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Contamination – Affection

Declaration *What is Shared Campus? Why do we need a new magazine?*

C/O Magazine intends to become a leading voice for topics of transcultural collaboration, which we understand to be fundamental to our times. C/O Magazine aims to discuss contemporary subjects that are relevant and of interest also for an audience beyond academia. It is designed to inspire as well as entertain an emerging generation, and most of all, to support their efforts in dealing with the complex issues of the coming future.

- The same topics are core motivation to the foundation of Shared Campus, which is the driving force behind this publication. Shared Campus, initiated in 2017 and officially launched in 2019, is a unique and leading collaborative platform for higher arts institutions. Shared Campus is founded on the long-term experiences of the participating institutions in regards to international cooperation. Our core beliefs are outlined in the following statements:

- The (arts) university of the future will no longer function in isolation, but within a network in which complementary interests, skills and resources are brought together. It is necessary for educational institutions to see themselves less as competitors than as institutions with common goals, basic values and corresponding responsibilities. Higher arts institutions are tasked to be a driving force in the understanding and co-existence of our societies, promoting diversity as well as a sustainable way of living that takes into consideration all species.

- We strive for an anchoring of practical cross-cultural experiences and their reflection in education (by exploring different values, points of view, living environments, political and social conditions), which should not be seen as a “nice to have”, but as an integral aspect of contemporary education. Thus, it should be well understood that collaboration in today’s global context is always precarious and risky, seeing as it takes place between different cultural, social and political systems. This asks to take a stand and at the same time demands critical self-reflection in terms of how we collaborate We desire to emphasize the experimental quality of our collaboration, in order to create open, fluid, and surprising forms that directly contrast with our tendency to quantify, evaluate, and control education. In this sense, we are interested in engaging with the undisciplined and the spontaneous, inclinations which are usually seen as challenges to institutional structures.

- Building these kinds of international collaborations is an investment, which demands time and resources. Therefore, we anticipate a long-term approach, as only through experience, consistent development and the fine-tuning of our activities will a deeper understanding of each other’s contexts, methods and values achieve an optimum synthesis.

- We aim to train people with the ability to grasp the complexity of specific issues and to recognize what their effects will consist of in different locations and contexts, i.e. to think in integrated ways, and to include different perspectives. Our education and research formats are therefore partially oriented towards globally relevant thematic areas instead of disciplines. Our current themes include: “Social Transformation”, “Critical Ecologies”, “Cultures – Histories and Futures”, “Pop Cultures” and “Tools”. We are building sustainable knowledge in these areas and aim to make this knowledge accessible in the longer term beyond Shared Campus.

- In developing common formats, we strive to integrate digital tools and learning formats from the ground up, and to develop criteria for when a physical exchange makes the most sense. With this in mind, we are developing new standards for international cooperation while acknowledging ecological criteria in order to guarantee transcultural collaboration within a sustainable setting that is also highly accessible.

Through C/O Magazine, Shared Campus aspires to contribute to a rewarding and creative dialogue, to a discussion centered around transculturality and collaboration, which will be supported by our powerful network with its inclusive and open spirit. The magazine will be published once a year dealing with a specific topic as approached through diverse formats; we will be inviting creatives from differing practices, disciplines and genres to contribute. The editorial team intends to continually shift and to always relate to different locations along the Shared Campus institutions.

I would like to thank all our partners for their cooperation in building up Shared Campus in the last two years. We very much hope to find thebest way and the means to become an exemplary creative initiative and a leader in the field of higher arts education of the 21st century. Most of all, I would like to thank the editorial and production team and all the contribu tors to our first publication and to finally wish our potential readers a joyful and insightful experience.

In collaboration we trust!

Daniel Späti
Chair Project Team Shared Campus

Contamination – Affection

Nuria Krämer

We live in times of contamination. Not only does the current global pandemic rule our everyday lives, it has also brought social, political and economic weaknesses to the surface, provoking fears, hopes and uncertainties.

Contamination, commonly framed as a negative dynamic, is perceived as invading, infecting and corrupting life forms and other matter. Nevertheless, there are also positive forms of contamination, ones propelled by affection, empathy, enthusiasm, eros, resistance and fascination.

We have witnessed confrontations as well as deep divisions between all kinds of opposing forces driven by diverse motivations, leading to massive global-wide protest movements; images of protesters from Hong Kong to Belarus taking over the streets and standing up against suppressive power structures have circulated widely; Extinction Rebellion and Black Lives Matter have transcended national borders and grown into planet-wide movements. At the same time, we have also seen a massive dissemination of fake news, flooding social and traditional media with troubling notions of truth and knowledge.

Opposite to these contaminating dynamics are forces that try to delimit, contain, categorize, stop and control. The human population of the planet were asked to go into quarantine and isolate themselves under the threat of a global pandemic. National strategies to contain

and gain control over the situation evinced debates concerning international solidarity and domains of power. Questions of empathy, connection, the need for sharing emotions and how those can prevail in difficult times became crucial in a society experiencing widescale division. How do we understand the concept of contamination today? How does thinking about contamination reconfigure how we relate to each other? How do we deal with newly forged relationships and how does it affect our sociocultural and creative practices?

In these times, we find increasing references in political, social, economic and cultural contexts that point literally or metaphorically to the dynamics of contamination. Relatioships and processes are described that exist and take place beyond clear separations, demarcations, singular individualities and identifiable entities. These are "fluid" processes, some of which happen independently of human consciousness, and cannot be analysed and fully understood or even dominated. The attention is thus directed to the invasive, transgressive, transient, the in-between, the indefinite and the multiple. Here we find the idea of "TRANS"– going bebeyond and into the "other"– of merging, mixing up and raising questions of coexistence of the many in a tight texture of relations.

On the one hand, we can observe formal dynamics at play: the separating and structuring, the abstracting and the analysing a "hard system" of ratio and reason. On the other hand, we observe a "soft system" of the informal, including contaminating practices and events. The two systems were and are effective in all cultures and at all times, always interwoven in a variety of ways.

The somewhat schematical juxtaposition of "hard" and "soft" does not intend to judge right from wrong, or play off the rational against the emotional, the reflexive against the affective. It is rather addressing different types of rationality and intelligence as well as different forms of agency. The "soft" system thwarts the "hard" one. This is when we humans experience ourselves as part of a more comprehensive ensemble of contexts that interact with one another. We become only one factor among others in a complex ecological biotope in which humans, plants, animals, machines and all other things cooperate horizontally, and interact in an open space of algorithmic and vital collective self-organising processes – or as Donna Haraway would describe it – sympoiesis or "worlding-with"[1] . The human experiences oneself/themselves as an element of complex assemblages: holobiont (Margulis 1991), critter (Haraway 2016), structure (Deleuze 1994). This can be described as a shift from a vertical to a horizontal orientation. From the family tree to the rhizome. From goal orientation to the systemic (Bruno Latour, Jane Bennett et al.).

The dialectical relationship of these systems, however, is indissoluble and intricate. Hence, one can intentionally and operatively trigger something in a "hard" way, which then unexpectedly resurges as "soft" and toxic, a loss of control, without one being able or willing to fully grasp the process or the phenomenon. A significant part of this is what we now refer to as environmental and climate catastrophes, as well as the current pandemic. This is what motivated our thematic choice for this first issue of C/O magazine. The virus is invisible, not fully understood, and so far eludes any exact countermeasure. The only thing that seems obvious is that it is we who have set it in motion.

The anthropogenic transformation of the earth, the oceans and the atmosphere caused by a relentless capitalist overexploitation of nature, has changed life on this planet as we know it. There seem to be no limits to our capacity of invading our ecosystem and destroying it as we can see in TRES work on space debris (→TRES). The environmental destruction has taken on such inconceivably large dimensions and such a level of complexity that it seems to exceed our imaginative capacities. This leads to a problem of representation. Visualisations of large amounts of data influence the way we see and perceive the world around us (→Tim Wolff).

The unruly forces that the systematic invasion and exploitation of nearly all ecosystems, has unleashed is so frightening to the human, that we do not recognise that we could also consider the human being as a kind of virus – the driving uncontrollable contaminating force (→Bogna Konior; →Michelle Kuen Suet Fung).

Contaminating dynamics can be observed on the one hand as "natural" vital processes. The symbiotic relationship we inadvertently share with certain microbes within our body. Adam Dickson's poetry is based on the results of chemical and microbial testing on himself, revealing how contamination plays into our existence as holobionts: complex assemblages of multiple coexisting species. By looking into his "contaminated-body" he explores how the outside writes the inside (→Adam Dickson). We might then understand ourselves less as individuals and more as interconnected, interdependent multitudes[2] (→Felix Stalder). Clear distinctions and divisions become an illusion (→Maro Pebo).

On the other hand, those contaminating dynamics can be technologically and mechanistically structured in social practice. In this context, power makes use of these mechanisms, one of the most dominant phenomena in current times being the datafication of society. People are observed, evaluated, and processed into data in their

1 Haraway, Donna. 2016. *Staying with the Trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene.* Duke University Press.

2 Yong, Ed. 2016. *I Contain Multitudes: The Microbes within us and a Grander View of Life,* ECCO Press.

digital world (→ Zheng Mahler). Enormous amounts of data are extracted and formed into behavioural models using sophisticated constantly evolving algorithms, which in turn are applied to individuals and collectives in order to successively lure them to a product or an idea; this is the voice of affective seduction, used to calculate future behaviour. In this way, collectives can be conditioned and formatted in their everyday practice according to behavioural guidelines. What we mean by freedom, the will to want, participation in and negotiation of one's own living conditions, loses its meaning. Under the totalitarian direction of Internet giants like Google and Facebook, society mutates into a swarm in cooperation with global market companies and financial institutions, becoming a punch line in Zuboff's book on surveillance capitalism[3]. The impact of the digital influence industry on human values such as diversity, privacy and freedom can no longer be neglected (→ Daniel C Howe).

The step from the digital into the analogue world has long been taken, for example with the interactivity of things, architectures, urban spaces, institutions, technological gadgets; an interplay of people and machines, for which Zuboff coined the term "confluence". The differentiation between the physical and the digital self becomes increasingly blurred.

At the same time, forms of resistance are being developed against the tendencies of totalitarian rule as a counter-practice in the "soft" regime. They come up in some of the contributions in this issue, for example in the concept of "Be Water", which was appropriated and adapted in Hong Kong (→ Justin Wong). In this specific context, practices of the arts are exposed as subversion, (→ Michael Leung; → Stirnimann & Stojanovic; → Theatre of Social Contagion; → Su Wei) and resistance (→ Marcelo Gomes; → Riar Rizaldi; → Kongkee).

Art can be "unseemly". It develops strategies and procedures that elude the normative and institutionally supported dominant narrative of a predictable and functional world. It develops contaminating, affective, tactile, collaborative, transitional, provisional, experimental procedures that resist control and the drawing of boundaries (→ Ursula Biemann; → Chris Wiesendanger; → Darren Moore & Timothey O'Dwyre).

The exploration of "contamination – affection" looks into an additional crucial dimension, the one of human and more-than-human encounters, in which, as Anna Tsing says "We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others. As contamination changes world-making projects, mutual worlds—and new directions—may emerge."[4] Through-

3 Shoshana Zuboff. *"The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power"*, PublicAffairs, 2019.

4 Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2015. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins.* Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

out history, and now in the times of globalisation more than ever, people are moving between different cultures, and thus different value systems, ways of thinking and ways of living. With each encounter we influence each other and create complex multicultural spaces of self-perception (→ Oussouby Sacko; → Kae Amo). The notion of national identity gets slippery and seems to lose definition once we look closer into individual realities, as we can observe in the Chiname project (→ Xiao Ke × Zi Han).

Out of these diverse encounters and touching alterities new productive assemblages and polyphonies can emerge, but also ideological divisions, enemy images and violence.

The affective dimensions of these encounters are a powerful agent of change opening an emotional space in which we affect and get affected (→ Alexander Düttmann).

By way of the process, contamination happens in manifold ways, opening up possibilities of sensitive contact, subtle perceptions and mutual appreciation, not least in resistance to the world of segregation and polarisation, but also of "soft" power and collective dispossession. This first issue of C/O magazine presents numerous examples of collaborative practice, aesthetic confluences, artistic structures, which are also practices of creating an affective-discursive public sphere, of participating in the development of one's own life worlds: living together in diversity – against the loss of self in the swarm.

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Ursula Biemann is an artist, author, and video essayist. Her artistic practice is strongly research oriented and involves fieldwork in remote locations where she investigates climate change and the ecologies of oil, ice and water. She works the findings into multi-layered videos by connecting the micro-politics on the ground with a theoretical macro level, proposing a reflexive exploration of planetary and videographic organization. Biemann's pluralistic practice spans a range of media including experimental video, interview, text, photography, cartography and materials, which converge in highly formalized spatial installations. Her work also adopts the form of publications, lectures, and curatorial as well as collaborative research projects. Biemann is appointed Doctor honoris causa in Humanities by the Swedish University Umea (2008). She has received the 2009 Prix Meret Oppenheim, the Swiss Grand Award for Art and the 2018 Prix Thun for Art and Ethics. Until 2014 she was a senior researcher at the Zurich University of the Arts (ZHdK) and continues to give lectures and seminars worldwide.
www.geobodies.org

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Ursula Biemann
Geomorphic Video

My artistic fieldwork has taken me to remote territories where fragile ecosystems have been subjected to a continuous and savage onslaught by the global resource extraction industry. The perspective through which I explore these life-threatening processes in my video works has shifted somewhat from a focus on the unsettling social and geopolitical implications of such massive extractivist interventions, to the very changes occurring in the physical and chemical composition of the earth. I see it as a turn to the inner workings of a landscape involving reflection on the structure of the world and its fundamental constituents. In the cinematic environmentalism presented in the two video works Deep Weather (2013) and Forest Law (2014), matter, fluids, and physical processes no longer just provide a dramatic backdrop for the narration of social events; they have moved to the fore to play the leading role. In this major figure-ground shift, which can be observed in the broader fields of contemporary philosophical discourse and aesthetic practice, one particularly urgent question has emerged: how to reconfigure the relationship between the artist-author and the nonhuman world? In filmmaking, this largely amounts to an inquiry into our direct implication in the making of this world through imaging practices. In this sense, I would like to think of my videos as geomorphic. They form a world in which the human-Earth relationship is fragile, complicated, poetic, and intensely physical.

> The massive chemical transformations of the Earth, oceans, and atmosphere provoked by large-scale anthropogenic interventions of the last decades (hydro-engineering, industrial agriculture, and the extraction and consumption of hydrocarbons) are largely unpredictable within science's current prognostic capabilities. Physical models are up for revision as soon as they are published. There is a direct connection between the unimaginable scale of alterations that are in store for humanity and the highly speculative mode in which we can engage them at this stage. It is fairly easy to access vast amounts of scientific data about the climate and environment, but the explanation of data alone cannot help us to understand the magnitude of change ahead of us. Aesthetics that are capable of reaching our collective imaginary will be necessary, and these often court the fictional. Strangely, it is the current eco-crises that produce the need to create fiction about the most material dimension of our living conditions if not our very ability to survive. The instability both of our physical environment and of the hypothetical measures of science also manifests itself in the realm of aesthetics, moving art closer to philosophy and speculative thinking. As our physical life-supporting system is taking this aesthetic turn, there is also a shift in artistic positioning. Artists are not so much interested in how our social and institutional contexts are conditioning our speaking positions but in how we as authors, as audiences, are implicated in the process by which materiality (and sociality) is formed.[1] We are moving toward ecological thinking.

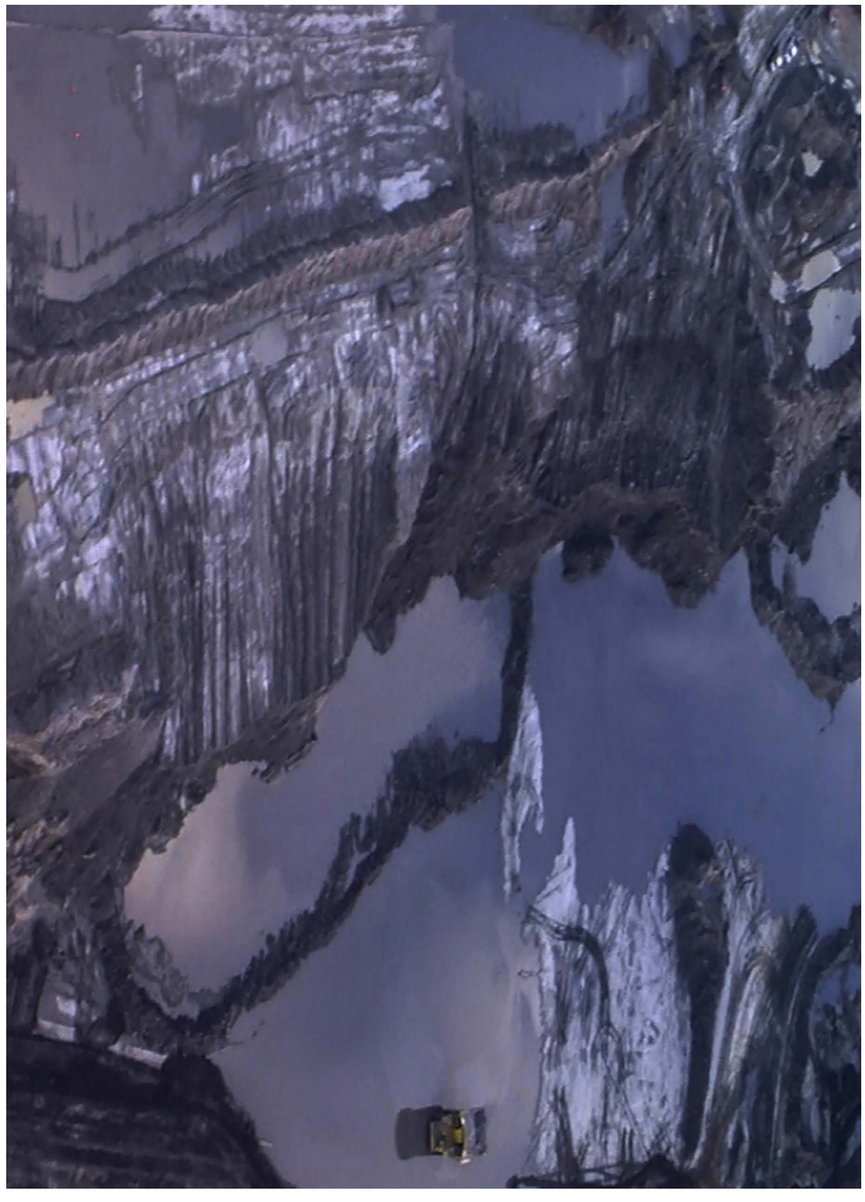
Let me start with Deep Weather. The short video essay draws the connection between the relentless unearthing of fossil deposits in Northern Canada and the protective measures against rising water levels undertaken by Bangladeshi delta communities on the other side of the world—two remote and simultaneously occurring scenes connected through atmospheric chemistry and the complex entanglements of water, chemistry, politics, and speech. As a video about climate change, the landscapes in Deep Weather are endowed with an additional dimension: the weather, which animates and transforms the space. If the film Babel[2] created a global space by connecting scenes occurring simultaneously in Morocco, Mexico, and Tokyo, Deep Weather intends a planetary space: Earth as a closed system.

> The film opens with a shot looking down from a helicopter onto a huge open-pit extraction zone of tar sands in the midst of the vast Canadian boreal forest, establishing a zone of dark, lubricant geology. In the tar sands, fresh water from the Athabasca River is used to boil the black sediment until the oil separates from the clay. Toxic waste, a necessary by-product of bitumen processing, is stored in open-tailing lakes that spread over large areas, which until recently were covered by ancient spruce forests—the living space and hunting territories of First Nations communities and hundreds of species. The condition of this collective space as it teeters on the brink of disaster is evoked in Deep Weather by the whispered voiceover: "The wildlife has retreated / The traplines are empty / The elders call the spirits / The young ones sing rap songs / And the acid wind's hissing: / Evolution isn't fast enough. Mutate!" The script is infused with a poetic science-fictional narrative enhanced by the voice, whispered into wind like a personification of the atmosphere itself. It resonates with the aerial video footage, activating an atmospheric time-space beyond the immediate

1 Ivakhiv, Adrian J. 2013. *Ecologies of the Moving Image: Cinema, Affect, Nature.* Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press. Chapter 3 is dedicated to cinema's powerful production of worlds.

2 Directed in 2006 by Alejandro González Iñárritu. Ursula Biemann

Alberta tar sands at Fort McMurray. Video still from Deep Weather, 2013.



Embankment building in Bengal Delta. Deep Weather, 2013.





Embankment building in Bengal Delta. *Deep Weather*, 2013.

physical and political reality of what is in front of the camera.

In fact, the consequences of what we see in the Canadian tar sands point us instead—in the form of methane and carbon dioxide released into the atmosphere—to the second part of Deep Weather in Bangladesh. Here, the consequences of melting Himalayan ice fields, rising planetary sea levels, and devastating cyclones increasingly define living conditions, especially in the Bengal Delta. Particularly emblematic of an increasingly amphibious lifestyle experienced in the age of global warming, the video documents one of the tremendous community efforts made by Delta populations to build protective mud embankments as large parts of Bangladesh are gradually submerged. These are the measures taken by populations who will progressively have to live on water when large parts of their land are submerged. The scene of collective human action stands in harsh contrast to the one in Alberta, where expensive, largescale machinery replaces human labor. For different but intertwined purposes, massive landscaping is underway on a planetary scale.

Across the Americas, we witness massive extractivist operations bringing their weight down on areas of extraordinary biodiversity. The search for natural resources in the Western Hemisphere has led directly to indigenous lands, which in many cases enjoy an abundance of oil, gas, and minerals, as well as healthy forests and clear waters. As socially and environmentally devastating as many of these mining endeavors from Chile to Canada are, the indigenous populations' struggles to safeguard their livelihoods have helped drive forward groundbreaking legal reforms. New laws in Ecuador and Bolivia are the expression of an altogether different human-Earth relationship than the one which led to the present ecological crisis. Forest Law (2014), undertaken on the oil-and-mining frontier of the Ecuadorian rainforest, brings to light the legal debates emerging from this unique political-philosophical conjunction. This multimedia art project has been realized in collaboration with the Brazilian architect Paulo Tavares whose long-term research into the politics of space and indigenous resistance in Amazonia laid the groundwork for our field study in Ecuador.

With Forest Law, Paulo and I are looking for conceptual and aesthetic tools with which to engage these ancient multispecies ecologies in Amazonia—Paulo through the elaboration of archival images, the development of satellite-based cartographies, and the use of a verbal narrative; myself by creating a twochannel video essay. To begin with, our research trajectory in Ecuador crossed diverse narrative threads that run together in the forest. We sought out encounters with indigenous activists and lawyers who conceive of, and struggle for, a legal framework that includes nonhumans. Among them, Nina Pacari, a Kitchwa constitutional justice, has been crucial in forging the new laws of nonhuman rights. In the hills between the Andes and the Amazon basin, we interviewed botanist David Neill at the herbarium of the Universidade da Amazônia (University of Amazonia) who apprehended that his activity of recording and naming unknown species in the remotest part of the Cordillera del Cóndor ultimately leads to the gradual extinction of these very species as a result of making the areas accessible to vehicles and settlers. In an encounter with shaman Julio Tiwiram we learned about his profound pharmaceutical knowledge of the forest. José Gualinga, leader of the people of Sarayaku in the depths of the lowland, gave us insight into their concept of the living forest and its protectors. And finally we entered into dialogue with Ecuadorian anthropologist Eduardo Kohn, who explores, in his illuminating book How Forests Think, how the human

The two synchronized videos, in their stereo optic, expose a landscape that is populated by all kinds of sentient beings, who inhabit different dimensions of reality.

has been formed and transformed amid encounters with multiple species of plants, animals, and microorganisms.[3] In doing so, Kohn expands philosophical and semiotic frameworks to include other living beings in the list of those capable of thinking. These far-reaching ideas on how to "think with" sentient environments, which are profoundly transforming academic disciplines at the present time, have been cultivated by indigenous forest communities since time immemorial, although their knowledge and teachings are rarely acknowledged in western bibliographies.

In Forest Law, these legal, scientific, semiotic, and cosmological narratives converge to form a dense epistemological fabric of the sylvan ecology that reaches beyond the simple distinction between personal testimonies and factual evidence. In the design of the Sarayaku satellite map, also used as evidence in court during the hearings at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, indigenous signification of the land and current geological exploitation schemes merge, exposing the deeply conflicted jurisdiction of the Sarayaku territory. Operating from the micro to the macrocosmic scale, Forest Law draws from a range of different human registers of imagining reality. What occurs in this corner of the rainforest can only be understood as the result of these powerful interrelating forces. The project aims at reintroducing complex landscape histories where the dominant discourse of global capitalism has continuously effaced them. As mineral and fossil resources are transferred to global markets and turned into exchangeable commodities, they are systematically stripped of their social history of labor and displacement as well as their natural history of consumed landscapes and species extinction. The forceful extraction of raw materials from their local ecologies is closely linked to how we narrate the stories of commodities and where they come from. Forest Law undertakes an intervention into these earth narrations by proposing a radically different cognitive mapping of situated materiality where water, forests, indigenous communities, landscapes, climates, and the geopolitics of oil and copper are inseparably entangled in meaningful ways.

While the overall scope of this project covers larger grounds, I will mostly discuss here the two-channel Forest Law video and concentrate on one of the three court cases in the Amazonian forest of Ecuador that the video attends to, the case of Sarayaku. This Kitchwa people own a large forest territory that can be entered with the permission of the village council only by the river or by flying in with a small propeller plane. Sarayaku has good reasons to control its boundaries and entry points since in 2002 a foreign oil company invaded their territory and without consultation laid a vast grid of explosives for seismic prospecting across major parts of it. Sarayaku sued the State of Ecuador at the Inter-American Court of Human Rights for facilitating oil extraction on their land.

What makes the Sarayaku case so important is that it coincides with significant legal reforms in Ecuador, enabling a new approach to a scenario that reiterates a long history of colonial intrusions and expropriations. Emerging from the indigenous cosmologies of the living forest (selva viviente), and fought for by the indigenous nations of Ecuador in defense of their commonly owned land and way of life, the new Constitution introduces a series of Rights of Nature, which contends that ecosystems—the living forests, mountains, rivers, and seasare legal subjects.[4] This cosmovision of interdependent cohabitation is deeply inscribed in the indigenous ethical and legal system in which the violation of natural com-

3 Kohn, Eduardo. 2013. *How Forests Think.* Stanford: University of California Press.



Nina Pacari, a former justice in Ecuador constitutional court. Video still from *Forest Law*, 2014.



Village of Sarayaku.



José Gualinga, leader of the Kitchwa people of Sarayaku. *Forest Law.*

munities equals the violation of human rights. For Forest Law, a project particularly interested in practices that extend beyond a humancentric perspective, the Sarayaku trial is groundbreaking in that it evolves at the intersection of Human Rights and the Rights of Nature understood as two profoundly entangled realms. Forest Law also sees the legal cases unfolding in the Amazon as an opportunity to consider the legal potential of a comprehensive Earth jurisprudence. The speculations in the project embrace a sort of multispecies world citizenship. At present, nature, and hence life forms and their ecologies, are treated by the world legal system as mere property to be traded, consumed, and at best protected by environmental laws imposing regulations on corporate and private actors. While we have parceled off the land into small units that can be owned and exploited, entire living systems of the Earth are legally invisible. Since its early beginnings, our legal architecture has rested entirely on social contracts made between humans. What is sorely missing, as French philosopher Michel Serres elucidated in his visionary book The Natural Contract in the early 1990s—a constant companion during our trip to the field—is a pact between humans and nature.[5] Today, the recognition of natural communities bearing equal rights of existence is only just rising over the legal horizon.

The video, based on interviews with indigenous community leaders who recount the foreign intrusions and forest trials, is shot with two cameras and staged in the middle of the forest. The stillness of this aesthetic framing sets the piece apart from a documentary film. Placing the testimonies in the context of anthropogenic Amazonia and climate change, a video subtext establishes the direct connection between our current universal legal structure, based entirely on property rights, and massive forest destruction and species extinction. Zooming out of the dark, misty rain forest, the video prologue evokes the Earth as a living planet whose surface has evolved into ecosystems that keep her metabolism alive. With a four degree rise in its temperature, the Amazon ecosystem would turn into dry scrub, an essential cooling system would then be shut down, and the planet would turn increasingly hot and dry, with an amount of ever shrinking land left for human food production. Conclusion: when the forest is gone, world civilization will have come to an end.[6] Inserted in the flow of the interviews, the subtext continues throughout the film, positing the Sarayaku case at the decisive moment when the concept of nature as a background to be engineered and managed disappeared, and a legal system of Earth jurisprudence emerged that treats all life forms as rights-bearing entities.

Rather than an eco-apocalyptic vision, this narrative construction suggests that what unfolds in this remote corner of the rainforest is of worldly importance. What moves to the foreground of our artistic and intellectual attention now are the most material concerns. For instance, the toxic mud, which spilled out after Texaco's drilling and remains a jarring presence in the equatorial forest thirty years later, comes under forensic scrutiny in Forest Law. No longer the passive backdrop to human history, the landscape, nature, and matter itself return to the fore and become the subject of aesthetic consideration. Here, the act of soil sampling is carried out as a mute performance of handling the samplers, shovels, and giant pipettes of the eco-chemists. The activist is

4 Biemann, Ursula, and Paolo Tavares, *Forest Law—Selva jurídica.* 2014. East Lansing: Broad Art Museum/Michigan State University. See, in particular, the chapters "The Forest in Court" and "Rights of Nature."

5 Serres, Michael. 1995. *The Natural Contract.* Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995.

6 Lovelock, James. 2007. *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity.* New York: Basic Books, 2007.

> enacting a scientific gesture, not in search of data this time, nor a useful gesture, but one that enables matter to become expressive and deranging, acutely intensifying the provocation posed by the misplaced oily mud. The evidence brought to the surface speaks of the perishing of life worlds with whom the law has no relationship, and of an active materiality with which we want to reconnect.

