then, do we think of conditions as entry points into knowledge production at a planetary level? People around the globe are subject to containment, confinement, slavery, flight and expulsion. And I am borrowing the concept of 'expulsion' from economics, following Saskia Sassen. Those living in such conditions are largely considered the subjects of the representation of knowledge, rather than the producers. If we continue to look at this problematic from the privileged standpoint of high cultural circulation – exhibitions, conferences, publications, gatherings, studentships, residencies and subsidised cultural practises – we are not dealing with the different points of access into practices around the globe. All of these forms of circulation are humanistic efforts at creating a certain kind of level playing field.[1]

Two perspectives, in particular, have given us the understanding that in the so-called post-colonial, we are not dealing with deterioration of access, but with completely different and parallel trajectories. Saskia Sassen converges her arguments around the notion of expulsion, claiming that in the expanding space of advanced capitalism in the past 20 years, we have moved from the original colonial model of conquest and seizure to a contemporary mode of systemic incorporation around the globe, notably through modes of contemporary financialisation. She characterises these modes as expulsions: 'Logics of extraction, debt as a disciplining regime, new global frontiers of finance. These depend on so-called

1 Saskia Sassen, 'Beyond Inequality: Expulsions', *9th Annual Conference: Philosophical Foundations of Economics and the Good Economy: Individual Values, Human Pursuits, Self-Realization and Becoming, session 5*, September 2011 (Colombia University, New York), 22.

financial innovation'.[2] Financial innovation is the production of new financial commodities. The sub-prime markets that created the mortgage crisis of 2007-8 are but one example. Sub-prime markets were a new financial product, Clearing Banks would hand out mortgages to unsecured borrowers, investment banks could package them as a financial commodity, so these mortgages were no longer a relationship between a customer and a bank/loaning facility, but a financialised product traded by investment funds. The shorting of stocks, so as to benefit from their failure, a practice that arose over the last decade, is another example. Instead of investing in a stock, you bet on a stock that is going to fail and what you get is a commodity that is independent from its operations (an American film called *The Big Short* is one of the best ways to understand what financial short-selling is doing.)[3] Let me quote Sassen again expounding on her notion of 'Expulsion' as a wide ranging component of economic-social life: 'People are expelled, devastated neighbourhoods are expelled, sharp increases in displaced people, poverties and deaths from curable diseases are part of these mechanisms of expulsion. The expulsion of people that turns space back into territory with its diverse potential'.[4]

Expulsion also has to do with the way in which multinational corporations purchase tracts of land to make them productive. Those corporations then expel the people who live on those lands in order to undertake resource extraction – mining, petrol, gas – whatever the raw material on offer. This is not the colonial system of conquest, this is not about the conquest of somebody else's land; instead, states deliver their territory to multinational financial interests that incorporate them into the global multinational financial system. It is a very, very different kind of process. We see it at work with art institutions as well. This means that when we think of the circulation of such entities as the Guggenheim in

2 Sassen, 'Beyond Inequality', 4.

3 *The Big Short* (23 December 2015), dir. Adam McKay, *Paramount Pictures.*

4 Sassen 'Beyond Inequality', 23.

Bilboa, in Helsinki, etc., or The Louvre, The British Museum in the Gulf – we need to think about these projects not simply as the exploitation of local resources by multinational corporations, but also the exploitation of local aspirations as resources for their own expansion. In the process numerous financial components are stitched into an overall cultural canopy: labour exploitation, usurping local resources for multinational needs, solving storage issues, expanding brand recognition, etc.

Equally in the art world we see the same kind of 'land to territory' that Sassen describes, rendering culture ripe for investment and for financialisation, i.e. the degree to which certain kinds of territories are being handed over to multinational financial interests of the art market. For example, In London we have the 'Frieze effect', or the 'Tate effect'.[5] These places – these Friezes, these Tates – are multinational financial corporate interests to which certain kinds of territories are being handed, and we have to understand that this is how they are operating along the principles of expansion. They are never operating on the basis of exclusion, it is always about incorporation: art works, collections. Patronage, investment are brought in and incorporated into the system thereby affecting an instant finacialisation, what might have been a representation of a national culture to a patron, becomes a valued commodity within a market dependent on museum incorporation for rising value. Inclusion has similarities with expulsion. Expulsion of people turns a 'place' (with a history and an identity) back into 'territory' with a diverse economic potential. The territory is a wide-open space ripe for investment and for incorpooration. Any kind of investment can take place in it. Once it is handed over to large-scale financial interests, the law of the country cannot protect the territory in the name of the nation state. And here the legacies of colonial structures and power relations are taken up in

5 The notion of 'effect' in the case of a museum was first articulated by Jean Baudrillard in 'The Beaubourg-Effect: Implosion and Deterrence' *October*, trans. Rosalind Krauss and Annette

compensation, enacted through belated and ceremonial inclusion.

Achille Mbembe has argued that these are 'the after-effects of empire'. He argues that the after-effects of empire are found in the articulation of late modern colonial occupation, through new forms of the disciplinary, the biopolitical and the 'necropolitical'. The 'necropolitical' is Mbembe's term for the experience of life in contemporary Africa, the forms of the subjugation of life to the power of death. Mbembe has written a series of really interesting essays, one of them titled 'Necropolitics'[6] and the other 'At the Edge of the World'.[7] He talks about the after-effects of empire, on the one hand, and of the dominance of global financial discipline imposed by the IMF, by the World Bank, by international agencies, etc., and of the way in which nation states do not deal with one another, but deal with multinational corporations. This is one facet of what he calls 'necropolitics', or the subjugation of life to the power of death. Mbembe asserts that we have moved from a binary opposition of life /not life, or life and death as a binary, to death and death. The regimes that control life in Africa today – economic life, resource management, the movement of people – are creating a 'necropolitical' culture, the subjugation of life to the power of death. Mbembe here says: 'Thus, biopower is sufficient to account for contemporary forms of subjugation in which new and unique forms of social existence, in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life, confer on them the status of the living dead'.[8]

When you start reading widely in the most critical and imaginative thinking about globalisation, you begin to understand that the language that dominates this discussion is the language of flows and circulation. Everything flowed and circulated, and that created

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6 Achille Mbembe, 'Necropolitics', trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 12:1 (Duke University Press, Spring 2003), 11-40.

7 Achille Mbembe, 'At the Edge of the World: Boundaries, Territoriality, and Sovereignty in Africa', trans. Steven Rendall, *Public Culture* 15:1 (Duke University Press, Winter 2000), 259-28.

8 Mbembe, 'Necropolitics'.

markets, global markets, labour forces, the movement of goods, people and value. In response to this, we are currently witnessing the emergence of a really interesting and powerful critical language, a language that talks about necropolitics, a language that talks about those that were expelled, which begins to produce a possibility or at least, one hopes, a possibility for another political base from which we might think the global in a different way. There are many emergent languages for these processes. Judith Butler and Athena Athanasiou, for example, have called them 'Dispossessions'.[9] They discuss how 'human bodies have become materialised and dematerialised through histories of slavery, colonization, apartheid, capitalist alienation, immigration and asylum politics, post-colonial liberal multiculturalism, gender and sexual normativity, securitarian government and humanitarian reason.' In the face of these forces, how do we begin to take up questions about the circulation of artistic practices which seem so minor and so frivolous, so endlessly self-preoccupied within the larger picture of deprivations?

My question is, if we came at it from another perspective, another angle, would it operate in a less frivolous, less privileged, less self-preoccupied way? Would we be able to re-potentialise the field of the global movement of art, in a way that doesn't serve all of the entities that we know it serves – art markets, cultural diplomacy, and so on – the endless avatars of territorialisation. Because I live in London, I operate in the shadow of the Tate, and I can take it up as a test case for larger neo-liberal tendencies within cultural policy. A few years ago, I was at a conference in Amsterdam called *What is a post-colonial exhibition?*[10] The director of the Tate at the time, Chris Dercon, walked onto the stage. First, he did a 'CEO of a multinational corporation' talk – in which he said, I cannot remember

9 Athena Athanasiou and Judith Butler, *Dispossession the performative in the political* (Polity Press: Cambridge, 2013).

10 Stedelijk Office Amsterdam, 'What is a "Post-colonial Exhibition"?', Conference (25 May 2012, Amsterdam) https://framerframed.nl/en/blog/symposium-what-is-a-post-colonial-exhibition/.

the numbers: '7 million visitors, 22 million views, blah blah blah.' Then he said, 'The Tate realises that it has gaps in its collection and therefore it has now put in a lot of effort into filling those gaps.' In other words, the gaps are not a product of global politics, of 200 years of global politics – they are just gaps. Oversights, maybe. Even more interesting than this term, 'gaps', is how they are filling these gaps; they are forming committees of people from formerly colonised countries who are rich collectors, and they are asking them to facilitate the buying of works from their countries for the Tate. They are using a colonial form of consciousness in which there is some belief that to have these works in London is more important than to have them in Lagos or any other place of origin. So, instead of that money going to all those places, to build institutions and structures, and so on, it simply undergirds a belief about superior Western infrastructure. If you buy the work for us, according to this logic put forward to patrons, we will research it, care for it, and it will be added to the collection of international art and have an audience of millions of people.

That is the story, and that is the kind of pressure that is put on the work itself and on those enabling its movement. Even more interesting, once these collections are built up, they are rarely shown because they ultimately need to be there so there will not be any gaps in the collections that pretend to a universality. In the end, they are more about a legitimating narrative of a complete collection that has global representation than about an experience of transcultural viewing. Once these works arrive, the Tate puts on an exhibition by a historical figure from that area, so an extremely old Egyptian painter becomes the line of historical development for whatever contemporary art from Egypt has been added to the collection. Which is to say, part of the infrastructure is the ability to historicise, right?: 'we recognise that you have a history and we can take the responsibility for historicising your art'. This is the logic of incorporation at work.

When you look very carefully, you see that certain art institutions are becoming global, both in their collections and in how

they relate to the market. Frieze is now a global art fair with several iterations worldwide, an art magazine, a school, and a summer school. Someone gave me a list of the current 11 Frieze formats. I have misplaced the list, but it did give me a sense of an expansionist market policy like few in the art world. For example, they organise the duplication of a highly profitable and high-profile event in London to locations that wish to take up the operations of the brand in order to jump-start peripheries of central arts activities. All the while serving as a clearing house for the numerous activities of the art world: buying, selling, exhibiting, researching and publicising. This is the logic behind multinational corporations that link together resources, markets, labour, branding, advertising, and merchandising.

We need to mobilise an analysis of what Mbembe calls 'the after-effects of empire'[11] to understand the relation between late capital and the legacies of colonialism and empire. Because otherwise we cannot understand the reach of markets. The tens of millions of pounds that are being poured into the Tate collection committees, from the Middle East and North Africa, from India, from Brazil, from Mexico and by Russian expatriates, would have no meaning without a colonial history. It is the colonial history that gives them the resonance that is now financialised and capitalised.

In the face of these forces, these ceremonies of inclusion and representation, how do we begin to take up questions about the circulation of artistic practices, which seem so minor and so frivolous, so endlessly self-preoccupied within the larger pictures of deprivations? Anthropologist Anna Tsing's work provides helpful insight for my questions. Tsing says 'capitalism, science and politics all depend on global connections. Each spread through aspirations to fulfil universal dreams and schemes. Humanist universalism values connection but does not study it – it just

11 Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Duke University Press: 2019).

presumes that it exists through flows and circulation'.[12] This is the problem with flows and circulation. They never stand still for enough time to be studied, there is constant movement and that movement is always aimed at further production of goods or production of knowledge. Tsing notes, 'yet, this is a particular brand of universality. It can only be charged and enacted in the thick materiality of practical encounters.'[13] Building on Tsing, I would argue that the actual artistic work or knowledge being produced is the 'sticky materiality of practical encounters.' This would mean removing it from the many ways in which it is framed when it is in the museum. The museum will always inform visitors of the proper name, the proper name of the country, the proper name of the region, the proper name of the style. Therefore, this conversation about the sticky materiality of the encounters challenges us. How can we produce that sticky materiality of encounter within art spaces? Is that a possibility? How do we start thinking about that?

We in London, as in other major cities, have been subjected in recent years to a long line of what I would call 'discovery voyage exhibitions'. I will provide some titles: *Indian Highway*;[14] *Beyond the Veil; Post-Communist This and That; Awakening Latin America*; *Mexico* (at the Royal Academy). And the list goes on and on. I have several dozens of these in mind when I invoke this genre of exhibitions. Such exhibitions are, seemingly, offering insights into local histories, into production, sensibilities and conditions but, actually, they play a part in a transition in the international art market in which these places are becoming increasingly important consumers and patrons of the arts. And they are as much invested in linking potential diasporic patrons to local institutions, as I describe above, as they are committed to the actual exploration of

12 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton University Press, 2005), 1–18.

13 Ibid.

14 *Indian Highway.* 10 Dec 2008-22 Feb 2009, Serpentine Gallery, London.

what is taking place elsewhere. The emphasis is on easy access, the illusion of specific information, but not on what it stands for. And, most of all, these exhibits duplicate the market emphasis on circulation. The speed and breadth of circulation begins to stand in for familiarity, for concern, for being better informed but without an immersion in the struggles of the places being so 'visited'.

My question is: what do we have at our disposal to understand this circulation that does not fall into fallacies of the easy consumption of such 'elsewheres'? For myself I would like to offer three possible theoretical ways of addressing the problematic. I do not want to go straight into possible practices because I have a sense of really needing to dismantle the language and flesh out concepts before I can start inventing other practices. I want to go through three theoretical models that allow me to think about this problematic in a slightly different way.

The first model was articulated by geographer and urbanist Neil Smith, in thinking about what he called 'jumping scale'.[15] 'Jumping scale' is a concept that is quite prevalent in urban geography and has to do largely with neighbourhoods in urban environments, with scales of density within different kinds of metropolitan formations. Here, Smith used a spatial concept, scale, to think about how exceptional, micropolitical situations – for example the homeless in the context of New York urban politics – could possibly jump scale and become bigger and further reflect a situation as a whole. In this case the inflation of property prices driving gentrification, the dissolution of traditional urban communities, the exile of local services, etc., were all at issue. The interesting thing about jumping scale is that it is not about becoming bigger. Linguistically that is what it sounds like, but it is not. Jumping scale is about how you take a microcosm of a problem that is being enacted locally, and scale it up so that it can address other problems.

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15 Neil Smith, 'Contours of Spatialized Politics: Homeless Vehicles and the Production of Geographical Scale'. *Social Text* 33 (Duke University Press, 1992): 60 (54-81).

Smith did a really interesting project with artist Krzysztof Wodiczko on a place in downtown New York called Tompkins Square Park.[16] Historically, it has always been a place for the homeless but it was also a place for numerous radical protests of different kinds, different groups, protesting about things happening in the city. It was an open space and it is a very old place, developed by city planning in 1823; it has a particular traditional role within the history of New York. When Rudi Giuliani was mayor of New York he wanted to remove all homeless people from the city – nobody knows where he put them – he basically bussed tens of thousands of homeless people out of Manhattan and as part of that they also shut down Tompkins Square Park. The city locked it and no one could go in. In response, Wodiczko and Smith did a very interesting multi-layered project. Wodiczko did one of his classic projections on all the buildings around the square – it was somewhat over the top, I think – he used the language of the Sandinistas in Nicaragua, rebels with sub-machine guns and sandbags, but it was projected on all the buildings around the square. Neil Smith – I do not know how he managed to do this – went into the square, and he put up an enormous billboard with a timeline on it. It was very simple, just a timeline of what had happened in Tompkins Square Park from 1823 to the present. He rewrote the history of Tompkins Square Park as a place of the only consistent political protest in New York city across 150 years of urban development. How did he 'jump scale' in this instance? He took a local crisis, the closing of Tompkins Square Park and the evacuation of the homeless from the city, and he scaled it up and made it about a particular urban history of protest which now too was 'unhomed', expelled from the city's own awareness of its history. And he staged these in tandem with virulent local protests against the closure by local inhabitants. This is what 'jumping scale' is – taking a particular set of specific and local circumstances and making them speak up to a larger and more abstract

16 Ibid.: 59.

set of issues. When you say scaling up, it sounds like you are trying to make something bigger. But that is not the case, it is about a sliding scale between something small, specific and local and something large and general.

In Neil Smith's words: we 'jump scale' to organise the production and reproduction of daily life, and to resist oppression and exploitation at a higher scale, over a wider geographical field. The chants of the protesters in Tompkins Square Park expressed the same ambition. From the immediate retort: 'Whose park is it? It's our fucking park' the chant changed in the first days of defending the park to: 'Tompkins Square Everywhere'. In this way it becomes an instance and a reference for a whole set of urban protests elsewhere as well. Smith continues: 'The struggle was defeated precisely at the point where it failed to mobilize tenants, housing activists, and homeless people citywide. Put differently, jumping scales allows evictees to dissolve spatial boundaries that are largely imposed from above and that contain rather than facilitate their production and reproduction of everyday life'.[17]

Where are the political debates over the scale at which neighbourhoods are constructed, the boundaries of the urban, what makes a region, the scale of the nation state, or indeed, what constitutes the global scale? Is it that such debates have never occurred? They have, although they have generally been obscured. As such, the division of the world into localities, regions, nations, and so forth, is essentially taken for granted so that the relation between scales within the urban, of local to municipal, for example, are simply assumed.

To counter this involves several shifts in thinking. First, recognising the construction of geographical scale, is a primary means through which spatial differentiation takes place. Second, an understanding of geographical scale might provide us with a more plausible language of spatial difference. Third, the construction of scale as a social process, i.e. scale is produced in, and through, societal activity, which in turn produces and is produced by

17 Ibid.

geographical structures of societal interaction. And fourth, the production of geographical scale is the site of potentially intense political struggles. This is how an urban geographer such as Neil Smith introduces the notion of jumping scale. If we start thinking about the way in which, within a Western cultural landscape, we receive either the practices or the knowledge productions of elsewhere, it is always, in what he says, leaving it with the understanding of local, regional, national, etc. The possibility of allowing it to address a set of problems that we share beyond those categories, is the only way of allowing it to jump scale.

This is a genuinely complicated process in the sense that you have to do the work of disabusing yourself of all of the obvious solutions to the problem of communicating across regional/cultural/linguistic differences.

Some years ago, I curated a very large exhibition of a Turkish video and image artist, Kutlug Ataman, in Antwerp. I learned that the city has a very large migrant Turkish population. I thought 'I will take this quite heretic and quite anarchic Turkish artist and I will connect him to the migrant population of Antwerp and this is how I will "jump scale."' It was the silliest idea ever. They were absolutely not interested in him and he was absolutely not interested in them and the mutual common ground of a 'Turkey' showed itself to be the empty identarian signifier that it is. The whole effort was a ridiculous failure, but like all failures, very, very important, because it made me face the realisation that that kind of notion – that we will connect problems in Turkey with problems of Turkish migrants in Western Europe – is precisely not how you jump scale. On the other hand, the use of incredibly specific local instances that Ataman makes in his work in terms of issues of sexuality, or in terms of abjection, offer a whole set of foci that one can scale up. What was impossible to do under the aegis of a national identity, because no one actually inhabits a national identity, became more possible in thinking through the embedding of sexuality, or of poverty, or of lack of agency in specific narratives that are always developing beyond identity, which is the great strength of Ataman's work. A moment of

recognition of Anna Tsing's 'sticky materiality' is here at play. So, it is very interesting to think about all of the work you have to do in order to let go of what constitutes a context for work. I find that I can only do it on a trial and error basis. I cannot locate the exact proven approach, the right approach, because it is not there yet. So, this is one term, 'scaling up', that we can use to think differently about what work this circulation of art can do.

The second term I would like to borrow is from Guattari's preoccupation with 'micropolitics' is grounded in Deleuze and Guattari's broader understanding of biopower.[18] Micropolitics refers to small-scale interventions that are used for governing the behaviour of large groups of people. Recent definitions of micropolitics, developed by thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Gilles Delueze and Felix Guattari, argue that micropolitics is a type of political regulation involved in shaping the preferences, attitudes and perceptions of individual subjects. Micropolitics contributes to the formation of desire, belief, inclination and judgment in political subjects. Its regulations take place at local and individual locations, in places such as prisons, hospitals, and schools. But also in films, exhibitions, and other arenas for expressing desire through culture. In Deleuze and Guattari's thesis 'those who evaluated things in macro-political terms, understood nothing of the event, because something unaccountable was escaping.'[19] They propose assemblage as the term of a new topology at the centre of micro-political dynamics. Every assemblage is connected with other assemblages, in a specific way, without one determining the others. What we have in the notion of micropolitics is very similar, I think, to a jumping scale argument. We have a series of highly specific assemblages of knowledge and experience, as in a series of films or in the culture of the prism, that then connects to other assemblages and together produce a completely unframed notion;

18 Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Robert Brinkley, 'What is a Minor Literature?', *Mississippi Review* 11:3, Essays on Literary Criticism (Winter/Spring 1983): 13-33.

19 Ibid.

unframed in the sense of disconnected from the given name of the nation, the State or the kind of governance that society is under.

One of the important questions is how do we, in the world of cultural production, get away from the dichotomy that says 'here we are a democracy' and 'there', referring to the people being represented in an exhibition, they are a non-democratic society, totalitarian or under a military regime or tribal, or whatever. The trouble with this binary understanding of forms of governance is that it cannot capture everything that is happening in the field. It immediately creates an opposition: this form of governance versus that form of governance – or our experience – defined as more democratic, more open, more representative – versus that experience – constructed as less open, more oppressed, less accountable. When we start thinking about the micropolitical, what we have is assemblages speaking to assemblages. So, in a way, this is a form of jumping scale, but slightly different because it is more lateral, it is more transversal. Less captive to a mental model that determines that here is the small part of a recognisable bigger whole (neighbourhood vs. municipality vs. state). Micropolitics models operate differently than jumping scale, in breaking down the local versus global binaries we use to discuss the circulation of art and art practises. They are not vehicles of translation, how to translate the local into the national or transnational scale, but rather a concept of aggregates, an aggregation of instances that, joined together, produce something larger but not totalising.

A really great book by Suely Rolnik and Felix Guattari called *Micropolitical Revolution in Brazil*[20] records the conversations they had, as they travelled across Brazil, and spoke with groups of people who were gathering together – groups of psychoanalysts, urban activists, and workers in different sectors. The book is really a reproduction of those conversations, a form of aggregation without a driving argument. It offers an amazing panorama of

20 Guarrai and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, trans. Karel Clapshow and Brian Holmes, (Semiotext(e), 2008).

different voices and this is what they claim for the micropolitical revolution in Brazil. It is not a change of regime, not a top-down change but an aggregation of many different conversations stemming from many different fields of endeavour that come together and produce a sea-change within the culture.

Perhaps you are familiar with the work of Elizabeth Povinelli and the Karrabing Film Collective. Povinelli is an anthropologist, based in the US and, together with a group of indigenous people in the Northern Territory of Australia, she started the Karrabing Film Collective. It is a really great example because, on the one hand, its positioning is intricate and elusive – who is shaping and driving the project, who is the subject and what is the object, is never easily graspable. On the other hand, the work is receiving significant attention in the current art world. In every major city, everywhere in the world there are screenings of Karrabing's work.[21] I have actually seen several of these screenings and they are really complex and difficult because they are about really harrowing experiences of people who are so abject, and so minoritised that they do not even have the possibility of a dialogue with any kind of central power. They are equally difficult and complex as they are the product of an intricate set of internal dialogues between a highly sophisticated intellectual, and a group of people whose very difficult living conditions cannot be transcended. Taken together, it means that the pathway to making a film, is one of the subtle negotiations and numerous unspoken perceptions. I do not think I fully understand what this is doing in the mainstream international art world. In my view, the situation that becomes legible around this presence, not the final product, is what we need to think. It is never the final product that does the work. But in the art world it is always the final product that is assumed to be doing the work. What really interests me in Povinelli's work with Karrabing

21 *Karrabing Film Collective: Salt water Dreams*. Tate Modern. Screening 28-29 October 2017, https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-modern/film/karrabing-film-collective-saltwater-dreams.

Film Collective is all the references that come into the work, from different parts of the world, historical moments, and using different discourses. For example, one such reference was to Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. This model of theatre started playing a part in the Karrabing film-making process as a way to consider the relation of conditions and representation. This is why I find the world of Povinelli and others with the Karrabing Film Collective to be an interesting entry point. Its specificity of the grim conditions of life for indigenous people, in the Northern territory of Australia, is refracted through a set of global references taken up as vehicles for the expression and representation of dissent.

Here is a quote from a conversation that appeared on e-flux, between Elizabeth Povinelli and a couple of other collaborators, among them her co-director Liza Johnson. In their discussion they describe a micropolitical structure. Elizabeth Povinelli: 'These film projects began as something quite different than what they ended up being. I talked a little about this in an earlier e-flux journal essay. A very old group of friends and colleagues of mine were working on a digital archive project, that would be based in the community where they were living. But after a communal riot, they decided being homeless was safer than staying in the community. So what began as a digital archive that would be located on a computer in a building in a community was reconceptualized as a "living archive" in which media files would be geotagged in such a way that they could be played on any GPS-enabled smart device, but only proximate to the physical site the media file was referring to'.[22] It could not be played in another country but only in proximity to the physical site to which the media file referred. Povinelli continues: 'We thought this augmented reality-based media project would have two main interfaces, one for their family and one

22 Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Audra Simpson and Liza Johnson, 'Holding Up the World, Part IV: After a Screening of When the Dogs Talked at Columbia University', *e-flux Journal* 58 (October 2014), https://www.e-flux.com/journal/58/61151/holding-up-the-world-part-iv-after-a-screening-of-when-the-dogs-talked-at-columbia-university/.

for tourists. And they thought this would be a way of supporting their specific gerontology – their way of thinking about land and being – and create a green-based business to support their families'.[23] Then Liza Johnson adds: 'I had collaborated with an anthropologist in the past, and when we finished the project, he was very quick to claim mastery over the content, relegating me to the form side of the equation, as if the two could be easily separated. And as if you can have mastery over content when that content is itself a group of living people who have mastery over themselves!'[24]

Within art contexts, this split has formal implications too, most obviously between a representational paradigm that may aim to generate shifts in meaning or ideology, and a public art, or relational aesthetics, paradigm that may think of social relationships as the material and medium of the work. But is it not possible to gesture in both directions? Cinema and theatre offer a lot of models that we could aspire to, including: Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*;[25] the kinds of participatory projects that Jean Rouch made and that Faye Ginsberg champions; classical and contemporary forms of neorealism; and even in the legacies of minimalism, like Akerman and Warhol, for the ways that eventfulness and the everyday are distributed. I have been very interested in Lauren Berlant's project, including her characterisation of the cinema of precarity, and in Ivonne Marguelies's work on realism, and especially on the role of description in creating a kind of critical purchase on eventfulness. These references, in conversation with a set of references traditional to the Karrabing mob, were the basis of the workshop that we did with the Karrabing. We fundamentally aspired to Boal: what are the conflicts of everyday life, and how might we act upon those conflicts if we try to act them out?

These are models that, for me, have the value of always pulling

23 Ibid.

24 Ibid.

25 Augusto Boal, *The Theatre of the Oppressed* (Pluto Press: London, 1979).

away from the finished product. Smith, Guattari and Povinelli all talk about processes that are not in advance of the finished product but that are ongoing. It is the processes they are interested in, they are meeting around the assemblages of different kinds of knowledge. One of the things that I really like about looking at all the people who are involved with Karrabing, is that none of them has a final goal in mind. They do not think 'Oh it's going to be a film and that film can then go to a film festival or distribution, or museums around the world'. Instead they think 'we'll bring this and this together and then we'll see what happens'. And then the art world gets hold of it and it becomes a commodity. So how do we constantly dial back, basically? To a moment before the clarity of a product?

Finally – and I know this is a really long and labyrinthine argument – but the third and final term at my disposal at this moment is Jean-Luc Nancy's 'world-making.' He differentiates between globalisation and what he calls 'world-making'.[26] Globalisation, according to Nancy, is the totality of things: 'totality grasped as a whole. While the other is the process of constant forming'. A process in expansion, in reference to the world of humans, of culture and of nations, in a differentiated set. 'Globalization', says Nancy, 'is the suppression of all world-forming. An unprecedented geopolitical, economic and ecological catastrophe', the world, says Nancy, 'has lost its capacity to form the world. It seems only to have gained the capacity of proliferating'.[27] This, again, is the kind of argument, in a completely different language, that reverberates with what I have found in Sassen. He says that 'advanced capitalism has nothing but proliferation'.[28] To create the world, for Nancy, is 'to immediately, without delay, reopen each possible struggle for a world that is, for what must form the contrary of a global

26 Jean-Luc Nancy, 'The Creation of the World or Globalisation', trans. with introduction François Raffoul and David Pettigrew (State University of New York Press, 2007).

27 Ibid.

28 Sassen, 'Beyond Inequality', 2.

injustice against the background of a general equivalence'.[29] He is opposing two things here: the global injustice against general equivalence. Equivalence, in his philosophical language, is what we were talking about earlier as the absolute flattening impact of universal humanism. Universal humanism advances a kind of flattening effect, in which everything operates in the same way. And this is what Nancy wants to reverse. There could be few better ways of understanding the oddness of endless displays of cultural products from elsewhere, their elevation to the status of both precious objects in the market sense, as well as signifying entities in the contexts of cross-cultural negotiations, than Nancy's understanding of a global injustice against the background of a general equivalence. The global injustice and lack of equality that goes into the making of these cultural entities, the conditions of their making, is completely negated in their circulation within a market of equivalences.

These are some tools for a conceptual understanding of the terrain we inhabit. Now we have the opportunity to open up, in detailed specificity, some of the practices of artistic production, intervention and advocacy, curating, and the building of infrastructures, which, I argue, combine to renew the possible struggle that Nancy aspires to in his desire for world making.

We arrive at the tail end of a complex unpacking of my problematic about the global circulation of art works, without a conclusion, and without a recipe – because I think that to be without a conclusion and to be without a recipe, is to be where we need to be. We do not need a template for a perfect, just, and balanced model of exhibiting artistic practices from around the world and we do not need to be under the illusion that this kind of practise dignifies the work or artists in any way, whatsoever, or creates a different level of understanding around the world. We do not need any of that, we need something else. What the something else is, I have no idea! It certainly has to do with the rise of new subjectivities on the world

29 Nancy, 'World or Globalisation'.

stage of politics, and it certainly has to do with research that projects backwards onto researchers. It is clearly divorced from the business of representation, and its relation to informing us is both dubious – there is no solid truth to tell – and dangerous, in view of the art world's voracious appetite for nuggets of factual information about remote places. I gravitate towards Anna Tsing's 'sticky materiality' in all of its unexpected dissonances, and to Abdou Maliq Simone's narrativised accounts of minute and incomprehensible performances of seemingly insignificant acts, that he terms 'just keeping things going'.[30] This effort to keep things going connotes the recognition of a bigger picture, without the act of engaging with it, or opposing it, or being victimised by it – it is a form of inhabitation. My final question then is – how can we create proximity between two very different forms of 'keeping things going'? On the one hand, art world protocols and, on the other, the lived realities? Can exhibitions of 'elsewheres' become instantiations of world making, of the struggle to form a world? Asking these questions from within several forms of cultural practice, such as teaching, researching, and curating, requires that this becomes the site of the struggle rather than the place from which we project the struggle to elsewhere. □

30 Abdou Maliq Simone, *Improvised Lives: Rhythms of endurance in an Urban South* (Polity Press, 2018).

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Grada Kilomba

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PUBLICATION PROGRAM

Plantation Memories

The question of the title *Plantation Memories* is a very interesting one. It is often the case with my method that the title comes first. It appears to me. I think that sometimes we are working through things on an unconscious level, then we hear a whisper in our ear and we do not quite know why but then they materialise. *Plantation Memories* is a title which was with me for quite some time, it was with me at an important moment when I went to São Tomé and Príncipe for the first time searching for the rest of my family. I knew that my grandparents and my grandmother were born in São Tomé, in Monte Café – at the time it had a different name – which was a coffee plantation that consisted, as was typical of plantations in São Tomé and other places, of a palatial house, a long avenue and a series of slave quarters where people lived in homes that were only three square metres.

I went in search of the rest of my family, knowing that my grandfather had, like many others, actually gone to São Tomé *after* the abolition of Portuguese slavery. The Portuguese economy collapsed after abolition because Portugal lived off the riches of slavery. In the case of São Tomé and Príncipe those profits came from cacao and coffee. Portugal had a contract with Cadbury's

chocolates. Cadbury's was under pressure because they could not purchase the cacao that had been produced by enslaved people after abolition. And so, the Portuguese then instituted another system of modern slavery – the *'serviçais'* [contract labourers], which was a different kind of post-slavery system. The Portuguese would go to the continent to forcibly bring people to the many coffee and cacao plantations of São Tomé and Príncipe. I knew that my grandfather was from Cabinda, and that he travelled on a ship to São Tomé and Príncipe.

This is our very complicated and brutal history, but it is a history that we often do not know about because it is not documented, it is not verbalised and it is not recounted. Then there is another side of it - for example, we often sing Césaria Évora's song, *Sodade*. In it, Césaria Évora sings about Portugal's post-slavery system when the Portuguese took the *'serviçais'* forcibly, with the false promise of work on the plantations from which they could later return to their native lands. In fact, they were imprisoned on the plantations and could never return. And this is why she sings *'sodade dessa terra, São Nicolau... essa terra longe.'* She is singing specifically about those people taken from São Nicolau and other islands, and brought to São Tomé and Príncipe to work on the plantations.

The text and the title of my project came from this very personal and individual journey. I went all over the islands and their hills and plantations and met so many people from different places – from Mozambique, from Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde – all separated under a system of apartheid, each on a different plantation with its own language. As a result, the Creole language is strong because they needed to be able to communicate. Before going there, I already had the title for the book – but I did not know why. And I think that the more you work, the more things start to materialise and you begin to realise why you have this title and why it appears. The title persisted, and I let it be and started working around it, almost in circles, which is the way that I work with text. I became interested in working on the subject of trauma

and collective trauma, colonial trauma and the way it is re-performed in the present. I started working on this question of the inter-temporality that we experience: we live in the present but the present is constantly being interrupted and we never reach the future. *Plantation Memories* are the memories of the plantations that are built in the day-to-day like a mise en scène of the past, which localises you, which put you in a different chronology that does not belong to the now. This is how I began writing the book. I started interviewing women from different African diasporas, living in Berlin. Some were Afro-German, others Afro-French, Afro-English – different women from different diasporas, with different sexualities and different genders. Then I created a dialogue between these women and me, between my memories and theirs, between my biography and their biographies, and this is how I wrote *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Daily Racism.*

I launched the book in 2008 at the International Literature Festival in Berlin. I had the great honour of opening the festival at a round-table discussion with Wole Soyinka, who won the Nobel Prize for Literature, and Maryse Condé, the *grande dame* of French language literature from Martinique and friend of Frantz Fanon. I was surrounded by those great roots, by those queens, presenting my book and it was really beautiful because when they invited me to launch it and open the festival with my book, an interesting issue came up. The book is really a hybrid, like all my work, and they did not really know if the book belonged in a literature festival, or if it was academic, or where – or what – it was. This is the difficult thing about creating new languages; that is, finding where to place them. But we launched the book and within three months it had sold out. Now it is in its fifth edition. It is being translated in Brazil, whereas in Portugal we are still negotiating it – but it has taken all these years. In the meantime, I have started working more on theatre, on the stage, and what interests me increasingly is performance. I adapted the new book to be performed in theatre and the short film you have watched is one part of that performance.