For the indigenous communities, these vital ecologies are inhabited and energized by the masters of the forest, the mountain, and the water—the Amasanga, the Sacha Runa, the Ja Xingu—with whom they commune and who recharge their life energy. Alluding to the perspectivism inherent in the relationship Amerindians across Amazonia entertain with other beings, the two synchronized videos, in their stereo optic of a simultaneous wide-angle and close-up, expose a composed landscape populated by all kinds of sentient beings who inhabit different dimensions of reality: minute copper deposits, forest spirits, indigenous councils, scientists, medicinal plants, international law, global oil corporations, and river systems. By addressing this complex ecology of practices, Forest Law delves into cosmopolitical considerations, the politics of humans and of everything else. The shift from worldly to cosmic politics—that is, from global social and political struggles to the earthly and atmospheric forces of nature—raises the question of how law, ecology, and cosmology conceive of the global, the cosmos, of something common to go by. How do they conceptualize interaction among species and with everything else? But also—and I speak mostly for myself—how can our modest aesthetic practice engage this kind of scale? What can it possibly say about the different conceptions of how we imagine the world to be composed? If realism has made us see that reality is something that needs to be built, rather than something already there, we must assume that the common world too needs to be made, not just represented. Neither a utopia nor a simple projection into the future, this constructive realist endeavor links local realities not only with a global context but with the Earth system at large in a cosmopolitical motivation to build a common sphere.

> I am with Isabelle Stengers and Bruno Latour here, who assert that this cosmos, this common world, does not already exist but needs to be fabricated. If cohabitation, if "living with" is the goal, Stengers suggests that this future articulation—that is, the linking of the multiple divergent worlds—can only happen through a slow epistemology of perplexity, wondering, and vulnerability.[7] Her slow cosmos is full of spaces of hesitations where what is common can be examined and redefined. In her words, it is "a matter of imbuing political voices with the feeling that they do not master the situation they discuss, that the political arena is peopled with shadows of that which does not have a political voice, cannot have or does not want to have one."[8] If cosmos is to endure, it has to resist the fast, consensual way. Her proposal, then, is not a manual for good and efficient cosmos forming, it is an invitation to decelerate, respect speechlessness, and give more weight to those who do not function within the parameters of language, reason, and cost-effective productivity. In other words, it allows for variable temporalities. Geomorphic video practice, with its open-plan fieldwork, travelling through the forest, engaging in conversations in semi-comprehensible translations, entering the thicket and digging in the earth to collect samples, seeks out ways of slowing down the pace of knowing. It is a practice through which to form a different commons, a different cosmos.

7 See Latour, Bruno. 2004. "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics?" *Common Knowledge* 10.3, p. 450–462, and Isabelle Stengers. 2005. "The Cosmopolitical Proposal," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and P. Weibel. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, p. 994-1003.

8 Stengers, Isabel. 2005. "Cosmopolitical," p. 996.



Franco Gualinga in his garden in Sarayaku. Video still from *Forest Law*.

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Born in Mexico City. PhD in Creative Media at City University of Hong Kong, MA in Gender Studies at Bologna University in Italy and BA in Art History at Iberoamerican University in Mexico City. Specializes in the intersections of art, science, and biotechnology. Her current interest lies in microorganisms' cultures and a microbial posthuman turn. Maro has published and presented her research internationally including at Performance Research, ISEA, EVA, ISCMA, Comciencia in Brazil and Media Art Histories, co-curated the Open Systems salon, the HK Leonardo Art Science Rendezvous and was involved in the Mexican Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale. Currently working on fostering post-anthropocentric microbiology literacy in society.

www.maropebo.com

Title
Against Sterility

Tag
Multispecies Coexistence
Sterility & Isolation
Collaboration
Microbes

Material



P. 28



P. 29



P. 30



P. 31

Maro Pebo

Against Sterility.

The Art of Living Together on a Microbial Planet



Carmen Serratos-Chavarria. "Simpecados de la higiene personal" 2020.

We seem to be unable to overcome the prevalent conception of microbes as enemies, and therefore there is still a widespread desire and action to get rid of them, wipe clean and purify in order to sterilise homes and surfaces. In relation to this trend, I want to strip down the desire for sterilization, the compulsion for purity, and the ritual of disinfecting.

Our experience of disgust towards the dirty is related to the microbial; what is dirty is most often bacterial. Those smells that we find repulsive are not properties of rotting matter per se, but volatile compounds produced as waste by living organisms. These experiences of disgust relate to the connection we make between dirt and disease. Again, there is a connection between the life of microbes and disease.

But who are the microbes? 'Microbe' usually refers to all forms of life that are invisible to the unaided human eye; some would say they are unicellular, but they actually organize in multicellular communities, or are tiny animals like the wonderful tardigrade. All life forms, in fact, have a microscopic version, including plants, animals, fungi, and, of course, bacteria and archaea.

Repulsiontowardsdirtinessgeneratesculturesofcleanness, enacting every possible mechanism to wipe microbes away. The compulsion and frenzy for hygiene is eloquently extrapolated to religious rituals in the work of Carmen Serratos Chavarria, where she approaches how our regimes of personal hygiene function as modes of control and discipline over the body; likewise, how scientific discourse echoes the previous need for purification. In her banners, cleaning products and devices are transformed into devotional symbol, talking the visual language of the banners for what is revered. She also has produced votiveofferings,dedicatedtoabrandofchlorine,appropriating the specific religious language of a centuries -old tradition of simple votive paintings offered as tokens of gratitude for a miracle, in this case, for no one in her family, thus far, getting infected with the virus.

A huge risk associated with the fervor for sterilization, however, is that since disinfectants cannot kill all living microorganisms, a few of the toughest and best adapted specimens within a population will resist. In this way, the exacerbated processes of purification also become practices of selection and mutation that participate in the development of highly resistant microorganisms, called "superbugs", a problem that also is increased through the abuse of antibiotics in humans as well as in industrial meat production. The irony of this process is that in an effort to get rid of germs, we are selecting the kinds of microorganisms that will be much sturdier and even more lethal.

The origin of the word "sterile" is related to infertility, or the lack of possibility for reproduction, but the question here is the lack of whose life and whose reproduction? A sterile surface is a surface we would wish to be without microbial life. This same principle applies to "antibiotics", the life they are trying to prevent is that of microorganisms. In this microbiophobic mood, we could turn back to the Aristotelian hierarchy of life, the Great Chain of Being, in which all living beings are ranked in a pyramidal structure, from the lowest (plants and crawling beasts) to the highest (man); microbes, had Aristotle known about them, would probably feature quite low in his ranking. The concept of The Great Chain of Being is still powerful today; the life of those beings we cannot see are considered widely disposable. We desire their infertility on our sterile surfaces, including everything within this immense biodiversity of microbes. The problem with these exterminations is that not only do we lose valuable biodiversity for our health, but it overrides the fact that far less than 1% of



Carmen Serratos-Chavarria."Exvotos de la limpieza" 2020

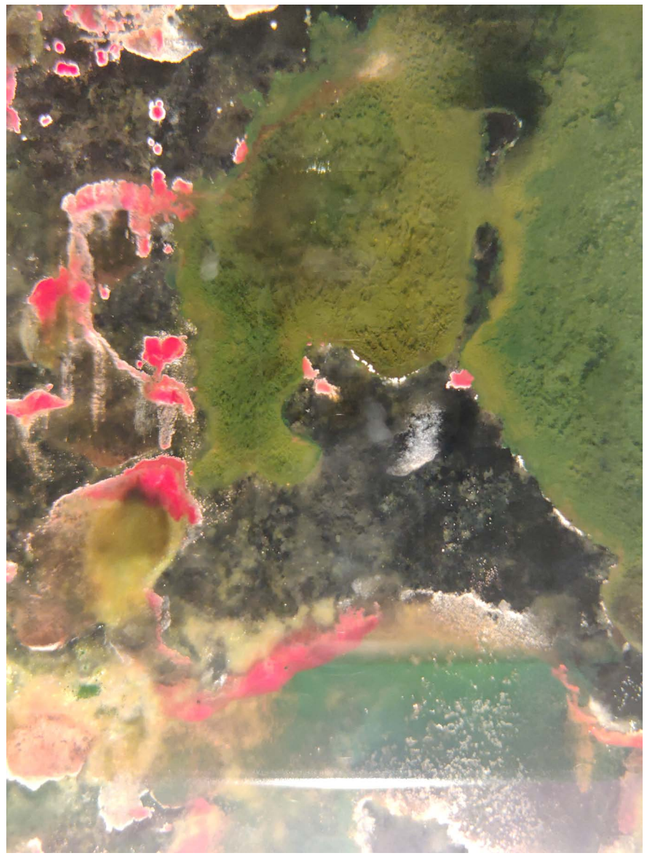
microbial species lead to disease in humans.
A kind reminder: on this planet, microbes are omnipresent. There is virtually no place they have not adapted to and do not immediately occupy, from deep inside our guts, to every extreme environment and hidden corner of the planet. Therefore, sterility is a fantasy. The planet cannot be sterilized, the end of microorganisms would mean the end of life as we know it.

There is another aspect to sterility: cleanness and purity. With this, I refer to the purity of kind, purity of species, to clean-cut division and control of the desired and the undesired. In microbiology, the Petri dish allows for the culture of organisms, pure cultures from one single cell. The fantasy of classification of species, of order, the illusion of true and essential biological difference, the purity of race that cannot be sustained biologically, but over which we want our classifications to hold. Who is the other, so I can differentiate myself? Culturally we get carried away with the superficial, with the appearance. Biologically too, microorganisms defy a superficial classification, there is no telling them apart by appearance, but neither through genetics. They mutate quickly and in their microbial ecosystems they exchange genes, challenging our efforts to classify and organize them hierarchically.

One way to start thinking about these impure microbial ecosystems is from within our bodies. The human microbiome became the prime example in considering our identity when we comprehend that a huge amount of the cells of our bodies are not solely our own; we are much more microbial than we thought. Ed Yong's book titled "I Contain Multitudes" comes immediately to mind. This kind of knowledge about the human microbiome also reveals our closeness and intimacy with the microbes, for example, our health, immunity and digestion are closely related to the diversity of our microbial populations. This relationship also touches also upon our mental health. There are a number of mental disorders associated with an imbalance of the microbiota. Living without them, in the compulsion for cleanness and sterility, has led to higher expression of allergies in the "developed" world.

On a less anthropocentric note, microbial ecosystems exist not only in our bodies but everywhere. The omnipresence of microbes exist mostly as mixed, impure communities, collectivities of diversity; the greatest biodiversity is microbial. There is a joy in mixed uncertainty, of the abundance and fertility of microbial life, fermenting, exposing, opening the window to the exchanging microbial populations.

Elsewhere we have written extensively about a device that honors the messy mixed populations of microbial ecosystems that dominate this planet - the Winogradsky column. It is nothing more than a transparent cylinder filled with a muddy sample and fed with basic nutrients like paper as a source of carbon and eggs as a source of sulfur. Science historian Mathias Grote explains why this device is relatively unknown in comparison with the successful Petri dish. The Petri dish allowed for purity, for identification; while the Winograsky column is appropriate for unidentified populations exchanging, fighting, and in symbiosis. The resulting object is a column filled with colors, with great microbial colonies that become visible as patches of color. In this sense, the Winodrasky columns are an alternative to the pureness of Petri dishes of microbial cultures, and represent an ecosystemic approach rather than the eagerness for the pure individual culture.



Detail of Winogradsky panel, Natural History Museum, Mexico City

Following the idea of the appreciation of mixed and uncertain cultures, we can consider the work of Gilberto Esparza, an artist who, in his work, readily acknowledges and appreciates the local microbial ecosystems. For Autophotosyntethic Plants, Esparza gathers water from local environments where the artifact will be shown. Within his artifact, the water is transformed by the bacteria and released electrons, powering the light that feeds the plants in the nucleus. What is relevant in terms of microbial abundance, is that the microbial fuel cells will only release electrons if the bacterial community is present and stable, ideally forming a biofilm that smoothly conducts the electrons. For Esparza, it is important to take samples of local water, but also of the local mud underneath it. The Autophotosynthetic Plants has been critiqued in terms of its political and hybrid dimension, but it is also about the specific representation of local microbial ecosystems, about bringing them into the artwork, watching their energy and hearing their metabolism.

Our cultures of sterility, symptomatic and compulsive as a religious ritual, take shape in the votive images and banners of Carmen Serratos-Chavarría. These mechanisms of purification and sterility stem from the impossible desire to annihilate the undesirable life of the microbes. Nonetheless, there is space to unlearn the limited microbe-disease association in order to appreciate the largely unknown (micro) ecosystems of the unclean.

In the dirty water and mud that Gilberto Esparza collects for the installation of his work, there is appreciation for the unknown populations of the impure. Life flourishes where reproduction and interchange occur, therefore, perhaps it is pertinent to associate the dirty and the smelly with the abundance of life, easing off on the desire for the purity of sterility.

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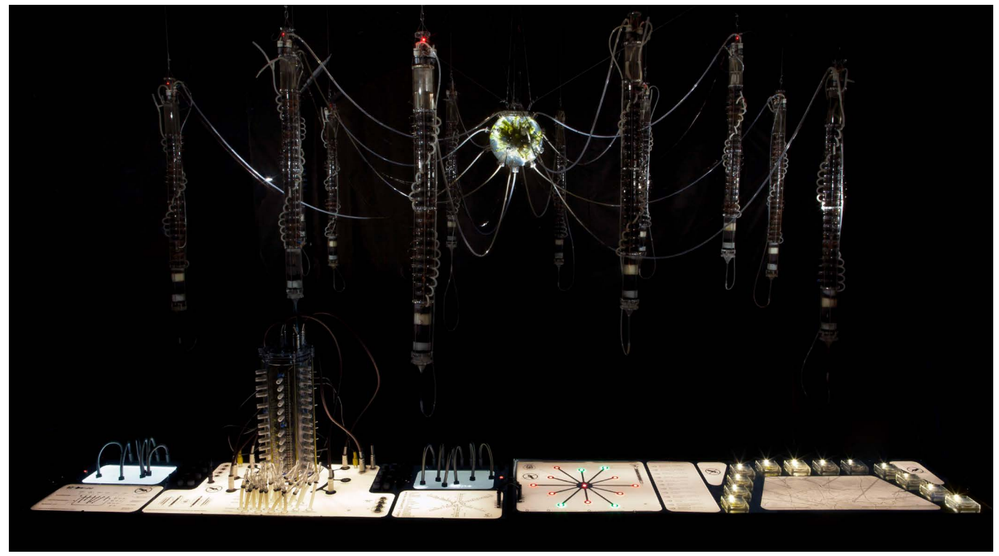
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Autophotosynthetic Plants by Gilberto Esparza (2013-2019)

Author
Adam Dickinson

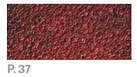
Location
United States of America

Adam Dickinson is the author of four books of poetry. His latest book, Anatomic (Coach House Books), involves the results of chemical and microbial testing on his body. His work has been nominated for awards including the Governor General's Award for Poetry. He has been featured at international literary festivals in Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, and the United States. He teaches English and Creative Writing at Brock University in St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada.

Title
Anatomic Poems

Tag
Environmental Contamination
Holobiont
Metabolic Poetics

Material



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Adam Dickinson

Anatomic Poems

Anatomic (Coach House Books, 2018), incorporates the results of chemical and microbial testing on my body in order to look at how the "outside" writes the "inside." I looked into my blood, urine, and feces, and saw the Anthropocene staring back at me. The epigraphs for the following poems indicate the presence or specific levels of various chemicals or microbes in and on my body.

"Galactic Acid" responds to a microbe I likely acquired from my mother during childbirth.

"Disruptors" responds to phthalates, a class of endocrine disrupting chemicals that can interfere with hormones or hormone receptors in the body.

Microscope images of my blood cells were produced with the assistance of Jeff Stuart in his laboratory at Brock University.

The bacteria plate poem "Other words for money" was produced, as the caption indicates, by swabbing money for bacteria and then culturing that bacteria on top of a list of colloquial synonyms for money.

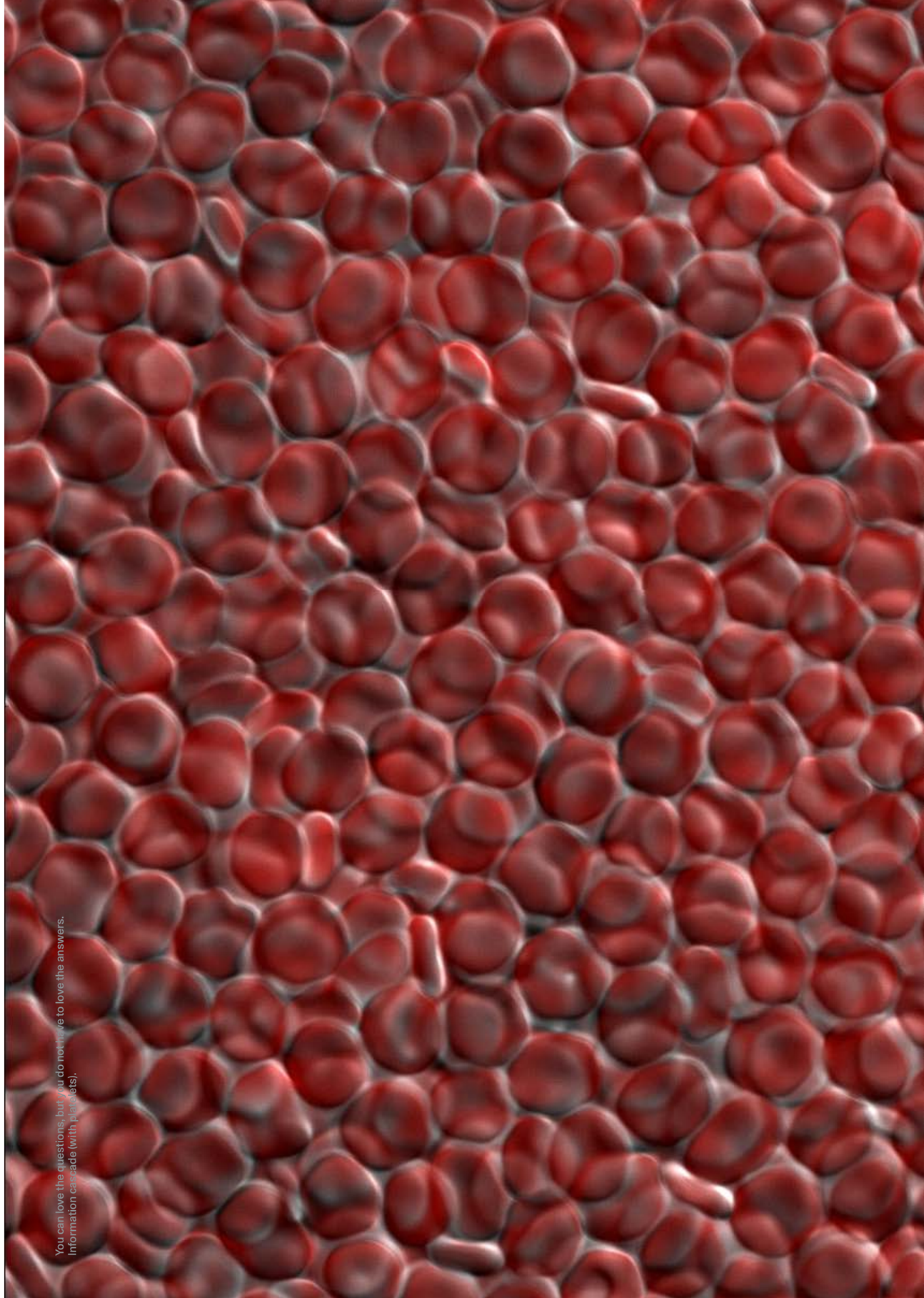
DISRUPTORS

Monobenzyl phthalate (urine): 4.63 ng/mL

The key
in pinkeye
and hand
in merchandise
and tongue
in cheek
and screw
in bolt and butter
in scotch
and coffee
in cups and
dinner in the bell
and periods
in the reasons
enumerated
for failure
and the fly's
field of vision
in the width
of the web

and the tick
in the sweat gland
horses
in the power
and the guest
in the host
and the knock
at the door
and the grammar
of the dancing
reproductive
success
of the bee
in the pollen
and the allergen's
revolt deciding
inside from out
and the shout
in the rooftop
and the drift
in the gene
and the spray
that comes in
from the crops
and the air
in the vent
and the vent
in the small hours
after damage
has been spent
and weeping
in the willow
and empire
in the fiddle
and Balkan
in the powder
and dark horses
in the running
and the absence
of questions
in the wandering
lust
and the fire
in the pinecone
and the halo
by virtues
of passion
in the fruits
with substrates
in the enzyme

and penis
in vagina
and the hetero
in normativity's
reflexive
complementarity
and floor tiles
in the embryo
and raincoats
in testicles
and the call
in the response
and the response
in the mouth
that makes the call



GALACTIC ACID

Lactobacillus acidophilus

For the first two years of my life, my mother's vaginal flora lived in my stomach. Consigned to the edge of their star system, they ate everything I ate, fermenting chains of starch into acids that fed the high-energy demands of trying to erect an antenna. The flora flexed for deep space, convinced they weren't alone. They transmitted their contractions and hoped to reach aliens before the terrible facsimiles of the 1970s: humans drawn without sex organs and burdened by messages whose content had become instructions for reading. Set amidst this mucosa, a gram-stained parabolic reflector waited for word from newcomers. We're a lot alike, my mother and I. Our disdain for underachieving campsites and the way we signal for help by maintaining a slight underbite during awkward conversations. Her vagina made me cosmopolitan. A dialectic crowned in the forest, its many antlers have since come to crowd my self-possession with spent velvet. I watch my mother favour her disintegrating hips. The small party that left her for the new world founded a settlement on a moon she still tracks without looking. Its tidal pull on the pit of her stomach makes her pause at the zenith of a phone call: "What is it?"



Other words for money edited and revised by bacteria cultured from swabs of money. Phthalates are present but not visible. Phthalates are a class of endocrine disrupting chemicals, or hormonally active agents, often transferred to banknotes from receipts jammed into wallet

Author
Michelle Kuen Suet Fung

Location
Hong Kong

Fung's ongoing oeuvre revolves around a grand narrative of a dystopian world set in the year 2084. She weaves acute observations of the early twenty-first century into an absurd, fantastical landscape populated with plastic-eating humans, flying elephants, and islands floating in the sky. Her works present a fictional geopolitical map of a bizarre future, one impacted by changes in the Anthropocene. Fung's works span a broad range of media including text, books, drawing, painting, printmaking, installation, performances and short films. She has an upcoming solo exhibition at the municipal museum Art Gallery Boris Georgiev, Varna, Bulgaria, as the invited guest artist of the Quarantine Film Festival (2022) and has held recent solo exhibitions at leading artist-run galleries in Australia (2019) and California (2018), as well as the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (2019.)

Her works have received many awards including Film that Matters, the Montreal International Animation Film Festival, Canada (2019), 50 Best Books for Secondary Students, Hong Kong Professional Teacher's Union (2018), winner of Young Writer's Debut Competition, Hong Kong (2017), the Grotto Award, Hong Kong Baptist University (2015) and Award of Excellence, Fourth Greater China Illustration Awards (2012 and 2016)

Title
Polluta
The Floating Paradise

Tag
Environmental Contamination
Community

Material



P. 42



P. 43



P. 44

Michelle Kuen Suet Fung
Polluta. The Floating Paradise.

In 2084, the imaginary country Contradictoria has solved its pollution problem with Plan Polluta. Under this plan, air pollution is condensed into building bricks, which are used to build arcologies called Polluta, floating green vibrant artist colonies! Artists can live, work and show for free, forever! It sounds too good to be true. It is. Polluta was meant as a joke, a wry serious joke. This body of oil-based woodblock prints on cloud dragon handmade paper features ninety-nine unique propaganda prints—three presented in this issue. Each print features one aspect of this ecotopia. Polluta is perhaps my crazy solution to mind-boggling problems: pollution, artists' struggle with money and integrity and world politics, knowing fully that it is not a viable solution. It is a feverish murmur, perhaps a frustrated joke.



Tenth of Ninety-Nine Views of Polluta: a Starry Starry Night. By Michelle Kuen Suet Fung, 2019



Third of Ninety-Nine Views of Polluta: Green New World. By Michelle Kuen Suet Fung, 2018

Political Origins of Chinese Woodblock Prints

Woodblock prints have existed in China as an artistic medium for over one thousand years, but underwent substantial changes and became political tools in the early twentieth century. Traditional Chinese woodblock prints, unfailingly busy, cheerful and life-affirming, were popular with folklore and religious purposes and used ink and watercolours exclusively. In the light of recent shameful national defeats such as the First Sino-Japanese War and the Boxer Protocol, China saw an explosion of patriotic self-awakening sentiment in the 1920s, when Chinese intellectuals looked west for enlightenment. In this New Culture Movement, led by cultural luminaries such as Cai Yuan Pei and Chen Du Xiu, art education was believed to be an effective tool for social improvement. Woodblock printers began a grassroots movement and sought a conscious departure from both expensive literati ink paintings, reserved for scholars and oil on canvas paintings which were recently introduced by the first generation of Chinese artists who studied abroad.

These avant-garde printmakers made a conscious effort to align with proletarians in these sombre, monochromatic prints. However, it is highly unlikely that their works actually reached the masses; in the 1930–40s these "proletariat" prints were only accessible through publication in literary journals, public exhibitions and in private circulation. Even though later traveling exhibitions attracted a fair number of visitors, the movement carried on largely unnoticed by the masses the printmakers wanted to address and impress the most.

The effectiveness of woodblock prints as a mass medium truly blossomed when they were adopted to spread official messages in the 1960s. This grassroots movement was endorsed by the state as early as 1935, when the state sponsored a multi-city traveling exhibition, The National Joint Woodcut Exhibition. Yet, the state's enthusiastic usage of woodblock prints in the 1960s had an effect much like Instagram or Facebook posts on an organization's official social media pages today, spreading official messages like wildfire. These printed posters were displayed widely and prominently all over the country, from metropolitan cities down to small rural villages. Slogans on these posters became the mantras of those days.

Historical Context and Precedents

My choice of a medium laden with political resonance was no coincidence. The complex history of Chinese woodblocks echoes the duality of the Polluta story. Polluta's promise makes every artist's pupils dilate. Give an artist shelter, food, studio, art supplies and a bunch of talented artist friends. Isn't this what artist residencies are supposed to be? However, behind that relentless optimism in the promotional print materials, there is, always, a caveat.

For me, the shiny facade of Polluta seems confusing at best. The privileges in Polluta come with a price: artists cannot have a normal family life (family members except for artists are not allowed to stay on premise after 11pm) and they have no access to outside entertainment (even the amusement park in their backyard is only accessible twice a year). One cannot help but wonder if Polluta is a conspiracy to lock all artists up, out of sight from a functioning society. Artists

are free to form families as long as it's all incestuous within the artistic circle. Oh, and children are not allowed to live there!

Polluta was largely an intellectual exercise to make sense of the art world. Hong Kong, where I have been based for the past few years, emerged as an international player when Art Basel purchased Art Hong Kong in 2011. In the following year, 1,661 art exhibitions took place in the city, an average of 4.5 exhibitions per day! In I Love Art Basel, Leung argues that superstar brands chose to open Hong Kong branches purely for geographic convenience and economic reasons;[1] cultural and historical considerations were not part of the picture, while Hong Kong's bustling international art market (blue-chip galleries, art fairs and auction houses) led a parallel existence completely detached from the local social fabric. Regular gallery goers detect a growing trend of exhibiting artists' diminishing age, sometimes having solo exhibitions even before their grad shows! This phenomenon is perhaps unsurprising considering how an alluring art market beckons promising fame, opportunities, and security for unproven artists facing an uncertain future. And there is some substance there, as I have personally lost count of how many times artist interviews are featured on financial channels, and how often dollar signs enter the conversation. Yet, money increasingly seems to be the only worthwhile yardstick. This overbearing worship of the market propelled me towards the other extreme, an idealized world with no poisonous capitalist vapor—an artist colony.

As a point of comparison, consider how creative artists were grouped together in the Artists' Union of the USSR between 1932 and 1993, where they were pampered and their every want catered to. Food, lodging, exhibition space and studios were provided along with holiday amenities. Multiple picturesque locations were available to which the artist could move, using Union funds. Tell me you won't kill for that. Even though everything was free, there really was no free lunch. Just like artists in the capitalist system, socialist artists were expected to produce cultural activities of value. Commercial domination is replaced by a political one. In such a system, "The objective criterion for defining a cultural value is its progressive character for society."[2]

It is clear that access to Polluta's resources is not a right one has earned, but a privilege granted by authority, to be taken away in a moment's notice. Especially in this bizarre virus-striken year of restricted travels and cancelled exhibitions, a skyward immigration that solves all problems does sound awfully enticing. The promise of Polluta seems like an irresistible paradise, as long as one is willing to abide to a few housekeeping rules.

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2 Zvorykin, A. A. *Studies and Documents on Cultural Policies: Cultural Policy in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.* P. 10., http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0000/000012/001240eo.pdf

Author
TRES

Location
Mexico City

TRES (Ilana Boltvinik + Rodrigo Viñas, Mexico City) is an art research collective founded in 2009 that has focused on exploring the implications of public space and garbage through artistic practices that concentrate on the methodological intertwining and dialogue with science, anthropology, and archaeology among other disciplines. Of particular interest has been the inquiry on the subject of garbage as a physical and conceptual residue that entails political and material implications. Since its foundation in 2009 TRES has worked with different qualities that shape garbage. Its mobility {in the project A Cluster of Oblivion} 2009, its spatial traits {in Blind Spots} 2010, its symbolic value {in An Informal Gaze} 2009, its aesthetics {in the book Desechos Reservados} 2009, its intimacy {in All the Shines is Gold} 2011, its permanence {in Chicle y Pega} 2012, its scientific potential {in Urotransfrontation DTC-UR013} 2013, amid others.
www.tresartcollective.com

Title
Trapped

Tag
Environmental Contamination
Space Trash
Technology

Material

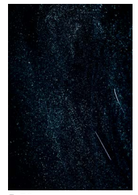
TRES
Trapped

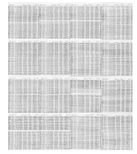

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People have always observed the sky and fantasized about space, we devised ways explored it. We have come a long way in the "conquest" of space. A paradigmatic date is –of course– October 4, 1957, day the Soviets launched Sputnik 1, the first artificial satellite. Four yearslater, Yuri Gagarin became the first human to see Earth from afar, in the Vostok 1. Since 1957 we have been on the moon, we have orbited Mer-cury, navigated next to Pluto, NASA's Insight has landed on Mars. More than 500 humans have been up to 438 consecutive days in space. Humans "master the sky". According to the European Space Agency (updated in 2019) we have launched about 5,450 rockets since 1957(excluding failures); 8,950 satellites have been placed into the Earth's orbit, of which 1,950 still function. Yet this marvelous exploration also brought its counterpart, one of the first was the death of Vladimir Komarov in the Soyuz 1, 1967.