The photograph is part of the exhibition at Avenida da India Gallery entitled *The most beautiful language*. This was a piece of work I initially made with the actors when we were rehearsing. I really like to work together with the audience, or with the actors I am working with, and to build a third voice. At the time I was working with the actors and asking them to read the book and to read the adapted script. I asked them to underline and bring me the parts of the text that touched them the most, specific phrases that could be just a word or a short or long sentence. Then I took the phrases they brought and I rewrote or re-ordered them to compose a new body of text, which is repeated throughout the piece in different ways. It sounds almost like a manifesto, a manifesto of what I want and do not want. So that is how it came about.

When we started working at the Avenida da India Gallery it was really lovely because it was João Morão who invited me first – he was still the director then – and I was in Salvador, in Bahia, at the time on a residency, and he contacted me. He said 'Grada, it seems impossible but I only just found out about your work.' And we talked about that, that it was no accident that my work only became known in Portugal through the colonial relations with Brazil, and it was via this route that the work came to be here in Lisbon. And he was lovely and said 'It's very urgent, you must bring your work here and we have to do an exhibition. Come and see the gallery – it's very important.' So, I came and saw the space.

When Morão approached me, I had been working at the Bienale de São Paulo with Gabi Ngcobo, who was my curator. She was my curator in São Paulo and also in Lisbon for *The most beautiful language*. Ngcobo will curate the Berlin biennale in 2018. She is a curator I love working with – she is very conscientious. Ngcobo is from South Africa and she really comes from that politicisation of the arts, the importance of making art political, so we speak almost the same language. The gallery is beautiful and very large, it is almost a museum, and it is a space full of light. That sort of space is ideal for showing more classical artworks, like sculptures and paintings, but when you work with video it is hard to fill that space

because there is so much light. That is why I decided – everything in this exhibition as well as in MAAT, since these are two exhibitions in dialogue with one another – that everything there was adapted for that space, architecturally, for the physical space. I decided to work mostly with text because we had these huge white walls and panels and I thought it was interesting to deconstruct that white cube, the white in contemporary art that is supposed to be neutral and universal. It is very important to mark that white cube with manifestations and works that bring a narrative and visuality that are generally not seen in these spaces. I wanted to work with these contradictions.

The enthusiasm for the exhibitions is wonderful. It has to do, I think, with a generation, an audience that is more than ready for a new approach. They need the tools and instruments to deconstruct a history that has been turned into fantasy. We have a colonial history. I am always saying it but it is always worth repeating it: Portugal has an almost obsessive relationship with the colonial past. It constructs all of its narratives around a colonial history, around a past that is totally romanticised and fabricated and, in that sense, there is a huge disparity between reality and fantasy. It is an idealised story that does not correspond to the truth, because Portuguese colonial history has not been historically verified. Colonialism creates dehumanisation, brutality, atrocities and trauma. It is an incredibly complicated subject, that is not just Portugal's, but shared by all European countries. The way history has been idealised with words and euphemisms like 'the discoveries' seems to be an almost infantile fantasy, repeated over and over. The Portuguese still believe that Portugal discovered a continent of thousands of people. Yet these are contradictory ideas and I think when we construct these narratives, we are dealing with history in a way that is incoherent, illogical and problematic. You cannot quantify a history of dehumanisation, slavery, exploitation, exclusion. Therefore, I think that as we get chronologically further away from that period in time, the more urgent it becomes to have a language, and have a visual language,

and a platform to explore more visual and literary languages, etc., to tell this history in a more coherent way. I think that this is where all the enthusiasm comes from.

It is also a great relief. It is a great relief and it is extremely empowering to find words with which to define ourselves again, in space, and for us to define ourselves and position ourselves in a way that is constructive to our very problematic history. When we create platforms like this, and exhibitions, I am always so enthusiastic and I think, 'finally', because we have to make these spaces. We have to approach post-coloniality in all its complexities of gender, sexuality, transsexuality, and our discourses have to be much more complex. We have to deconstruct many things. So it is a relief when we build these discourses. It can be done in a conversation like this, and it can also be done in exhibitions. I think this is a generation that wants to learn to speak differently, and that needs to speak differently, and we do not have this language because we grew up in Portugal with a brutal history and a reality that is never spoken of. I remember growing up without being able to speak about racism. It was always - 'let it be,' 'you're being over-sensitive,' 'pay no attention.' It has always been a language of sanctions, of neglecting, of not naming, of not giving importance. At the same time, it is individualised, as if the person talking has a problem but it is not historical, societal, political. This is why the role of art, of literature, the production of knowledge – and it is your responsibility to make the most of it and to find new languages – is so important.

Until relatively recently I would have said that coming to do this kind of hybrid work has been a process, but in fact it has not been a process. My work has always been a hybrid. I just mentioned my book, and the book crosses a number of literary lines, it is very hard to know where to place it. The book was performed and it was a video installation. I have always worked with this hybrid method and I have always been interested in bringing academic and theoretical and political languages together with arts and performance. How can I bring knowledge, which for me is essential, and breathe

life into it? How do I make it physical, emotional, so that people have access to this knowledge internally; a different kind of access. I have always worked on different platforms to make this possible.

I started giving lessons in 2004 at Humboldt University, and then I taught in several universities across Europe and in Ghana, in South Africa, and as a guest professor on and off, but I also worked a lot in theatre. For example, I worked at the Maxim Gorky Theatre and I also worked in theatre in London. I've worked on many different platforms and I have actually realised that my work is interdisciplinary. It can be in a space like a museum, but it can also be in a theatre, a university – and I think that is important, to occupy different spaces. There is an urgency for this language, to build new artistic languages – we have to bear in mind that the classic disciplines do not serve to tell this history. These disciplines have traditionally and historically often served to silence. It is very important for artists, thinkers, activists from the margins to invent, to create a new language, a language that is fit for this narrative. You cannot use the dominant language because it is often not possible, the language is not complex enough to explain who you are, because of our overlapping categories, for example gender, sexuality, and postcoloniality.

When one starts doing political work there is a need for a different language. It is no accident that most black artists are not painting flowers, because there is an urgency that has to do with life and death, that has to do with trauma, with violence. I have no time to waste. It is existential, it is bodily as well. It is the intellectualisation and the visualisation of a history of trauma, I cannot get distracted. There are other artists who do that but I am not going to do that. There is that 'nice art' and those 'nice discourses' which often take up our platforms. I think that it is important to make challenging art, challenging discourses, art in which people immerge and are somehow transformed by it, or that can raise questions they did not have before. That is beautiful. Perhaps that is the answer: I got a little tired of the academy after 14 or so years

of giving lectures, I got tired of giving answers. There is a relationship of power in giving answers and I became more and more interested in posing questions and having work in which the audience does not necessarily receive an answer, but sees something which raises a question. When you formulate questions it is a transformative moment and that is what I started to find much more interesting.

The risk of exoticism is always there. But when we create our work, or at least for me – I do not worry much about these issues to be honest. I do what I want, and enjoy, and I do it for me. It has been very important for me to get to this point. I create works and narratives which work for me, which help me understand who I am. Working artistically, in a literary way and also academically is like making a puzzle – to do it, you need lots of pieces. But as a woman and as a woman of the African diaspora, you need lots of pieces that were taken from you, lots of pieces that were made invisible, lots of pieces that were silenced, pieces that were turned upside down, some pieces that I am unaware of, and it is a process of turning them around, one by one, and identifying them, trying to work out who I am. When I get into this process, which has to do with creating myself, I am the author and the authority. I am the author of my own work so I assume all of these processes of 'Othering' – it is a refusal to be the Other. But I am not so worried about that. I am rather worried, or fascinated by, the fact that each of us, with our different biographies – even if we have the same political or social background – each of us has the liberty and space to develop a language with which to retell our own story. It is important to invest in this diversity: we all have a story to tell and we need an artistic or literary language to tell that story. Language that distances us from that power relation, of dependency, between 'I' and the 'Other'.

The main installation at MAAT, which is called the *Desire Project*, is a video installation composed of three acts and three simultaneous films. One of them deals precisely with the issue of being seen as the 'Other' or as different, which is then deconstructed.

I am not different – different to whom? Who is different from whom? If someone has power and privilege, is that a point of reference to which I defer? The installation also deconstructs the idea that people who are marginalised are discriminated against because they are different, which is a myth. The installation demystifies a series of myths. I *become* different through discrimination; it is discrimination that differentiates me. So, these words – other, tolerance, difference – we are a generation which has a discourse that has nothing to do with that of the 'Other' from the 60s and 70s. We say no, I am not 'Other,' I refuse to be 'Other,' I am not different. I am as different to you, as you are to me, your hair is as different to mine, as mine is to yours. Yet it is in that moment that discrimination happens – the moment that you touch my hair, even though I do not touch yours – that I become different. How that relation is built has to do with power. It has to do with who can touch whose hair. Power relations create difference and that is what this installation at MAAT addresses.

It is significant that a museum that did not exist two years ago comes into being, bringing a new agenda and a new curriculum. They are also defining who belongs, who are the artists and intellectuals that belong to the national canon. It is no accident that my work has never been shown in Portugal, even though I have been working for 20 years, exhibiting internationally. It is no accident that it is here now. Museums have to build a new agenda that is based on the present. Inês Grosso and Pedro Gadanho did that when they approached me after São Paulo and said 'we've seen the work you've shown and we must acquire a piece and it has to be shown in Portugal. We must be the first and we must show it in Lisbon where you're from.' This is crucial because female artists from the African diaspora and black artists in general do not have much visibility, they have no platforms. It is no accident that we are so absent, or that it takes such a long time for us to gain visibility. And even when our work is on display at museums, and Dokumentas and biennales and Goodman galleries, even then, no one has heard of us, we are unknown, and this is very

problematic – it shows clearly who can belong to the national canon, whose bodies can represent the nation, and who cannot. Those artistic and curating decisions – which are also financial decisions – are also political decisions. □

Paul Goodwin & Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

FEBRUARY 2018 MAAT – MUSEUM OF ART, ARCHITECTURE AND TECHNOLOGY

RESEARCH PROGRAM

Epistemic Disobedience

Paul Goodwin

The way that I want to use recalcitrance refers to the idea of resisting the call to order. I am referring to the call to order that institutions impose on us – all of us, anyone who is in an institution - there is always a call to order to follow how an institution works or should work, whether that institution is a museum, an art school, a cultural institution, a discipline, or an art medium such as painting or curating. The origins of the term recalcitrance, according to the Oxford English dictionary, lie in the English language, from the mid-19th century, and were taken from the Latin verb recalcitrare, which means, to kick out, to kick out with the heels. And for me *recalcitrance*, thus, has actually got quite a violent and explosive connotation: to kick out. And also in English, it implies a more subtle, stubborn and quotidian form, an everyday form of resistance to authority, of not complying to the rules and regulations, the way that authority wants us to behave, and saying no, I am not going to do it like that, I am going to do it like this.

In some respects, I see this kind of quiet recalcitrance in the work of many artists that I have had the privilege to work with, and I see it in the work, for example, of an artist such as the

Dutch-Surinamese painter, Iris Kensmill, not only in the work itself but in the way that she talks about her work. I will give you a quick example. In an essay that I wrote about Iris' work for the catalogue of an exhibition that she did two years ago, there was one section in the text where I wrote about where Iris, in my opinion, inserts blackness into the canvas and into wider art history – in other words, a kind of black perspective within painting that had been neglected. In my wisdom, I tried to situate her work (using photographs and media as a basis for painting) in relation to other contemporary painters that I felt did so too – I thought about Wilhelm Sasnal, and also Luke Tuymans, another painter who uses media as a basis for their work. And I wrote about that and I showed the text to Iris and she said: 'No! I don't do it like that,' you know. And so, in the text, she inserted a paragraph where she said: 'Sasnal paints in cold light. His images reflect more detachment and irony. So, appropriation, for Sasnal, is irony, and therefore distant from the culture in which he grew up.' Iris – and she is using my words here - 'on the other hand, paints her subjects in a way that confirms the reality of the historical experience, existence and importance. The attitude shown in her appropriation is one of respect or even of reverence.' I changed my text according to how Iris said it. And I thought a lot about this intervention by the artist in my writing and I realised what was actually going on, was that she was engaging in an act of recalcitrance, right? And she was trying to resist her work being glibly compared to the attitudes of a mainstream artist from a European background, and saying, 'well, actually the way I do this work is very different, and has a different sense of subjectivity, experience and history,' which I had missed out on in my analysis. In a way it was a kind of decolonial gesture, a microcosm. And I think as we investigate these art histories, we would do well to bear in mind the recalcitrance of artists like Iris to simplistic and positivist comparisons of her work with European contemporaries.

This very brief example of an artist recalcitrant to the way they have been written about, the way curators write about artists, is in fact emblematic of the very problematic way that many non-Western artists are curated in exhibitions, often with a focus on their ethnicity and on

the social context, to the detriment of talking about the actual art that they produce. There is often an over-contextualisation of certain external factors and an under-consideration of the internal factors, that I think blights discussion about the actual practices black artists and non-western artists have in certain circumstances. So I have been working towards the idea that as curators, who are working with artists who have been raced/gendered/othered, within the Western art canon, we need to create a space in our writing, in our curatorial practices, for the work itself as a starting point. In practice, this means in some ways, I think – and I have talked about this before – we need, perhaps, as curators, to step back a bit, to reign in our curatorial egos and maybe think about, what I call 'un-curating'. We need to start un-curating a bit, right!? We need to start thinking about taking away that curatorial space.

Another way of thinking about what I call un-curating relates to the cultural theorist and writer Edouard Glissant's idea of 'opacity'. In several of his texts, Glissant talks about the rights of people and things not to be understood. Not the right to be *understood*, but the rights of people *not* to be understood, to resist full scrutiny by the other. The demand for opacity is not the demand for invisibility, it is not about saying I want to be invisible, it is about saying: 'I exist on other than your terms'. It is the assertion of a right not to be understood, to resist the demand for transparency that Glissant saw as characteristic of relations of the West with the non-West. In this interview with Manthia Diawara, he says: 'There's a basic injustice in the worldwide spread of Transparency and the projection of western thought. Why must we evaluate people on the scale of ideas proposed by the west? As far as I am concerned, a person has a right to be opaque. It does not stop me from liking that person, it does not stop me from hanging with him, working with him. A racist is someone who refuses what he does not understand. I can accept what I do not understand.' So, what he is really saying is that in the West, we often have this idea about being transparent, that we need to know everything about, for example, an artist's work, we need to interpret what the artist is saying.

What he is saying is actually: 'No. I refuse to be co-opted, to be called to order, by an artist or by an art historian, or by an external factor'. Glissant's call for the 'right to opacity' has been taken up by many artists and curators, in recent years, to defend the right of the artist and the artwork to resist the imposition of external meaning. So, we might even call this a curatorial opacity, or a curatorial minimalism, that disrupts the constant flow of information, the discourse and interpretation surrounding the work of art. If we do that, if we start to un-curate, if we start to respect the right to opacity, maybe we can start to facilitate new ways for the object to speak to multiple constituencies. That is what I am proposing.

I tried to do this in an exhibition – I tested the idea – which I curated with the brilliant young co-curator Hansi Momodu-Gordon, in New Art Exchange in Nottingham, in 2017. The curatorial move that we made, concerned the way in which we attempted to actually dispose of the idea of having a curatorial theme for the show. We worked with 10 artists, all of whom were of African descent, within Britain – Black British artists – and we wanted to find a new way of curating outside of the frame of 'Black Art' or 'Contemporary African Art' or any of these other labels that are often applied to these artists and just say: well, actually, these artists are dealing with some of the issues that are important in our time. So, for example, the work of Larry Achiampong and David Blandy investigates questions about technology and the transformation of trans-human identities through hacking. They hacked the Grand Theft Auto game engine, and they worked in collaboration with marginalised communities to create avatars. And in fact, it would be a work that, I think, is relevant to the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (MAAT), so I am really pushing for Larry and David to get their work shown here. Other artists, such as... you can see this painting here, of a woman shooting, a policewoman shooting a black woman, is the work of Kimathi Donkor, who is an activist and who really draws on historical ideas around history painting, to bring out the relevance of history to contemporary life. All of the works really spoke to issues about how we live today; not just about blackness, not just about black art – the fact that they were black artists was not the

determining feature of the works. But in order to liberate that, we had to dispense with having this externally imposed, black art frame. Many of the questions and concerns that overlapped and crossed between the artworks and the images – we did not attempt to present a fixed or definitive position on these works as exemplary of black art – what we did was invite viewers to contemplate, to wrestle with and draw their own conclusions by engaging directly with the works and the way they were juxtaposed in the space of the gallery. In this sense, *Untitled* marked something of a break from many of the exhibitions in Britain that frame African diaspora artists within a fixed narrative around Black Art, or 'Diversity', which is my real bug bear – do not get me talking about that!

I want to end now by speculating about another way of seeing a more radical kind of curatorial recalcitrance, this time, not so much at the scale of the individual artwork but at the scale of the museum. Many of us on the continent, around the world and in the diaspora, operate as art-workers, curators, programmers, and artists, within very hostile environments. These environments were not created to accommodate the sexual, cultural, political perspectives that many of us articulate, in the way that Monica was talking about, from the subject positions that Walter Mignolo talks about, or the Geo-body-politics. And I want to consider ways that we can think about our diverse experiences, and channel them into modes of resistance against the daily micro-aggressions that we face in racist, neoliberal environments, of many of the institutions which we are *in*, but not *of*. The question is, how can we, as subversive practitioners and intellectuals, survive, maintain ourselves and create spaces of resistance within often hostile, colonial institutions, that we are *in* but not *of*? I want to refer here to something Fred Moten and Stefano Harney wrote, in their classic text *The Undercommons* – a text that has been central to much of my thinking since it was initially circulated on the internet in 2013. It is often quoted. They were talking about universities and I have actually substituted the word museum for university:

'the only possible relationship to the university today is a criminal one'. I have changed that, following the philosopher and activist and colleague of Bonaventure, Paul Preciado, who basically adopted this quote from Moten and Harney's text and exchanged the word 'university' with 'museum'. For me this sums up many questions about the role of the subversive intellectual or practitioner within the museum. I am going to read this quote and replace it again with the word museum, so: 'This may be true of *museums* everywhere: it cannot be denied that the *museum* is a place of refuge, and it cannot be accepted that the museum is a place of enlightenment. In the face of these conditions, one can only sneak into the *museum*, and steal what one can. To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission, to join its refugee colony, its gypsy encampment, to be *in* but not *of*, this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern museum. After all, the subversive intellectual came under false pretences, with bad documents, out of love. Her labour is as necessary as it is unwelcome. The *museum* needs what she bears but cannot bear what she brings. And on top of that, she disappears, she disappears into the underground, the lowdown, down-low maroon community of the *museum*, into the undercommons of enlightenment, where the work gets done, where the work gets subverted and where the revolution is still black, still strong.' Moten and Harney's classic text, exploring the radical potential of alternative forms of sociality and belonging, in many ways, speaks to the posture of recalcitrance that I am trying to create. In their text, they paint a picture of the neoliberal university in America as a site of total professionalisation, that is the key word; I think the same happens to museums now. In a museum, you have to be *professional*, at all times. You have to come, you have to deliver certain outputs. I used to work in a museum, now I work in a university and, as such, and as many of you know, you are judged, particularly, in Britain – not everywhere in Europe is the same but in Britain, the model that you have in universities, you are judged by how much money you bring in for research, and you have to have peer-reviewed outputs. In other words, you have a narrowing of the experience of what it means to work in a university or a museum, to this very professional sense.

Although it may be a stretch to compare the contemporary global museum to universities in all respects, I believe that the logic that drives much museum practice increasingly resembles Moten and Harney's diagnostic of the university in the age of neoliberal capitalism. It begs the question: what is the undercommons of the museum? And if it does not yet exist, what can it become? The undercommons of the museum is not a place – Moten and Harney say that the undercommons is not a literal place. It is not a place that is opposed to power in a binary mode – you are either in it or you are out of it, or in George Bush's language: you are with us or you are against us. Rather, the undercommons is more of a mindset, an orientation, a positioning in relation to power, an unstable assemblage of strategies coalescing around the idea of refusal or even opacity to dominant forms and norms of power. Moten and Harney argue that the undercommons involves supporting and extending what they call 'black sociality'. In other words, it is another way of being together, of eating, of drinking, of fucking, of being in common, for each other, of loving each other - in other words, what they call study. And this already exists in some respects and I think many of us are doing that, at work. This is what we are doing here today. But I think we need to extend it, to spread its message and power, to infiltrate the museum, or the university, or the institution, one step at a time. The undercommons can be construed in the sense that I argued earlier as a mode of everyday recalcitrance, a refusal and position of fugitivity to the call to order, or the will to power of the institution.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung

There are a couple of things Paul said that resonate in what I wrote, and the images you see on the background are a couple of projects at SAVVY Contemporary – actually seven of them – and in a particular order. It was difficult to choose these works, but I thought that these are some of the projects that really reflect the disobedience that Paul discussed. The first thing, was Jean Pierre

Bekolo's *Welcome to Applied Fiction*, which we did in 2016. Then *What the Tortoise Murmurs to Achilles: On Laziness, Economy of Time and Productivity*, which we also did in 2016, and a relatively big project we did called *The Incantation of the Disquieting Muse: On Divinity, Supra-realities or the Exorcisement of Witchery*, we did on divinity, super-realities or the exorcisement of witchery. Then *From Bandung to Berlin*; then two more recent projects, one called *El Usman Faroqhi Here and Yonder: On Finding Pose in Disorientation*; and the last one you will see is called *That Around Which the Universe Revolves: On Rhythmanalysis of Memory, Times, Bodies in Space* on rhythm analysis of time, memories and bodies. These exhibits and images are the backdrop of something like a lecture I want to give today.

Mónica de Miranda[1] mentioned something at the beginning about some people not having a voice, and so on and so forth. This is kind of true, but I would rather like to think with Seloua Luste Boulbina, the Franco-Algerian philosopher based in Paris who, looking at Spivak in another way, says the issue has really never been that the subaltern does not have a voice, the question is whether the non-subaltern is really ready to listen. I think that this is the shift, and this is the beginning of what we might call a certain degree of disobedience. Because we have always had a voice – we have always had a multiplicity of voices. The question is, can you listen? So I will start with an epigraph from Mignolo who inspired this way of thinking. It reads: 'If you are getting the idea of what shifting the geography of reason and enacting the geopolitics of reason means, you will also be understanding what the decolonial option in general means. It means, in the first place, to engage in epistemic disobedience. Epistemic disobedience is necessary to take on civil disobedience to its point of no return. Civil disobedience, within modern Western epistemology, could only lead to reforms, not to transformations. For this simple reason, the task of decolonial thinking and the enactment of the decolonial option in the 21st century starts with epistemic de-linking, from acts of epistemic obedience.'

1 Artist and director of Hangar – Centre for Artistic Research

What I will try to do here is to look at something I will call my practice, but through the prism of SAVVY contemporary I founded in 2009, with a few other people. Today the space is run by 26 people, from over 11 different countries. It is a small space and a space that has taken upon itself the responsibility to swim against the stream; that is what we try to do.

Thinking of how to start this lecture I thought of the poet Kei Miller, a Jamaican poet based in England who wrote a book called *The Cartographer Tries to Map a Way to Zion*. I would like to use that as a beginning and I will try and throw in a couple of things about it later.

I. in which the Cartographer explains himself
You might say
my job is not
to lose myself exactly
but to imagine
what loss might feel like –
the sudden creeping pace,
the consultation with trees and blue
fences and whatever else
might prove a landmark.
My job is to imagine the widening
of the unfamiliar and also
the widening ache of it;
to anticipate the ironic
question: how did we find
ourselves here? My job is
to untangle the tangled,
to unworry the concerned,
to guide you out from cul-de-sacs
into which you may have wrongly turned.

That is the voice of the cartographer – now, the Rastafari man responds.

II. in which the rastaman disagrees
The rastaman has another reasoning.
He says – now that man's job is never straight-
forward or easy. Him work is to make thin and crushable
all that is big and as real as ourselves; is to make flat
all that is high and rolling; is to make invisible and wutliss
plenty things that poor people cyaa do without – like board
houses, and the corner shop from which Miss Katie sell
her famous peanut porridge. And then again
the mapmaker's work is to make visible
all them things that shoulda never exist in the first place
like the conquest of pirates, like borders,
like the viral spread of governments

It is obvious that I chose this poem because of the dramatic display of the encounter between knowledge systems and methods of understanding the world. This intellectual clash between the cartographer and the rastaman could, in a nutshell, be summarised as a tug of war between western and non-western philosophies, histories, interpretations of science, cogitations of reason, understandings of space, place, possession, dispossession, territorialisation, and de-territorialisation. It is the friction between the exactness and the rationality of what is termed sciences, against the experiential, empirical and the phenomenological. This encounter betrays the figure's relation to, and entanglements between, concepts of nations and races. But also, the liaison between language and knowledge, language and land. It is obvious that this encounter between the cartographer and the rastaman is a metaphorical struggle between Babylon and Zion – in that exact constellation. What I like to call *the healthy scepsis*, is the premise on which I place this talk. So, this dispatch is an effort to review the agency and ambitions, agitations and turbulences, missions and visions that led to the founding of what we call SAVVY Contemporary, the 'laboratory of form-ideas'. It is a deliberation on the beaten and unbeaten tracks, as well as the worlds we staggered and stumbled upon. SAVVY is an art space, a discursive platform, an eating-drinking spot, as Paul

mentioned, a njangi house – you know in Cameroon we have njangi houses where people go to every Sunday, dressed up – a space for conviviality. SAVVY situates itself at the threshold of what you call the West and the non-West. We primarily seek to understand and negotiate between and deconstruct these ideologies. For this, it seems appropriate to invoke, convoke, and to deploy the cosmogenic powers of artists to guide us. On this journey, we engage with what Sylvia Winter and Paget Henry describe as the poetic power of artistic practice. We do this to un-name, to rename, to de-institute, to reinstitute selves, contain imposed voices and un-silence suppressed voices, in an effort to resolve the crisis of entrapment.

SAVVY Contemporary has defined the deliberation and exercising of conviviality and hospitality as one of its focal points. Taking into consideration the rise of xenophobic and racial violence, widening gaps in class and economic realities, revamped hegemonic structures in the last years and decades, the necessity to reflect on and perform hospitality seems to be more important than ever. It is to this end that SAVVY actively and performatively tries out strategies of ignoring, abrogating, and neutralising those distances and impediments between the self and the ego, between the self and others. The possible method of realising the aforementioned is to radicalise conviviality and sharing.

We also like to talk about something we call epistemological diversity – which is very different from diversity – a space that embodies Bonaventura de Sousa Santos' postulation that 'another knowledge is possible' and that takes up its argument that there is no social justice without global cognitive justice. As Sousa Santos states: 'The exclusions, oppressions and discriminations produced by global capitalism have not only had economic, social and political effects upon the world, but have also had detrimental cultural and epistemological effects. Thus, the urge not only to acknowledge the diversity of epistemologies but to resist the tendency to universalise Western epistemology.' At SAVVY, we celebrate that diversity of epistemologies, as we articulate '*knowledges*' as a means of

decolonising the singularity of knowledge. In language, as Lewis Gordon says: 'the formulation of language in the singular already situates the question in the framework that is alien to pre-colonial times. For the disparate modes of producing knowledge and notions of knowledge were so many that 'knowledges' would be a more appropriate designation. Unification was a function of various stages of imperial realignment, where local reflections shifted their attention to centres elsewhere to the point of concentric collapse. On their way, those varieties of knowledge coalesced into knowledge of the centre, and successive collapses of centres under the weight of other centres led, over time, to the global situation of the centre and its concomitant organisation of knowledges into a singular knowledge.'

That citation highlights the importance of looking at the plurality of knowledge systems, the fact that we are not going to accept a universal knowledge. Returning to the university as a place where this kind of universal knowledge is propagated, the question is – and I align with Paul in his reflections – how can one be subversive within such institutions? In our case, it was very important for us to produce something out of those institutions, to function without them and within them. The question is how to restructure those structures from without as well, you know, thus the importance of having a space like SAVVY contemporary where we do things and where you see that institutions, bigger institutions and museums pick up those things, in later years. Our efforts are directed at producing antidotes to the epistemic activities that have been practiced over the globe by accommodating and celebrating forms of knowledge and epistemic systems from the African continent and the diaspora, from Asia, from Latin America, but of course not forgetting Europe, and North America. In doing so, we have chosen to explore alternative mediums that embody and disseminate knowledge so we reflect a lot with the body. We see the body as a site of discourse, so performativity has a very important role in what we do. I am really happy that Marcio Carvalho is here with us, as he did one of the very early performance series at SAVVY. We are thinking of other ways through which knowledge can be passed on, beyond the very normal spaces where you are supposed to find knowledge. In Esiaba

Irobi's *Philosophy of the Sea*, he writes about the way that bodies carried forms of knowledge from the African continent to the new world, and how those forms of knowledge have been kept through performativity, through rituals, through different forms of performances. That is something we found very important and that we try to practice at SAVVY Contemporary, besides eating and drinking – of course because there is a lot of knowledge in drinking, in breaking bread and sharing wine. As Banchetti-Robino and Headley point out, the idea of embodiment of thought – which borrows significantly from feminist discourses, whilst distancing itself from thought as objectivity, intimates the prospect of relocating reason in the corporality of the thinking subject, rather than in some disembodied and immaterial realm. It is for this reason that we at SAVVY Contemporary see ourselves as a performative space. On the one hand, because it is a space in a constant state of becoming, so we are not really an institution, we are the becoming of an institution and we want to be in that space of becoming. But, on the other hand, we are a space that explores philosophical concepts of the embodied mind, as understood since time immemorial by many non-western philosophies – thus acknowledging that, and practicing the fact that human cognition is not only shaped by the brain but encompassed in the body that performs cognitive tasks like conceptualisation, reasoning, and judgment. But also, through interactions with the environment, and the outer world. This goes hand in hand with postulations by Francesco Varela and others, when they talk about the embodied to imply, first and foremost, that cognition depends upon the kinds of experience that come from having a body with various sensory-motor capacities and, secondly, that these individual sensory-motor capacities are themselves embedded in a more encompassing biological, philosophical and cultural context.

Another issue at stake here is a culture of referencing and not referencing. The culture of canonisation and leaving some out of the canon; the culture of legitimisation, of who reserves the right to legitimise and who does not get legitimised. Because as much

as we cite references from scholarship circles, we also cultivate the academia of the fireside – all those stories, folk tales, recitations, narrated around the fireside – as our own legitimate source of reference. The idea here is not to create another parallel canon, but to de-canonise the notion of the canon as a whole. By choosing the body, music, food, as mediums of discourse and knowledge, we de-link from the conventional referencing phenomena and propose a more phenomenological approach to dealing with history, memory and knowledge at large. In the corrupted politics of referencing, one often finds out that the roles played by the non-West in the economic, social, and epistemological development of the West are too often left out or disputed. Eduardo Galeano aptly summarises this phenomenon when he writes: 'On his deathbed, Copernicus published the book that founded modern astronomy. Three centuries before, Arab scientists Mu'ayyad al-Din al-'Urdi and Nasir al-Din Tusi had come up with the theorems crucial to that development. Copernicus used their theorems but did not cite the source. Europe looked in the mirror and saw the world. Beyond that lay nothing. The three inventions that made the Renaissance possible, the compass, gunpowder and the printing press, came from China. The Babylonians scooped Pythagoras by fifteen hundred years. Long before anyone else, the Indians knew the world was round and had calculated its age. And better than anyone else, the Mayans knew the stars, eyes of the night, and the mysteries of time. Such details were not worthy of Europe's attention.'

An important part of a culture swimming against the stream is working extra-disciplinarily. We have quite a diverse body of people, including bio-technologists like myself, art historians, cultural theorists, anthropologists, and artists as well. One must be able to liberate oneself from the tight concept of one's own discipline. Thus, when Glissant talks about not leaving history in the hands of historians alone, he makes a call for extra-disciplinarity. A plumber can actually be an historian; a scientist can actually be an historian. Our effort is thus to go beyond the hierarchisation of disciplines, as well as beyond the institutionalisation of disciplines. By thinking extra-disciplinarily, we acknowledge the limits and failures of our own disciplines and advocate

for processes of unlearning, to be able to learn something anew. It is important to mention that unlearning is not forgetting. It is not deletion, cancellation, or burning off; it is writing bolder and writing differently. It is commenting and questioning. It is giving new footnotes to old and other narratives. Unlearning is flipping the coin, and awakening the ghost. Unlearning is looking in the mirror and seeing the world, rather than a concept of universalism that purports the hegemony of knowledge. We embrace Lewis Gordon when he articulately talks about the geological suspension of disciplines and the need to fight the forces of disciplinary decadence when he says: 'disciplinary decadence talks the form of one discipline assessing all other disciplines from his, supposedly, complete standpoint. It is the literary scholar who criticises work in other disciplines as not literary. It is the historian who asserts history as the foundation of everything; it is the natural scientist who criticises the others, for not being scientific, and it is also the philosopher who rejects all for not being properly philosophical.' Maybe this is just a way to justify myself as a non-curator working within the field of curatorship – we have to do these things.

One of the other things we concern ourselves with, is the issue of language. Finding the right words to express what we want to talk about in the way we want to talk about them, without the limitations of an inherited universal language is, of course, always an issue in an age of coloniality and hegemonies. Shifting the boundaries of language is also an attempt to find a language to express thoughts that cannot necessarily be expressed using English, Portuguese, Spanish, i.e. the colonial languages we inherited that – through the hegemonic structures and embedded hierarchical systems in relation to knowledge – might not be able to articulate certain philosophies and world views. As a consequence, we research into and live languages and ways of life like Pidgin, like Patois, like Creole, as possibilities of articulating knowledge systems. We concern ourselves with them, also or especially because of, their ability to stand out as syncretic languages, as contact languages, with a legacy as languages of

resistance, the ability to embody, express and dissimulate subversiveness and negotiate identities. The language I was brought up with is Pidgin, which is the most widely spoken language in Cameroon, so it is very interesting to consider this within that context which is almost at war now because they say the Anglophones are somehow different from the Francophones. Those language groups are constructs that we inherited from colonisers, you know, so you can see how weird these things are. And that is why it is important to go beyond thinking of colonialism to thinking about coloniality, the continuation, the amoebic forms that these power structures have taken up to our day. People are killing each other because they are Anglophone or Francophone. How weird is that?