In August 1966, LIFE Magazine published "Planet Earth by Dawn's Early Light", a series of photographs taken by astronauts on the Gemini 10 shuttle, using a 70-mm Maurer camera. The last two pages are amazing. One is a photograph of a discarded black plastic bag floating in space—one of the first pieces of galactic waste? It contained objects that NASA intended to leave behind. And the second page is a list of

‘space trash’—and an Inventory of Hardware in Orbit. “A growing clutter of over 1,200 satellites, burnt out rockets and just plain junk now orbiting the Earth. [...]”[1] The photographic series ends with a powerful statement regarding these objects, that someday they could “cause a serious traffic problem in space.”[2] That day has now come. The introduction of the book Geographies of Trash, positions it beautifully: “At over a million feet above the planet’s surface, the plastic bag and its content seemed categorically unrelated to trash on Earth, more of a time capsule than litter. [...Yet] Not even the infinite volume of outer space exempt from the perils of trash.”[3] It seems we need more space... but for trash.

Since 1957, around 22,300 debris objects are regularly tracked by Space Surveillance Networks. There are more than 500 break-ups, explosions, collisions, or anomalous events resulting in fragmentation. We are surrounded by waste. At the growth-rate of launches and space exploration, are we to be trapped in our planet, not able to leave because of the collision risk? There are more than 128 million objects from 1mm to 1 cm!

As a collective, TRES has explored waste for more than ten years, yet space junk has left us flabbergasted. It seems that the typical saying ‘out of sight, out of mind’ has now acquired a completely new dimension. We were invited to present an exhibition in the Juanita Harvey Art Gallery of the Midwestern State University (MSU) in early 2020 —those pre-pandemic days. We decided to speculate about the fictional future of space junk with the help of students. The project’s name, TRAPPED, surfaced when thinking of the backside and implications of our obsession with exploring the universe. What type of materials are needed for building super-powerful spacecrafts and where are they extracted from? Where so satellites and other orbiting things end up? How do materials change when the atmosphere is different? These are some of the questions that arouse.

The materiality of the Earth is expanding in dimension, we mine resources that will be used to manufacture all types of spacecrafts, many of which will end up in the Earth’s orbits. Our newly renamed orbits are now a reflection of the superpowers that these floating objects gain out there. Their vertiginous velocity of 7.8 km/s (28,000 km/h; 17,000 mph) converts them into potent weapons (a 10 cm crashing object has the force of a hand grenade); their decay rate is much lower than on the Earth’s surface, rendering a longer debris life; their collision can become cascades, known as the Kessler syndrome, that increase the possibilities of further collisions. All this on the Object Superpower Orbit (OSO), formerly known as Low Earth Orbit (LEO). On the Taxable Remote Satellite Orbit (TRES), before known as the Geostationary Ring (GEO), rent on space and size will be implemented. Finally, the Mining Orbit (MO), previously known as Graveyard Orbit will serve as a chaotic ground for material recovery. Will we have to fetch future materials from these orbits considering the depletion of natural resources? Other qualities that emerge are yet to surprise us. We will enter the era of the super-objects.

1 “Planet Earth by Dawn's Early Light,” LIFE Magazine, August 5 1966, 28.
2 Ibid.
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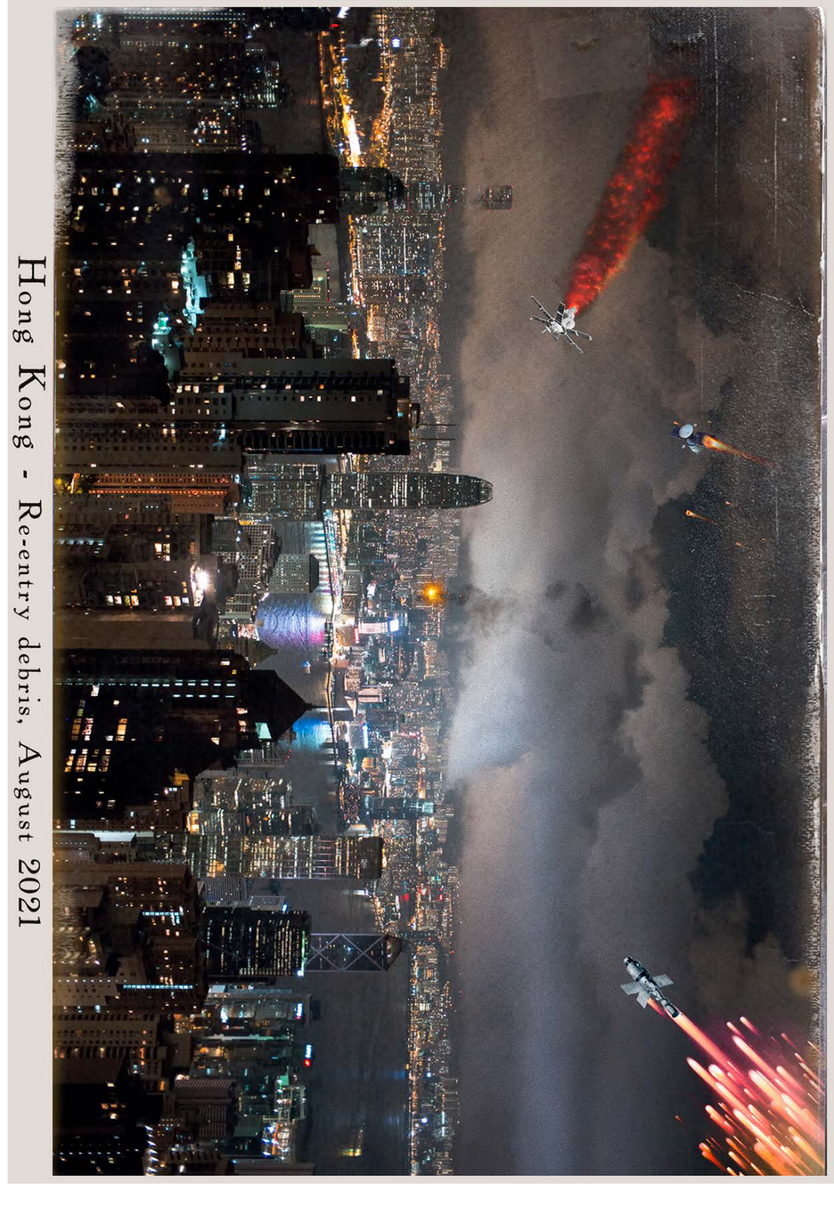


Hong Kong

Re-entry of Kosmos 1867

From the series *Postcards from the Future*, 2020

From the series *Postcards from the Future*, 2020



Hong Kong - Re-entry debris, August 2021

From the series *Postcards from the Future*, 2020



Venezia

Detriti di veicolo spaziale sconosciuto



From the series, *The Possibility of Seeing Space in all Things (Eraser IV)*, inkjet on fabric, 2020



From the series, *The Possibility of Seeing Space in all Things (Eraser II)*, inkjet on fabric, 2020

Author
Bogna Konior

Location
Shangai

Bogna Konior is a writer and a scholar currently based at NYU Shanghai, Interactive Media Arts department and the AI & Culture Research Centre. She is interested in the human relationship to and imagination of the inhuman, especially at the intersection of large-scale ecological and technological paradigm shifts. Her work can be found at www.bognamk.com.

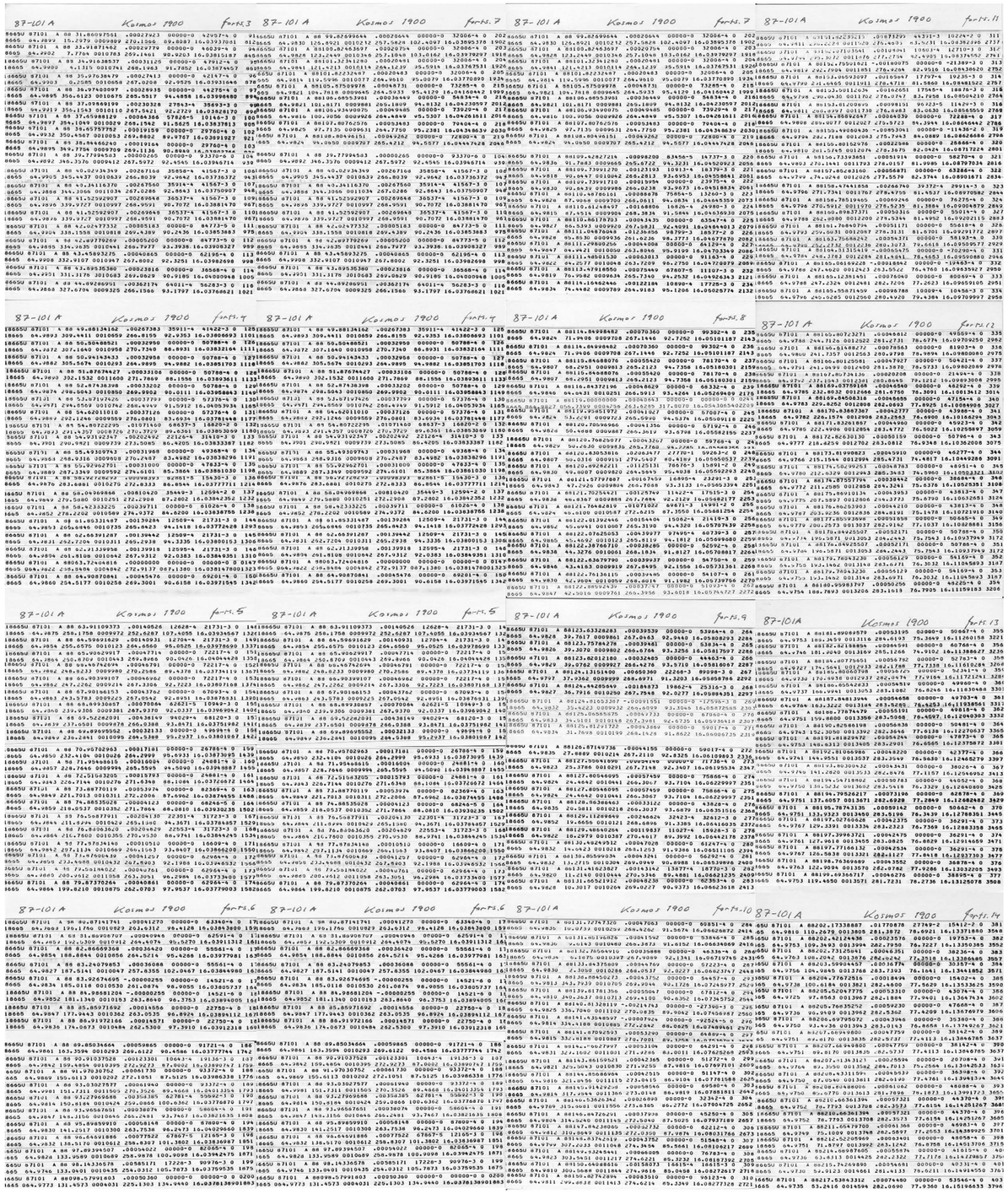
Title
Are We the von Neuman Machines?
Self-replication and Ecophagy

Tag
Environmental Contamination
Artificial Intelligence
Self-replication
Technology

Bogna Konior

Are We the von Neuman Machines?

Self-replication and Ecophagy



Epidermis of Thing that Surround the Earth,
wallpaper, inkjet on vinyl, 2020

Dangerous replicators could easily be too tough, small, and rapidly spreading to stop - at least if we make no preparation. We have trouble enough controlling viruses and fruit flies.[1]

Behold a human. There he is, readying himself for death. He does not know that he is readying himself, but what else is life than not dying a bit more with each day? We say that we are living a life but it would be more precise to say that we are dying one. Every day, our bodies work less well, or we are pulled out of existence abruptly: in both cases, this life of ours seeps out of us into the cosmos, polluting its fabric, embroidering bits of us into the universe.

> Of course, we do not think about this very often. The low hum of panic - the anxiety of dying a life - is the background of our days, accepted peacefully at the level of abstract reasoning but greeted with panic by our bodies, which cannot forever repress the sensation of their own disintegration Subconscious fear is processed passively in the body as a host of mystifying symptoms: rashes, illnesses, pains, cramps, aches. It is also processed actively as reproduction: making copies of ourselves as a practice of partial immortality.

"What does the fish think when he is jerked up by the mouth through the silver limits of existence and into a new universe where the air drowns him and the light is blue madness?"[2] The fish thinks: extinction, tornado, eternal life, end of the world, heaven, hell, alien abduction, nuclear war. The number of eschatologial scenarios created by human civilisations from time immemorial to now would take days to list.[3] These scenarios are a marvel of biology: we are a species that evolved to think not only of our individual demise, but the end of life itself, or the end of the very substance of the universe. Nanotechnological existential risk scenarios concerning tiny self-replicating machines consuming the Earth's ecosystem lie somewhere between science-fiction, scientific hypothesis, tech gossip, and policy recommendation. Now disproved, they speculate that nanotechnological molecules could exponentially self-replicate until they consume all biomass on Earth, a scenario known as "ecophagy," the act of consuming the environment wholesale, like a Titan in ancient Greek mythology. Indeed, paleontologist Peter Ward coined the "Medea Hypothesis" to describe a theory of life on Earth that tends towards *death* on Earth.[4] In contrast to the benevolent Gaia hypothesis, in which the planet is a collaborative, life-sustaining organism, Ward proposes that life on Earth is suicidal, and most extinctions were caused by reactionary microbes who want to restate their microbial dominance over the rest of life on the planet.

> The idea of autonomous, microscopic, self-replicating machines reached the height of popularity around the 1980s in the United States. Four decades prior, mathematician Joseph von Neumann proposed that macro-scale self-replicating machines will one day exist. Speculating on machine self-replication, von Neumann discovered that evolution requires that an agent is able to pass on information to offspring separately from itself, an insight that foreshadowed the discovery of DNA translation and replication by the cell in the 1950s. With advancements in nanotechnology, hypothetical von Neumann machines became more elusive and smaller, and in K. Eric Drexler's book *Engines of Creation: The Coming Era of Nanotechnology*, the grey goo hypothesis was described for the first time. Many still blame the popular book for stalling research in nano-technology.

Hypothetically able to convert 'host' mass to nanomass, therefore turning the whole ecosystem into themselves, nanobots resembled a hi-tech virus. Both viruses and nanobots show us that "evolution only needs three things to occur: variation, selection, and replication." 'Life' is not on the list.[5] It is difficult to overstate just how astounding it is that humans are capable of not only decoding but utilising principles of reproduction different to ours. Some roboticists look to viral self-replication as a template for developing self-replicating robots (though not very small ones). Roboticists working at Hod Lipson's Lab at Cornell University write code following principles of viral replication, creating "[a] digital universe filled with numerical organisms that reproduced, had numerical sex, repaired 'genetic' damage and parasitised one another." They observed computer programs swap code as they engaged in algorithmic reproduction. Virologist Nils Barricelli uses the term "symbio-organisms" to describe self-reproducing entities in binary code.[6]

> Self-replication is an ancient competitor of sexual reproduction: humans and viruses have been in competition since time immemorial.[7] If we have a semblance of ancestral memory, it is only natural that we might be anxious about self-replication. No matter whether we can use our sophisticated prefrontal cortex to trick ourselves into thinking that evolutionary competition is not the main goal of all life on Earth, we are in a deadly battle with other forms of being. Parallels between technological and biological evolution are as terrifying as they are awe-inspiring; some would say, sublime. As Emily Monosson puts it, "if viruses can evolve within hours, computer code can do it within fractions of a second. Viruses are dumb; computers have processors that might some day surpass our own brains."[8] While put to rest as an existential threat on policy level, the grey goo hypothesis tells us much about today's existential fears of extinction and inhuman invasion. Biotechnology, autonomous weapons, the plague, 'we are polluting the planet!', have your pick of end-of-days scenarios. Psychologically alienated both from 'nature' and 'technology,' man experiences both as a threat. Having inoculated himself from nature with technology, and having subsequently made that technology functional to the point of being natural, man, in the paranoid posture that he has assumed for many centuries, perceives himself as if in a fortress and under assault. Planetary state change is experienced as an invasion when both poles of the transition - nature and technology - appear to us in forms of macro- and microscopic replicators, alien to our human logic of sexual reproduction.

For Drexler, the grey goo scenario would be a depressing ending to humanity because it could "stem from a simple laboratory accident."[9] No malice, evil, or moral judgment on the failings of humanity would need to be exerted. In a much-discussed article by historian of modernity Dipesh Chakravarty, climate change is similarly described as an accident produced by our industrial culture. In an extraordinary argument, he sketches how we have "stumbled" into what is now called the Anthropocene (the Age of Man), a product of a contingent cosmic shift:

> Take the case of the agricultural revolution, so called, of ten thousand years ago. It was not just an expression of human inventiveness. It was made possible by certain changes in the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, a certain stability of the climate, and a degree of warming of the planet that followed the end of the Ice Age (the Pleistocene era)—things over which human beings had no control . . . "There can be little doubt," writes one of the editors of Humans at the End of the Ice Age, "that the basic phenomenon—the waning of the Ice Age—was the result of the Milankovitch phenomena: the orbital and tilt relationships between the Earth and the Sun." Without this lucky "long summer" or what one climate scientist has called an "extraordinary fluke" of nature in the history of the planet, our industrial-agricultural way of life would not have been possible.[10]

Studying the convergence between technological and ecological changes presents us with no simple moral causality, and offers no clear villains and heroes. Judging from existing eschatological scenarios, we'd much prefer it if civilisation ended by way of punishment rather than by chance: from religious to secular upheaval, end of the world scenarios are usually accompanied by feverish moral panic and scapegoating,whereonegroupisblamed,practicallymetaphysically, for all evil in the world. While 'evil' scientists, capitalists and technocrats, or corporate greed, or unrestrained curiosity can be part of this moral narrative, a rarely considered grey goo scenario under the name "malicious ecophagy" stages a conflict between human and bot reproduction. In this hypothesis, nanobots purposefully and maliciously self-replicated in order to attack animals that reproduce sexually. We have "goodbots" and "badbots," the former defending humanity and the latter attacking it. Tellingly, in Freitas' review of this scenario, the badbots enter the human body like a virus, and drill through animal tissues: a deadly explosion of self-replication within a mammal body. There are also more spiritual iterations. It is interesting to read Greg Bear's 1985 novel *Blood Music* alongside serious policy recommendations from the same decade. In the novel, the grey goo hypothesis is also a parable of arti-ficial intelligence. What begins as an immunological invasion of the human body ends in a transcendent finale as trillions of single-cells nanobots become intelligent. The novel works from the premise that reality is the function of its observers, so when the nanobots become intelligent, they mutate the whole Terran ecosystem just by registering it in their hivemind. The book's ending, when humanity is ter-raformed by the nanobots, is glorious in its ecstatic specieswide *phase changes*.

> As dated or fantastical as nanotechnological risk may look to us today, its implications are distinctly contemporary. In a paper dating back to 2000, one of the first to present a systematic overview of the grey goo existential risk scenario, "Some Limits to Global Ecophagy by Biovorous Nanoreplicators, with Public Policy Recommendations," Robert A. Freitas Jr. already makes the connection between nanobots and climate change. [11] If there are too many nanobots replicating at once, they will accelerate biosphere warming. In addition, nanobots would perceive all biomass as accumulators of energy to be 'eaten:'

Ecophagic nanorobots would regard living things as environmental carbon accumulators, and biomass as a valuable ore to be mined for carbon and energy. Of course, biosystems from which all carbon has been extracted can no longer be alive but would instead become lifeless chemical sludge.

> Ironically, Freitas' description of what nanobots could do to biomass is what *human*s are (kind of) doing to biomass. Humans convert biomass to energy to reproduce not only ourselves in the flesh but also in *artifice*: if we consider technology as the extension of human bodies and senses, we are replicating ourselves through our technologies and cultures, rather than only by having children. Philosopher Patricia MacCormack criticises human sexual reproduction as a form of transhumanism, that is, seeking immortality.[12] But what about human *asexual* reproduction? If we take the proposition of media theorists like Marshall McLuhan seriously - that media are the extensions of man - we are also reproducing by converting biomass into artifice, not unlike what the nanobots are imagined to do in the grey goo hypothesis.[13] When we convert biomass into cultural and technical artefacts, we are reproducing asexually - is this not simply a slightly different reading of the well-accepted theory of memetics, of how ideas and cultures evolve through selection, variation, and replication? Are we the von Neuman machines?

Von Neumann's self-replicating machines are, of course, a machine counterpart of life, which is by default able to reproduce. To consider humans as von Neumann machines is to consider technological evolution as part of human reproduction. Technological reproduction, whether through artificial life, artificial intelligence or simply by way of cultural artefacts, is not about exact copies. Neither is sexual reproduction, unless we speak about cloning rather than having babies. When we convert biomass into technology, we are self-replicating: extending ourselves through selection, repetition and alternation. Just like the hypothetical nanobots, we are converting biomass into artifice as a way of extending the lifespan of our species. The result of this ecophagy remains to be seen, but this time, rather than speculating about microbots invading our bodies, we are the microbots invading the ecosystem and converting it into technology.

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Author
Zheng Mahler
in collaboration with Tiffany Sia

Location
Hong Kong

Zheng Mahler are an artist (Royce Ng) and anthropologist (Daisy Bisenieks) duo working together on research intensive, community based, site-specific projects often utilising digital media, performances and installation to explore the relationships between art and research practice. Drawing from each other's respective backgrounds, they examine the limits as well as the methods and strategies of expanding both their familiar disciplines while experimenting with new interdisciplinary possibilities or cross pollinations, where anthropological approaches are applied to art practice and artistic methodologies are utilised as research exercises in the studies of anthropology. Together they have exhibited, performed and participated in numerous art spaces, institutions and residencies, working alongside various communities in Australia, Asia, Africa, Europe and the US.
www.zhengmahler.world

Zheng Mahler
Hellscrape

Title
Hellscrape

Tag
Resistance
Surveilliance
Artificial Intelligence
Technology

Material



Video



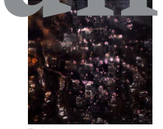
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Zheng Mahler's collaboration with the artist and filmmaker Tiffany Sia entitled 'Hellscrape' conjures up a series of landscape images produced by a generative adversarial network (styleGAN) algorithm trained on a dataset of media images of significant sites in Hong Kong's 2019 anti-extradition protests. The dataset was scraped from Google image searches of Harcourt Road, Tamar Park and PolyU over a period of one hour. The resulting generated landscapes hover in a liminal state, between known and unknown datasets, frozen in horrific trans-imaginary moments of time where multiple threads collapse into one. The images are also a synchronic map of the artists' IP address detailed at the time and place in which the image search was undertaken, which simultaneously function as a particular, mutated typology of the media's site-specific representation of the protest sites themselves. Consequently, the images are viewed as formal agglomerations of art historical and photographic landscape conventions weighted towards the cinematic spectacularisation of protest. Amidst so much resistance against surveillance, facial recognition and the technological apparatus of the state within the protest, the work raises questions around the queasiness of using AI generated imagery and the reappropriation of the ongoing "capture" that unfolded in those months, and amounts to taking on the subject position of the state itself in order to critique it. Snippets of concrete poetry composed by Sia, excerpts from her forthcoming book Too Salty Too Wet 更咸更濕, emits a hellish scroll about affect, geography and the occult in Hong Kong, which are threaded into the images, woven in the style of a voice-over text or subtitles which come to embody what film theorist Michael Chion describes as a kind of talking and acting shadow – "These images although static contain hundreds of threads of time, and a voice emerges from this void as an atemporal, spectral being – 'a special being'." Our times of political unrest are at once etched into our digital timelines, our bodies and our dreams. Accordingly, these phantasmagorias challenge traditional images of landscape photography and painting. These images ask, "what does the landscape of affect look like"?



YOGA

body picks what visits you in your dreams



Dancers will still run

horses will still sizzle

Stocks will still dance

Author
Daniel C Howe

Location
Hong Kong

Daniel Howe (US/HK) is an artist, researcher, and critical technologist whose work focuses on the interrelationships between networks, language, and politics. His collaborative practice explores the nature of algorithms and their impact on human values like autonomy, diversity, privacy and freedom. Howe is an open-source advocate and contributor to dozens of socially-engaged software projects over the past two decades. His outputs include software interventions, art installations, algorithmically-generated text and sound, and tools for artists. He currently resides in Hong Kong where he teaches at the School of Creative Media.
www.rednoise.org/daniel

Title
Spectre, Deepfakes and the Contamination of Contamination

Tag
Deepfake
Influence Industry
Surveilliance
Artificial Intelligence
Technology

Material


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Daniel C Howe
Spectre, *Deepfakes and the Contamination of Contamination*

Spectre, by Daniel Howe and Bill Posters, is an immersive installation that attempts to detourn the tactics and technology used by the digital influence industry to manipulate people's behaviours and decision-making. The installation invites visitors to explore the implications of surveillance-driven capitalism and the new religion of Dataism, and to better understand their impacts on trust, privacy and democracy. Below Howe talks about the release of Spectre, the deepfakes from the project, and the events of the last year.

Soon after our prototype of the Spectre installation debuted at the Sheffield DocFest in mid-2019, videos of the deepfake characters who guide visitor through the experience spread rapidly across social media, in what was referred to at the time as 'going viral'. These synthetic celebrities – Mark Zuckerberg, Kim Kardashian, Donald Trump, Damian Hirst and others – and the glimpses into their warped psyches that the project revealed, were covered across the media landscape and even discussed in a session on deepfakes in the US Congress. Of course, we had

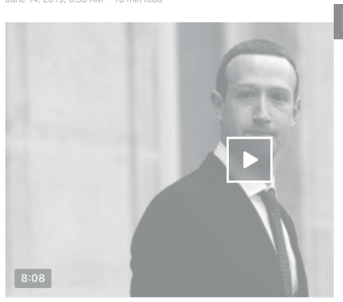


VIDEO LIVE SHOWS 2020 ELECTIONS CORONAVIRUS

After manipulated Zuckerberg, Pelosi videos, lawmakers grasp for 'deepfake' answers

Beyond tech barriers, experts and lawmakers grapple with free speech questions.

By **Lee Ferran** and **Fergal Gallagher**
June 14, 2019, 6:58 AM • 10 min read



When seeing isn't believing: using AI to create 'Deepfakes'

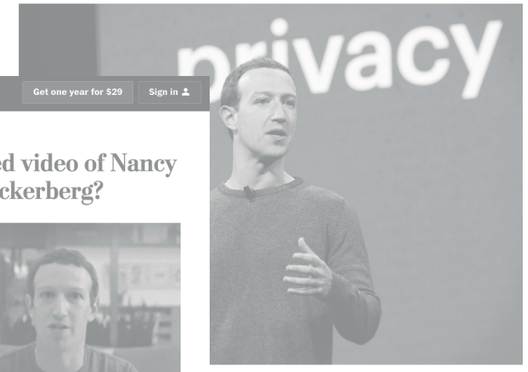
The latest in artificial technology allows creators to swap and meld vi

Days after an artist uploaded a digitally manipulate
appearing to show Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg
monologue about "control[ling] the future," a real-l

Artists Artworks Auctions Editorial More

News Jun 13, 2019

Artists created deepfake videos of Mark Zuckerberg t
test Facebook's misinformation policies.



no, via Flick

book with deepfake videos that seem to show
rberg speaking about his unprecedented
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one man, with total control of billions of
secrets, their lives, their futures," says the
rsion of Zuckerberg, created by artists Bill
collaboration with startup Canny AI. "I owe

ice actor and an artificial intelligence algorithm.

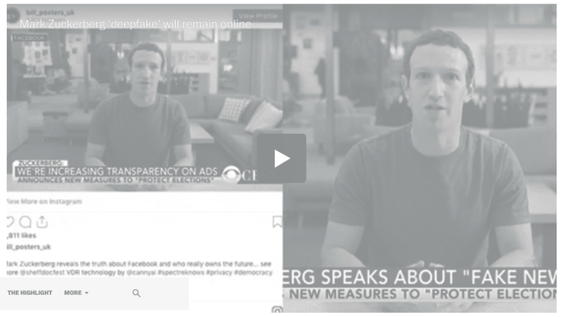
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Facebook wouldn't delete an altered video of Nancy Pelosi. What about one of Mark Zuckerberg?



Mark Zuckerberg created using artificial intelligence, called a "deepfake."

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Facebook lets deepfake Zuckerberg video stay on Instagram

12 June 2019



The deepfake clip features a computer-generated version of Mark Zuckerberg talking, blinking and moving his head for emphasis

Facebook has said it will not remove a manipulated video of its chief Mark Zuckerberg from Instagram, in which he appears to credit a secretive organisation for his success.

The clip is a "deepfake", made by AI software that uses photos of a person to create a video of them in action.

Facebook had previously been criticised for not
US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

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3 hours ago

Features



The homeless addict who became a professor

Un groupe d'artistes et de communicants fait tenir au patron de Facebook des propos qu'il n'a jamais prononcés, dans une vidéo truquée. Ils l'ont diffusée sur Instagram, qui appartient à Facebook.

Par Nicolas Six

Publié le 13 juin 2019 à 08h30 · Lecture 6 min.

Dans une intervention vidéo de quelques secondes circulant sur Instagram depuis vendredi 7 juin, Mark Zuckerberg tient des propos inquiétants sur nos données personnelles : « *Quiconque contrôle les données contrôle le futur* » lance-t-il. Le patron de Facebook, qui détient Instagram, n'a en réalité jamais prononcé cette phrase : la vidéo est un travaillant en collaboration a américaines spécialisées dan

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Mark Zuckerberg

This article is more than 1 year old

Doctored video of sinister Mark Zuckerberg puts Facebook to the test

Last month Facebook declined to remove a manipulated video of Nancy Pelosi even after it was viewed millions of times



A misleading clip of Mark Zuckerberg casts the Facebook founder in a sinister light. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA

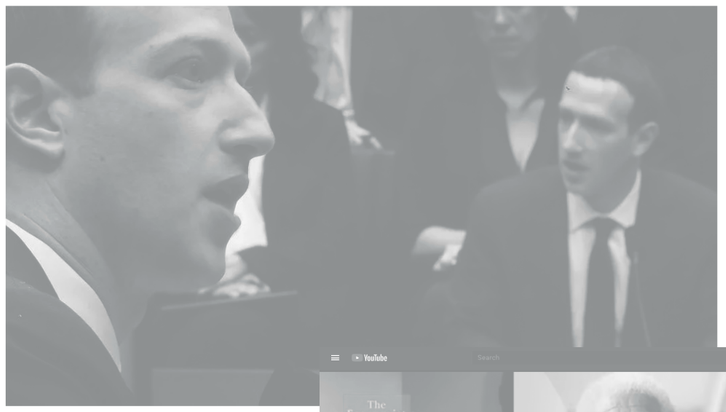
Luke O'Neil

EN DIRECT

#COVID-19 #VACCINS FRANCE AFRIQUE REPORTAGES EMISSIONS STOP L'INFOX

Mark Zuckerberg pris au piège des "deepfakes"

Publié le : 12/06/2019 - 16:37 Modifié le : 12/06/2019 - 16:41



La fausse vidéo de Mark Zuckerberg est une création de deux art

Texte par : Sébastien SEIBT 5 mn

**Des artistes ont créé une fausse vidéo de M
une organisation criminelle fictive. Une œu
trucage vidéo ridiculisant la démocrate Nar**

"Imaginez un homme qui contrôle les données vo
vie et leur futur. Je dois ça à Spectre. Spectre m'a

Facebook wants to stay "neutral" on deepfakes. Congress might force it to act.

lark Zuckerberg is the newest victim of AI-manipulated
edia, but he won't be the last.

Sigal Samuel | Jun 13, 2019, 3:00pm EDT



cebook needs a new approach to deepfakes and misinformation. When will it forego its supposed "neutrality" and start king out some actual positions? | Washington Post/Getty Images

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How would you react if you saw a video of Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg describing himself grandiosely as "one man, with total control of billions of people's stolen data, all their secrets, their lives, their futures"?

opefully, you'd realize that this video — which was **posted a few days ago on Instagram**, a ompany owned by Facebook — is a forgery. More specifically, it's a deepfake, a video that has een doctored, using AI, to make it look like someone said or did something they never actually aid or did.

e Zuckerberg video was created by artists Bill Posters and Daniel Howe together with the raeli startup **Canny** as part of a UK exhibition. It's actually not a great deepfake — you can tell at it's a voice actor speaking, not Zuckerberg — but the visuals are convincing enough. The iginal footage they doctored comes from a 2017 clip of Zuckerberg discussing Russian ection interference.

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epfake treatment – shoddy approach

Under the watchful gaze of the global community, each minute that the video stays up serves as a test for the social media company

Kubu Shand-Baptiste | @kubared | Wednesday 12 June 2019 16:24 | comments

There's delicious irony in all of this. Weeks after (once again) dismissing the dangers of doctored political footage on Facebook, its founder and CEO unwittingly landed the starring role in a misleading video of his own.

Well, not technically his own, it's part of an art installation called Spectre that he had nothing to do with. But that's exactly the point of the video and other "deepfakes" like it – to make us believe that what we're watching came straight from the horse's mouth, as opposed to complex computer programming, or convincing video editing.

To bring you up to speed, towards the end of last month House speaker Nancy Pelosi became the target of an attack on her credibility. Using footage from a speaking engagement at the Centre for American Progress, the altered video convincingly made it seem as if, instead of speaking in the clear and concise manner that we're used to, Pelosi was having trouble speaking altogether, slurring and repeating her words as if under the influence.

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Tech

Facebook lets deepfake Zuckerberg video stay on Instagram

12 June 2019



The deepfake clip features a computer-generated ve
blinking and moving his head for emphasis

**Facebook has said it will not remove a manipul
Zuckerberg from Instagram, in which he appea
organisation for his success.**

The clip is a "deepfake", made by AI software tha
create a video of them in action.

Facebook had previously been criticised for not
US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

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NEWS TRAINING ETHICS & LEADERSHIP FACT-CHECKING MEDIA LITERACY EVENTS

On Wednesday, The Washington Post reported that two artists and a tech startup created the video of Facebook's chief executive. Posted on Instagram, the deepfake made it look like Zuckerberg was bragging on CBS about stealing data from users. In actuality, the video was created using AI and a voice actor. The same artists created other deepfakes depicting Donald Trump and Kim Kardashian West.

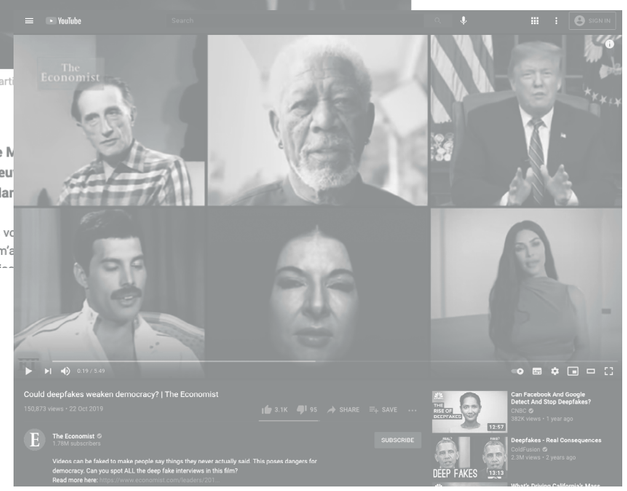


The discovery set off a firestorm of speculation over whether Facebook-owned Instagram would remove the videos, since one depicted Zuckerberg. Facebook hadn't removed the manipulated Pelosi video, instead relying on its fact-checking partners to debunk and flag the post as false. (Disclosure: Being a signatory of Poynter's International Fact-Checking Network code of principles is a necessary condition for joining the project.)

bill_posters_uk
15.8k followers



6,768 likes





little idea how our understanding of the term 'viral' would be transformed in the months to come.

As COVID-19 spread across the world and upcoming exhibitions of the installation –in the Americas, Europe and Asia – were cancelled, the deepfakes from the project, a relatively small part of the Spectre experience, became embroiled in a global conversation about AI and media manipulation that still continues. Yet synthetic media, which has long existed in aural and photographic forms was, even then, only one element of the manipulation equation. New tactics and technologies, whether psychologically micro-targeted advertising, professional political manipulators, or toxic social media bubbles have had the potential to impact cultural and political spheres in powerfully negative ways, and were largely absent from the debate at the time of Spectre's release. Yet with the Brexit referendum close at hand, and the 2020 US election only months off, the stakes were high. The weaponization of targeted disinformation in social media had already been shown to have impacted prior elections (the US presidential election in 2016, for example) as well as public debate on critically important issues like climate change. In a recent study, researchers estimated that on a typical day in the weeks leading up to the Paris Climate Agreement (IPCC 2018), upwards of 25% of all Twitter posts on topics related to climate change were made by automated accounts or bots, defined as "tools designed to generate, disseminate, and promote positions on social media". Of these the majority were found to be "skeptical or denying of the wide scientific consensus on climate change" (Marlowe 2020).

Considering the magnitude of these issues and the degree to which misinformation can derail public debate, it is not only Spectre deepfake character studies that are relevant to the question of algorithmic manipulation. I focus here instead on a far less-discussed element of the project, specifically the "manipulation game" that forms the overarching narrative for the immersive experience. For visitors to the installation, who have logged in with a social media account and then agreed to the project's terms-of-service, the game begins when they are tasked with selecting, from a series of (surreptitiously captured) profile-style photographs, a previous user of the system to be the target of an as-yet-unknown series of manipulations. Users are then presented with a series of gamified tasks which focus either on generating additional data about their target, or later, using existing data to influence the target's beliefs and behaviors. The tasks increase in complexity and potential discomfort, beginning with simple demographic assessments such as age and gender, to evaluating the financial, political and sexual inclinations of the target, to helping facial recognition algorithms more precisely identify emotions in the captured images of their faces. The final task which users (those who have not abandoned the installation – the vast majority do not) is to create a series of social media advertisements, via an interactive design tool, in order to change the target's intended vote on either the Brexit decision or the 2020 US election, depending on geographic location. Users are tasked to design these advertisements specifically for their target, based on a range of personal data points that the system has accumulated, including the target's OCEAN personality score, a five-category system believed (and used by marketers (Seimiene 2012)) to accurately model a human subject's patterns of thoughts, feelings, and behavior (Diener 2019)[1].

As in the well-known Milgram experiments (McLeod 2017) the subject of primary interest is not the target here, but rather the visitor, who, by making judgments and selecting strategies, incrementally reveal themselves to Spectre's cognitive psychological quantification. This fact becomes apparent to visitors as they realize their participation has already enabled their own subjugation to future users of the system, who may choose to target them. By engaging with Spectre, much like the modern-day systems of platform capitalists that it takes as inspiration, you empower it to use you – to forever task others with the relentless penetration of your persona. In this sense Spectre targets the fundamental property of immune systems: the ability to discriminate "self" from "other" so that contaminating bacteria or viruses can be attacked. We might even consider the system to be "autoimmunological" in a sense, exhorting participants to attack their own cells and tissues as if they were foreign threats.

Of course, metaphors of autoimmunity have been discussed extensively in critical theory (though often derided by actual immunologists), notably in the later work of Derrida, developing out his earlier preoccupation with 'contamination'[2]. He writes "to protect its life, to constitute itself as unique living ego, to relate, as the same, to itself it is necessarily led to welcome the other within... it must therefore take the immune defenses apparently meant for the non-ego, the enemy, the opposite, the adversary and direct them at once for itself and against itself." (Derrida 1993) An apt description of how the vast systems of computational disinformation, driven by the Zuckerbergs of the world, function (and equally apt in the context of Spectre's manipulation game). As Derrida notes, such systems are only quasi-suicidal. The contamination of the self is achieved by the self, as other, to an extent that self and non-self can no longer be distinguished. As Peta Mitchell writes, "Autoimmunity in this sense, then, reveals itself as the limit of the law of contamination—indeed as the contamination of contamination." (Mitchell 2017) The systems of late-stage surveillance capitalism,
in digesting the datafied corpses of its happily consenting users, mutate and reproduce in what can perhaps best be described as a metaphorical act of tireless auto-necrophilia.

Sources:

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1 It is important to note that the data that the user is provided in these manipulation activities is real data about the target, collected as the installation runs and distilled via a large-scale deep-learning model developed by researchers at the Psychometrics Centre at Cambridge University and trained on over a million human subjects.

2 In fact, Derrida's shift towards immunological tropes in his writings of the 1990s is often considered a marker of his so-called 'ethico-political' turn.

Author
Tim Wolff

Location
Vienna

Tim Wolff's work reflects the dynamics of social, political, economic and architectural structures. His graphics and moving "images" harken back to observations of the banal and mundane. Through his unique style of visualization, Wolff lends a tangible stru- cture to scenes out of everyday life, providing an impulse for critical reflection on events that would otherwise be overlooked. Regarding the formal aspects of his work, Wolff places special emphasis on dynamics and rhythm, using broad lines that flow powerfully, yet appear carefully controlled. This results in sparse, though at the same time incredibly dynamic compositions. Simultaneously, the artist unravels his motifs by spreading out the contours and distinct perspectives of his pieces to form deep, layered structures.
www.timwolff.com

Title
Level of Impact

Tag
Fluid Metaphors and Symbols
Environmental Contamination

Material

Tim Wolff
Level of Impact

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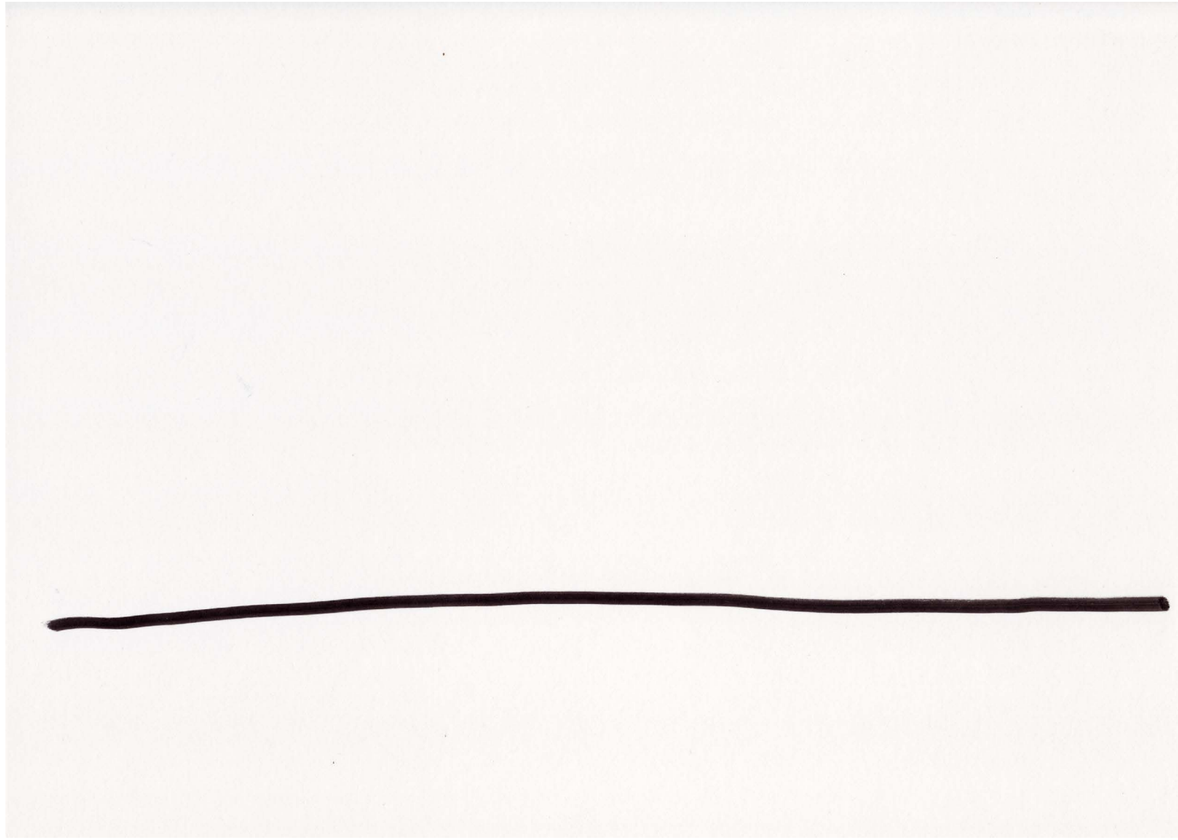

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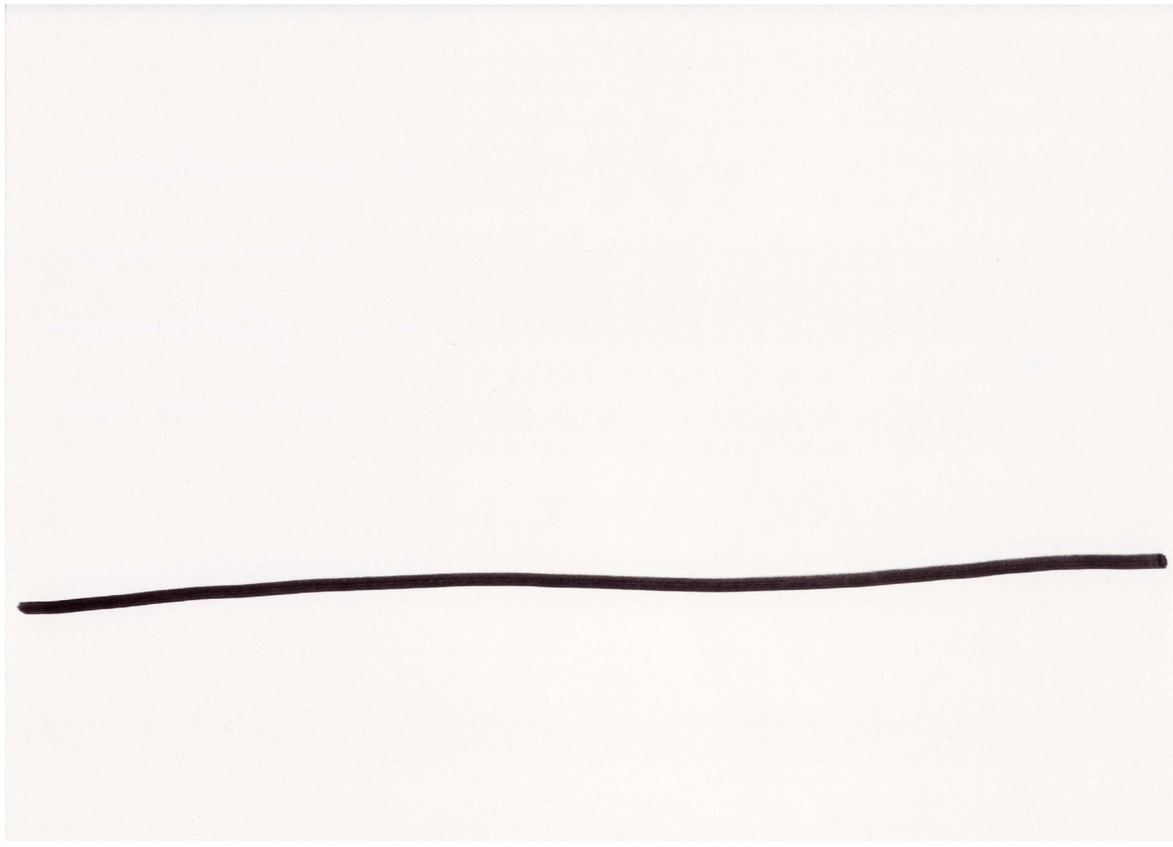
P. 79

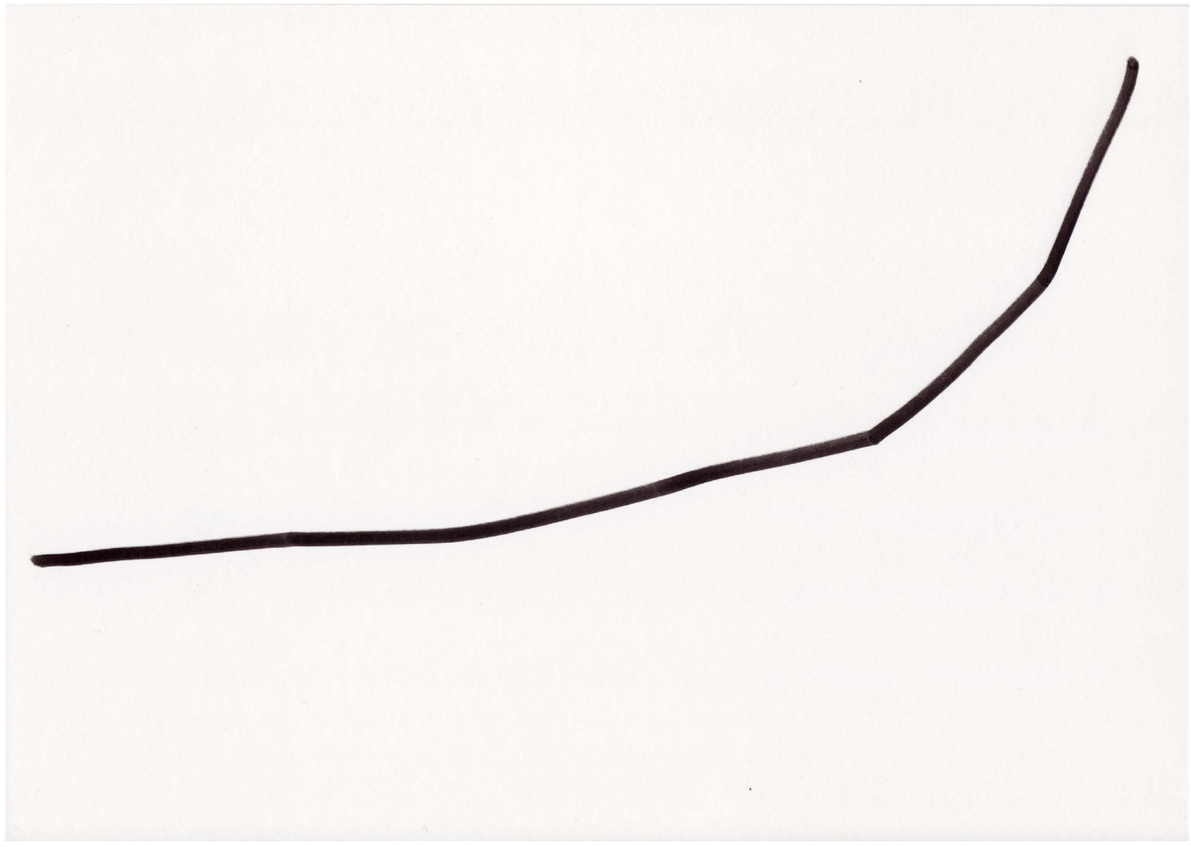


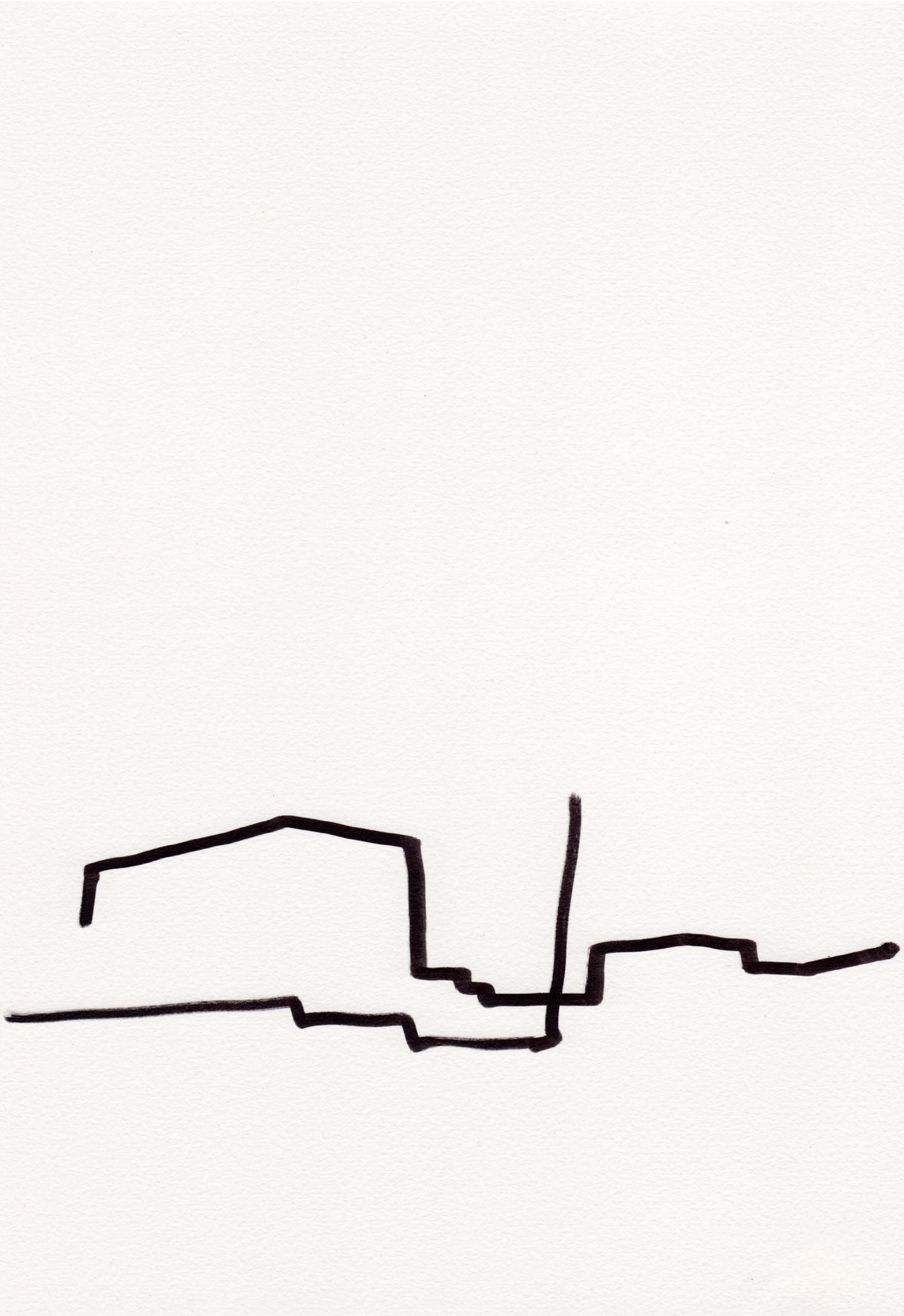
Exponential graphs and rates have come to define our times. One cannot deny how many of the critical dynamics of 21st century life develop at a vertiginous rate: human population, pollution, global warming, viral diseases, etc.; all these developments take place on such a massive scale that they become incomprehensible to most of us. Graphs and data visualizations help us understand complex numerical information over a period of centuries, and at the same time, they also increasingly shape how we perceive our new reality.

Never before has the world stared so obsessively at a line on a chart that goes up and down, as we now do in the time of Covid19. There have been economic crises in the past during which performance graphs, like the one that calculates the stock market indices, were followed with much nervousness, but now we have reached a new level - it is no longer just a small part of the world population fixing its eyes on a line, but the entire global population. The coronavirus has changed the way lines are perceived: the line has degenerated into an indicator whose main task is to depict concrete threats.

This idea is the starting point for the series of drawings "Level of Impact", which uses simple lines to describe the exponential impact humans have had on their environment. The drawings stretch out over several pages, fractioning the motifs, and at the same time, increasingly shifting the focus onto the lines as graphs. Only its assembly allows for interpretation.













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Location
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Felix Stalder is a professor for Digital Culture at the Zurich University of the Arts. His work focuses on the intersection of cultural, political and technological dynamics, in particular on new modes of commons-based production, copyright, and transformation of subjectivity. He not only works as an academic, but also a cultural producer, being a moderator of the mailing list <nettime>, a crucial nexus of critical net culture., and a member of the World Information Institute and the Technopolitics Working Group, both based in Vienna. He is the author/editor of numerous books, among others Manuel Castells and the Theory of the Network Society (Polity Press, 2006), Deep Search. The Politics of Search Beyond Google (Transaction Publishers, 2009), Digital Solidarity (PML & Mute, 2014), Kultur der Digitalität (Suhrkamp, 2016), Aesthetics of the Commons (Diaphanes, 2021) and Digital Unconscious (Autonomedia, 2021).
www.felix.openflows.com

Title
Contamination and Affection in Digital Media

Tag
Holobiont
Community
Algorithmicity
Technology

Material



P. 83



P. 84

Felix Stalder

Contamination and Affection in Digital Media

In 2012, a review article presented an emerging consensus in the field of biology that animals, including human beings, cannot be regarded as individuals, that is stable, self-contained units, no matter whether this unit is defined anatomically, embryologically, physiologically, immunologically, genetically, or evolutionarily.[1] Rather, they noted that a symbiotic view of life had risen to prominence, meaning that what used to be seen as individuals are now understood as composites of non-similar organisms. Such a composite is called *holobiont*, which is an "integrated organism comprised of both host elements and persistent populations of symbionts."[2] The host here is the larger and the symbionts are the smaller but equally necessary organism of the composite. In the case of humans, the host is organs, and the cells of which there are comprised, the symbionts are, for example, bacteria that live in the digestive system. These bacteria are non-human insofar as they exist also outside the human body, but the human body as a composite cannot exist without them. To put the same thought differently, animals do not just live *within* ecologies but are ecologies *themselves*.

> **Why does this matter from a cultural point of view? First, because there has always been a close relationship between political and biological categories. It is no coincidence that the individual-centered view of life emerged in the West in the 19th century, in the formative phase of political liberalism which itself is based on the enlightenment notion of the self-possessed individual.[3] In the same way, there is again a parallel movement of what one could call "post-individual" thinking, ranging from feminist notions of "entanglement",[4] to theories of "actor-networks"[5] and "post-humanism"[6], and beyond.[7] Second, and more important for the present argument, is that there is also a praxeological dimension to such shifts in paradigmatic understandings of the world. People, in everyday life, understand the world through concepts that correspond to how they act in the world. And how they act in the world is shaped by the technological infrastructure at their disposal. It has long been shown that the idea of the individual and the idea of the separation between the single person and the world, emerged in, and reflects, print culture, where reading takes place in isolation (that is, silent) and each reader has to determine by him- or herself the meaning of the text and its possible relation to the outside world.[8] Descartes's famous "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am) can be understood as the quintessential formulation of the reading experience.**

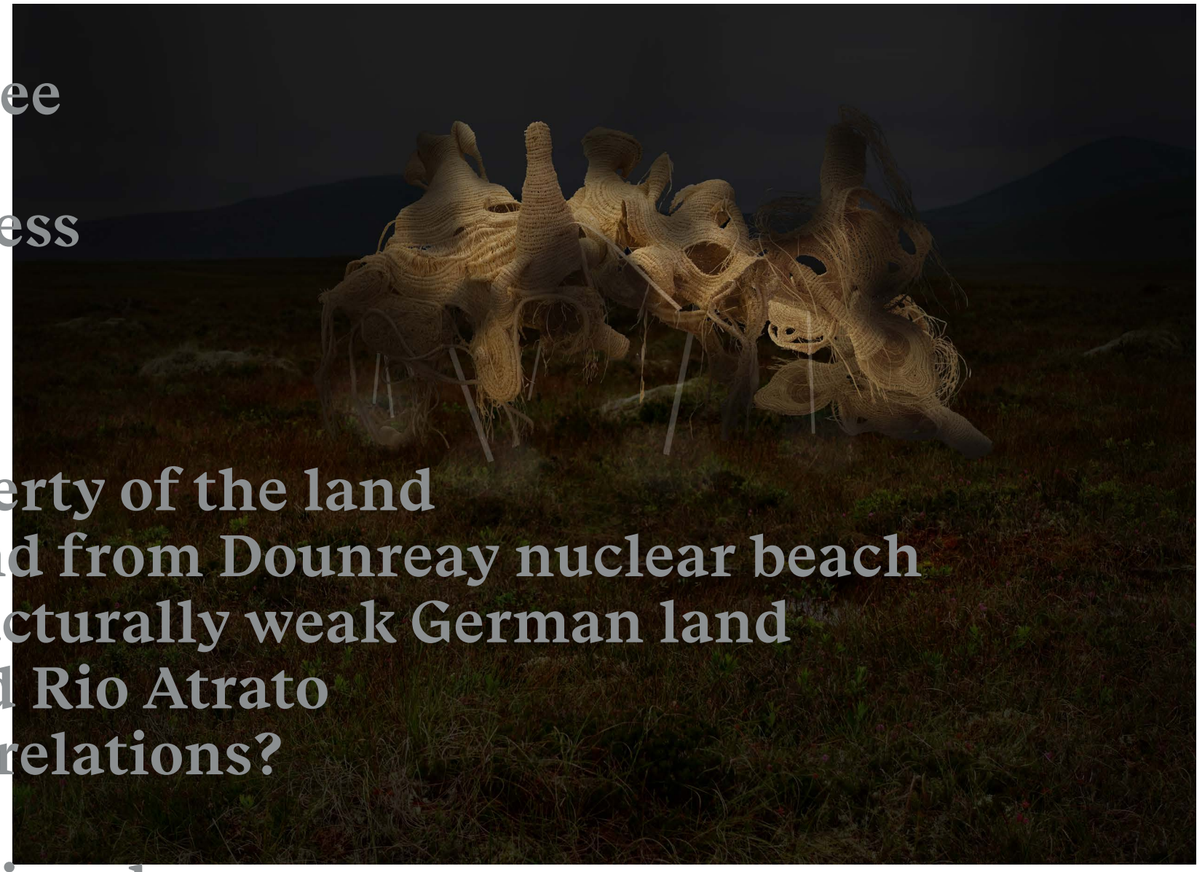
In digital media, particularly social media, reading, or, more generally, consuming media, is very different. It is, for the better or worse, much more interactive, much more dialogical, characterized less by introspective interpretation, and more by active linking of single statements into a larger network of meaning-making. Thus, thinking is not achieved by maintaining a critical distance, but by seeking active involvement. Yet, while the first-person account, rather than the impersonal analysis has become the prevalent mode of knowing the world, the author of this networked meaning is not the single person, neither on the side of production nor of reception. Rather, it is the larger community that is created by this networking and cross-linking activity. This community is held together by affects – by a certain way of seeing and feeling the world – and the shared affect is produced by contamination, that is, a hard-to-control and even harder-to-predict exchange of (cultural) material. But community might be a misleading world, because community suggests a homogeneity of what its members are. Communities, we have long thought, are composed of people. But in the context of social media, it is more than obvious, that it is composed of people and machines. Indeed, as I have argued elsewhere, the digital condition is characterized by both communality and algorithmicity,[9] that is, both people and machines are actively involved in meaning-making. And, now, sitting in our 'home offices' during a quasi-lockdown, it has become unavoidable to acknowledge that the range of actors – and their cross-contamination – extends even further than humans and machines.