Pidginisation, as a way of being, also means commoning. A popular phrase upon farewell in Cameroon goes like this: *'on est ensemble'*, 'we are together'. The English version of it does not really reflect the French version of it: an almost frantic invocation, an incantation of an imminent reassembly, or togetherness, at some point – so while you are leaving, you are telling the person, *we are together*. This stresses the need to network, to relate, that is to say, the need to get together, to take care of each other, to be together. Which, in itself, is a stand against the capitalist concept of the lonesome cowboy. From our perspective, commoning – again, coming back to Paul – also stands for a 'co-'collaboration, co-working, co-production, co-creation, and collectivity. This should be understood as a concept of radical sharing. This sharing goes beyond the physical, as we look into the concept of the collective mind and the noosphere. But commoning should also stand for common sense, for being savvy, for exercising everyday knowledge. This too is of course a political stance that reflects our view that certain natural and cultural resources such as air, water, habitat, land, and basic human rights, must be available to all members of all societies.

So I am of the opinion that the 'healthy scepsis' that the Rastaman adopts against the cartographer in Kai Miller's poem is indeed the epitome of epistemic disobedience. □

Sammy Baloji & Filip de Boeck

MARCH 2018 HANGAR, CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO ARTÍSTICA

RESEARCH PROGRAM · MODERATED BY ANA BALONA DE OLIVEIRA

Urban Realignments: Ethnographic and Artistic Ventures into Congo's Cityscapes

Sammy Baloji

Lubumbashi is really different from Brazzaville or Europe, where there are lots of archives and documentation about the past and the present. In Congo, after independence, we've endured many struggles. Even now, most of the archives, knowledge and materials relating to that area are in Brussels and, therefore, while living in Brussels it's quite interesting to work with all those materials that are in the Tervuren museum or in those libraries.

I was making comic books, I was drawing and I turned to photography because I couldn't find the images of the city where I was living. I started to produce images in order to bring that into my comic strips and then I found it interesting to use photography in that way, so I went to study photography and started working with professional photographers. Eventually, I learned to develop film myself and started producing something that I didn't realise was something also going on in Europe. This was between 1990 and 1997. Congo was completely closed to the rest of the world. I didn't know I could do exhibitions with photography like I'm doing now, because all of the cultural centres were completely closed and

no foreigners were living in the country. I was doing this to create new narratives and to exist in that space, where there was nothing for people who had a voice or who just experienced what was going on. When I started working with the French Institute, they asked me to document all the architecture. It was fascinating because, at the same time, photographer Marie Françoise and even the director of the French Institute, historian of colonial architecture, were really interested in buildings. But when I took the pictures – even when I looked at the resulting pictures – I was really interested in how those buildings were occupied and inhabited and how those occupiers shifted the meaning of the building. The picture was not only the building but also how people gave meaning to the building and the stories behind the people who lived there.

This is when I started doing more research. I needed more context because I was producing images, and it's always about what the images meant, how I could control them, and how I could give them that. Discovering archival pictures that belong to the colonial period was a shock for me because it was another context, about which, I hadn't learnt anything. I had a contact sheet without any context and I used the photographs of my own work, but with this idea of holes that are in a line. I was trying to create a bridge between the past and present. All those images, all the history, were not about me yet, there are now consequences of what happened, so I was trying to create a kind of bridge in between them. I was really interested in that. After that, I was invited to the Tervuren museum, in Brussels, and started discovering more context. With Filip it's also part of this process of understanding. When I was working at the Tervuren museum I had this idea of shifting, framing the context, but also creating new narratives for the context that was produced before, and how I could bring that out in a subjective way, because I saw many layers in those archives, all of those captions that went with them, etc.

Filip didn't really write the book while we were working in Congo. In Lubumbashi and Kinshasa, we mainly talked, and I

believe he wrote the book here, in Lisbon. We worked visually but also conceptually. We met with people and, at the same time, I developed my approach through those experiences, and produced the book and two films, present in the exhibitions. I was working on those layers. There was a visual aspect I was really into, but I was also trying to create a context through the relationship that we had, and to work in those parts of those cities I was familiar with.

Ana Balona de Oliveira
What you've just said is interesting. I'm also responding to my own experience of going through the book and seeing the exhibition. It looks very big and large but it's also heavily illustrated – it's quite a journey. Both in the exhibition and the book, through visual production and textual production, you look at the passage of time and the visual discourse tells us, as you were just explaining, that the passage of time can be spatialised in the cityscapes, mostly of Kinshasa but also other Congolese cities, like Lubumbashi. There is this kind of synchronic notion of the urban surface, and this indicates the title of the exhibition – *Urban Now* – so you're very interested in the present, the fractures, the frictions, and then you go into several conceptions of modernity, the legacies of a conception of colonial modernity, which then, you tend to resist in a way, by looking to the ways the Congolese, the city dwellers themselves, resist. But then, you are also looking at the contradictions of other neoliberal conceptions of progress and modernity, that kind of replaced the colonial ones but also extended them. And then you look into all these complexities.

Then you have this more diachronic line and you mention these bridges with which you were always trying to make sense of the present, inviting you to go into the past, but then there were many pasts. You go to the precolonial, to the colonial, even post-independence had its moments before the neoliberal present. This diachronic perspective allows you to see the city, besides this more surface-based focus, as a palimpsest of all the layers, all these pasts and the way they are re-invented, entangled, and they

change and are changed by dwellers in their everyday lives. The book is called *Suturing the City, Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds*, and the exhibition is Urban Now – but this notion of suturing the city pervades your proposition. Then you come up with this method, and I would like for you to expand upon and explain, what you mean by this notion of 'suturing' and 'urban acupuncture'. This says something about the politics of your work, both in terms of colonial legacies but also in terms of the contradictions of the neoliberal present, and all the problems and different layers. And even though you are not an Afro-optimist, you are not Afro-pessimistic either. You look into the healing and the strategies of communality and visibility, you talk about the mystical presence, the body, and there's an infrastructure there as well. I wonder if you can expand on your visions, out of your experience, which is also a lived experience, right, of the obstacles and also this notion of holes that you also present? Holes are literal, they are material, they are infrastructural, but they are also mental, and this strategy of illuminating the hole, suturing and acupuncture. Because the fact that you are combining text and image is one of the strategies. So, what do you mean by that? Can you share a little with us?

Filip de Boeck
First of all, let me say something about time, history and layers. For me – for us – the book is about the urban surface: we stay close to the plane of the city and so on, and the materiality of the city. Of course, the surface always hides various other layers that make the surface into what it is today. It's Sammy's work that made me think about it more, because I've always thought that he was rightly famous for his collages, most people in the room no doubt know them. In the collages, you have a postcolonial landscape, the industrial mining landscapes, the ruins of Katanga, and on top of that archival images from the 20s and 30s, and so on – from the archives of the mining companies – so you have layer upon layer of time. For me, his work has always been a kind of reassembling

of various pasts into a present, and from there, seeing a future that people imagine for themselves out of that, or not - but it's about time, it's about history, it's about nostalgia, it's about memory, and so on. I think if you try to write the story of an urban surface today, in the 'urban now', within the limits, or again as Walter Benjamin did, in order to understand the now, you have to reach out to these various pasts. And we have done that through what we've been calling, 'urban acupuncture.' It's a term that is not ours. It was first of all inspired by a piece of work that Sammy did years ago with Faustin Linyekula. Together they made a video called *Mémoire* and Faustin's dance work in the video has been described as a kind of choreo-geography or geo-choreography, in which he puts his body almost as a kind of acupunctural needle and by realigning, by distorting his body, he also realigns space and reorders the world in an alternative way through dancing. These are urban acupunctural movements through space, that open up space. Then there's the 'weak architecture' movement by de Sola Molares and so many others. Architectural interventions in urban tissue in a very tiny, minute way, not starting the city all over again and building from scratch but with what is there, intervening in a very delicate way so that other things might spring out of that small intervention.

I don't share the therapeutic intentions of Faustin's dancing or architects who I know want to improve the city, but I want to understand it, and I like that delicate way of dealing with space and intervention and so, for me, it was a way to think about how we can – through photography, through writing – break open the urban space and try to understand it. And you can see these urban acupunctures – we literally drew out, in the exhibitions, specific spots – it can be a colonial building, a graveyard, it can be a pothole, a field – but spots around which we think every time something happens, urban life emerges or is generated. Each time you can stick your analytical needle into a place and try to understand it and come up with an ethnography, with a visual documentation, and then see how, from these places, urban life radiates outwards

to others. You can start to interconnect these dots and write it out as a line, in a way, and understand these dots in the urban landscape as a whole. And, of course, to analyse a city in its whole is impossible, you have to stay close to specific stories, and so on, but you can try to build it up into something more encompassing, even though that's just a sentence and a summary, and it's always necessarily subjective and never complete, but that doesn't matter, really. What the urban acupuncture also does is, as when you stick the needle in someone's body and nerve centres radiate outwards, or you activate a space, it also goes into the flesh. Our analytical needle is also test-drilling to see if we can understand the various layers that make up the present. You bring out all of these various pasts, and all of these pasts, you then realise, are always also there, they're not gone. For me, the post- in the post-colonial is not a rupture with the past but something that brings the past constantly back into the present and sometimes these pasts come back with a vengeance too.

We've done a whole series – for me a very touching and important part of the work – a series of photographs and portraits of Land Chiefs. These Land Chiefs belong to the local autochthonous people, known as Teke and Humbu, who lived in that area before the colonisers arrived and started to sign land treaties with some of these chiefs. A lot of them, and part of their histories and stories, have disappeared and been swallowed and engulfed by the city. But a number of them still remain. We wanted to make the portraits of these remaining chiefs and the more we contacted them, the more they came out of the woodwork. We started to realise that, actually, underneath the urban surface of the city, run by the government, the provincial authorities and the city's administration, and so on, they continued to be very much present, although often in an invisible way. For example, in order for anyone to buy a plot of land to build a house in Kinshasa, you still need to pass through these Land Chiefs, who are the great-grandsons of the original chiefs who signed those treaties. You still need to contact them and without them you can't access land, even though

these people are not recognised by the state and don't have a formal official function. And then you start to realise how the city is in fact informed and made possible and grows and exists. We think of the city as the hard core of modernity, perhaps unfinished at its fringes, but then you start to realise that the city is actually made through actors, moralities and ethnic matrixes with precolonial and rural roots, that are anything but modernist and modern. You begin to see how all of these pasts continue to impact on the present. By focusing on such actors, we've tried to bring the complexity of these layers out. They impact, in turn, on these neoliberal schemes – the schemes that the government promotes, like Kinshasa will soon become the new Dubai, or the new Doha or the new Abu Dhabi, with the aesthetics of skyscrapers, and some of these are funded by hedge fund money and very volatile capital that lands there and then goes away again. Then you realise that as soon as they land, all these projects are immediately dragged into the swamp that the actual city is. They need to take that city into account because, whether they want to or not, they become part of all of these pasts that continue to play such a significant role in the present.

Ana Balona de Oliveira
What you've just said, Filip, in terms of the way the precolonial continues and ends up informing the present in a way that might contest certain conceptions of modernity, generates two ideas. First, the way you present this expanded notion of the urban. In the work, in the exhibition, in what Sammy is photographing, in what you're writing about – you do go into the rural hinterlands, you go into the border areas of neighbouring countries, such as Angola. You go into the new peripheries that have been formed in previously underwater land, in the marshes area. You look at those landscapes, carved out by the mining activities and extractive industries, even though this book and the exhibition are very focused on the cities, mostly Kinshasa but also Lubumbashi in this particular project, you do look to other places. But it is never

random, there's always a connection back to this major central space that you're actually examining. I was thinking about how with this expanded notion of the urban – which always involves looking to mutual practices, these Chiefs and these less official, non-state driven forms of power and authority and so forth – you end up looking into conceptions of modernity that go beyond heritages of the colonial and the neoliberal. This brought to mind the work of Ruy Duarte de Carvalho, an anthropologist, and how he speaks of, for example, communities who live in southern Angola whose ancestral, traditional ways of life end up being more balanced and adequate to the environment, the landscape, the natural resources available. This does not mean that traditions should be idealised. They raise problems; they have their own hierarchies and so forth. But de Carvalho points us to the ways in which what is supposedly the traditional, the precolonial, the ancestral, is not less modern. Here he evokes another sense of the modern, no less modern as in no less adequate. Could you comment on that? In a way my question is about how you challenge the binaries of tradition versus modernity and rural versus urban.

Filip de Boeck
Did you have the impression that I built these binaries in the book? Because it's something that I really didn't want to do. Using tradition as a concept, you can't really. The concept of tradition is actually a very modern thing and is generated, most often, precisely in the context of these two worlds. Even the formation of these chiefs is partly a result of that confrontation, so certain African traditions are actually highly modern things. I would certainly not think about it like that or in terms of the urban/rural divide. It doesn't make any sense to think about a definition in sharp opposition. Not just physically, but in terms of how people think and live: large parts of the city have become largely ruralised in the way that people live, their economics, the social construction of the city and its sheer materiality, whereas in rural areas you very often encounter a generation of urbanity – true for example of

artisanal diamond mining in Angola, where citizenship is produced without a city but as a kind of idea – and so, it doesn't make sense to think of these things in opposition to each other. One way to, perhaps, overcome that is to use topography to talk about all these layers. You asked a question about the holes, for example, so I thought if you start from the surface, the plane and the landscape, one of the features that have made the landscape – certainly in Kinshasa, but also elsewhere – you have mountains, and mountains are spots that in precolonial times were very important places; very often villages were built on top of mountains, they were places of ancestral worship, they were places where people were buried, and so on. There was one particular mountain, in the Malebo region, where Kinshasa emerged. You have the Congo river and, at some point, it becomes a huge inner sea which was formerly known as Stanley Pool and today is called Malebo Pool. On the left bank of this huge inner sea, this vast expanse of marshes and water, there was a particular mountain, Khonzo Ikulu, and that was the mountain of the village of Ngaliema, the main chief who controlled all of the political economy and politics of the Pool area before Stanley arrived. When Stanley arrived, he signed the land treaty with this guy, and planted his flag on top of that hill and changed its name from Khonzo Ikulu to Leopold Hill, after the Belgian King Leopold II. When Mobutu came to power, after independence, he built his presidential palace on top of the same hill, changed its name from Leopold Hill to Ngaliema, the name of the former land chief. Through these mountains, and you have many other examples, you can write the several histories from precolonial, colonial and postcolonial times, each with their own conception of what colonisation, territorialisation, sovereignty and appropriation of land might mean. Then there is the spiritual sphere: the spiritual landscape or geography of the city. There are specific mountains in the city which are important, where people used to worship ancestors and later the Belgian missionaries turned some of these mountains into pilgrimage sites, that today have become Pentecostal prayer camps, where people go into spiritual retreats

to cleanse themselves from the sins of the city. These mountains are important places to recount the history of the emergence of the city. At a certain point, the mountain as a proposition, as a theoretical proposition, was also translated into the urban landscape in the form of the skyscraper. And the very first skyscraper in Africa, ten stories high, was built in 1946 in Kinshasa and became a source of pride because it really illustrated Belgian colonialism at work – the fact that modernity had been successfully introduced in the Heart of Darkness. Again, after independence, Mobutu built another skyscraper, higher and more imposing than the colonial one, and so again the skyscraper can be read as a means through which each history tries to outdo the previous ones up till the present moment, where the neoliberal urban proposition recycles the structure of the skyscraper to transform it into something else.

In the exhibition, we show a promotional video of the new city to come, based upon the idea of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The film was actually made in Dubai. Again, shiny skyscrapers are still an idea that works, even though many people in Kinshasa will never be able to live in this new city, and this built form called skyscraper. But even though they know that this new city will not be accessible to them, the vertical aesthetics of the skyscraper still engender dreams and makes them proud to belong to a country that is able to produce such urban infrastructure. One also notices how the skyscraper, as a model, has been re-appropriated by local people. One video installation we produced is about a self-made tower without architects, where the maker of this building just appropriated the form of the skyscraper to generate his own urban dream out of it. And there's the fact that, in reality, most of the time, the only towers that emerge, the only skyscrapers on the horizon of people's urban lives, are the heaps of dirt that are no longer collected by the city, and that signals the fact that people's experience of urban modernity is far removed from any formal modernist urban model. In reality, for most people, life in the city is circumscribed by the infrastructure of the hole rather than that

of the tower. In our analysis, therefore, we've used the notion of the hole – be it potholes, erosion sites, unmarked graves, etcetera – all kinds of physical holes – to reflect upon the quality of life in the city. But, apart from those, the notion of the hole may also refer to moral and mental urban landscapes. The hole itself may be understood as a concept to think about the human condition of urbanity, of urban life.

Sammy has always been a photographer of holes – artisanal mines, for example, and I too have always had a specific interest in mining holes, but also graveyards, for example. In fact, we perceive the hole as the most basic form of the postcolonial situation, its most basic generic infrastructure. And the question then lies in understanding how the mountain and the tower became a hole; how holes can become mountains again. Or: where in the hole are dreams generated, does the postcolonial hole have the capacity to generate a certain form of collective life? And, again, thinking about the hole, what kind of life together is made possible in this way? To think this through I used the notion of suture, or the hole as a suturing point. To think about the hole in this way is closer to the original notion of what the suture is in the Lacanian sense of the word – actually it's a concept invented not by Jacques Lacan but by Jacques Alain-Miller, a close collaborator of Lacan. A suture is, of course, a wound, it's an opening, it's a gap, it's something that is missing, it's a hiatus or a zero. But the zero, as a number, is also a figure, a sign, a presence. The zero, therefore, is not only negation, it's not only absence, but also a figure standing for something else, and in this sense it's also a one. This is most intriguing: how exactly can zero become one? How can blackness be redefined as light, and how can impossibility at the same time become a possibility? That is the true question posed by the gap, the lack and the suture, the question of how people try and suture their lives together, how they realign all the impossibilities the city confronts them with and how they turn these impossibilities into possibilities. One of Sammy's photos, for example, shows an inscription on the wall of a house: 'the impossible is not Congolese.' This means

that for these urbanites, a possibility lurks in every impossibility, but you have to know how to see the possible in the impossible, you have to learn how to bring it out. How does the hole become something out of which you can generate life? It's not about Afro-pessimism or Afro-optimism, it's just about how, out of these local understandings and the sheer fact of having to live in the hole every day, and yet continue to live, the hole generates not only mere survival but also laughter and something that transcends the level of sheer bare life. That's what I am very interested in. Take the man in the video who auto-constructs his tower; on one level, this guy who refers himself as a doctor in spatial and aeronautic medicine, whatever that might mean in the Congolese context, clearly is a nutter, he's a madman, there's something wrong with him somehow. But, at the same time, there's also something very lucid in this madness and in the proposition that he is building. He knows exactly why he is building this. Recreating the city within this building, and realigning its problems and possibilities, his tower emerges as a kind of programmatic statement for a new and better urban future. There's a great sense of poetry in that and that kind of poetry turns life into a possibility, into something possible. That's the kind of affective understanding of the city that I'm also very much after.

Ana Balona de Oliveira
There's a very close proximity to the context that Filip and Sammy have been inhabiting, sharing, examining and you get a sense of that while going through the book and the exhibition. I guess it's a product of the ethnographic method, as well, the time spent, the close look and real committed proximity that is very strong in the book. And you can hear that in the examples, the book is full of those moments. You just offered the example of that doctor and his tower, and you also have other artistic productions beyond Sammy's own photographic and artistic work. Other artists' voices emerge, as well as other strategies of suturing, and so forth. It's all about Congolese reality and Kinshasa, and all of these connections.

I don't think there is a binarism here, not at all. That's also why I said I perceived this expanded notion of the urban. Despite this proximity, at the same time, I was reading it and perhaps remembering my own experiences of urban African contexts. I've never been to Congo, I've never been to Kinshasa but I've been to other urban spaces in neighbouring countries – at the same time, a feeling pervaded my entire experience of the book, like this speaks to other people and other spaces, and I think it is a strength of the book. It has a transnational scope at the same time. It speaks of the continent and of the Global South, and it speaks of African cities beyond the specificity of your perspective in this context. Do you agree? Do you think that it adds up, that you were able to open, that this analytical lens allowed you to think of urban spaces in a more transnational, broader geographical framework?

Sammy Baloji
When we started this project and I saw the promotional video for the new Dubai-like city in the heart of Kinshasa – the one we showed in our exhibition – I was shocked. There was also this way of separating people, rich from poor, making something that can be out of reach for poor people, which in a way reflected what was done during the colonial period, when you had black cities, indigenous cities, and white cities, all separated. It is the work we showed in Wiels and it's also in the book. I was personally interested in what was behind urban planning and how this segregation was really planned – and you could really see it in the town. You still have this production of the same system. In that way, the video was really shocking. When we started thinking about how to start the work I was really interested in it, because in all the Congolese history I think there is a kind of cycle present, things are coming back and there is no time, up until now, where I can say that we stopped and started thinking about what it meant to live in Congo today. What are we? It's like something that has been built and we are still just surviving in that space without defining the future, in a way.

We were in Accra and Nairobi. I don't think that we can compare them with other places, each place has its own history and its own experience. My interest in this project lies particularly in the area I came from. There are many layers. We're talking about the precolonial period. I was born in Lubumbashi and I've never been in my village; I don't have any kind of traditional background or any kind of initiation. I was born in the city. At the same time, when you look at all the elements that have been produced in the city, you have this exclusion, so you can always live and experience, even now, even in those projects, those ideas of exclusion. We are in the city or we are in the country but there is this logic of separation, segregation and exclusivity. This is what's really interesting to me: to work on layers that can help me, or people, understand that there are gaps that need to be considered and have a certain bond to be understood and analysed, in order to progress. So, for me, I don't know if it can be an example for other African cities.

Ana Balona de Oliveira
I guess I was thinking more of globalised, more neoliberal changes, the 'Dubai-isation.' I hear that word quite often from Luanda-based Angolan artists who critique and address that phenomenon of 'Dubai-isation' through their work. It would relate, this sense that I got while reading the book, probably in terms of more recent changes, but then again it is a book about this context. I was not questioning that, but it made me think of that, of neighbouring contexts.

Filip de Boeck
It's a very interesting question that touches the possibility for comparison. At the very early start of this project, it was set up as a comparative exercise around one specific building company – a Russian company at that time called Renaissance. In the meantime, they changed to a different enterprise and it was renamed. This Russian company proposed a kind of generic neoliberal city

model they intended to build next to existing cities: one 50 km outside of Nairobi, one next to Accra, one in Takoradi (a booming oil town on the Ghanaian coast), another one in Lubumbashi, and so on and so forth. We just wanted to follow this one company that was located in the same city, in totally different contexts. I had doctoral students in Ghana and Kenya and so on, the Lubumbashi part we did ourselves, and that was the original idea: to compare how these models, financed by global capital, actually emerge in different existing city contexts. How does that encounter manifest itself and what kind of conflicts emerge out of it? What happens to these city plans, and how does the existing city interact with it? But then, in the end, the Congo part of it took on a life of its own. I think it's important to address a more global context, but you have to do it from a specific positionality, you have to speak from a place in order to say something meaningful about larger trajectories, parts and transfers, and so on. And, in our case, Congo was the place most fitted for this closer ethnographic look. As Sammy stated before, it's his country, the place where his roots are, where he's got a history. As for me, I have worked in Congo for the past thirty years, and as such Congo has become a large part of who I am today. These are places that touch us and speak to us in different ways, not only because Sammy and I represent different generations, or because the colour of our skin differs, but mostly because we're also very much attached to these places in specific, deeply emotional ways. It is always good to start from that positionality, from that attachment.

In 2002, I participated in *documenta*, curated by Okwui Enwezor. He organised it around several platforms, not only in Kassel, in Germany, but in several other places around the globe as well. I was invited to take part in the Lagos platform, which was about cities, African cities. There were five: Kinshasa, Johannesburg, Freetown and Nairobi, I think, and another one I forgot. I was invited to talk about Kinshasa, and Lagos was represented by Rem Koolhaas, who had hired the helicopter of Lagos' governor to fly above the city and map out the fluxes and flows of commodities

and people in the city. His perspective and take on the city of Lagos was defined by this helicopter view, by the wide scope and the eagle's eye perspective. It generated meaningful insights about urban life in Lagos, in terms of its mobility for example, but omitted other stories and actors. Not a single resident of Lagos was part of his story initially: the voices of those who inhabited Lagos remained unheard in his analysis. Their bodies remained invisible. My presentation, on the other hand, resulted from the opposite angle. It featured a different scale, it started from a close angle, rather than a wide angle, and focused on the foreground rather than the macro-level. My analysis arose from moving on foot across the city, listening to the voices of people, and following the movements their bodies outlined through urban space. After my presentation, Koolhaas said 'what you're doing is just storytelling. You're so close that you don't see anything anymore.' What this taught me is that it is important to find the right angle. That angle and scale matter and you have to position yourself somewhere between the wide and the close to get the story right. I think that it's very important to know where to speak from, and where to start, and for me it has to start from the close perspective before you can zoom out to something more general. You have to stay close to the surface and close to the 'vocabulary of the legs' and walk around and then afterwards you can zoom out and you can take a different kind of perspective on it. But always starting from the near, rather than the other way around.

Ana Balona de Oliveira
The incredible thing is that you do manage to do that, and those transnational impressions I was getting were always from these very close approaches. You definitely manage to do that. I'm just going to pose two more questions. I'm going to ask Sammy and Filip to talk a bit about the trajectory of the exhibition. It started at Wiels, it went to New York, then to Toronto, and now it's in Lisbon. How was the reception? Is it going to the South? What were the challenges in installing this exhibition in different spots?

I find it significant that this exhibition is opening here in Lisbon, in Portugal, because of its colonial history and postcolonial reality, so could you share a little bit more, focusing more specifically on the exhibition process itself? We have images here of those stages.

Sammy Baloji
The exhibition started in Wiels, Brussels, in 2016. At the same time, we were working, preparing for the exhibition, selecting the pictures and also working to select material for the book, so it was quite a stressful time. We finally decided to have 55 pictures, plus 2 videos, that are in this exhibition here. It helped us to be close to the book since we were working in different places in Lubumbashi and Kinshasa, to try to be close to the chapters and to relate to the different topics that we've addressed in the book. We selected 55 pictures. After that it went to the Open Society in New York, which is not like Wiels which is a place for exhibitions, it's mainly an office. In Wiels we had the time, like here as well, to construct visually and also by sections, and we were able to create a sort of narrative that would work through the space. It was a place where we could present the work as we wanted. But at the Open Society it wasn't easy. Then there was Toronto, and now we are here. But at the same time there's a project to present it in Congo. We've already started talking with the Goethe Institute in Kinshasa and in Lubumbashi, and we are also organising the biennale, so it's something that we can do in the near future. □

Luis Camnitzer

NOVEMBER 2019 HANGAR, CENTRO DE INVESTIGAÇÃO ARTÍSTICA

EXHIBITION PROGRAM

Art and Dishonour

Some time ago I went to see the work of a young artist who had asked me for a critique. It was not a particularly remarkable work, an opinion we shared, and something that had been troubling her already long before our meeting. We discussed this for a while and then, suddenly dismissing her own work, she sadly confessed: 'What I am really interested in is the fact that the moment after my grandmother died, I went to drink a Coca-Cola.' With this statement, by far her most important and authentic one until then, she summed up the violence implicit in our little acts of dishonouring those traumas usually bypassed by our thresholds of sensitivity. In her case, she felt she had dishonoured the person she knew and loved. She had responded to her grandmother's death with an act of triviality that, in her opinion, had reviled her grandmother and shown her own callousness.

When I started to write this text, I thought it would be about 'art and violence' or about 'art and politics'. I wasn't sure. I quickly realised that neither one encapsulated what interests me. The artist's story about her grandmother dying helped me focus. Violence is a pointed act and acts within other eternal factors.

And politics, at least the way I understand it, refers to a collection of strategies to implement something and, therefore, it doesn't fit into my intended definition either. In relation to 'ethics, politics, art,' at least in my view, it's the ethical platform that informs the rest. Politics is the strategies used to implement ethics. And art is one of the instruments that may be used for that purpose.

Art is thus not that important, since it could be any instrument. If anybody would ask me why I'm an artist, I would say that it's a biographical accident that lacks any importance. If I were asked why the emphasis on ethics, I would say that it is as much a personal need as a social responsibility. The title, then, could be 'art and ethics.' However, the problem here is that the title separates the topics, and I believe that they are inseparable. If art isn't ethical it is better not to do it at all. If ethics is not creative, it may turn into dogma or a dead code of morals. Ethics is a rather vague term.

I will, therefore, introduce the idea of 'power,' because power and the quality of its distribution are factors that determine ethics for my personal use. The granddaughter in the opening story still had power, and the grandmother no longer did, except symbolically maybe. I'm not a philosopher and don't want to be one, so all these ideas are rather improvised. I'm interested in the subject of power because it's evident that some people have it and some are subject to it. Therefore, abuse of power is inherent to its uneven distribution. I speculate that in the Universe there is a fixed and limited amount of power available, and that if that power is not evenly distributed, we are in the presence of an ecological disaster. At the risk of committing a philosophical abuse of power, I would then interpret my ethics as normative, try to systematise an even distribution of power and, thus, avoid abuse. This allows me to see violence as an abuse of power. Yet, this doesn't explain the reasons why violence exists. That is precisely why the word violence is not enough here.

This brings me back to the conversation about the young artist's dead grandmother and the Coca-Cola. The story really summed up the meaning of dishonour. Her statement made me

take into account a fact that, in its banality and obviousness, I had neglected until that moment. I never paid attention to the threshold between the ethical and the unethical – between dismissible cruelty and sociopathic damage. We focus on what happens above a certain threshold and ignore whatever happens below it, as if there was no connection between both areas. We quantify experiences to accept or disregard them. Furthermore, we assume, at any given moment, that the line delimited by the threshold is not only fixed in an absolute position, but is also a tool to be used for adamantly stated evaluations.

The statement, made by the grieving granddaughter, led me to realise that *dishonouring* may be a much more accurate term for my thinking than *committing violence*. I feel forced to use the word *dishonouring* for lack of a fresher and better word. I don't mean *dishonour* in the old-fashioned sense that caused duels between self-presumed gentlemen. And it is ironic here that I come from a country where, until the 1970s, duels were still used as a tool to defend one's honour. So, I am using the term in its deepest sense. *Dishonouring* refers to activities that try to push fellow humans out of their rightful membership of the human community, either physically, or by sullying and destroying them on other levels. 'Dishonouring the living' is the antonymic version to what is meant by 'honouring the dead' – that strange and futile attempt at eternal resurrection. It seeks, with equal futility, to create eternal shame, burial and disappearance.

The point is that violence is only one of the many shapes *dishonouring* can assume. Therefore, violence can be seen as a sub-category of dishonour. Dishonour is a more descriptive term for a relation, while violence seems confined to distinctive, specific acts. There is an apparent neat division between perpetrator and victim. However, the commission of violence dishonours, in different degrees, both the victim and the victimiser. The victim is dishonoured by the intention of the victimiser; the victimiser by diminishing or abrogating his/her own right to participate in a constructive collectivity. That underlining relation, therefore, seems much more

revealing to me. The narrower focus on violence, that separates perpetrator from victim or – in a perverse analogy – producer from consumer, seems too schematic. It better reflects the prevailing ideology in our consumer society than it describes a situation to be analysed in ethical terms.

I should say that I am approaching the topic from the point of view of an artist, that is, not only as a very particular kind of a citizen, but an eccentric one. As an artist, one of my tasks is to challenge things taken for granted so I can understand them better. In this particular case of violence and dishonour, I am curious about the sliding scale that separates big from small acts of dishonouring human life. It is important because this awareness allows me to stake out the areas within which I may be able to act. There are things that I can protest and there are situations where I can act. From this point of view, big acts like stopping genocide are effectively out of my reach. I can protest and declare my opinion against genocide, but I cannot stop it, no matter how good my art may be. The small acts, however, are more accessible. They can be isolated to individuals and, therefore, a direct empathy can be established. There is a much better chance to enable communication.

Most acts directed against others are based on the avoidance or erasure of empathy. We can call this the 'obliteration of biography.' More obscurely, we can also call it 'reification,' that is, a process by which people become things or, at least, are treated like things. What is noteworthy is that, in this same act, the biography of the perpetrator is obliterated as well. Hence the surprise of the 'disappeared' children, stolen by military members of dictatorships in Latin America's Southern Cone, when they discover that their 'loving parents' are torturers who took the babies from their victims. It's at this point the children try to bring into phase reification with biography. This also shows the complexity of the perpetrator. He reified the parent and then decides to help build the biography of the child. The new adoptive father, in his self-dishonouring paternity, is perceived as a true and loving father. When truth finally reaches the child, the impossible task of finding

consistency between the reified image of the father and the biographical presence begins. That same theft also shows both the complexity and the guilt complex of the victimiser. On the one hand, it was he who eliminated the biological parents as if they were depersonalised objects. On the other hand, with his own biography he tries to construct the individual biography of the ill-acquired child. This action pads his biography and erases the sense of guilt. Biography is a vehicle to generate empathy. Its elimination, through reification, is probably the only successful transmutation ever achieved by humanity.

Regardless of what the interpretation might be, violence is always about depersonalising the victim, ignoring or erasing the history that defines him or her as an individual, thus accomplishing the dishonouring. At that moment, without realising it, the victimisers also de-individualise themselves, losing their biography to become victimisers, ending up dishonoured as well.

The connections that exist between the abuse of power and dishonour are not limited to the individual relations between victimiser and victim. They extend to collective ideologies as well. These ideologies try to justify the abuse of power with moralist arguments that transfer guilt to the 'other.' At first, a majority of individuals declare themselves opponents of torture. They consider it a savage technique that doesn't belong in civilised culture. But under different circumstances, that same majority will find exceptions to the rule. Unexpectedly, savagery will be an understandable and acceptable procedure thanks to the guilt attributed to the 'other.'

In the U.S.A., the myth of national identity includes a negative image of torture. It's not the American way, they would say. However, after the Twin Towers incident, intellectuals from all ideological sectors, even self-proclaimed leftists, proposed emergency exceptions. With the scandals of Abu Ghraib and Guantánamo, it became fashionable to discuss whether simulated asphyxia or waterboarding constitute torture or if they are nothing more than 'enhanced interrogation.' However, neither the techniques, nor the ethical

conflict, are new. Waterboarding was already in use during the invasion of the Philippines in 1898, it was called 'water cure.'[1] At the time, Reverend Homer Stunz, a missionary, erased the guilt of the perpetrator with the argument that it was not a form of torture since 'the victim could stop it at any time revealing what his interrogators wanted to know'.[2] Theodore Roosevelt referred to it as 'an old Filipino method of mild torture.'[3] All this didn't matter much anyway, since, as the paper San Francisco Argonaut put it: 'We don't want the Filipinos. We want the Philippines.'[4]

The Filipinos, the enemies, the other race, the homeless, the insane, the 'others', are all terms of reification and tools used to create a forced anonymity and, therefore, eliminate any possibility for empathy. The big acts directed against others, whether they are wars of extermination or simply negligence committed against victims of flooding or earthquakes, are only possible because reality is shifted into the realm of statistics. Statistics are that place where anonymity rules over decisions, and where biography and empathy are impossible. This anonymity objectifies people. It explains how generalisations applied against human beings, particularly racism, become abuses of power directed to dishonour the 'other'.