> **All of these shifts in biological and political thinking as well as in everyday experience and cultural practice, have a common direction. They point away from the mechanical, linear thinking in which the whole is the sum of its parts, towards a symbiotic thinking in which the whole is very different from the sum of its parts, but also that the parts themselves are in flux, adapting to each other and the emergent dynamics of the whole.**

Applying the notion of the holobiont as a metaphor, we can think of the social media infrastructures as a host and the users as the symbionts living inside the host and providing critical functionality to it, defining each other in the process.[10] And while it may not be particularly attractive to see ourselves akin to bacteria living inside an animal body, it is worth remembering that the symbiont can live outside the host, but the host needs the symbiont to survive.

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8 Eisenstein, Elisabeth L. 1983. *The Printing Revolution in Early Modern Europe.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
9 Felix Stalder, *The Digital Condition* (Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2018).
10 I'm aware that this metaphor must not be overextended, since such biological views obscure the dimension of power which is fundamental to all relationships in which humans are involved.

Thulhu thu thu,
made of fibers from raffia, an African palm tree
Months of collective weaving and knotting
undefined, formless and seemingly functionless
It bears the traces of a Berlin backyard studio
And the stories of the weaving actors
Smells of its use in the Scottish moors
Reverberating cheap speculation on the property of the land
contaminated with micro doses, grains of sand from Dounreay nuclear beach
interspersed with nitrate-rich weeds of a structurally weak German land
awaiting activation at mercury-contaminated Rio Atrato
Thulhu thu thu, openings for cosmopolitical relations?
those that can hardly be represented.
It stimulates to touch, to grasp, to connect, to invoke
Turning matter into care
You want to become part of it, to preserve, to let it grow.
Thulhu thu thu waiting
to be invoked to reveal its material potential
addressing molecular extractivism.



Thulhu Thu Thu, before the sun harms you, knowbotiq 2019/20 foto credit: knowbotiq

Knowbotiq. Incantations for Molecular Intimacies (excerpt)



Thuthu Thu Thu, before the sun harms you, knowbotiq 2019/20, Ausstellungsansichten: Philipp Ottendörfer

Author
Michael Leung

Location
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Michael Leung is an artist/designer, researcher and visiting lecturer. He was born in London and moved to Hong Kong eleven years ago to complete a Masters in Design at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. His projects range from collective agriculture projects such as *The HK FARMers' Almanac 2014—2015* to Pangkerchief, produced by *Pang Jai* fabric market in Sham Shui Po. Michael is a visiting lecturer at Hong Kong Baptist University where he teaches social practice (MA). He is currently doing his PhD at the School of Creative Media, City University of Hong Kong. His research focuses on *Insurrectionary Agricultural Milieux*, rhizomatic forms of agriculture that exist in local response to global conditions of biopolitics and neoliberalism.

In 2014 Michael started writing fiction, self-publishing and reading them in public space. He contributes monthly to *Fong Fo*, an artist zine printed on the 21st of each month.
www.studioleung.com

Title
Wormholes Between Autonomous Territories

Tag
Resonance
Social Movement
Community

Material



P. 89

Michael Leung

Wormholes Between Autonomous Territories

Contamination Through Conviviality

Pay close attention, every step is revealing —you'll see trees to weeds. [...] The biodiversity has gifted the villagers with a self-sufficient life behind the so-called prosperous development of the city. There are indeed many precious resources that we should treasure.

— Introduction,《橫洲草藥圖鑑》Wang Chau Chinese Medicinal Herbs zine [1]

The starting of this text is accompanied by two distinct sounds: the clicking of mahjong tiles being shuffled by four villagers; and a chorus of birds that I have yet to recognise chirping on a tree that towers 30 metres and generations above me.[2] The mahjong table is located in a designated green belt zone called Yeung Uk San Village in Yuen Long, the north western part of the New Territories. The New Territories is 95,310 hectares (953.1 km²) in size and located in the northern part of Hong Kong. The area consists of new towns, diverse types of housing, country parks, wetlands, brownfields (contaminated farmland), arable land and outlying islands—and is home to around half the population of Hong Kong.

In October 2015, the Hong Kong government announced a plan to turn three New Territories villages, Yeung Uk San Village, Fung Chi Village and Wing Ning Village into high-rise public housing.[3] The plan proposes to flatten a slope, displace 500 villagers, uproot the green belt and evict its multispecies inhabitants.

I joined the three-village (herein referred to as Wang Chau) resistance against the development plan in February 2017 after witnessing a lineage of lost villages in Hong Kong: Choi Yuen Village, a rural village with around 500 people who were displaced by the Express Rail Link for the *'higher ends of diplomatic policy (anofficial reunion with the motherland) and financial betterment (increased business and tourism)'* in 2011;[4] Nga Tsin Wai Village, a 650-year old village that was acquired and demolished by the *'ruthless Urban Renewal Authority'* in 2016;[5] Harcourt Village, *'a leaderless but orderly community [in Admiralty] with its voluntary cleaning activities, spotless restrooms, self-study corner, and countless activities and artworks'* that was established during the Umbrella Movement in 2014;[6] and a farm in Ma Shi Po Village where 7000 square feet were *'boarded up and territorialised as part of the government's North East New Territories Development Plan'* in conjunction with Henderson Property Development Limited.[7] In 2017 a message in a Ma Shi Po Village land protectors group chat brought me to meet Wang Chau villagers and join their plight in keeping their homes and preserving the green belt that is adjacent to Long Ping Estate—around 11 hectares of arable land that were developed in the 1980s into a housing development that consists of 15 towering blocks with 2300 households and a homogenous shopping mall built above a bus terminus.[8]

Sitting at the vacant second mahjong table, writing into my notebook and watching the villagers enjoy their game, I occasionally collect a cold beer from the kitchen fridge for "Long Hair," who grew up here. I'm moved by how such a convivial and regular gathering of mahjong players continues to happen amidst an eviction where government officers and security guards visit villagers on weekdays—sometimes unannounced. On 29 August 2020 the government's Lands Department, who are responsible in realising the Wang Chau eviction, even took over an evicted villager's home and renovated it into an office to conduct their work. Later a Komatsu PC128US-8 excavator, equipped with a muffler that reduces the exhaust sound pollution, entered and destroyed a part of the village entrance and trees. Branches were made more "manageable" and chopped by a handheld chainsaw which is now stored in the Lands Department's village office, which is 30 metres away from the mahjong table.

How does a gathering become a "happening," that is, greater than a sum of its parts? One answer is contamination. We are contaminated by our encounters; they change who we are as we make way for others. As contamination changes world-making projects, mutual worlds—and new directions—may emerge.

— Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins [9]

In January 2020 I was worlds away, around 10000 kilometres from Wang Chau attending an annual gathering called the *Reclaim the Fields European Assembly* in the Basque Country, north of Spain. Following the previous 2019 assembly in Florence, comrades and I organised the 2020 assembly over several emails and meetings.[10] I got to *Amarauna*, a collective space that was a former nuns' convent, at night and walked around the huge building before entering a warm kitchen of friendly and familiar faces.[11] I had arrived.

Over the six days, between 50 to 80 people spoke in English, French, Castellano, Basque and German, sometimes simultaneously through the help of a sound system called Spiders located in the assembly room (a reappropriate chapel).[12] In the four-sink and eight-stove-kitchen we cooked, danced and industrially-blended hummus together. I volunteered to be part of Ears, a group of people who are 'available to hear requests or issues that can't be expressed openly to the whole group' so as to 'flag and mitigate domination/oppression [group] dynamics.' The Ears group placed a Shouting Box at Amarauna's entrance, which received anonymous notes that would later be read out aloud, in multiple languages, towards the end of each night's dinner. People stopped eating, always listened and often responded with consensus hand signals.[13]

In the book, The Coming Insurrection, anonymous author(s) The Invisible Committee share that, 'Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by resonance. Something that is constituted here resonates with the shock wave emitted by something constituted over there.'[14] Both Reclaim the Fields (RtF) assemblies and the online organisation teach what it means to resonate, listen and do it together, and I continue to learn from the farmers, activists, clowns, physicists, chestnut jam makers and multilingual anarchists.

Before the start of the 2020 assembly I was asked if I would be comfortable to facilitate the plenary[15] session on the first day and time slot of the schedule with M., who having done it last year later cheekily passed the task to N. this time. The trilingual Bulletin 14 zine, that was freely distributed to everyone, has a lengthy description of RtF, but N. and M. and I all felt that it was important to verbally share a description of some kind at the plenary. During the plenary I said something along the lines of:

I think each one of us in this room has a different perspective of what RtF is. Some have attended assemblies before, and for some, this is their first time. This is only my second time and I'm still learning what RtF is. For me, RtF is everybody in this room, who has travelled near and far distances to meet together, once a year, to collectively build the assembly together. It is our exhausted bodies, tired from our respective struggles and revolutions, coming together in this room. It is the sunlight coming through the window and illuminating our faces, preparing us for the week ahead—our collective potential, and what will come. This is what RtF means to me.

Two days later, I spoke with the microphone again, with simultaneous French and Castellano interpretation, but this time about Wang Chau and the ongoing Anti-Extradition Bill Movement in Hong Kong. The ongoing movement seemed to be well-reported in European news and a few people asked me to do a sharing about the movement despite the assembly focusing mostly on autonomous land practices—that I once described as connected by "wormholes"[16]— that practice mutual aid and situated knowledges.[17]

Without a projector I shared nuances and anecdotes behind more popular images such as the umbrellas, archers, lasers and awkward American flags. I also stuck up a few pages of A4 text, hoping that a collective knowledge could be shared and be helpful in some way to other resistances. Thinking with Tsing and The Invisible Committee, what happens to (each one of) us after resonating together for six days in one place? In other words, how do transnational RtF assemblies and all those convivial encounters affect us when we are back in our local contexts, struggles and resistances? Learning from similar transnational gatherings in Tokyo, Seoul and the 2019 Black Book Assembly in Hong Kong, I wonder if something like an (East) Asian Reclaim the Fields could happen in this part of the world and where this could be—maybe Wang Chau...[18]

The convivial research approach presented here engages the tradition of participatory, politically situated practices of collective, community-based knowledge production by highlighting transdisciplinary, reflexive investigative approaches that prioritize local, situated, and poetic knowledges.

— Center for Convivial Research & Autonomy [19]

After collectively cleaning the four-storey building, I left Amarauna on 10th February 2020 in a packed car with four other people. We crossed the snowy border to France to stay at: T., a 10-person collective with waste-restaurant-oil-fuelled cars and where I helped with building the brewery; R., a home to an ecosopher and required us hitchhiking five times to get there (before COVID-19 spread across Europe); O., where I timely arrived during a chantier week (French for 'collective work') also with people from all over Europe and where B. and I patiently watched a goat give birth by the river and I carried the newborn back up to the barn—stopping at times so that the mother was comfortable and could share affection; E., a small collective with numerous chestnut trees and a permanent artist-in-residence who I need to send Chinese medicinal herbs to; F., a suburban collective with sheep, chickens and bees that hosted a party on International Women's Day; A. a collective who live around a former paper factory where I helped set up a small garden behind some caravans; and La Rolandière at the ZAD (Zone à Défendre in French, 'Zone to Defend' in English) where I stayed in 2018 and this time done a more comprehensive sharing of the past six months with art, animism and the role of Chinese medicinal herbs in the ongoing movement in Hong Kong. Convivial research happens with everyday life, affective encounters and transnational solidarity—at and in-between each aforementioned autonomous collective and all the punctuation—to the anarchist who let S. ride on their car bonnet down the Pyrenees, to the comrade who asked me to elaborate on lionbird and phoenixism.[20]

1 Wang Chau Concern Group,《橫洲草藥圖鑑》(English translation: *Wang Chau Chinese Medicinal Herbs*) (Hong Kong: Self-published zine, 2020): Introduction (translated by the Wang Chau Concern Group)
2 Friday 4th September 2020, Yeung Uk San Village, Hong Kong
3 The government originally had plans to develop on more land to create 17,000 public housing units, but this was later reduced to developing the three villages and downsizing to 4,000 public housing units. www.hongkongfp.com/2016/09/21/govt-records-reveal-yuen-long-housing-plan-was-scaled-back-to-avoid-confrontation-with-rural-leader (accessed 29 October 2020)
4 Yee, Winnie L. M. 2019. "The post-urban gaze and Hong Kong independent cinema: An ecofeminist perspective," *Asian Cinema* vol. 30 no. 2 : 222. Doi: 10.1386/ac_00005_1.
5 www.tinyurl.com/wansik and https://ngatsinwaitsuen.wordpress.com (both accessed 29 October 2020)
6 Li, Cho-kiu, and Kin-long Tong. 2020. "We Are Safer without the Police: Hong Kong Protesters Building a Community for Safety," *Radical History Review* no. 137 : 222. Doi: 10.1215/01636545-8092870.
7 U.,《守田》*Protect Our Farmland* (Hong Kong: Self-published zine): 51
8 www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/global-elements/estate-locator/detail.html?propId=1&id=1321348400460&dist=3 (accessed 29 October 2020)
9 Tsing, Anna Lowenhaupt. 2017. *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins.* Princeton: Princeton University Press: 27
10 www.tinyurl.com/CommonsPar2 (accessed 29 October 2020)
11 *Amarauna* is an amalgamation of two Basque words, 'mother' and 'web.'
12 https://bla.potager.org and www.coati.pimienta.org/electronics/spider/index.en.html (both accessed 29 October 2020)
13 *The A-Z of Discussion from the Woodcraft Folk* https://cooperantics.coop/tools-games-and-other-resources (both accessed 29 October 2020)
14 The Invisible Committee, *The Coming Insurrection* (Los Angeles: The MIT Press, 2009): 12
15 www.reclaimthefields.org/bulletins/bulletin-14-fevrier-2020 (accessed 29 October 2020)
16 Ho, Hao-Tzu Shirley, Michael Leung and Elise Youn. 2019. 農: *Experiments in Farming and Living in South Korea, Hong Kong, and Taiwan.*Hong Kong: Self-published: 78
17 *'Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and authorship of 'objective' knowledge.'* Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991): 198
18 www.blackbook.hk (accessed 29 October 2020)
19 www.ccra.mitotedigital.org/conviviales (accessed 29 October 2020)
20 Yu, 余在思 Jonathan. 2020.《文字境》*Fire Word.* Hong Kong: Self-published zine : 5 and 13

I returned to Hong Kong and self-isolated for 14 days, in time to help Wang Chau villagers, the concern group and supporters to organise the 2020 Wang Chau Jackfruit Festival, which is likely to be the last before the greenbelt is concretised.[21] Today, a day before another eviction of possibly seven village houses, new encounters between strangers and determined communities still happen in unexpected ways, reminding me of the wormholes that I journeyed through in the Basque Country and France earlier this year.

Power lies rather in the prospect of shaping a series of activities and relationships over time.

— Keller Easterling, Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space [22]

Since meeting the Wang Chau villagers in February 2017 I have seen how co-learning, mutual aid and contamination happens at villagers' homes, at the four jackfruit festivals, whilst silkscreen printing in my home, convivial birthdays in evictees' new homes, book sharings in community art spaces, in villagers' gardens where plant clippings and fruits are shared freely, on the rooftop of a villager's home flying a drone together, during discursive dim sum encounters, organising with those from previous land struggles such as Choi Yuen Village and Nga Tsin Wai Village, publishing bilingual essays about Wang Chau; and the impromptu and planned gatherings at the mahjong table—which may also be evicted tomorrow. Everything here contributes to world-making and over time becomes a collective pedagogy of the movement. In other words being present and actively involved through convivial research and publishing (as direct action when little more can be done)[23], builds internal and collective power between territories near and far, that are determined and contagious—preparing us all for those hegemonic and emancipatory interventions to come.

21 www.tinyurl.com/jackfruit2020 (accessed 29 October 2020)
22 Easterling, Keller. 2014. *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space.* New York: Verso: 85
23 www.medium.com/@godwinkoay/conditions-obscured-fdcd08dee0dc (accessed 29 October 2020)



Wormholes Between Territories Near and Far, farms visited between January and June 2020.
Painting by Michael Leung, November 2020.

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Title
Becoming and Contagion

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Darren Moore Timothy O'Dwyre Becoming and Contagion: *Exploring the Liminal Space in an Improvising Duo*

Darren Moore
Timothy O'Dwyre

Becoming-other: *Noise as Virus*

The virus is noise. "Clamor, Melody, Dissonance, Harmony; when it is fashioned by man with specific tools, when it *invade*s man's time, when it becomes sound, noise is the source of purpose and power" (Attali 1985, 6). Noise is antithetical to music, an aberration, a disruption. Noise, like a virus, is abstract, destructive to order, and disturbingly effective within proximity. Noise, created through the deconstruction of the musician's instruments by using extended techniques[1], is transmitted through listening, the contagion infecting the players, breaking down aesthetic immune systems, deterritorialising their individualities through "expressive intensities in flux, and the performative engagement that invents the new, novel and unanticipated" (Kielian-Gilbert 2010, 199). Though breaching safe distancing, a rupture of the moler occurs, and molecularisation mutates noise, instruments and bodies creating a liminal zone of indeterminacy; the infection attacks the stability of being, creating the conditions for what Deleuze and Guattari would refer to as becoming-*other*.

> Drawing from experience as a free improvising duo, saxophonist Timothy O'Dwyer and drummer Darren Moore discuss becoming-other as a process of contagion. Becoming-other, as Brian Massumi (1992, 100) points out, "...is an exponential expansion of a body's repertory of responses. Not only does each stimulus evoke an indeterminate number of pragmatic responses, but there is a change in the body's mode of response." Similarly, during the process of improvising, to reach a point where differentiation subsides, the musicians affect and *infect* each other on a molecular level with sound.

In a duo improvisation, the duo enters into a liminal space, becoming-other than themselves and their repertory of responses; they create a deterritorialised 'third voice' where hierarchies and individuality dissolve as a result of this cross-contamination. The process of becoming-other is a molecularisation of the body and musical instruments, enabling the moler to dissolve into fractals and granular possibilities that undermine the body, making it into a virtual space or zone of indeterminacy. In this liminal space of possibilities, "other bodies may slip into that zone of indeterminacy, or autonomous zone, creating the conditions for a contagion of becoming-other – a process as fragile as it is infectious" (Massumi 1992, 101).

> Improvising with noise, within a liminal space between two performers, is like hearing a petri dish of sound molecules in an ever-evolving and growing 'culture' of structures and relationships of infected cells. There is a displacement of the body (antibodies), just as viruses displace and disturb bodies. The improvisers navigate their desires within the construct of this primordial soup, creating a constant flow of chain-reactions cultivating the micro-organisms of the noise-virus. The late Melbournian percussionist-improviser, Sean Baxter (2019) sees improvisation as being a "dichotomy of stasis and flux" that "reveals the metaphysical tension between being and becoming." He continues stating that improvisation is:

... a conduwwit for the simultaneous negotiation of past, present and future in a rhizomatic and ever-changing NOW.



1 "In music, extended technique is unconventional, unorthodox, or non-traditional methods of singing or of playing musical instruments employed to obtain unusual sounds or timbres." Burtner, Matthew. 2015. "Making Noise: Extended Techniques after Experimentalism." NewMusicBox. March 1. www.nmbx.newmusicusa.org/making-noise-extended-techniques-after-experimentalism/.

Far from simply being 'made up on the spot', improvisation is the spontaneous navigation of training, context, intent and the unknown.

Here Baxter alludes to Deleuze's view of time which draws from Bergson in viewing time non-linearly where past events co-exist in a realm known as the virtual.

…the Untimely, which is another name of haecceity, becoming, the innocence of becoming (in other words, forgetting as opposed to memory, geography as opposed to history, the map as opposed to the tracing, the rhizome as opposed to arborescence). (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 326)

This approach sees the past laden with immanence and a precondition for the present. Non-linear time privileges *becoming* over being. Being is "a momentary, subsidiary, and largely illusory suspension (or "contraction") of becoming" (Holland 2013, 18) whereas *becoming* is an on-going process enabling the potentiality of elements from the past to be drawn upon freely to infect the present. In free improvisation, the music-system as a whole, consisting of techniques, theory, sounds, genres and epochs, is the condition for music to occur. The music system no longer *has* a history; it *is* its history (Holland 2013, 18).

Becoming-other: *Collaboration*

The Introduction: Rhizome in Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus begins with a challenge by the authors "… to reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I" (2004, 3). The deconstruction of the concept of identity in their work, that the singular is multiple, the definite virtual, and becoming is essential, is, moreover, an outcome of the process in becoming music.

The collaborative state "where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I," occurs on various time scales (Deleuze and Guattar 2004, 3). Collaboration is a move towards de-emphasising the self. The 'holy grail' of improvisation is to reach a point where conscious thought is no longer significant, where the ego can be removed towards a self-less state in the present now. Musicians call this 'the zone.' Ultimately, it is to become one with sound in a state of pure immanence. In this state, the collaborative act is infinite, moving in all directions at once, "process in motion and movement, metaphorically changing and transforming states and conditions". (Kielian-Gilbert 2010, 199)

It is because of this that many improvisers are unable to reflect or articulate what happens while improvising. We do not know what happens when we are engaged in this elusive state. We can guess; 'it is our training kicking in' or 'we are connected to the universal consciousness,' but it is only when conscious thought enters the improvising realm that the speed of thought slows down enough for us to get a glimpse at what is happening. The speed of thought or line of flight is still moving extremely fast, but certainly not at infinite speed. It is during these moments that improvisers can begin to articulate their actions. The process of writing this essay; reading, writing, editing, re-reading, re-writing, re-editing for example, still follows similar collaborative protocols to a real-time improvisation, but over a protracted time scale: A marriage, longer; A civilisation, even longer; A species, longer still.



Becoming-other: *Listening and Contagion*

Noise as a sound of disquiet and disease is contracted through listening. Through listening, the contagion spreads, we receive ('catch') the noise-virus through our sensory sphere, becoming a receptacle and host. As an improviser or 'patient-zero' of infection, a performer becomes conjurer and receptor of the noise-virus simultaneously, in a continuous flow of spontaneously unfolding events producing novel gestures of haecceity. "We are all agents, operating in a continuous condition of *indeterminacy*, where we cannot fully know what will happen next" (Lewis 2020, xviii). Sounds are heard, interpreted spontaneously in a feedback loop; each sound becoming the progenitor of the next, each decision of the improviser infecting the music through a process of listening, interpretation, and choosing the next sound as a consequence of the previous sounds. From there, the sound moves outward from the collaboration to receptive audiences; the recital hall becomes a fertile breeding ground for the contagion. The act of listening to music involves the interpretation of sounds as the listener follows a series of sound-syntax, discords and accords decoded and replayed by a performer. "We *analyse* our environment for clues as to where we are and to seed predictions as to where we are headed. This includes imaginings of past, present and future" (Lewis 2020). This phenomenon is heightened in a collaborative context where performers, through a process of contagion with the other players, open outwards to sound-information in their surroundings to become not only the music that they as individuals might imagine but the music of the other through the viral transfer of information.

Becoming-other Instruments: *Producing the Noise-Virus with Extended Techniques*

Throughout the 20th century the virus of noise has infected tonal music and thought through the work of pioneers in Luigi Russolo, who created his futurist manifesto "The Art of Noise" in 1913; to groundbreaking composers Edgar Varese, John Cage to Pierre Schaeffer, Derek Bailey and the Japanese noise artist Merzbow. The contagion of noise established itself as an essential element of contemporary music. Acoustic instrumental practice adapted to the demands of these composers and innovators, extending the traditional techniques of the instruments, deconstructing their roles and foregrounding



noise in genres such as contemporary classical, experimental music, improvised music and electronic music. In doing so, noise-producing extended techniques in themselves, became the building blocks of a new sound language, pushing the limitations of the construction of the instruments to becoming-other, noise-producing machines, infecting the music, musicians and listeners.

Extended techniques have a history of mutating the accepted boundaries of instruments through being infected by traits of other instruments. For example, brush playing, and drum rolls enabled drummers to play legato, extending the duration of the drum note. Saxophone slap tongue technique developed to enable the saxophone to become more percussive, and note bends echoed vocalisations. Free Improvisers use extended techniques to mimic sounds, transform the nature of sound and respond to sonic challenges set forth by other players.

The authors perform free improvisation, as described by Derek Bailey, is a non-idiomatic approach to improvisation and system of playing that negates references to a specific style of music. There is a conscious effort to avoid the structures and stereotypes in melody, harmony and rhythm. In order to liberate the instrument, the free improviser needed to cease viewing their instrument in the traditional sense toward simply being a sound-making body.

For percussion, the drum head becomes a resonator-membrane which amplifies and transforms the sounds through various objects coming in contact with it. The resonator transforms sound through fluctuations in pressure and friction of different materials such as metal, wood, plastic, stone, or organic material exciting the resonator. The saxophone operates similarly, becoming a resonant chamber and percussive device. Every element of the saxophone from the reed, mouthpiece, neck, keys, body, and bell becomes a multiplicity of percussive and resonant components that can be deconstructed and combined with various foreign objects.

Further to these aesthetic ideals, novel sounds - *noise*, created on conventional instruments reflect a deterritorialisation of the instrument milieu. Within this liminal space of the instrumental assemblage, instrumentsbecomedisorientated,theirdiscretemolecular cell walls break-down; deconstruction permits noise to infect their host (instrument/body of performer) and anyone who can hear in proximity, subsequently becoming carriers of the disease. Noise, like a virus, is anonymous, a waste byproduct of the instrument, fashioned into 'purpose and power' by the improvisers.

This rebuttal of tonality disassembles the emotional and psychological relationships (meaning-making) between traditional melody, harmony and rhythm and replaces this 'holy trinity' with noise, texture and intensities in flux with "varying dimensional speeds and affects" (Kielian-Gilbert 2010, 199). The use of extended techniques as the language base for music shares similar objectives of Pierre Schaeffer's acousmatics "to deny the instrument and cultural conditioning, to put in front of us the sonorous and its musical possibility" (2004, 81).

Not only do extended techniques expand the sonic capabilities of acoustic instruments, they foreground the now, refocusing the ear, not to a defined and familiar organisation of musical effects, but infecting the listener (deconstructing their music-meaning memories and experiences). Extended techniques allow for multiple outcomes and scenarios avoiding a singular or limited set of possibilities; creating a "performative engagement that metamorphically invents the new, novel, and unanticipated" (Kielian-Gilbert 2010, 199). Baxter (2019) explains:

The established taxonomy of instrumental classification is partial and exclusionary. It erases the reality of sonic possibility, fortifying existing political hierarchies of instrumental roles, subsequently limiting our capacity to perform and listen. Instruments aren't singularities, they're multiplicities.

Stubbornly abstracting the apriori of tonal music destroys the constraints of the traditional meaning-experience-making of traditional music, and creates a level playing field of sonic possibilities, allowing for the musicians and the listeners to more effectively engage in becoming the music in the here and now.

Becoming-other: *The nature of improvisation*

Holland equates the nature of improvisation to Deleuze and Guattari's 'free action' which are actions made in the moment without pre-programmed aims and ulterior motives "other than maximising creative difference in repetition" (2011, 201). The place that improvisation begins is neurologically a repetition, a familiar. It is unique to performance and improvisation in particular that the practice begins with something that the performer already knows how to execute. It is only in hindsight of writing music down that a composer can conceive of the unknown from the very beginning. From the known, the performer moves outward to the unexpected and difference emerges.

Through musical happenstance, Holland notes that in free action, "order arises immanently and immediately from the activity itself, rather than being reproduced from the past" (2011, 201). No one can predict what might happen in improvisation, there are no scripts, like a virus, death and danger lurks around every corner. The risk is that the form of the whole can only be perceived after the fact - after a positive diagnosis; the macrostructure emerges simultaneously as each micro gesture is enunciated. Holland sees free jazz (which is an expression of free improvisation) as being "continuous absolute deterritorialisation" (2013, 9). In the process of 'flux and intensities' emerging in an improvisation, sounds are deconstructed into the molecular, deterritorialising the mechanisms of sound freely from one iteration to the next in a stream of consciousness. Ideas recontextualise, break open and reform in new relationships.

Collaboration through free improvisation is a way to escape the limitations of the self by de-emphasising the importance of *I*. Becoming-other expands our capacity by subsuming the traits and characteristics of other music and musicians. If "becoming begins as a desire to escape bodily limitation" (Massumi 1992, 94), then extended techniques are a desire to escape the limitations of the instrument and their political hierarchies. Noise production through extended techniques, therefore enables a viral exchange of sonic contagions through the process infecting and becoming infected; becoming-other.