The increased technification of war aims at a growth of the statistical presence and, therefore, at impeding the possibility of a visualisation of biography. By using computers to handle weapons, the killing is performed from a distance that allows invisibility. Not only is body contact eliminated, but any possibility of eye contact is removed as well. Eyes, after all, are important doors to individual biographical information. During the First World War, when soldiers

1 William Loren Katz, "U.S. Waterboarding, 1899 Style," on History News Network, 2007. https://historynewsnetwork.org/article/44411?fbclid=IwAR3nUCGENcFJ3X_fKwIvPgZOjddOWCFtUjFB7cO4MdN3qsFYrPnOK2Jzl9c

2 Katz, "U.S. Waterboarding."

3 Katz, "U.S. Waterboarding."

4 Katz, "U.S. Waterboarding."

shot individuals that were within eyesight, it was much more common to miss a shot. Face-to-face encounters diminished thanks to technological improvements, culminating, today, in drone warfare that brings war down to the level of video games. Eyes, after all, as Bush the Second claimed after meeting Vladimir Putin, are important doors to know somebody. Thanks to a single look, Bush had decided that Putin was a good, honourable person and a friend.

In 1979, in Uruguay, the Chief Judge of the Military Supreme Court, Colonel Federico Silva Ledesma, commented about the political prisoners that were in jail: 'Uruguay in this moment has 1600 problems because it doesn't have 1600 dead.' The 1600 political prisoners held at the time of the remark, all of whom had been tortured, had refused to waive their own history, their biography, despite the torture.

Thirty-five deserters from the U.S. army who had joined the Mexican forces, fighting the 1846 U.S. invasion, were executed by hanging. But first they were forced to watch the U.S. flag being hoisted on the castle of Chapultepec. The flag was to remain the last image in their eyes before they dropped to death. It was an attempt to redirect whatever energy was left in them into a last instant of humiliation. History did not record where they looked during that last moment. Was it the U.S. flag? Or did they, as an ultimate sign of rebellion, move their heads to look at each other and thus reclaim the individuality that they were being robbed of?

During the Nüremberg trials after the Second World War, the Nazi ideologue Alfred Rosenberg declared that he had never gone to see the concentration camps. He alleged reasons of manners. It would have been 'improper' for him to go and 'observe people whose freedom was taken.'

Exceptionally, a statement by Admiral Frederick Ashworth, the handler of the atomic bomb dropped on Nagasaki, contradicts this wilful blindness by mentioning that his bomb wasn't taking people into consideration. In fact, Nagasaki became the target, as a solution to blindness. Ashworth reported: 'Kokura was the target, but the bombardier couldn't locate it because the area was

clouded. So, the navigator took us to Nagasaki'.[5] The obituary when Ashworth died further reports that he 'was awarded the Legion of Merit in 1946 for his work on the atomic bomb project'.[6]

Coincidentally, while I was reworking these notes, some years ago, I read in the paper that Paul Tibbets Jr. had died. Tibbets had dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. While I was growing up, in Uruguay, my generation shared the generous but mistaken belief that Tibbets had been institutionalised upon his return, his madness caused by the remorse of having killed an estimated 60,000 to 140,000 people. The truth is that he never regretted his action, he was proud of it, and he was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for valour.

Dr. Eugene Saenger, who died around the same time Tibbets did, also received a medal. He had been awarded the Gold Medal of the Radiological Society of North America, its highest honour. According to his obituary in *The New York Times* 'he exposed patients in Cincinnati to intense doses of radiation' to answer a question posed by battlefield commanders: 'In the case of a nuclear explosion, how much radiation could a soldier withstand before becoming disabled or disoriented?'[7] Twenty-one of Saenger's patients died within a month or so of the experiment. The obituary did not specify how much radiation would be acceptable.

What matters here, is that in the incidents mentioned, victims never had the chance to respond to the abuse and reclaim the stolen or annihilated individuality. It was always the victimizer who was allowed to die of natural causes and who received medals. Dioxin, a component of Agent Orange used in Vietnam to deforest

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5 Richard Goldstein, "Frederick L. Ashworth, 93, Atomic Bomb Handler, Dies," New York Times, December 8, 2005, Section B, p. 11. https://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/08/us/frederick-l-ashworth-93-atomic-bomb-handler-dies.html

6 Goldstein, "Frederick L. Ashworth."

7 William Dicke, "Eugene Saenger, Controversial Doctor, Dies at 90," New York Times, Oct. 11, 2007. https://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/11/us/11saenger.html

the country, caused severe biological damage to the Vietnamese population. It was the U.S. soldiers who took legal action against Dow Chemical for the damage they suffered as a consequence of spraying the chemical.

In 1838, there was the so-called 'Pastry War', in Mexico. France occupied the Mexican city of Veracruz as retaliation for the burning down of a French bakery. A canon ball shot away the leg of General Santa Anna, who was leading the Mexican army. The grieving Santa Anna had the leg retrieved and buried it with military pomp. Then, five years later, he had a monument built on top of the remains. Santa Anna governed Mexico eleven times and for much of that time he was considered a dictator. During one of the rebellions against him, the victimised populace disinterred the leg and dragged it through the streets of Mexico until it disappeared pulverised by erosion. Thus, the physical biographical remnants of the dictator where dishonoured by the dishonoured victims of his repressive regime.

Paradoxically, and thanks to a strange psychology, the process of revenge sometimes re-humanises the victimiser. After the French incident, Santa Anna used orthopaedic legs for the rest of his life. Today, one of his artificial legs, captured during the 1846 invasion, is still kept by the U.S. as a war trophy. It's in a vault of the Military Museum belonging to the Illinois Military and Naval Department in Springfield. And though Mexico asked to have it back, the U.S. refuses. Somehow, the trophies confer immortality to both victims and victimisers, and collecting them helps in providing this. In the case of Napoleon, there are enormous amounts of curls of hair claimed to have belonged to him. There is also Hitler's telephone, retrieved from his office or bunker by Chilean poet Vicente Huidobro in 1945. According to the latest reports, it is the property of a British Commander by the name of Ranulf Ryner. The phone number is listed in Wikipedia as 46239.

Euphemisms like 'surgical strikes', 'collateral damage', 'carpet bombing' and related language, further develop the relation between victimiser and victim. Cute names like 'Fat Man' and 'Little

Boy' were used for the nuclear bombs dropped on Japan. Henry Kissinger personally chose the Cambodian villages to be bombed during the Vietnam War and named his missions: 'Breakfast' 'Lunch,' 'Snack,' and 'Dinner.' And a whole generation of failed poets was created to name the operations in Iraq, such as 'Desert Storm' and 'Shock and Awe,' all attempting to create distance and remove biographies. The latest contribution to this nomenclature, at least to my knowledge, is the 'goodbye effect.' It refers to what a certain emission of rays, with a 3-millimeter wavelength can do. About 83 % of the radiation is immediately absorbed by the skin surface and creates an unbearable burning pain. According to the U.S. Air Force, the weapon does not cause permanent damage and the pain disappears after three seconds. The victim's reaction, however, is to run immediately. Hence the cute name.

All these are examples of efforts to achieve trivialised reification and eliminate any possibility of a biographical reading and its ensuing empathy. Which raises the question if those creating this language – in itself the creator of dishonour here – may not be as unethical as the genocides they are christening.

The situation differs when small acts are committed against others and the direct biographical knowledge is temporarily suspended. The face-to-face relation is maintained, but the direct biographical knowledge is temporarily suspended. What would normally be an interlocutor becomes a thing, though only for a short period. The commission of violence in small acts is much more direct, there is less room for statistics. It is as if we zoom in and have a higher magnification. Therefore, even though the damage in small acts may be quantitatively smaller, ultimately and from an ethical point of view, these small acts may be no less damnable.

I want to return again to the dead-grandmother/Coca-Cola-sipping story. It is interesting in its complexity and also because it is placed at the other end of the spectrum defined by grand military operations on one end, and affective relations on the other. An unexpected crossover took place here. The biographical quality of the grandmother (the term grandmother already holds biography)

was maintained while the process of reification took over. Surely, in the example, the artist found a way of coping with her grief. However, the uncomfortable simultaneity of biography and reification made her confuse her own feelings for unethical behaviour. It was the presence of biography that led her to perceive the danger of dishonour. And *biography* seems to be the hinge here.

For a long time, the Bush administration did not allow the publication of any photographs of the caskets of the dead U.S. soldiers being returned from Iraq. The photographs were the crevice through which the reification of statistics became individualised biography, and therefore became an unacceptable threat to the ongoing and never-ending accomplishment of the mission.

The intention of this long analysis is to better understand the complexity of trying to produce engaged art, what we call political art. Obviously, all these problems cannot be stopped with a declaration of principles. It would be like trying to stop a train by extending one's hand and yelling: 'This hand is mine and I'm an artist'. Something similar to this is what we do when we try to make art as activists. That is why I don't believe that by making art, and it doesn't matter what type of masterpiece it is or how historically memorable, we can stop violence. It's more likely that art may generate violence than stop it, if we understand art in terms a little broader than just a painting or a sculpture. As examples of this, we have the aesthetics, rituals and paraphernalia of uniforms, and also the fetishism-inducing design of weaponry. We have the artistic refinement of the narco-murders in Colombia: the tie-cut (the tongue appearing through a cut made through the chest) or the TV cut (an opening in the chest in the shape of a screen).

This doesn't mean that art is useless when confronting dishonour. I don't know of any artwork that is truly effective in reporting or stopping major violence. Effectiveness here can only be measured by the degree of conversion of people who hold a different view. Much of the so-called political art is addressed to a public that already agrees with the artist's position. Few works actually change minds. The examples of effectiveness I can think of belong

mostly to documentary photography and video, without ambitions of being art: the photograph of the police dog implementing racist attacks in Birmingham in 1963, the Vietnamese girl running naked on the street after a napalm attack and trying to escape from her own burning skin; maybe we should also include the My Lai poster with the answer-line 'and babies,' the Abu Ghraib photographs and, more recently, the photograph of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year old Syrian refugee child that drowned, just before reaching the beach. These images are well-chosen, well-edited and poignant pieces of information.

Some of the effective expressions in the arts – here, Bill T. Jones' choreography about AIDS, and Alfredo Jaar's *Eyes of Nduwayezu* come to mind. Jaar's piece has one million slides of the eyes of a child who witnessed a death by machete in Rwanda. Thirteen Argentinian artists made an installation with photographs of 'disappeared' babies and of the victims who had their children kidnapped. Each photograph had a mirror next to it, to compare faces and possibly help recuperate identities. The installation actually succeeded and reunited some families. And Juan Manuel Echavarria had an exhibition, 'The War We Haven't Seen,' in the Museum of Modern Art of Bogotá, with paintings done by both Colombian guerrilla fighters and paramilitaries recalling and documenting their own atrocities. These are works that, although not real documents, are based on documentation and mediated. With this mediation, they reduce the preaching part and force us to draw our own conclusions.

Generally speaking, the sermon in political artwork is mostly declarative and therefore unable to convert non-believers. It expresses the personal opinion of the artist but doesn't go beyond telling the viewer that the artist believes in something. No matter the current scholarly praise, I always felt that Picasso's *Guernica* is a good decorative painting that fails to activate anybody against violence. Today, after decades of symbolic investment by the gatekeepers of art, *Guernica* has become a useful reminder of the horrendous crimes Nazi bombers committed, in 1937, killing

a third of the 5000 inhabitants of the Basque village *Guernica*. The only purpose of the bombing was to test the efficiency of the German weapons. There was no punishment intended for what the people might have done. The painting is now a keeper of memory. Thanks to a created consensus – a clearly non-artistic investment – it stands as a symbol for an act of dishonouring, much more so than for actual violence. As such, it fulfils an important function. However, thanks to this fabricated consensus, it has become a symbol against violence and not against dishonouring. *Guernica*'s importance is such that the replica hanging in the building of the United Nations had to be covered on February 5, 2003. The concealing was to spare Colin Powell's embarrassment during his infamous speech in which he claimed the existence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. His speech sought to convince other nations to participate in the invasion of Iraq. The image of *Guernica* had been hanging near the entrance of the Security Council room since 1985. For this occasion it was covered with the flags of the countries that belonged to the Council. It is interesting that *Guernica*'s intended function was not one of remembrance, but it should serve as a warning to help deter future massacres and criminal acts. Carefully considered and excluding attributed factors, the painting is not as powerful as the preparatory sketches, which I doubt would have been able to convert Nazis and Franco supporters into progressive peaceful citizens. The sketches, however, show Picasso's anger in a way that the painting does not.

The original *Guernica* painting is in the Reina Sofia Museum in Madrid. I went, a couple of years ago, and decided to verify my feelings about the work. I went as close as it was allowed, roughly 2 metres, to see his brushwork, something you usually do with this kind of masterpiece. My opinions did not change, but when I turned around, what had been an empty room now was crowded with viewers lined up about 10 meters away. The rest of the space was empty. The distance allowed for framing for the photographs they were taking. The photographs were not to document the piece, but to prove that the photographers had been there.

They were making cultural 'selfies,' which is not exactly what Picasso had in mind.

In a recent twist, art has been invoked to justify criminal acts rather than to avoid or criticise them. U.S. general William Caldwell compared mayhem in Iraq to the production of an artistic masterpiece: 'Every great work of art goes through messy phases while it is in transition. A lump of clay can become a sculpture. Blobs of paint become paintings which inspire'.[8] This metaphor was used during a press conference to explain away the death of 49 Iraqi civilians during October 2006. During the month following this press conference, the casualties exceeded 3000.

I would say that art might only work as a deterrent of dishonour and violence if it can help visualise and feel the biography. Art can fight modest reifications and, while doing so, install the feeling of revulsion in the viewer. Unless art provokes this insight, the artistic statement remains and dies as alienated information. As an artist, I can try to work on the membrane that separates insight from information. This means that I should only use information that leads to insight. Any other information is spurious noise in relation to my purpose.

It is important to remember that both my own artistic taste and my own rage about these issues, belong to my personal biography. My biography is my own business and normally should not be allowed to interfere with the biographies I am trying to rescue. My biography may serve as a source of nourishment, but is otherwise totally irrelevant. Nothing I may say will expand the knowledge of others. My declarations as an artist will only increase the data that already fills their minds and that hasn't been proven to be very useful either. One can say that it's not about me; it is only about the victim and about you. Mostly it's about you, because I want to prevent future victims. Expansion of knowledge only occurs by

8 Julia Borger, "Iraq a 'work of art in progress' says US general after 49 die,"The Guardian, Nov. 2, 2006. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2006/nov/03/usa.iraq

challenging old paradigms and understanding new ones, by changing established systems of order, and by fairly redistributing power.

The task is to rescue the biography of the victim and to bring it in synch with the biography of the viewer, so that the viewer wakes up, emerges from statistics and enters the world of people. It's about the 'other' and the public I'm addressing, the public that I want to activate so that they both have and use the power they should have. Following *Guernica*'s advice so that the power may be used so that there are neither victimisers nor victims. In her diary Virginia Woolf once wrote: 'The reason why it is easy to kill another person must be that one's imagination is too sluggish to conceive what his life means to him'.[9] I would say that if imagination isn't able to capture the meaning of a person's, I don't want to think about what happens with the meaning for one hundred thousand or a million people that escape the possible radius of empathy.

I believe that violence will always remain on the data for the spectator level; it is only the dishonour that can become an insight. Wounds in this matter, unfortunately, cannot be shared. They only can be imagined. More than anything else, this helps define our task as artists: to pinpoint how many wounds may be imagined before they become a statistic. Political content tends to be descriptive and informs about those wounds that cannot be shared. One thing is art that informs about political themes, another is art that functions as an instrument to affect politics. The latter does not necessarily have what we understand as political content. What it has is the ability to transfer power, to help to understand and to separate those decisions that are made in our name, from those that are made by us. It is about empowering imagination and helping it find the right direction. This combination of empowerment and direction of the viewer – not in the content – is where art can become a political tool with some possibility of being successful and ethically on point. It doesn't sound like much. A revolution

9 Viriginia Woolf, The Diary of Virginia Woolf, vol. 1, 1915-1919 (New York: Harcourt, 1984).

in art won't change society much unless it is helped by social change. But we should also be aware that a major social change will be unable to take place unless a parallel supporting change in the arts accompanies it. Art's function here is to point at ethical directions and to create exemplary icons.

Inasmuch as power is not correctly distributed, those that don't have it live in dishonour. The function of art here is to show ethical directions and to create icons for the situation to change and, with it, help in the acquisition and expansion of knowledge. Meanwhile, the doubt raised by the dead grandmother and the longing to have a Coca-Cola helps us refine our sensitivity, not so much in regard to how much sensitivity, but in regard to being sensitive to dishonour itself. It's a way of protecting our integrity and of continually knowing what we are doing and why. This gives us a notion of the scale of the possible, without utopian megalomanias and without attributing magic powers to art, which it unfortunately lacks. It leads to more modest but more effective artists. □

Irit Rogoff
Scaling Up: Local Densities and Global Arts Circulations

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Filip de Boeck (b. 1961; Antwerp, Belgium) is a Professor of Anthropology at the Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA), a Research Unit of the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Leuven, writer, filmmaker and curator, actively involved in teaching, promoting, coordinating and supervising research in and on Africa.
Since 1987 de Boeck has conducted extensive field research in both rural and urban communities in the Democratic Republic of Congo. His current theoretical interests include youth and the politics of culture, urban infrastructure, and the transformation of private and public space in the urban context in Africa. He has published extensively on these topics including *Suturing the City. Living Together in Congo's Urban Worlds* (London: Autograph ABP, 2016), which he co-authored with photographer Sammy Baloji; and Kinshasa. *Tales of the Invisible City* (Ghent and Tervuren: Ludion and Royal Museum of Central Africa, 2004), a joint book project with photographer Marie-Françoise Plissart.

Sammy Baloji (b. 1978; Lubumbashi, DR Congo) lives and works between Lubumbashi and Brussels. He received a degree in Information and Communication Sciences from the University of Lubumbashi and a degree from the Haute École des Arts du Rhin. In 2019 Sammy Boloji started his PhD artistic research project *Contemporary Kasala and Lukasa: Towards a Reconfiguration of Identity and Geopolitics* at Sint Lucas Antwerpen.
A Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres, Sammy Baloji has received numerous awards and distinctions, including the Prince Claus Prize, the Spiegel Prize of the African Photography Encounters of Bamako at Dakar Biennale, and the Rolex Mentor and Protégé Arts Initiative. For the year 2019-2020, he is a resident of the Académie de France à Rome: Villa Médicis. Since 2018, he teaches each summer at the Sommerakademie in Salzburg. In 2008, Sammy Baloji co-founded the Rencontres Picha/Biennale de Lubumbashi. His recent exhibitions include *Sammy Baloji, Other Tales* at Lund Konsthall and Aarhus Kunsthall (2020); *Congo, Fragments d'une histoire* at Le Point du Jour (Cherbourg; 2019); *A Blueprint for Toads and Snakes* at Framer Framed (Amsterdam; 2018); *Sven Augustijnen & Sammy Baloji* at Museumcultuur Strombeek (2018); *Urban Now : City Life in Congo, Sammy Baloji and Filip de Boeck* at The Power Plant and at WIELS (Toronto and Brussels; 2016-2017); and *Hunting and Collecting* at Mu. ZEE Kunstmuseum aan zee (Ostend; 2014). His first solo exhibition *That is where, as you heard, the elephant danced the malinga. The place where they now grow flowers* at Imane Farès, 802. took place in 2016, He has recently participated in the Sydney Bienniale (2020), documenta 14 (Kassel/Athens: 2017), the Lyon Bienniale (2015), the Venice Biennale (2015) and the Photoquai Festival at the Musée du quai Branly (Paris: 2015).

Luis Camnitzer (b. 1937; Lübeck, Germany) is a German-born Uruguayan artist, curator, art critic and academic who was at the forefront of the 1960s

conceptual art movement. For over five decades, his practice has explored the psychological and political dimensions of language through his writings and artistic works, primarily in sculpture, printmaking and installation. Camnitzer's work constitutes an exploration of topics of repression, institutional critique and social justice, with a focus on identity, language, freedom, ethics and historical tragedy. Apart from internationally important works and exhibitions such as the *Uruguayan Torture Series* (1983-84) and *A Museum is a School* (2009-present), he has also written several books including *New Art of Cuba* (University of Texas Press, 1994) and *Conceptualism in Latin American Art: Didactics of Liberation* (University of Texas Press, 2007). Most recently, his works were presented in the retrospective exhibition *Luis Camnitzer: Hospicio Para Utopias Falliadas* at Museo Reina Sofia (Madrid, Spain: 2018).
Camnitzer is Professor Emeritus of Art at SUNY Old Westbury and served as Viewing Program Curator at the Drawing Center in New York City from 1999 to 2006. His work is in the permanent collections of major museums in the United States, Latin America, Europe and the Middle East.

Paul Goodwin is an independent curator, urban theorist and researcher based in London. His curatorial, research and writing projects extend across the interdisciplinary fields of contemporary art and urbanism with a particular focus on black and diaspora artists and visual cultures. Between 2006 and 2010, he directed *Re-visioning Black Urbanism*, an interdisciplinary research project exploring the multiple modalities of blackness and urbanism in cities such as London, Lisbon and Paris, at the Centre for Urban and Community Research at Goldsmiths, University of London. As a curator at Tate Britain from 2008 to 2012, Goodwin directed the pioneering *Cross Cultural Programme* that explored questions of migration and globalisation in contemporary British art through international conferences, workshops, talks and live art events. His curatorial include a number of internationally significant exhibitions including: *Migrations: Journey into British Art* at Tate Britain (2012); *Thin Black Line(s)* at Tate Britain (2011); *Coming Ashore* at the Berardo Collection Museum (Lisbon, Portugal: 2011); *Afro Modern: Journeys Through the Black Atlantic* at Tate Liverpool (consultant curator; 2010); and *Underconstruction* at Hospital Julius de Matos (Lisbon, Portugal: 2009).
In 2013, Goodwin curated *Charlie Phillips: The Urban Eye* at New Art Exchange, Nottingham, which was long-listed for the Deutsche Börse Photography Prize 2014. He is also curatorial director of the 3D Foundation international sculpture park and residency programme in Verbier, Switzerland, and is a trustee of the socially engaged art organisations Peckham Platform and no.w. in London.

Grada Kilomba (b. 1968; Lisbon, Portugal) is a writer, psychologist, theorist and interdisciplinary artist of West African descent whose works critically examine memory, trauma, gender, racism and postcolonialism. Having studied clinical psychology and psychoanalysis at the Instituto de Psicologia Applicada in Lisbon, she began work as a psychologist in Portugal with war-traumatised people from Angola and Mozambique, and initiated various artistic and therapeutic

projects on trauma and memory. With a scholarship from the Heinrich Böll Foundation, Kilamba completed her PhD at the Free University of Berlin in 2008, whereafter she was a fellow at the Berlin Institute for Cultural Inquiry (2009-2010). She has taught and lectured on postcolonial studies, psychoanalysis and the work of Frantz Fanon at various universities including the Free University of Berlin, the University of Bielefeld and the University of Ghana in Accra. Kilomba is known for using varying formats to express herself, from text to scenic reading and performance/ performing knowledge, as well as combining academic and lyrical narratives. In 2012, Kilomba was guest professor for Gender studies and Postcolonial studies at Humboldt University of Berlin where she conducted research on African diasporas, and taught Decolonial Feminism, Decolonising Knowledge and Performing Knowledge.

Bruno Leitão is the curatorial director of Hangar – Artistic Research Center. At Hangar he has curated and organized several exhibitions, including Cuaderno de Ejercicios by Luis Camnitzer (2019), Ilha de Vénus de Kiluanji Kia Henda (2018); Cubismo Ideológico by Carlos Amorales (2017); Plagiarizing the Future, co-curated with Andrea Rodríguez Novoa, with artists Edouard Decam, Elena Bajo, João Maria Gusmão and Pedro Paiva, Jordi Colomer, Letícia Ramos, Louidgi Beltrame, Marlon de Azambuja and Rosa Barba (2016); Untitled by João Onofre and Principio Tautológico with Igor Jesus, Sara and André, Cristina Garrido, Javier Núñez Gasco, João Paulo Serafim, João Ferro Martins, Daniel Barroca, Paolo Chiasera and Los Torreznos (2015).
As an independent curator, he recently curated Taxidermy of the Future at the Natural History Museum of Angola and the Lubumbashi Biennial (Lubumbashi, R.D.Congo, 2019); Pouco a Pouco, Ângela Ferreira's first solo exhibition in Spain at CGAC (Santiago de Compostela, 2019); Affective Utopia at the Kadist Foundation (Paris, 2019) with artists Sammy Baloji & Filip De Boeck, Luis Camnitzer, Ângela Ferreira, Alfredo Jaar, Kiluanji Kia Henda, Grada Kilomba, Reynier Leyva Novo and Paulo Nazareth; Topology of the Aura with Carles Congost, Javier Núñez Gasco, Igor Jesus, Sara and André at the Bacelos gallery (Madrid, 2016); El Buen Caligrama at The Goma Gallery (Madrid, 2015); You Love Me, You Love Me Not at the Porto Municipal Gallery (Porto, 2015); Atelier Utopia in Porto EDP Foundation (2012); Contr/act at 3 + 1 Arte Contemporânea (Lisbon, 2014); among others.
He has contributed to several magazines and catalogs. Among them, we highlight Atlantica: Contemporary arts from Angola and its diaspora (Hangar Books), The Gap (curated by Luc Tuymans at Parasol Unit, London, and Mukha, Antwerp), Atlántica magazine, Dardo Magazine, Artishock (Chile) and Artecapital.

Mónica de Miranda is a Portuguese visual artist, photographer, filmmaker, and researcher who works on postcolonial issues of geography, history, and subjectivity mostly related to Africa and its diaspora. De Miranda is affiliat-

ed to the University of Lisbon, *Centro de Estudos Comparatistas, Faculdade de Letras*, where she works as a researcher, in projects dealing with sociocultural and political aspects of contemporary migration movements linked to lusophone Africa. Among such projects are *Post-Archive: Politics of Memory, Place and Identity, and Visual Culture, Migration, Globalization and Decolonization*. She holds a Visual Arts Degree from the Camberwell College of Arts (London, 1998), a Master's Degree in Art and Education from the Institute of Education (London, 2000) and a PhD in Visual Art from the University of Middlesex (London, 2014). Mónica is also one of the founders of the artistic residencies project Triangle Network in Portugal and she founded in 2014 the project Hangar – Center for Artistic Research, in Lisbon.
De Miranda's work is research-based and looks at the convergence of politics, gender, memory and space. Her works typically consist of video, photography and installation, which frequently register the artist's view on urban and peri-urban, Luso-African landscape and associated contemporary and colonial history. Her works have been shown at art biennales including the Dakar Biennal, Bamako Biennal, Houston Photo Fest & Bienal de Sur, galleries, and museums including the Berardo Collection Museum (Lisbon 2016), the Pera Museum (Istambul 2017), the Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado (MNAC, Lisbon 2014), the Museum of Art, Architecture and Technology (Lisbon 2019), and the Calouste Gulbenkian Museum (Lisbon 2020)... Her pieces have been nominated to the Novo Banco Photo Award (2016), and the *Novos Artistas Award of Fundação EDP* in 2019. Her exhibition *Geografia Dormente* was nominated to the Best Photographic Work of the Authors Prize - 2019 by the *Sociedade Portuguesa de Autores*.
Her work is present in public collections like the MAAT, PLMJ, Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, Museu Nacional de Arte Contemporânea do Chiado and Arquivo Municipal de Lisboa.

Marissa J. Moorman is Professor of African History and of Cinema and Media Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. Her research focuses on politics and culture in colonial and independent Angola. Moorman's work explores different media and their uses, the practices and meanings people develop around them, and their relationship to power shifts over time. She has authored two books: *Powerful Frequencies: Radio, State Power*, and the *Cold War in Angola, 1931-2002* (Ohio University Press, 2019) and *Intonations: A Social History of Music and Nation in Luanda, Angola, 1945-Recent Times* (Ohio University Press, 2008). Fellowships from ACLS, Fulbright Hays and the SSRC have supported her research.
Moorman has published widely on music, fashion, film, radio and urban space. She is editor of *The Journal of African History* and on the editorial collective of *The Radical History Review*. She is an active member of the editorial board of *Africa is a Country, the blog that is not about famine, Bono, or Barack Obama*, where she is also a regular contributor.

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung (b. 1977; Yaoundé, Cameroon) is an independent curator, author and biotechnologist. He is founder and artistic director of SAVVY Contemporary in Berlin and the artistic

director of sonsbeek20–24, a quadrennial contemporary art exhibition in Arnhem, the Netherlands. Ndikung was the curator-at-large for Adam Szymczyk's documenta 14 in Athens, Greece and Kassel, Germany in 2017; a guest curator of the Dak'Art biennale in Dakar, Senegal, in 2018; and the artistic director of the 12th Bamako Encounters photography biennial in Mali in 2019. Together with the Miracle Workers Collective, he curated the Finland Pavilion at the Venice Biennale in 2019 and was a guest professor in curatorial studies and sound art at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. He is currently a professor in the Spatial Strategies MA program at the Weissensee Academy of Art in Berlin and is also a recipient of the first OCAD University International Curators Residency fellowship in Toronto in 2020.

Ana Balona de Oliveira is FCT Researcher (CEEC 2017) at the Institute for Art History of the New University of Lisbon (IHA-FCSH-NOVA), where she co-coordinates the cluster 'Transnational Perspectives on Contemporary Art: Identities and Representation'. She has lectured in several institutions in Portugal and the United Kingdom, where she received her PhD (Fort/Da: *Unhomely and Hybrid Displacements in the Work of Ângela Ferreira, c. 1980-2008*, Courtauld Institute of Art, 2012). Her research focuses on colonial, anti- and post-colonial narratives, migration and globalization in contemporary art from 'Lusophone' countries and beyond, in an intersectional and decolonial feminist perspective. She published articles in *Nka: Journal of Contemporary African Art, Third Text, African Arts*, etc.; co-edited the volumes *Atlantica: Contemporary Art from Angola and its Diaspora* (2018), *Diálogos com Ruy Duarte de Carvalho* (2019), etc.; contributed essays and interviews to the exhibition catalogues *Recent Histories: Contemporary African Photography and Video Art* (2017), *Novo Banco Photo 2015*, etc., and the volumes Revolution 3.0: *Iconographies of Radical Change* (2019), *(Re)Imagining African Independence: Film, Visual Arts and the Fall of the Portuguese Empire* (2017), *Red Africa: Affective Communities and the Cold War* (2016), *Edson Chagas: Found Not Taken* (2015), etc. She curated the solo exhibitions *Edson Chagas: Oikonomos* (CCP, Luanda, 2019), *Ângela Ferreira: Underground Cinemas & Towering Radios* (Galeria Av. da Índia, Lisbon, 2016), *Ângela Ferreira: Monuments in Reverse* (CAAA, Guimarães, 2015); co-curated the collective exhibition *Ruy Duarte de Carvalho: A Delicate Zone of Commitment* (Galeria Quadrum, Lisbon, 2015-2016), etc.; and organized the talk series *Artistic Migrations in and beyond Lisbon* (Hangar, Lisbon, 2015-2016) and *Thinking from the South: Comparing Post-Colonial Histories and Diasporic Identities through Artistic Practices and Spaces* (Hangar, Lisbon, 2018).

Irit Rogoff is a writer, educator, curator and organiser. She is Professor of Visual Culture at Goldsmiths, University of London, a department she founded in 2002. Rogoff works at the meeting ground between contemporary practices, politics and philosophy. Her current work is on new practices of knowledge production and their impact on modes of research, under the title of *Becoming Research* (forthcoming).
As part of the collective freethought Rogoff was one of the artistic directors of the Norwegian Triennial *The Bergen Assembly* in September 2016 and editor of *The Infrastructural Condition* (to be

published by BAK). In 2017, Rogoff co-founded *The European Forum for Advanced Practices*, a Europe-wide forum for engaging with and developing a set of principles for Advanced, Practice-Driven forms of Research. In 2019 Rogoff received an honorary doctorate from Aalto University in recognition of her work in developing and instituting the field of Visual Culture.

Manuela Ribeiro Sanches taught at the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon, from 1981 to 2016. She has held lecturing appointments at Indiana University, Bloomington; Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin; and the Maumaus Visual Arts School, Lisbon. She was also a resident scholar at the University of California Center for Cultural Studies and at the Institut für Europäische Ethnologie, Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin.
Having obtained her PhD with a dissertation on the traveller and revolutionary Georg Forster, her interest in travel literature and related topics, such as the epistemologies that sustain the subjective processes of perceiving and narrating the described objects, led her to broaden her interests to the field of the history of anthropology, which she articulated with a cultural studies approach from a postcolonial perspective. Having widely published on these issues, she later became interested in the transnational processes that marked anti-colonial movements. Her research interests include African film, questions of migration and racism in Europe from a comparative perspective.

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Organisation of talks at Hangar – Centro de Investigação Artistica
Irit Rogoff: 'Expansion – Local Densities and Global Art Circulations'; October 2017. Organised by Mónica de Miranda and with the support of Citcom. CEC-FLUL as part of the research project of Hangar and Citcom CEC-FLUL politics of Memory, Place and Identity. This talk was part of Hangar Research Program.

Grada Kilomba: 'Plantation Memories'; November 2017. Moderated by Manuela Ribeiro Sanches and organised by Mónica de Miranda in partnership with CEC-FLUL, Orfeu Negro and the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, University of Lisbon. This talk was part of Hangar Publication Program.

Paul Goodwin & Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung: 'Epistemic Disobedience'; February, 2018. Organised by Mónica de Miranda as part of the research programme at Hangar and the project *Politics of Memory, Place and Identity; CITCOM-CEC-FLUL.* This talk took place at MAAT. This talk was part of Hangar Publication Program.

Sammy Baloji & Filip de Boeck: 'Urban Realignments: Ethnographic and Artistic Ventures into Congo's Cityscapes'; March 2018. Organised by Ana Balona de Oliveira and Mónica de Miranda as part of the projects *Thinking from the South: Comparing Post-Colonial Histories and Diasporic Identities through Artistic Practices and Spaces; Transnational Perspectives on Contemporary Art: Identities and Representation; CASt-IHA-FCSH-NOVA; Visual Culture, Migration, Globalization and Decolonization; CITCOM-CEC-FLUL and Politics of Memory, Place and Identity.* This talk was part of Hangar Publication Program.

Luis Camnitzer: 'Cuaderno de Ejercicios'; September-November 2019. Organised by Bruno Leitão as part of the exhibition programme at Hangar.