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Title
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Community
Freedom of Expression

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Su Wei

Community of Feeling: *Emotional Patterns in Art in Post-1949 China*

This central theme of this research-based paper is "emotional feeling", revisiting a rarely emphasized aspect in the art of the socialist period, and further examining its relationship and dialogue with contemporary art.
Despite being suppressed in the 1950s and 1960s, "emotional feeling" in China's official socialist art also attained new meanings and formulations with each major shift in art. This paper highlights and explores related issues such as the suppression of individual feeling, the complex connections between love and revolution, the tension between private desire and concern for "the greater good," and the political connotations of showing affection. Here, "emotion" is envisioned as a mobilizing force existing between the state and the individual, public and private, politics and art, with the paper aiming to describe the various connective, mediating, and critical roles feelings played in the negotiation between self and the other.
This paper is based on the exhibition "Community of Feeling: Emotional Patterns in Art in Post-1949 China" which Su Wei curated at Beijing Inside-Out Art Museum (IOAM) in December 2019.

Two Monologues from China in the 1950s and 1960s[1]

"One night, when we were fast asleep, somebody suddenly woke us up and told us that a car was passing by and could take us to the foothills of the Changbai Mountain. We then quickly put on our clothes and got into the car. In the hazy moonlight, we enjoyed the night view of the forested areas; the towering red pines evoked endless fantasies with their fair, majestic presence. Beautiful images were already starting to formulate in my mind. It was already early morning when we arrived at the foot of the Changbai Mountains, where we stayed at a humble inn. The following day, several of us set off together and walked all the way to the summit of Changbai Mountains. At the summit, at an elevation of 2,500 meters, there was a meteorological observation post by the side of the Tianchi Lake, which overlooks the North Korea borderline. This was said to be the site where a volcano erupted some 150 years ago, and for this reason, the rocks around the lake, a dazzling variety of shapes and colours, were a sight to behold. We registered all this breathtaking natural beauty in our artistic creations. There were only three to five staff members at this post, and their working conditions were trying; food had to be transported to us from the bottom of the mountain. We were treated to a warm lunch, and took a nap in the hills before embarking on our slow descent. Then, while we were trekking on the winding road near the bottom of the mountain, on the damp earth after the rain, we detected tiger footprints. Apparently, a tiger had just passed by. We quickened our steps while making loud noises with our wooden sticks, and our sense of security was not restored until we saw an army truck parked by the roadside."[2]

1 This article is an excerpt (with adaptations) from an article included in the exhibition catalogue entitled "Community of Feeling: Emotional Patterns in Art in the Post-1949 China". The eponymous exhibition was curated by the author and mounted in Beijing Inside-Out Museum in 2019, with the exhibition catalogue forthcoming.

2 Wang Qi. 2019. *The Complete Works of Wang Qi,* Volume 6, pp. 254-255. Hunan Fine Arts Publishing House.



Wang Qi, *Returning Late*, 1955, Colour woodcut print, 15.5×23cm, presented in the exhibition "Community of Feeling: Emotional Patterns in Art in Post-1949 China", courtesy of private collector.
Caption: This woodcut presents a scene of peasants returning home after agricultural work in the Chinese countryside. In the mid-1950s, printmaking faced a profound challenge. The short history of Chinese printmaking was closely connected with revolution and propaganda, but in the new era of socialism, leaving behind the battlefields and suffering, the challenge for printmaking was to respond to the positive atmosphere of production and life in the new era. Wang Qi's painting is a corresponding attempt, which also heralds the rise of the "lyrical printmaking" trend.

The above monologue is taken from printmaker and art theorist Wang Qi's recollections of the year 1963 . In autumn of that year, he gave a talk on the art form in Changchun at the invitation of the Jilin branch of China Fine Arts Association. His talk was printed and disseminated to local artists. It was entitled "On the Formal Explorations of Art", and was hugely influential to China's art world. It came into being during a relatively relaxed political period in China, and sought to reopen the debate on realist art within the socialist context. Wang Qi's contention for the uniformity of form and content was part of his endeavour to reinvigorate methods and debates set aside shortly after the Hundred Flowers Campaign from 1956 to 1957.[3] The anecdote in the monologue cited above took place on Wang's way back from Changchun to Beijing. On the Changbai Mountain, Wang's theoretical ambitions gave way —albeit briefly—to his total immersion in the breathtaking natural landscape, yet the image of the tiger cried out for our attention, along with the sense of "uncertainty" it symbolized.

As an artist and art theorist, Wang was an intellectual who enjoyed special treatment from the state. His emotional reactions to nature were drastically different from those of the intellectuals condemned as "rightists" or others who had been struggling in the harsh political environment. In Wang's recollection, no feelings of dissatisfaction were expressed, and he seemed to have escaped the confusion caused by political struggles by withdrawing into his inner world. In 1964, Wang's "On the Formal Explorations of Art" was censured by He Rong, the editor of the Art magazine. He Rong's trajectory was representative of artists of the time. In He's criticism, Wang Qi as a champion of the school of "Cezanne, Gauguin and Matisse" should be condemned according to the principle of class struggle. However, in 1959, He Rong had published a sequence of articles advocating the more liberal tenets of the Hundred Flowers Campaign. These articles were written in a context where the "Great Leap Forward" movement was widely questioned and extreme leftist politics were criticized both inside and outside the party, and accordingly, they challenged the leftist creative method prevalent during this period by attacking the "subject matter determinism" in Chinese painting. However, five years later in 1964, as Mao lambasted the art world and started the rectification movement in art, He Rong had to change his stance to be in line with the political climate: liberal principles in art had to give way to those of the class struggle.

It would be challenging for us to decide the cause of the artists' sense of "uncertainty"; mere speculations from a psychological perspective would not suffice. The post-1949 art world was complex for a number of reasons. First, because it was tightly reined in by politics, which thoroughly ideologised and institutionalised the production and circulation of art. Second, because it attempted to reconfigure and reinvent the aesthetic discourse that was the progeny of such important historical moments as 1919, 1937, 1942 and 1949, so that it could serve the post-1949 thematic variation of revolution and change. In the meantime, socialist fine art was no less part of the revolutionary narrative than were other genres of artistic production such as literature, drama, and film. Third, because it had to assume the responsibilities of reforming tradition, critiquing modernism, formulating a nationalist narrative and initiating aesthetic debates. Moreover, the art world was complex because the diversity of the people involved; generations of artists who were very different in their training and backgrounds, and who were in different phases of life, found themselves thrown together in a highly organized and institutionalized political environment; they had, as a group or as individuals, to comprehend and translate their pre-1949 visual experiences and ways of thinking so as to refashion themselves as new socialist paragons. This complex art world of the 1950s and 1960s was therefore infused with tremendous tension. Artists and critics had to make a conscious effort to carve out a place for themselves amidst the political turbulence, and to decide their optimal distance from the mainstream which was constantly shifting. All these accounted for the sense of uncertainty felt by many artists at various points during this period.

We can respond to the sense of uncertainty by observing the role emotion played in the history of art after 1949 in China. The role of emotion has been described in general terms by many artists who lived through the socialist period. Their testimony states that emotion bridged the creators' "mind" with the "external world", that it served as the "catalyst" of artistic inspiration, and that it was an index of consummate art for mature artists. The political dictates made it impossible for them to state directly that emotion is an expression of personality, so they had to insinuate the role of emotion generally plays in art. However, in-depth explorations are seldom seen in such universal descriptions. Actually, there exists an unstable, uncertain relationship between the mind and the external world. The mind, on the one hand, was asked to cut off its nostalgic ties with both China's aesthetic tradition and the modernist approach adopted before 1949. The "external world", on the other hand, along with the "reform" in the new era, was, after all, not entirely composed of external reality. Rather, it was equally a set of radical, futuristic and ideological appeals. Emotion often cannot directly mediate the interaction when the self reaches out into the external world, and for this reason a streamlined, generalised account of emotion's role can hardly meet the need if one is to understand the special circumstances of the socialist period. Moreover, even though more complex feelings were allowed expression during relatively relaxed political periods (1956-1957, 1961-1962), these expressions still had to be collectivist by nature because the emotional experiences of the mass public were largely channelled by the state into a uniform expression. For example, the zest for the revolution and for national construction, the love for the new nation as well as the hatred for the "hostile forces", or the longing for a new life and the satisfaction with a new society, were all raw emotions reshaped to fit into a uniform structure. When they were translated into artistic creations, the emotions therein were already twice removed from their original form.

The uncertainty, that existed between the mind and the external world, was variously manifested in artistic creations: sincerity, belief, hesitation, resistance, or, more generally, confusion and disorientation; these

3 The Hundred Flowers Campaign ("let a hundred Flowers Blossom and a hundred schools of thought contend"), was formally introduced by Mao Zedong on 2 May 1956. The campaign encouraged the free development and discussion of literature, art and science, which marked a contrast with the long-standing oppressive cultural policy of the Communist Party of China. It was initiated in the context of the crisis caused by Khrushchev's criticism of Stalin in the Soviet Union as well as the political turmoil in Poland and Hungary. Through the brief implementation of the Hundred Flowers Campaign, the Communist Party of China attempted on the one hand to reinterpret the meaning of the socialist revolution through a free debate, and to correct the liberalization trend in the international socialist camp. On the other hand, the policy was part of China's initiative to explore its distinct socialist path.



Wang Qi, *Illustration of Ai Qing's Poem "The Rock"*, 1957, Colour woodcut print, 7.5x14cm, courtesy of private collector.
Caption: "The Rock" is a poem created by the poet Ai Qing (1910-1996) during his visit to Chile in 1954, where he visited the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. This poem depicts a rock that has been withstanding the surge of sea waves and links it to the image of the new China. Ai Qing attempts to express a strong sense of national pride in a calm, descriptive language. This inner tension of the poem is also reflected in this woodcut print of Wang Qi.



Wu Dayu, *Untitled 327*, c.1960, ink and colour on paper, 14.1×10.8cm, presented in the exhibition "Community of Feeling: Emotional Patterns in Art in Post-1949 China", courtesy of Beijing Shixiang Space.

emotional responses all ultimately led to the diversity of artistic practices. To be more precise, the uncertainty at issue here refers to the disempowered cultural position of the artist in a socialist context. The artist could neither derive a sense of artistic autonomy from the regulations made clear by the state, nor could s/he, in order to have a certain point of view that might be heard, obtain a solid position within the bureaucratic system. In other words, an artist would need to be thoroughly disciplined within the socialist system, but s/he should also be awakened to the fact that art is not solely grounded upon a given reality; it must at the same time be oriented toward the future.

The uncertainty therefore pertains to the artist's self-awareness that is dynamic, historical, paradoxical, and therefore deeply connected to emotion: that which contains the feeling of a certain reality and of one's position within it. When the individual artist interacted with his times, often he could not fully grasp the role of art or the agency of the individual, as his understanding would be perplexed by the political goals of the state as well as by the revolutionary fervour of the masses. Emotion, in this process, was not just one random component of a universal creative principle; rather, it operated in the most subtle and ambiguous places between the individual and the state, attempting (though often with frustrations) to reconcile individual responses and creative demands with uncertain situations. The experience of life under political dictates was at once one of passive involvement and of voluntary participation. If artistic creation as a whole was in decline during this period, the emotional structure of this period was characterized precisely by the possibility of carving out a breathing space within the ideological imperatives and art establishment.

A monologue from the artist Wu Dayu (1903-1988) written in the 1960s:

"Sensibility is the air in which artworks breathe. I mean, if sensibility ceases to exist in a painting, then the painting is comparable to a desiccated fish: a fish taken out of its water. The popular New Year painting would be a case in point. It attracts the viewers with its set form, yet the viewer can hardly 'breathe' in the face of a New Year painting: their eyes and their feeling are easily dulled—or even exterminated—by the painting. Therefore, though New Year paintings can contain a plethora of 'artistic materials', these materials generally serve no useful purposes: the viewers cannot be 'transported'. [...] A similar instance would be our country's diplomatic rhetoric, which is full of extensive reasoning and historical accounts. However righteous or indignant it may sound, it may only instigate the audience of one place and one time only. This is because no lived feeling is bodied forth in such rhetoric."[4]

4 Documents from the Shixiang Space in Beijing, 2020.



Wu Dayu, Untitled 175, c. 1950, crayon on paper, 26.6×19.2cm, presented in the exhibition "Community of Feeling: Emotional Patterns in Art in Post-1949 China", courtesy of Beijing Shixiang Space.
Caption: Wu Dayu returned to Shanghai from France in 1927 and became one of the key founders of Chinese modernist art. After 1949, his adherence to the modernist style led him to be intolerant of the official art system and to a prolonged period of unemployment, which made for a very difficult situation in the socialist period, both in terms of his work and his life. During this time, his paintings were unsigned and undated, thus in silent confrontation with the official narrative of time. Many of his paintings are painted on palm-sized paper, rich in colour and uninfluenced by the mainstream. These paintings are somewhere between abstract and figurative, full of dynamism and vitality. Wu Dayu uses the term "tendency and incarnation" (Shi Xiang) to describe his own creations, attempting to bridge between traditional Chinese freehand brush work (Xie Yi) and Western realism, between emotions and ideas.

Wu was a modernist painter active in the art world in Shanghai in the 1930s, yet there was no place for him in the new world after 1949. His student Wu Guanzhong (1919-2010) strove to restore his reputation in the 1980s, but until then Wu Dayu's distinctly abstract works had completely disappeared from public view because they could not be integrated into the body of mainstream art creations. Wu did not strictly distinguish sensibility (and feeling) from emotion. His assumption was that the artists had sophisticated and fine sensibilities, and the "lived feeling" of the works would therefore "transport" the viewers. For Wu, feelings mean vitality, and his juxtaposition—and comparison—between art works and China's diplomatic rhetoric implicitly communicates his hope for a more visceral, embodied existence of the state. He was discontented with the political dogmas and rational discourses of the time, and was hopeful that the state could operate as an emotionally enabling system that bodied forth genuine, lived feelings.

Often, however, the most prominent role emotion played in the field of socialist art would be its political or moral appeal. The art establishment in the new China thoroughly adopted the organizational methods and bureaucratic structures of the former Soviet Union, and continued the Yan'an tradition where fine arts were asked to assume the role of 3. In other words, fine arts were expected to communicate direct messages to the people (or the workers, farmers and soldiers) in order to mobilize them to identify with the revolutionary cause, and to participate in production as well as the revolution. To this end, art must use an explicitly symbolic language and relatively accessible images. Therefore, "marching songs were needed along with lyrical songs". Emotion in this context was considered to be a public force: it mediated between the image and its viewers, and was in the meantime a predetermined symbol that was crucial to the construction and legitimization of the post-1949 history, to the artists' response in the constantly changing climate, and to the negotiation of relations between the party and the non-party members.

The production of emotion on such a large scale has been severely censured by today's art historians. As the violent nature of such emotional production was clearly identified, people start to revisit this history in the following two ways. One way of looking at this history is through the lens of cultural criticism popular among the leftist critics. Emotion is thus regarded as an active yet elusive force that played a positive role in popular culture, in the circulation and consumption of images, and in the negotiation of public and private spaces. The other approach is to see emotion as the private recesses of individual artists. A great number of individual cases of the last three or four decades have been thus revisited, exhibited and studied to reveal the artists' resistance amidst the political turbulence. These studies tend to foreground the genuine feelings the artists reserved for themselves, as well as the artistic attributes of neutrality and detachment inspired by their private emotions. Both approaches simplify, to varying degrees, the multifaceted nature of emotion in its mediation between the state and the people, and between the individual and the community. Emotion after 1949 was Janus-faced: it was at once part of the establishment and critical of it. It does not suffice to confine one's understanding of art within the realm of cultural experiences. Neither would it be satisfactory to regard art as a timeless aesthetic space outside of history, especially when one is faced with the post-1949 art world.

Wu Dayu's monologue may also serve as a starting point for our contemplation of the artists' approach to the new relationship between the state and the individual after 1949—no matter whether the



Wang Qi, Night Around a Tall Furnace, 1959, colour woodcut print, 20×15 cm, courtesy of private collector.
Created during the "Great Leap Forward" period (1958-1960), this painting attempts to represent the dramatic changes in socialist industry and the national enthusiasm for production. The political mobilization from the top down shaped an accordant emotion and even madness for the entire nation. The Chinese people in the midst of it turn a blind eye to the absurd productive goals of the period and indulge in the merging of the state and the individual into one.

artists at issue here were marginal to the artistic establishment or not. Though Wu's text was moderately sarcastic in tone, his association between the sensibility in artworks and the state evinces his expectations from the state: an imagined state with "lived feelings". Wu's personified state with sensibilities is inhabited by real individuals, and its construction requires their heartfelt and emotional identification with the country. This identification is as much the result of the national liberation as the brainchild of the artist's utopian ideals. Nevertheless, if we are content with seeing only the prevalence of this identification in the art world in general, we would hardly explain the tragedies caused by the failure of the vision of identification during times of political violence. In the face of a multitude of political movements, the individual not only needed to reform his or her thoughts, but also had to bridge the chasm between the belief in national identification and the frustration of such a vision. One needed to constantly readjust one's positions to survive in the constantly renewed political environment. Wu Dayu's words reflects a state of mind in which the creative individual was not completely passive in accepting the "self-reform"[5] required by the new regime during the socialist period, but actively rejected the modernist notion of individuality and endevoured to establish a relationship with the state, a relationship that, in Wu's view, could be established through emotion.

5 "Self-reform" is a key word in socialist literature and art. It is a political principle designed for those who come from Western or Japanese art training backgrounds, traditional Chinese ink painters or artists who had been living in the Zone occupied by the Chinese Nationalist Party (Kuomintang) for a long time. Under organizational coercion and mobilization, they must recognize the harmfulness of "feudal" and "bourgeois" ideology, reshape themselves into socialist new man, and complete a reform that "touches their souls".

If the post-1949 history of emotion can be thus comprehended, then emotion is not merely a set of symbols serving the purposes of the political or moral appeal; its mechanism was much more complex. When it comes to artistic practices, when emotion mediated between the state and the people as well as between one's self and the other, it can be symbolic, self-projective, lyrical, ironical, political, imaginative, or all of these at once. The investigation of the role emotion played in the post-1949 art world is a crucial gateway to the understanding of the relations between the state and individuals, politics and art, as well as between ideas and practice, which unfolded through the various collective practices carried out in the art world and the theoretical debates prompted by the politically relaxed period. It also helps us to understand the specific meaning of "uncertainty" and the two sides of the front, namely the self-referential, essentialist, lyrical "I" and the compulsory collective "I": the former seeks infinity and modernist aesthetics, while the latter is embedded in a specific political environment, trapped in the inner reality of the spirit and the political reality. Only when we fully appreciate this complex relationship between the individual and the collective can we grasp the historical position of human beings in China socialist context and thus understand in what sense Chinese art has an inherited historical legacy after "the reform and opening up" starting from the 1980s.

Socialist art was subject to a full-blown crisis after 1979. On the surface, the Chinese art world was in lockstep with the country's changes and began a full-scale modernization process. As the result, the realist principles in art were criticized, and a new emotional structure came into being, brought about by the dissatisfaction, and even anger, at the rigid Soviet-style art education and the dogmatic realist principles. However, as a matter of fact, this emotional farewell to socialist art was hesitant, and the framework of socialist art remained intact. This marked therefore a stage of continuity in discontinuity in the Chinese contemporary art world. The new emotional structure was formed in dialogue with the old socialist framework. It was transformed into a non-unitary, non-normative framework. New binaries developed between the mainstream and the marginal, the elite and the masses, the technological and the ideological, as well as the local and the global, which every art practitioner in the field still had to face. This essay cannot fully elaborate on these binaries, yet it is worth pointing out that, similar to the socialist period, the post-1979 emotions were still not of a purely private nature, and must be viewed in the context of the historical changes of the country's modernization as well as of the constantly evolving art world. The post-1979 creative individual engaged in a fatalistic dialogue with the emerging new order, a dialogue still conditioned by the sense of uncertainty imbricated with the cultural, political, and institutional negotiations with the modernization drive. In this process, the emotional structure is constantly made and remade and is always evolving, thereby dissolving the values of the new era and reconfiguring those of the socialist tradition.

To this day, the new emotional structure of the Chinese art world presents itself within the framework of globalization. The Chinese contemporary art world attempts to form in a short period of time—by way of emulating—a local art system consistent with the West, which is tantamount to engaging with imagined global conditions. However, though Chinese contemporary art has been earnest in assuming the air of highly individualized, atomic existence, the process in which China made its way into the global art system most paradoxically bore the collectivist hallmark. This collectivity is a hybrid of multiple desires and emotions: the search for legitimacy in both local and international territories, the eagerness to delineate the boundaries between nationalism and unilateralism, the "state-owned" art system that still survives to this day, or the self-proclaimed dissidence and "folk" practices. On the surface, contemporary art in China, like the West, questions and undermines shared conventions and the universal consensus. However, it is equally true that the collective dependence on the institution and the belief in power are pervasive and universally shared, and widely influenced by the elitist line of thinking. This is the common situation of art practitioners in the post-revolutionary era, and is a question that requires urgent reflections.

Author
Theater of Social Contagion

Location
Shanghai

The Grass Stage (草台班) theatre collective was founded in 2005 by Zhao Chuan and his collaborators in Shanghai. Their work devotes to the promotion of the new social theatre movement and the creation of non-profit public space for intellectual exchange. Grass Stage has been consistently making use of various environments to create a flowing public space, and trigger poetic imagination, reflection, and discussion through workshops, performances and on-site activities. Their theatre works include: Wild Seeds series (2018-2019); the "Social Theater Trilogy" (2006-2017): World Factory, The Little Society, and Madmen's Stories. "Theatre of Contagion" is their new start of a series works since the start of the pandemic in early 2020.

Title
Voices from the GELI Isle

Tag
Isolation
Affect
Community
Freedom

Material


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Theater of Social Contagion Voices from the GELI Isle

Zhao Chuan: In the spring of 2020, the global COVID-19 outbreak was just beginning, while China's was already largely under control. At this time, the Shanghai-based theatre group "Grass Stage" resumed their weekly gatherings to discuss their feelings about the epidemic and what was happening around them. In the beginning, we went to an artificial island in the middle of a green field in the suburbs to confront people's anxiety about being close to each other after the epidemic. Later, we took the discussion that began there and rewrote it into an almost 50,000-word text, The GELI Isle, complete with sound and visual images. The rewritten text turned out to be a haphazard application or proposed names that borrowed ideas from the Decameron and depicted an island with a mix of time and space. The reason for this approach is to historicize our experience and to open more space for expression, also for reasons that it cannot be discussed at the public level in China.

This collective work is placed under the name of the "Theater of Social Contagion (人传人剧场)". It concerns how people deal with emotions, and how people approach others to communicate and support each other in a critical situation.

The GELI[1] Isle (Excerpt)
Prologue ×

Let's call this the GELI Isle for now. There is no direction here, no north or south, and the seasons are reversed. The roads on the isle are intricate and sometimes cannot be found, but spring still comes. The ground is full of soft, withered deadwood and pine needles. We sit around, take off our masks, surrounded by snacks, tea and verdant trees. Spring flowers are blooming everywhere.

NOSYLIA: *She hasn't spoken for a long time, and is happy to see her friends.** I saw that Mountain Yellow was opened yesterday and said that it was free for Yellowese.[2] Look at the photo, there is a huge crowd, the mountain is full of Yellowese.

SUROILYD Yeah, we've gone through a stage of internal reorganization and digestion here, now it's up to other cities. You can see the new public opinion direction from the daily update of the epidemic figures.

ULUMULO Three or four weeks ago, my friend, a journalist for a major mainstream newspaper, was in charge of the countryside outside the city gates. He said farmers would soon be plowing and sowing in the spring, and now he wanted to publish pictures of farmers working in the fields without masks. In the pictures sent by the village, all the farmers were wearing masks. Our general says no, ha! We have to do it again.

NOSYLIA Before you let people wear it every day, countryman didn't want to wear it, and now you're saying don't wear it, alas!

One: Experience with GELI

PINOCCHIO *Finally, it's her turn.** I couldn't be happier. What you were talking about, mostly, is home quarantine, which means self-quarantine. If you take an abnormal temperature, or are thought to have a suspected infection, a group of people from health department in protective suits will pull you right out of your home and put you in centralized quarantine.
I counted as a temporary worker in that block, which was rather awkward, and they didn't let me go to the so-called first line. All I was exposed to on a daily basis was some data, like how many dangerous cities came in and how many were quarantined at home. I work in a room of less than three square meters, which used to be the old man's warehouse, after some cleaning it became our office. Working inside a three square meter space, there were those old men across the hallway outside the door. For me, working there every day was a life of quarantine. *She grumbles about it.** But when the epidemic started, because I had been away for a few days before, I was asked to quarantine my home. When I received the inform, I felt like I was liberated. I was so relieved that I happily escaped back home.

FELINA It was that joy of not having to go to work, wasn't it?

PINOCCHIO Yes, yes, it was. But very politically incorrect to say - xx, let the storm blow even harder! Alas, the summer bug cannot speak about ice. Maybe the epidemic is a magic mirror to know what kind of person you really are. I'm over there hoping I don't talk all day, don't get noticed, and better yet, don't even meet anyone going to the toilet. Anyway, I'm a temp and someone on our block is supposed to be diagnosed, but because of my level of status, I can never know. Some information is quarantined and shielded from the outside world.

ULUMULO The GELI that everyone is talking about now is all related to this overwhelming epidemic, and personal experience has come from here. Do you want to talk about something else? GELI is not only domestic and centralized,[3] but also for other purposes, such as political, racial, or other issues that have been experienced over there in Yonaguni, Goguryeo, and Kiriwala ..... Let me start with a bit of my personal experience. When I was a young child in Flarence[4] during the Ten Years' War, the word GELI was often mentioned. Back then it was said that whoever was segregated was in fact unofficially locked up. It was a bit like being detained, but generally not by law enforcement agencies, and anyone could be ~~GELI~~. They usually put the person in a room with food and lodging, with a guard at the door in shifts. The person is not free.
One day my mom waited until midnight and my dad didn't come home. She got someone to find out, and my dad was quarantined from the unit.
The incident could be made serious or it could be brushed aside. It was hard to talk about such things in those days, not knowing what would happen, and there were many instances of people being killed or being formally sent to jail. My mom was extremely scared.
I later learned that the reason my dad was isolated was that he had some like-minded friends, all of them in their thirties, who were a bit bored with the world during that turmoil; they went to the cemetery, brought food and drink, talked, wrote poetry and essays, and one of them ended up putting them in his diary. The man was raided, the diary was examined, and the poems of these young men in a low key were found - they were then said to be a cult group, and so they were fucked. Two weeks later my dad was free again. He was usually mild-tempered and polite, and had no enemies. It ended up going away and was buried in our house. But it influenced my dad's work, treatment and way of being in the world for a number of years.

The young friends looked at each other as they listened.

ULUMULO There's another thing about GELI, from a friend of mine in the South Pacific. He spent nine and a half years in jail for shipping stuff that shouldn't have been shipped. He talked about how the newly built modern cells would be better, and those old prisons are usually depressing, and a lot of prisoners committed suicide in them while serving their sentences. At one point he was sent to one of these old prisons. The cell next to his was a single cell. One night in the middle of the night, the inmate next door committed suicide. That cell used to hold that man's father. That's where his father committed suicide. The son was run over and put into the cell where his father had hanged himself - a segregation that was extremely eerie and horrific punishment..... *pause** Isolation is more than just the loss of physical freedom, isn't it?

FELINA I was reading Alfred's book some time ago, and some of it had to do with GELI. What struck me was that he saw GELI as ..... For example, modern society sees diseases, epidemics and the like as bad things, and society wants to banish this bad stuff to a separate place.

SUROILYD Now we are calling this process War, right?

FELINA ..... Like the leprosy village is a form of quarantine, pneumonia, consumption also need to be isolated. I think it might be possible to rethink ~~GELI~~. We certainly expect a good society, but it seems as if the formation of our good society is predicated on isolating these so-called diseases, disasters, deaths, dissent, and crimes.

ZUGS stands up, stretches his legs, expands his chest, takes a few steps back and forth in the spring breeze.

ZUGS *nonchalantly** Friends say that they seem to be much closer to their families lately. Since they're locked in, they're having better conversations with their families and elders. They also say that they've been talking a lot about things and knowing more about things above the clouds lately because they can't work. Now, we probably have such a state of close communication precisely because we're on this GELI isle.

NOSYLIA So you're asking us to be grateful for this isolation?

1 *GELI*: 隔离◦隔, ↓keeps people or things from coming together. 离, let something separate.; ↑keep apart, separate from, isolate, quarantine, segregation, etc.

2 The Yellownese in the Mountain Yellow is an allusion to the Anhuinese and Mountain Huangshan in Anhui province.

3 The author used the word"集中的(centralised)" here. The author's intention is unclear, but we can associate it with words such as "Democratic centralism 民主集中制" referring to the CCP's fundamental organisational and leadership system. The translation uses the direct translation to transport this meaning.

4 The term here is borrowed from the Florence of the *Decameron*.

A collective work developed from workshops by Grass Stage
Concept/Director: Zhao Chuan
Text: Zhao Chuan, Zhuzi, Zhang Ruoshui, Wu Meng, Lin Tian, Little Lina
Sound Director: Xu Cheng
Visual Design: Zhao Chuan, Wu Meng
Logo design: Wu Jiayin, Little Lina (calligraphy)
English Translator: Wang Yun
Participants from the workshop: Cao Yongjie, Chen Zhongwei, Lin Tian, Little Lina, Lyre, Reta, Shou Xing, Wang Yun, Wen Ruojin, Wu Jiayin, Wu Meng, Zhang Ruoshui, Zhao Chuan, Zhou Shengjie, Zhou Yi, Zhuz

Sound Creation Concepts

Xu Cheng: In the current plague epidemic, personal fear and despair no longer have a tangible intuition, and the decaying body is abstracted into numbers that keep moving in cyberspace. The discussion at the "Quarantine Island" gathering itself mirrored the current sense of crisis over the so-called "real", "virtual", "data", "repression" and "safety". Therefore, when conceptualizing the soundtrack of "The GELI Isle", I also drifted into various aspects of reality, history, virtual and data.

1. J. S. Bach's lament Cantata No. 25, composed in the age of plague, was rewritten by me with virtual instruments and Vocalorid. The glow of divine mercy is replaced by digitized vocals. → See QR-code on previous page

2. "Romantic 37" comes from 36.2, 38.2, 34 ..... frequent daily body temperature measurements show an unbelievable and gradually becoming accustomed to a pattern of rhythmic data. → See QR-code on previous page

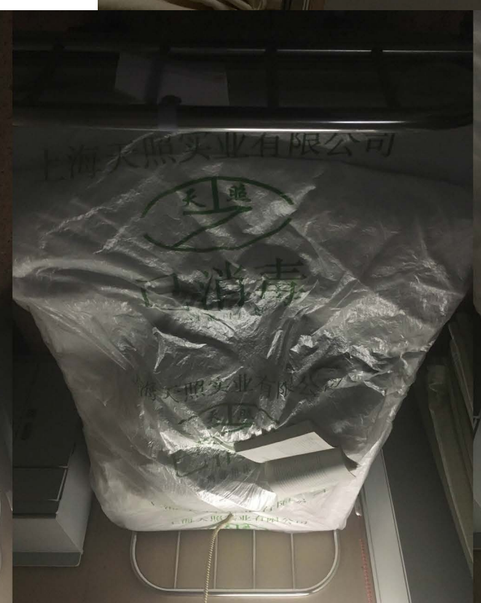
3. "Broadcast" comes from a government broadcast recorded by Zhang Ruoshui in rural China during the Chinese New Year. Content: the broadcast asks everyone to cooperate with the government in epidemic prevention). → See QR-code on previous page

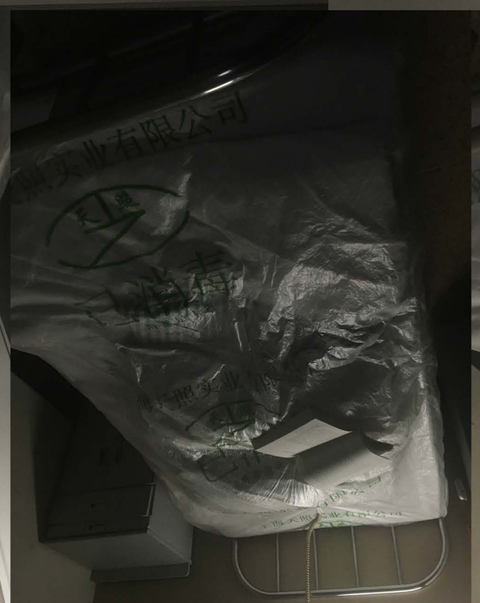
4. "Victory Day". On April 4, 2020, the Chinese government held a public ceremony for the fight against the epidemic on Tomb Sweeping Day, a traditional day to honor the dead. On that day, artist Zhong Minjie recorded a different kind of soundscape in a shopping mall. → See QR-code on previous page





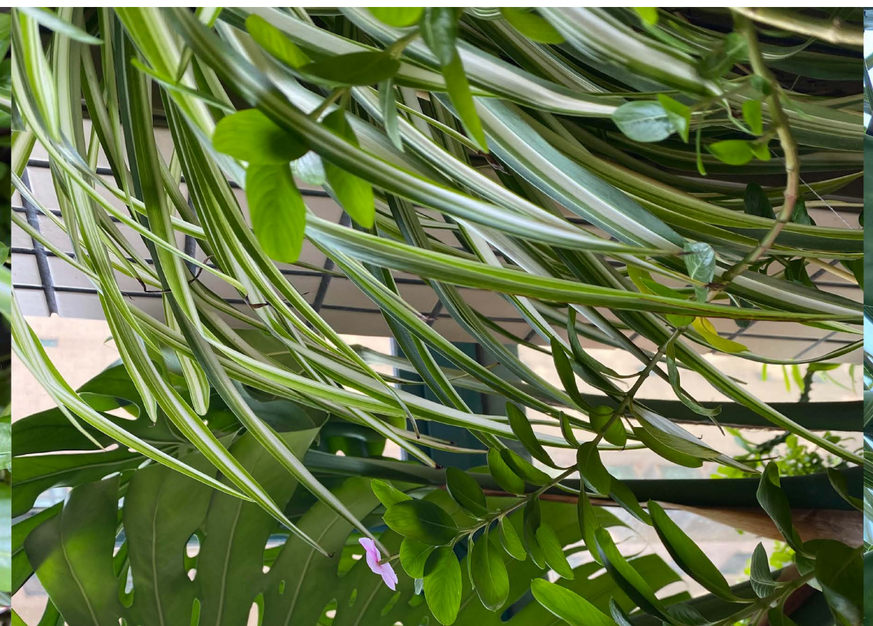








Author
Justin Wong

Location
Hong Kong

Justin Wong, comic writer, received his BA (Fine Arts) in Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1996 and his MA (Interactive Digital Media) in in London. He began his career as comic writer and illustrator in 2006 and started to publish his political comic column Gei Gei Gaak Gaak in Ming Pao the year after. His publications include “Lonely Planet” and “Hello World” and “je préfèrerais ne pas”. He is now an Assistant Professor in the Academy of Visual Arts in Hong Kong Baptist University.

Justin Wong
Be Water

Title
Be Water

Tag
Fluid Metaphors and Symbols
Social Movement
Freedom of Expression
Resistance

Material

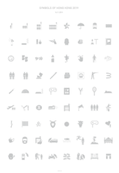

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“Be Water” – the famous saying of martial arts star Bruce Lee, was a motto shared by protesters in the Anti-ELAB protests in Hong Kong in 2019. The belief of being “shapeless, formless, like water” encouraged protesters to adopt more flexible strategies in order to tackle the continuous suppressions of the police and the government. While the entire movement was enacted in a leaderless manner, social media platforms such as Telegram and the local online forum, LIHKG became hubs for collaboration among the protesters. The open discussions, with their democratic atmosphere, allowed creative ideas to emerge which could be applied to every aspect of the movement. At the same time, the participation of this new generation fostered a kind of culture that was vastly different from the protests of the past. Visual graphics such as posters, cartoons, flyers were published online or appeared on Lennon Walls. These illustrated a new set of symbols that helped to construct a “fluid” identity for the protest. In about nine months time, various graphic symbols emerged that represented different stages of the protest. From the yellow umbrella inherited from the Umbrella Movement to the use of Pepe the Frog in various scenarios, we could see how the identity of the protest was being rebranded and re-energized by the playful approach of younger protesters. Internet memes and even traditional paintings by famous painters were appropriated and reused by the protesters. The tradition of using the Guy Fawkes mask from the V For Vendetta movie was replaced by an anonymous and “meaningless” icon, LIHKG-pig, which signaled a complete change in the paradigm -- Protests were no longer exclusive to activists. The playful and flexible “spirit” that emerged in the vast number of graphics created a new language which was used as a propaganda wedge against the forces of the police and the government. One clear example came about after the New Hong Kong National Security Law was passed in July 2020 - protesters used simple graphics or even a blank A4 size paper to replace the Chinese characters “Liberate Hong Kong, the Revolution of our Time”, a popular slogan that was no longer allowed under law. Despite the highly abstract form, readers could still decipher it, as they believe that “the idea is bullet-proof”.



An illustration representing the occupation of the Legislation Building on 1 July. The logo of HK Gov was replaced by the icon of the LIHKG forum, with reference to the Smiley face of the Watchmen comics.



Digital painting appropriated from René Magritte's works



Digital painting appropriated from Edward Hopper's works

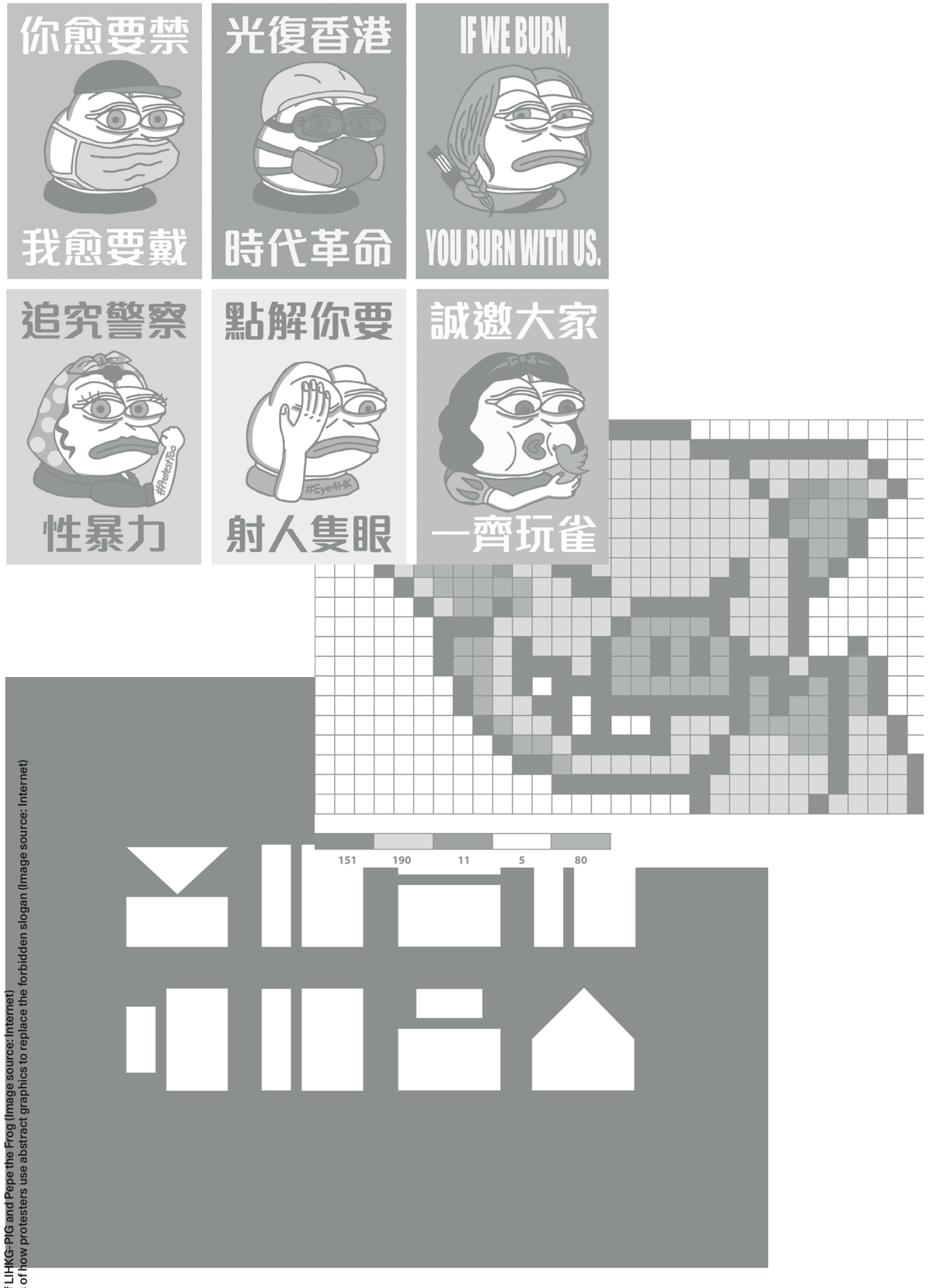
SYMBOLS OF HONG KONG 2019

16.11.2019



...

List of icons developed to record different stages of the protest



Images of LIHKG-PIG and Pepe the Frog (Image source: Internet)
Examples of how protesters use abstract graphics to replace the forbidden slogan (Image source: Internet)

Author
Stirnimann
& Stojanovic

Location
Zurich

Nathalie Stirnimann (*1990) & Stefan Stojanovic (*1993) live and work in Zurich (CH). Stirnimann-Stojanovic's concepts are manifested and materialized in situations, performances, words and objects. Central themes in their practice are the social and structural issues of the art system seen from the viewpoint of aspiring artists. They are interested in exploring the boundaries between art, activism and society using transdisciplinary approaches and interdependent relations. By involving the public, spectators become actors, permitting new types of dialogue. Their aim is to probe and call into question the reality of the art field and, using collective approaches,to thematize fairer and more sustainable working conditions. Stirnimann-Stojanovic's works were shown, among other venues, at MCaM, Shanghai; Performance Art Biennale, Chandigarh; La Tertulia, Cali; Manifesta, Zurich; the Kunsthalle Fri Art, Fribourg; Performance Festival Turku; U10, Belgrade; Acción!MAD, Reina Sofia, Madrid; Circuits and Currents, Athens. They jointly earned an MA in visual arts at ZHdK in Zurich.
www.stirnimannstojanovic.com

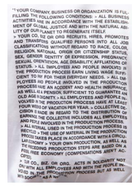
Title
YOUR LOGO *HERE!*

Tag
Fluid Metaphors and Symbols
Resistance
Capitalism

Material



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Stirnimann & Stojanovic

YOUR LOGO *HERE!*



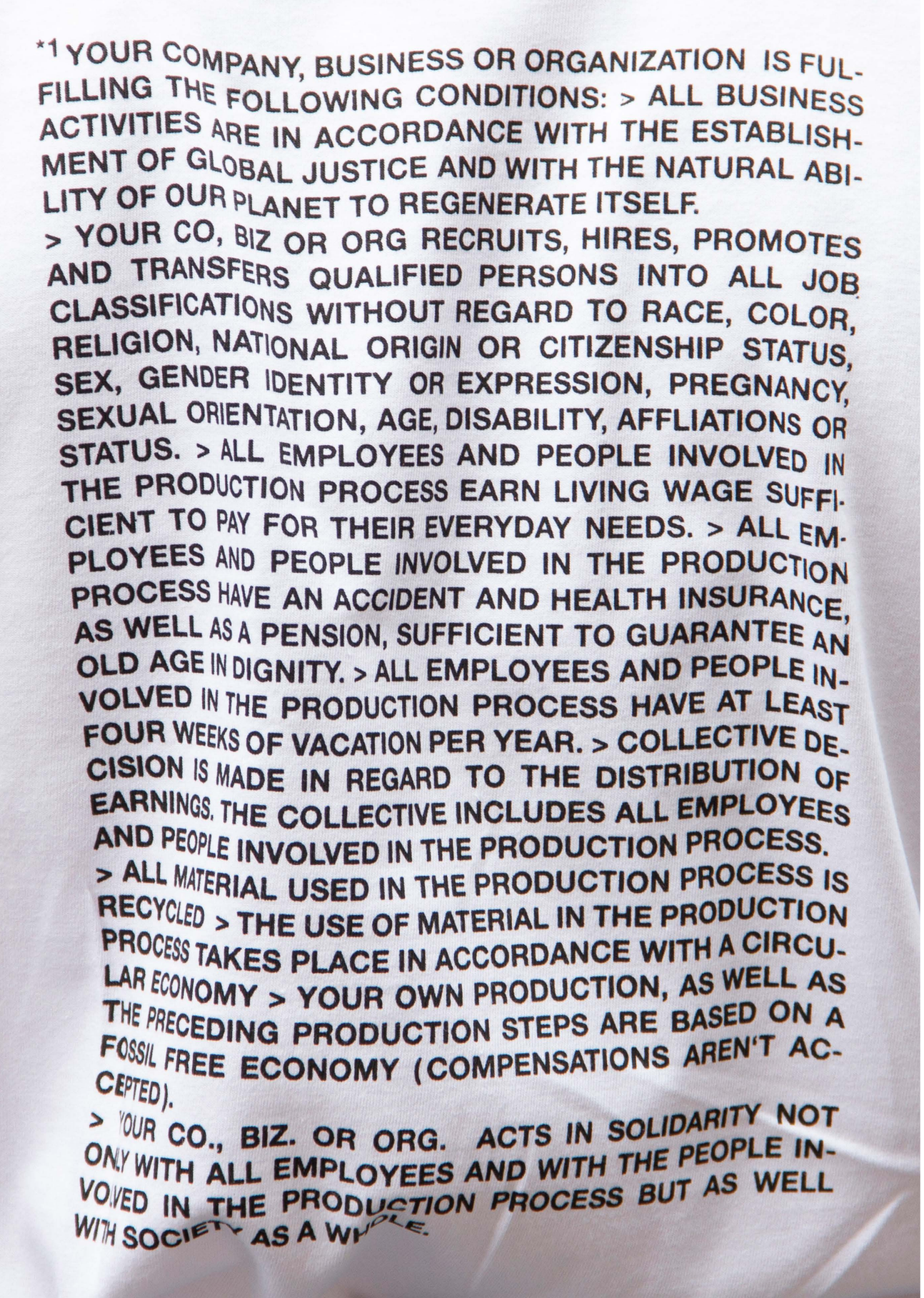
(dis-/u-)topia?

future =>

communities
/ (co-)habitation / mutual support & care

resistance
=> processes & changes
=> transformation
(inter-)connection / (inter-)dependency

“on contamination <=> affection”



Author
Marcelo Gomes

Location
Recife

Marcelo Gomes was born in Recife, Brazil, where he founded a film club. His debut film, Cinema, Aspirinas e Urubus (Cinema, Aspirins and Vultures), premiered at Cannes Film Festival (Un Certain Regard) in 2005 and received France's National Education Prize. His feature film Viajo Porque Preciso, Volto Porque Te Amo (I travel because I have to, I come back because I love you), which he co-directed with Karim Aïnouz, premiered at Venice (Orizzonti) in 2009. His historical bio-pic Joaquim was selected in 2017 for the Golden Bear Competition in the Berlinale Film Festival. His documentary Estou me guardando paraquando o carnaval chegar (Waiting for the Carnival) was released in the Berlinale Film Festival (Panorama) in 2019 and was also presented in Amsterdam (IDFA), Sheffield Doc Fest, among many other festivals.

Marcelo Gomes
Carnival is a Serious Business

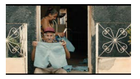
Title
Carnival is a Serious Business

Tag
Resistance
Capitalism

Material


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As a child, I made frequent visits to relatives in the rural part of Northeastern Brazil. I remember the laid-back atmosphere, the slow pace, which for so long was characteristic of the interior of Brazil. A few years ago, I once again passed through that region. The place I was most struck by was Toritama. It used to be a tiny little peasant village but now it had become the self-proclaimed *capital of jeans*. Toritama had gone through a wild transformation and I was mesmerized by the madness of the landscape, everything surrounded by outrageous billboards.

Someone told me a story about people from Toritama: they are totally crazy about carnival. It is known throughout the region that after a long year of tireless work in denim sweatshops the workers of Toritama will go to extremes to enjoy a week of holidays at the nearby beaches. To accomplish their dream, locals save their earnings during the year. But even when they can't make ends meet, many families are willing to sell their possessions: TV sets, sofas, motorcycles and fridges, rather than missing the party. The city becomes a ghost town during those days. I was intrigued and impressed. Is it a powerful transgression to get rid of one's own goods, even the most basic ones, just for the sake of carnival? I tried to imagine the intensity of their work routines and how it led to such an extreme reaction. Since I tend to make movies to learn about things I don't know about, I thought that this could be a subject for one of my films.

The denim industry workers I met in Toritama truly believe that they are the owners of their own time since their income comes by way of a few cents for every completed pair of pants. In their anxiety to raise their earnings in order to consume more goods they end up in a vicious cycle of self-exploitation. That's when Carnival comes and this ceaseless production is finally interrupted. The desire to enjoy the moment, no matter the consequences, might seem subversive to modern day capitalists; it can also be consid-

ered an example of resistance. The spirit of Carnival infiltrates the logic of capitalism and allows the villagers to engage in catharsis, contagious joy and socially-accepted transgressions. During this time, people go wild and indulge in dancing, drinking and partying. It is a time to be a hedonist, cultivate affections, and get together with loved ones as each individual partakes in a collective experience shared by millions. Once a year, their existence makes sense, even though it may put all their preconceived perceptions of security and prosperity in jeopardy.

Contaminated by the spirit of Toritama, I decided to immerse myself into the region for a year and half. I tried to understand this radical switch from productivity to indulgence. After all this time, I still couldn't completely grasp the complexity of the Toritama attitude. Maybe there isn't a complete explanation for it. What I am sure of is that no matter how big or small the celebration, Carnival is perceived as a magic spell that will wipe away all the pains and sorrows of the previous year. As irrational as it may seem, this kind of thinking has contaminated Brazilian culture to its root and made it a self-fulfilling prophecy. The year is reset and everything must start again. Money makes the world go around.

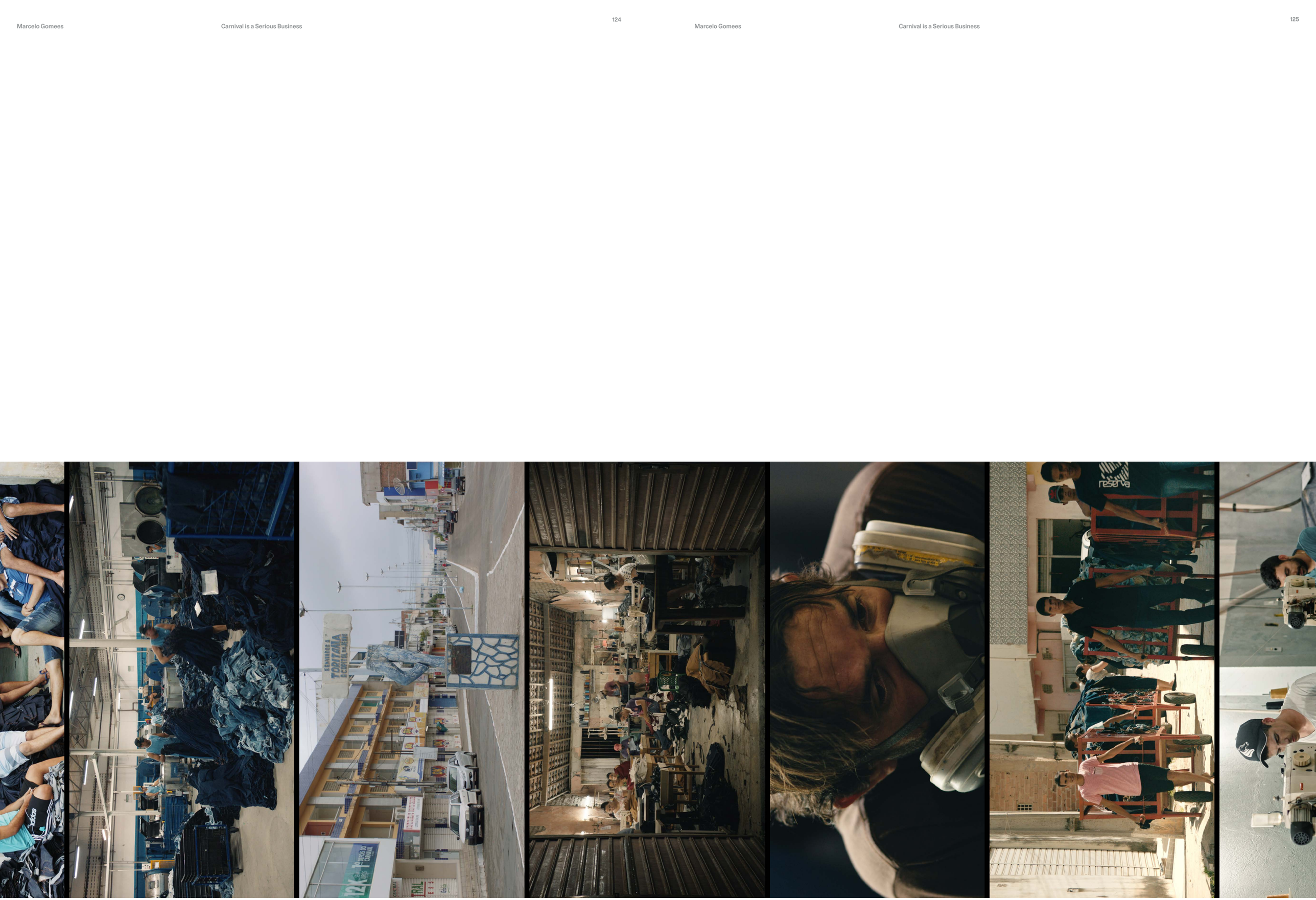











adidas
REVENDAS
TORITAMA
CENTRO OESTE
reserva



ed in 2019 at Berlin

Author
Riar Rizaldi

Location
Jogjakarta

Riar Rizaldi works as an artist and amateur researcher. Born in Indonesia and currently based in Hong Kong. His main focus is on the relationship between capital and technology, extractivism, and theoretical fiction. Riar has also curated ARKIPEL Jakarta International Documentary & Experimental Film Festival—Penal Colony (2017), Internet of (No)Things (2018) at Jogja National Museum and co-curated Open Possibilities at JCC, Singapore & NTT ICC, Tokyo (2019-2020). His works have been shown at Locarno Film Festival, BFI Southbank London, International Film Festival Rotterdam,Times Museum Guangdong, Asian Film Archive, NTT Inter Communication Center Tokyo, and National Gallery of Indonesia amongst others.
www.rizaldiriar.com

Title
How To Do Nothing

Tag
Resistance
Capitalism

Material



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Riar Rizaldi

How To Do Nothing: *On Being Unproductive*



“Our epoch has been called the century of work. It is in fact the century of pain, misery and corruption.”

Paul Lafargue

In one of his interviews, when asked about the relation of time, slowness and cinema, Lav Diaz says that in Southeast Asia culture waiting is very important. The Malay way, according to him, is an act of ‘sit under the trees or lie in our beds the whole day, waiting for something to happen... it’s not laziness or indolence at all. It’s part of our lives, because we’re so connected to the ways of nature, including the hot weather, the humidity, the storms, typhoons, floods and landslides.’[1] Lav Diaz’s “the Malay way” resonates with the crisis we are facing today. In this time of uncertainty and confinement, non-productive time blooms. When productivity freezes, capital will not circulate. For the last couple months, we practice what Paul Lafargue postulates in 1880 as the right to be lazy. We are lying in our beds the whole day. We are waiting for the productive time to return... or not?

“Work! Work! Work!”

said Joko Widodo (Jokowi) several times in his official speech and informal encounter with the public as a mantra of productivity that must be improved in Indonesia. For the Jokowi’s administration, people are considered living in this world if they are working—whether spending their time in a productive activity of producing materials or offering services. In the regime of neoliberal capitalism—especially in Indonesia, where alternatives are non-existent, the orientation of production is to create an exchange-value which is not necessarily embedded with use-value. In the modern economy, exchange-value is the capability of a commodity (or service) to be exchanged with another commodity. Exchange-value always manifests as a relation of quantitative proportion between commodities, while use-value is the result of a subjective evaluation and also rooted in the physicality of things. However, in the circulation of capital, the exchange-value has to contain a surplus value. Therefore, in this system, what is classified or identified as productive labour is a work which produces surplus value, while unproductive labour is the opposite—though many of the so called unproductive are useful in everyday life as a form of reproduction. The productivity of labour is primarily related to its position in the circulation of capital in producing the surplus value. Of course, producing surplus value is the aim of the productivity campaign brought forward by Jokowi’s current regime in Indonesia. At the same time, the doors for investment are also opened as wide as possible through the Omnibus Law[2] to optimize the laissez-faire economy for the oligarchs through the expansion of capital-intensive industries. Productivity also resonates with the old mantras of developmentalism, and in the cultural sector, productivity continues to be held as the backbone of *cultural advancement*.

Before he became a bureaucrat and took part in the managerial class, my father was an electrician who worked for a state-owned energy company. One day he was sent to the island of Halmahera, formerly known as Jailolo. In the mid 90s, my father told me that on this island the Tobelo, the indigenous people who live in Halmahera, were extremely lazy people. They just lie down and do nothing. As a hunter-gatherer society, according to my father, they only hunt or fish twice a week. “Extremely unproductive,” according to my father. My father, who spent most of his life in the Java urban environment this kind of behaviour seemed odd and unacceptable. He told me this story to motivate me as a child. A cautionary tale to avoid laziness. For my father, the life of the Tobelo people was an unworthy life. Lazing around is not a life choice. It’s backwardness.

Here I imagine the dialogue between my father and a Tobelo person who was relaxing under the trees:

My father: You are lazy, help me in stall this electricity.
Tobelonese: For what?
My father: So that you can have electricity, then your life will be much easier, helped by technology.
Tobelonese: And then?
My father: Then if you live more properly then your life will be more joyful.
Tobelonese: And then?
My father: Then you will be able to relax!

This imaginary dialogue illustrates that life does not have to be determined by the necessity to be productive. For the Tobelo people, even though they do not base their lives on growth, progress and material accumulation, they can still live in a relaxed fashion before their resources—land, labour, and material—are taken away by capital expansion. They were what the anthropologist Marshall Sahlins proposes as the original *affluent society*.[3] However, for my father, whose life was based on an understanding of sur-plus value and capital accumulation, Tobelonese appeared as a lazy community. With their characteristic of minimal possessions, it is easy for an outsider like my father to label them as poor. In this context, his cautionary tale was a prognosis. He illustrated the concept of backwardness as he doesn’t want to project the notion of laziness onto his own son in order to survive in the “Work! Work! Work!” world that will come 20 years later.

In the play Si Kabayan: Comedy Satu Babak written by the LEKRA (Institute for the People’s Culture)[4] writer Utuy Tatang Sontani, Kabayan is described as a lazy figure with limitless imagination who despises productivity and being productive. For him, productive time is useless. He thinks that the non-productive time he spends with his friends or the imaginary journey he produces when he daydreams is more exciting. In short, nongkrong is sacred for Kabayan. Nongkrong is an Indonesian concept which literally means ‘sitting around because there is nothing to do’ or ‘hanging out because you’re not doing any work.’[5] Nongkrong itself—which is now an Indonesian cultural export that is being analysed through the art world—is romanticised by many artists in Indonesia. However, like Kabayan,

1 See https://thefilmstage.com/lav-diaz-on-the-desire-for-epic-runtimes-not-voting-for-the-oscars-and-the-problem-with-big-film-festivals/
2 For a detailed analysis of Omnibus Law in English see https://lausan.hk/2020/jakarta-is-returning-omnibus-bills/
3 See Marshall, Sahlins.2004. *Stone Age Economics*. London: Routledge.
4 Cultural and social movement as well as artists collective that was associated with the Indonesian Communist Party
5 Parallel to this I would also argue that *nongkrong* is a form of reproductive labour.

it is a privilege and luxury for artists to be able to enjoy unproductive time. As Kabayan lives in a village with the abundance of natural resources that are sufficient enough to fill his daily energy output, non-productivity is more useful than making ends meet. As an icon of laziness in Indonesian literary history, Kabayan is a critique of endless capital accumulation and the notion of productivity. In the world of Kabayan, it is better to discuss ideas and concepts through chatting and contemplating all day as a reproductive labour than producing tangible commodities via manual labour on the shop-floor. Having more free time and less possessions seems more productive. In this utopian world the boundaries between what is productive, non-productive, and unproductive has collapsed. When work is abolished then people have more time to create, think and innovate—a life without economic necessity. Perhaps Kabayan shares mutual ideas with Peter Kropotkin who essentially believed that humans should create and collaborate together instead of working under the promise of wages and careerism. Therefore, everyone has the right to become an artist when the work itself is eliminated as a standard of living for human society.

> Perhaps Kabayan has a point, maybe we need reproductive labour more than manual labour and other capital-intensive industries. The labour-power used to produce a cup is not compatible to the labour-power to keep it usable. More labour is needed to maintain cultural products or commodities, to keep them extant, and therefore, the value of the commodities can continue resonating. We need care-taking labour more than manual labour. Can't that be clearly illustrated in this pandemic era, when care-taking labour helps us to better survive as compared to the labours of the managerial class?
> Unfortunately, instead of thinking about how affection for fellow human beings can be represented through the form of care and mutual assistance, which is also clearly demonstrated by the mutual aid projects in Indonesia during this crisis, Indonesia as a nation-state still sees labour-force and productivity as an important life value.

Can we take some time to rest for a while? Is it possible for us to channel our Kabayaness in order to counter the narrative of high-productivity proposed by the nation-state via the Omnibus Law? No? If not, then maybe we can offer a resistance. And as a form of civil disobedience, we can celebrate non-productivity in rejecting the hegemony of work and productivity. We have to look at leisure time as a form of resistance. We should contaminate the forces of endless productivity with unproductive laziness in order to slow down the juggernaut of plutocratic oligarchic and neoliberal states throughout the world.

> From Hong Kong, Thailand, to Indonesia, we should start organising these three proposals of 'how to do nothing' as a mass laziness action:

We shou...
...I'll do it later.

Author
Kongkee

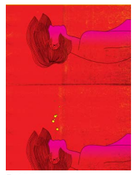
Location
Hong Kong

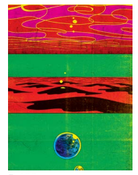
Kongkee, animation director and comics artist based in Hong Kong. Founder of studio Penguin Lab since 2008. In 2015, in collaboration with bripop group BLUR, Kongkee created comic book "Travel to Hong Kong with Blur" for the group's album The Magic Whip, which became a big hit in the scene. Comics Detournements: La littérature de Hong Kong en bande dessinée (co. Chihoi) also won wide acclaim in the international literary arts circle. Original comic and animation short "Dragon's Delusion: Preface" received the Japan TBS channel "22nd DigiCon6 Asia Grand Prize" in 2020. Kongkee is also invited to the jury for the International Competition at the International Trickfilm Festival, Stuttgart, 2019.

Title
呼吸 Keep Breathing

Tag
Isolation
Affect

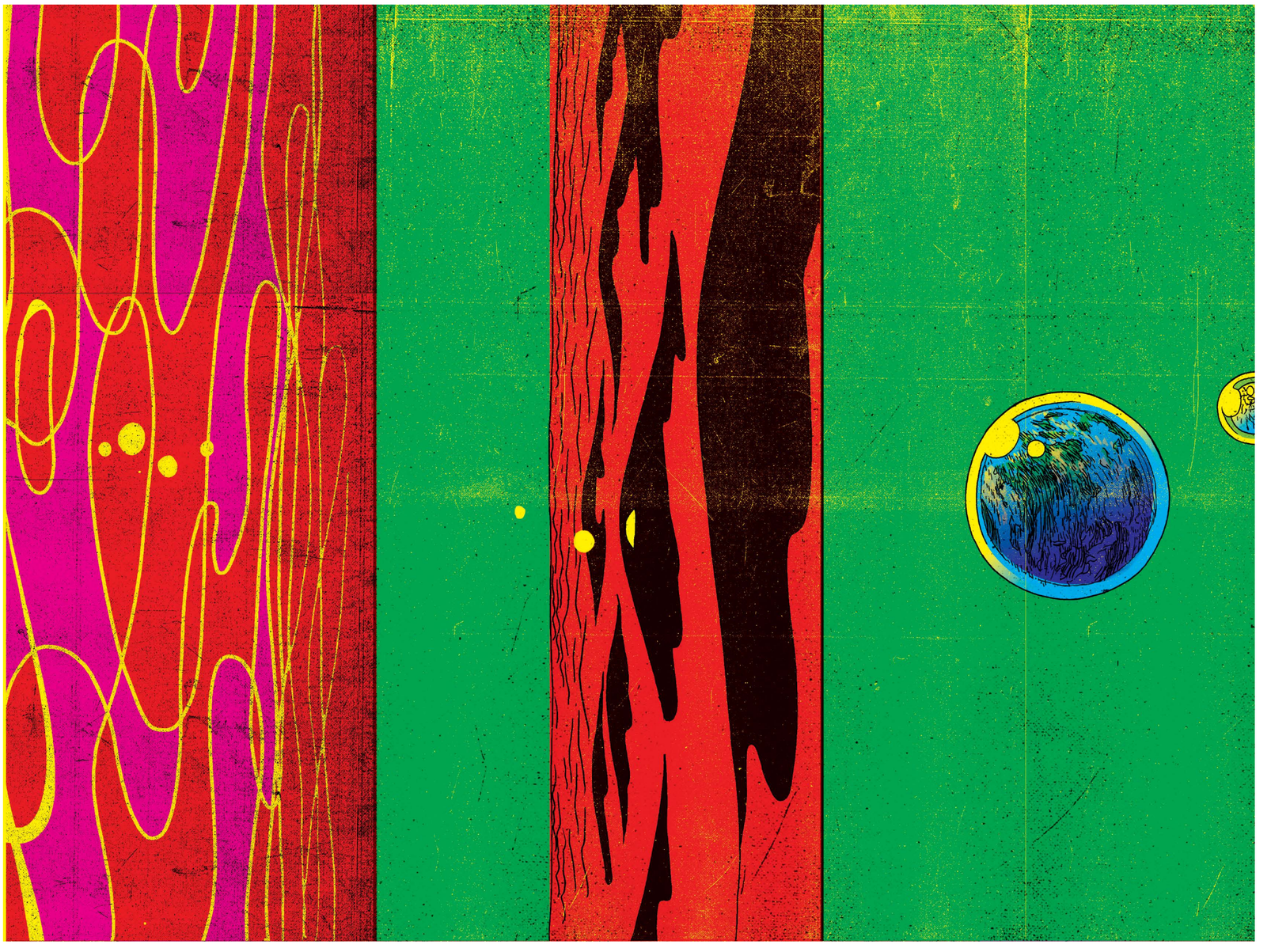
Material


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Kongkee

Keep Breathing
呼吸



Author
Xiao Ke × Zi Han

Location
Shanghai

Xiao Ke has been a professional performer and choreographer since graduating from university. She expanded her practice into visual arts and other forms, setting up different collectives to pursue these ventures. Zi Han's artistic background lies in photography and audiovisual production, but has since broadened up to include endeavours in performing arts. Together, Xiao Ke×Zi Han have directed five stage projects through a strong interdisciplinary process, which have been performed internationally. Their work is resolutely conceptual and features a clear social—sometimes documentary—dimension, often involving local artists and taking the projects to the public space; their choreographic work Republic of Dance tells the history of the Chinese moving body through the personal tales of performers from five different generations. In 2018, they embarked on CHINAME, a three-year research project that will take them throughout Asia and beyond, generating various artistic outcomes during the process.
xiaokexzihan.com

Title
Chiname

Tag
Cultural Identity
Diasporic Chinese

Material


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Xiao Ke × Zi Han

Chiname

Our Name is Given, Yet We Try to Explain Who We are

Initiated in May 2018 by Shanghai-based artist duo Xiao Ke×Zi Han, Chiname is an attempt at creating a temporary contact zone for 'Chinese' identity by researching the diasporic Chinese in different regions of the world.

Through the on-location collecting of documentary interviews and portraits of common people, Chiname addresses questions of cultural identity and social belonging for transplanted human beings. How is Chineseness defined? Its significance shifts according to its context, and its impact on contemporary geopolitics is felt on an everyday level. How does the young generation in China perceive Chineseness? What about the Chinese migrants outside of China? In this tangled web of perceptions, the artists raise the question: 'What is Chinese—is it an imagined community or is it real?'

During over two years, Xiao Ke×Zi Han have sat down with more than 150 persons on three continents and have restituted their research through different artistic outputs: photographies and films, lectures and performances, in person on a stage or digitally behind a computer, navigating the constraints of personal mobility and adapting to the new deal of a planet subjected to a pandemic.

Building upon a first layer of young Chinese abroad, Chiname eventually led the artists to tackle this problematic on a more universal level. After all, cultural identity is something that relates to everyone, migrant and indigenous populations, Chinese or not…

This mere self-interrogation of one's own identity might even be the one element which connects us all in the end, independently from gender, language, religion, and other traits that set individuals apart—or seem to do so. Our values fluctuate with time and location, change from what we inherited from our biological family to a composite influenced by passing friendships and elective communities, and never ever freeze into a final stance. If this project taught us one thing, it is that the more we find out, the more confused we get.

2022 should bring Chiname to a close as a stage performance titled "NAGENAGE, Chinese", which will explore the material collected during this whole process through a divinatory ritual, an artificial ceremony that will bring the audience and performers together on stage. For c/o magazine Xiao Ke×Zi Han has prepared a portfolio presenting a small sample of the most significative quotes and frequent answers collected from these 150 interviews, together with ten portraits, which give a human dimension to this sometimes abstract research. The quotes are not necessarily to be attributed to the photographed person.



Chopsticks fit everything

Tradition

马永峰 Ma Yong Feng, Berlin in May 2018



The Chinese people's head is round not square

Free-spirited

刘盈盈 Vivian Law, Düsseldorf in May 2018



Family

I don’t want to define

于淼 Yu Miao, Guangzhou in August 2018



Filial piety

Benevolence

Friendly

It is so difficult to make a definition

李健辉 Lee Kien Fei, Penang in August 2018



People from China

How to define Chinese?

温思妮 Wen Szu Ni, Taipei in September 2018



Black hair yellow skin

Hand

Creditworthy

Chaotic active and a lot of energy

Yada Kaewburee, Bangkok in February 2019



Red

That is a difficult question

Moderation

姚晶杰 Xiao Bing, Tokyo in April 2019



Fresh, quick cooking

Wisdom

廖嘉豪 Nero Lio, Macau in May 2019

Righteousness





Chinese

Chinese language

Beautiful

尹艳 Yin Yan, Riga in June 2019

Big eater

Optimistic and willing to socialize with people

刘芙蓉 Lotus Liu, Melbourne in June 2019

Author
Oussouby Sacko

Location
Kyoto

Oussouby Sacko, President, Kyoto Seika University (JAPAN), was born in the Republic of Mali in 1966. After graduating from high school, Oussouby SACKO studied in China at Beijing Language and Culture University and then at Southeast University in Nanjing, where he majored in architecture. After coming to Japan in 1991, he earned a PhD at Kyoto University Graduate School of Engineering, Department of Architecture. Focusing on topics such as 'living space', 'machiya reproductions in Kyoto', 'community regeneration' and 'preservation and renovation of world cultural heritages in Western Africa (city and architecture)', his research explores the relationship between society and architectural space from various perspectives. His publications include Literacy and Culture of Knowledge (Nakanishiya Publishing, 2007) Contemporary African Culture Today (Seigensha Publishing, 2020). He became a lecturer in the Faculty of Humanities of Kyoto Seika University in 2001 and was promoted to Professor in 2013. On 1 April 2018, he was inaugurated as President of the University.

Title
Interplay of Perspectives

Tag
Cultural Identity
Diasporic Malian
Diversity

Material


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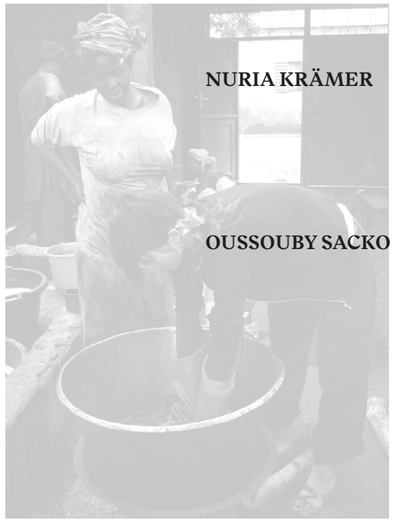

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Oussoubi Sacko Interplay of Perspectives *An Interview*

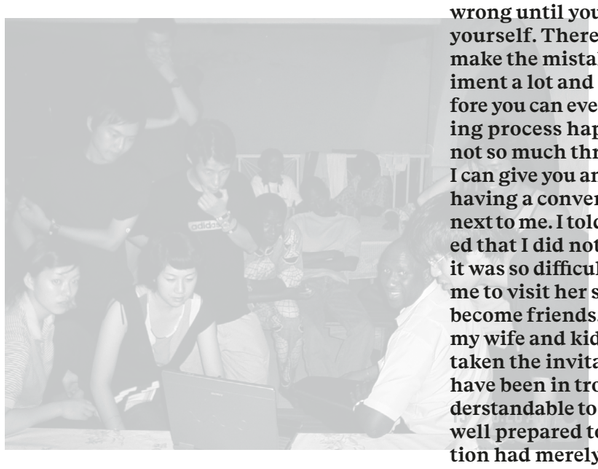
NURIA KRÄMER Dr Sacko, you were born in Mali (Bamako), and after graduating from High School you went to Nanjing and Beijing, China to pursue your education in the field of Architecture. Then you moved to Japan and received a Master Degree and a Doctor Degree of Engineering in the field of Architecture and Architecture Planning from the Graduate School of Engineering at Kyoto University, Japan. In the year 2001 you joined Kyoto Seika University and in 2013 you were promoted to Professor. And then on April 1, 2018, you were elected President of the University.
You have been living now for almost thirty years in Japan, you have a family there, you speak the language fluently and have become an important member of the local community. One could say that you embody diversity within yourself. How would you describe diversity within the realm of your personal experience and the perception of your own cultural identity?

OUSSOUBY SACKO I have been living in Japan for many years now. Without doubt I'm very much influenced by its culture. While I acknowledge the Japanese influence, at the same time I try not to be assimilated. My Malian side means a lot to me.
Over time, I gained the impression that integration frequently is misunderstood as assimilation, which can be considered as a unidirectional transformation, in which the foreigner is expected to understand and adapt to the local culture and society, while the local culture is not asked to understand the foreigner. I think that's not bringing us any closer. It is uncommon in Japan to dissociate the citizenship from the cultural background. I wanted to show that I can contribute to the development of diversity in Japanese society by being a Japanese citizen and at the same time keep my Malian side. When describing myself, I like to say: I'm a Malian Japanese.
I lived in China for many years, and my experience there was very interesting as well as different from the one I had in Japan. At the time I was living in China, it was difficult to be part of its society. I experienced a very clear division. As a foreigner, you had to consume different things and go to different places than Chinese people. There were little common spaces and joint activities. There were two separate worlds, one for Chinese citizens and another one for foreigners like me, with clearly established frames, defining my place and my possibilities for interaction. Thus, when I went to China, I never got the chance to fully participate and become part of the society.
This was different in Japan. I was able to participate in everyday social life, consume the same things and have access to the same activities.
Surprisingly, this division made me more Malian than I was. I had to explain so many times where I'm from, that suddenly, I had to ask myself what I really knew about Mali. I noticed that actually, I didn't know much. When you are in different culture and you get the impression that you have different commonsense, then the question about "who am I?" tends to arise. The encounter of other cultures pushes you to face yourself. That's why in my case I felt the urge to go back and try to understand myself and my culture. Hence, I decided to go back to Mali and find out. In that sense one could say, that the encounter with China and Japan made me understand more about Mali and myself.



NURIA KRÄMER You have been working at Kyoto Seika for many years before being elected as its President. You were chosen by your colleagues because of your outstanding leadership qualities, nonetheless, international media celebrated you as the first African-born president of a Japanese university. How does being African play a role for you? And what does African in this context mean to you?

OUSSOUBY SACKO When I first came to Japan, I felt very frustrated about not knowing the language and not understanding anything. This frustration pushed me to work hard on learning Japanese, which I was required to do in order to apply for university. Luckily, I was successful and I got accepted at the Kyoto University. The first thing I stumbled upon when I started there, was the big gap between foreigners and locals, which was mainly caused by language barriers. Some foreigners were allowed to do their studies in English. The fact that they were not required to use Japanese language in everyday life, meant that they did not have to participate in a large number of daily routines and social interactions. At that time, I was doing research about housing, which made it indispensable for me to understand and have access to everyday Japanese social life, and language undoubtedly was a key. This seriously motivated me to do everything in Japanese. Quite quickly, I became part of the system and worked in my own research unit with some students, and after some time, I found myself always among Japanese colleagues. It was not my nationality, but my way of doing things that got me there.
I have worked very hard to prove that I want to understand the people I live with and their culture. I have proven my interest and will.Sincerely, I never expected people to put my "African-ness" in the foreground.



After being elected President of Kyoto Seika University, the media got curious about my story, wondering how this happened in a society which is commonly perceived as homogeneous. It was this kind of discourse in the international media, focussing on my African-ness,which made me aware that I could be a role model for young Africans. At the beginning, I didn't feel conformable with the labelling that was being imposed on me by the media. I was elected President because my colleagues and my university found that I was the person fitting to that job, not because of my skin colour or my background. Seika is one the rare universities process of electing the President. It was a fair election. That's why I think it would have been more important to foreground democracy and diversity. But at the same time, I discovered that I could use my position to help these young people integrate into Japanese society. So that's the point. I sometimes choose to be "the African". It's a chance for me to be an ambassador of "Africa" in Japan without really forcing it.

NURIA KRÄMER You very generously offered an insight into your personal story highlighting the importance of a genuine engagement with language and social interaction. We all have experiences with misunderstanding and being misunderstood in other cultures. We know how much time it takes to really understand. I would be curious to dig deeper into the experiential dimension of learning.

OUSSOUBY SACKO For Japan you need patience. It is considered a high-context culture, where people communicate based on inherent understanding. Thus, integration into Japanese society is not something you can calculate or predict. There is no clear path, no one way, no technique. You have to go with the flow. You really have to be patient and relaxed. Japanese people don't tell you that you're wrong until you make a mistake and understand it by yourself. There is no warning in advance. They let you make the mistake. This means that you need to experiment a lot and make your own personal experiences before you can even start integrating in Japan. Your learning process happens through failures and experience, not so much through language.

I can give you an example. Some time ago, I was on a plane having a conversation with a Japanese woman sitting next to me. I told her about my life in Kyoto, and mentioned that I did not have many Japanese friends, because it was so difficult to make some. She immediately invited me to visit her sometime and assured that we could become friends. A few weeks later I went to visit her with my wife and kid. The woman was shocked that we had taken the invitation seriously. She assumed that I must have been in trouble, otherwise our visit was not understandable to her. Her main worry was that she was not well prepared to welcome us at her home. The invitation had merely been a way of being kind, but she didn't literally mean it. These kinds of experienhelped me to start "reading the air".

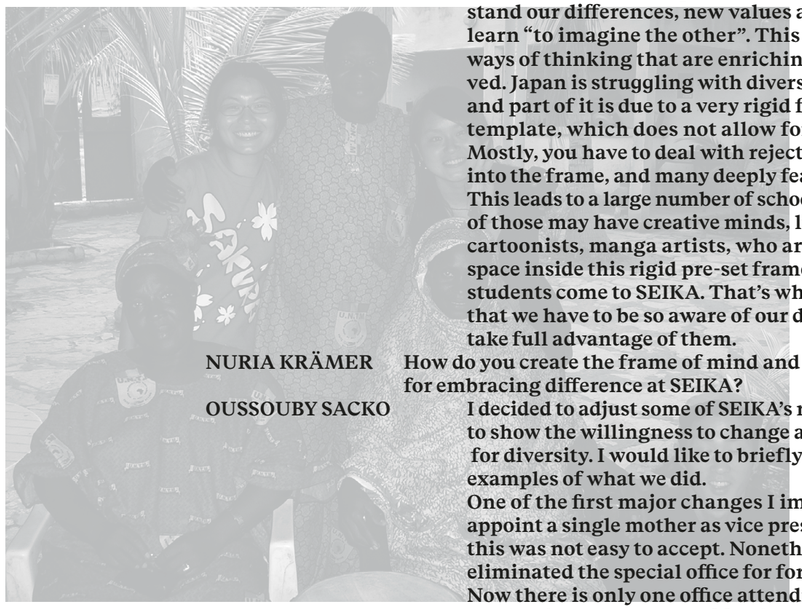
I started to write regularly about my integration experience in Japan. I'm writing a monthly column about how I perceive the Japanese society. This column is called [kuki wo yomu=空気を読む], which means "reading the air", a term addressing the unspoken rules governing Japanese social life. I will also be publishing a book this year, in 2021, called "An African University President, Training in Kyoto='アフリカ人学長、京都修行中'."

There's a prominent emphasis on the "learning", because I want to stress that it's about the awareness of the process, rather than about me having figured out the "how to". I have the impression that my writing about my integration experience becomes a mirror for Japanese readers. The outside perspective makes them aware of things they can't see because they are too close to them. I think it is the interplay between the perspectives from outside and inside which opens up a space for mutual understanding.

NURIA KRÄMER In your President's statement, you highlight the aim to promote diversity at the university, as well as announcing substantial changes. How do you envision diversity at Kyoto SEIKA?

OUSSOUBY SACKO As I see it, there's a big chance for SEIKA to become more diverse. It is not merely about being diverse, but about reflecting diversity. I have observed a tendency to think diversity is mainly about giving more opportunities to minorities, but I think diversity is about changing the consciousness of the majority.

In this process everyone needs to be actively involved, and in the first place, admit that the other exists, and secondly, openly acknowledge and accept individual differences. In the process of coming to understand our differences, new values are discovered. We learn "to imagine the other". This leads to new ways of thinking that are enriching everyone involved. Japan is struggling with diversity in education, and part of it is due to a very rigid frame or education template, which does not allow for differences. Mostly, you have to deal with rejection if you do not fit into the frame, and many deeply fear this rejection. This leads to a large number of schools drop-outs. Some of those may have creative minds, like visual artists, cartoonists, manga artists, who are not finding their space inside this rigid pre-set frame. Some of those students come to SEIKA. That's why I'm so convinced that we have to be so aware of our differences and take full advantage of them.



NURIA KRÄMER How do you create the frame of mind and support structures for embracing difference at SEIKA?

OUSSOUBY SACKO I decided to adjust some of SEIKA's regulations in order to show the willingness to change and create space for diversity. I would like to briefly mention just a few examples of what we did.

One of the first major changes I implemented, was to appoint a single mother as vice president. For some, this was not easy to accept. Nonetheless, I insisted. We eliminated the special office for foreign students. Now there is only one office attending to students. We set the aim to have 40% of foreign students, at least 30% women in leading positions and we planned a center for diversity among other things.

We integrated the concept of diversity as much as possible into the regulations, which are indispensable in a first step to promote change. Sometimes you have to stay strong with these kinds of decisions, let them sink in and become part of a new normal. After some time, people get used to them.

NURIA KRÄMER Shared Campus is part of SEIKAs internationalisation strategy. One of its core aims is to embed transcultural awareness as a cornerstone of international education. What role does Shared Campus play for you in achieving diversity?

OUSSOUBY SACKO The diversity orientation we currently have at SEIKA is still within the Japanese framework.

Shared Campus reaffirms the ambition of SEIKA to strive for a more diverse educational strategy beyond its national borders. It helps to see that there are other higher arts education institutions acknowledging that we need to open up and embrace diversity and difference in order to learn more about ourselves and our practices. Integrating Shared Campus activities to SEIKA can help us to improve our internal framework. In that sense, Shared Campus offers us the outside perspective that can help us to see and do things in a different way.

NURIA KRÄMER You mentioned on previous occasions that you wish to intensify academic relations with universities from African countries. What is your vision in this regard?

OUSSOUBY SACKO I have conducted a few programmes where we

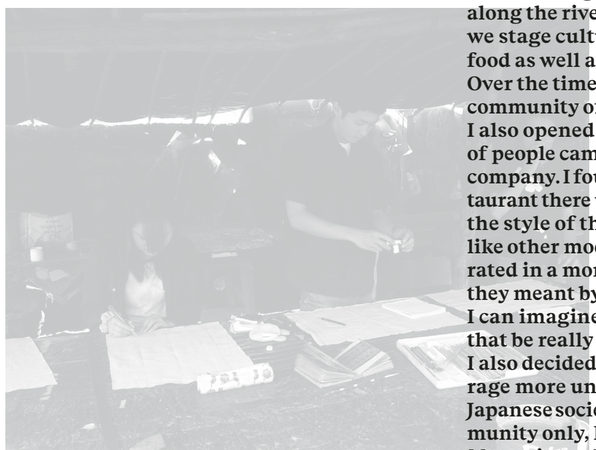
travelled with students outside of Asia. I have witnessed something that I call student metamorphosis, which is not a change of essence, but a change in perception and sensibility. Students became more aware about their Japanese-ness, and at the same time they opened up to new influences.
The first trip to Mali with students happened in an unexpected way. My students just decided to follow me to Mali on one of my trips back home. My parents were shocked when I brought 17 Japanese students along with me for two weeks. I invited a group of students from Mali to join my Japanese students. The mission I gave them was to think about things they would like to change in town. When they started exploring the urban areas my Japanese students would be interested in things and choose to go to places that were absolutely not on the radar of Malian students. That's how the latter rediscovered their own culture through the eyes of the strangers, and in that way they gained lots of inspiration. The other way round, Japanese students could overcome prejudices and clichés. Before travelling to Mali, all information they had about Africa was originating from Japanese or foreign media. In Africa, they were able to have first-hand experiences and meet people; they collaborated and lived with people who share the same reality as them, but in a different context. Only then could they start to understand that before they had been contaminated by those media clichés.
Collaboration was a tool to rediscover themselves as well as each other, initiating a process of change. When my students came back to Japan, they became aware of their transformation – their metamorphosis.

NURIA KRÄMER Sounds like a beautiful form of contamination to me.

OUSSOUBY SACKO Definitely! This trip was in 2002. I'm still seeing this group of students about twice a year. They come from all parts of Japan to meet in Kyoto, and then we enjoy remembering this experience, which profoundly marked everyone involved. They became open minded Japanese. And their metamorphosis plays back into their community.
Doubtlessly it would be very enriching to the Shared Campus network to include more difference. What I mean to say is that at this moment there is difference, but only to a certain extent. In many ways we are quite close. Including partners from Africa who bring in another kind of perspective, maybe something that is difficult to understand and sometimes also to deal with, which I think is a very good thing. Believe me! A negotiation between somebody from Japan and somebody from Switzerland will not be as long as one with somebody from Mali. That's internationalization. The biggest change happens through that which we at first do not understand. And that's awesome. I am already connecting to institutions in Mali, and hopefully the Shared Campus network can grow in this direction.

NURIA KRÄMER I would like to learn more about your engagement in promoting diversity beyond the academic context. As I found out you are a major player in African community gathering and development in Japan. Could you tell us more about the African Community and its concerns?

OUSSOUBY SACKO Sharing my experiences was always important to me, and I can assure you that those were not always rosy. When I was in China, I had to struggle a lot, because at that time I encountered lots of ignorance about Africans. In this regard the situation in Japan was not much different. People did not know much about African cultures when I arrived. People were asking me awkward things, but that wasn't even the problem. Other things were much more complicated, like getting married to a Japanese woman. Initially my



wife had to face disapproval in her family. I think they reacted that way because they were ignorant and they had no means to know me, my story or my background. I could have told them everything, that my grandfather was a great guy, that I come from a good family, but still, they wouldn't really be able to understand. That is why I tell African students, that they should try to have a new dignity in this society, a dignity based on achievement. They need to show who they are for others to understand. There is no preliminary knowledge that can be assumed.
I decided to offer support to Africans. That's how I resolved to open my house as a kind of office and create and group named Tobiuo International, which mean literally "Flying Fish". Over a number of years, we organized international festivals in Kyoto along the river, called World Festival, during which we stage cultural experiences, which present music, food as well as other events to about 10,000 visitors. Over the time this initiative formed a very nice mixed community of Japanese and international people.
I also opened a restaurant serving African food. Lots of people came to enjoy the taste of Africa and good company. I found it interesting that while I had this restaurant there were always discussions going on about the style of the restaurant. Could this restaurant look like other modern restaurants or should it be decorated in a more "African style"? I still don't know what they meant by that. What is a real "African Style"?
I can imagine what they were thinking of, but would that be really African?
I also decided to form an African community to encourage more understanding and interaction with Japanese society. I'm not doing that for the African community only, I'm doing that for the Japanese society. Many times, I experienced a kind of fear of "cultural contamination" by Japanese people, but they will need to change. In few years Japan will face serious demographic problems due to the increasing number of elders (aging society), and the decreasing of natality. Foreigners coming to study and work in Japan will be more than needed. That's why I think it's so important for the Japanese society to get in touch, learn and communicate with people from other cultural backgrounds.

NURIA KRÄMER You mentioned a kind of fear of "cultural contamination" in Japan, which we experience globally in different forms and intensities. That's one of the reasons we decided to explore the concept of contamination for this first issue of the c/o Magazine. Governments all over the planet have been kindling controversies and spreading fear of "the other", while "the other" becomes a mouldable, changing place holder. But exactly as you said, the moment you get in touch with the other, the other becomes part of you. It reconfigures yourself. In this case contamination can be regarded as a positive and enriching dynamic.
When talking about cultural diversity, you repetitively stressed the fact that you wish to think in terms of integration, not assimilation. Assimilation is generally defined as adopting the ways of another culture and fully becoming part of a different society, whereas integration is understood as an acceptance of difference under terms of equality.
We could say that integration is a process where we learn from other cultures and become positively contaminated by them. We integrate them as part of our identity and eventually we become hybrids, or more so, transcultural. To do this, we have to assimilate to some extent, right?
Did you make any experience where the difference between integration and assimilation becomes conflictive or blurry?

OUSSOUBY SACKO I would like to quickly comment on the term "contamination" as I understand it in the cultural context. This term originally has a negative connotation.

It means that the contaminating agent intrudes the contaminated one. Thus, contamination becomes an aggressive transformation. Personally, I observed different dynamics and nuances to it. I used the term "assimilation" before, to describe the process of adopting a new culture. At a certain time, I started to use another term, which is alienation. Alienation for me stands for a complex transformation process which can happen when someone fully immerses into a new culture, abandoning his/her own roots. That's what I feel happened to many Africans when they first arrived in Europe. This desire to look like white European for some Africans is rooted in the illusion of gaining power and being superior. The assimilation process starts with consuming the host culture and transforming yourself. This process of denying yourself is not a choice in a society where people request you to have the same common-sense. In my opinion, this will not happen in Asia, because people are reminding you on a daily base about how you are different from them. The question if we really need to be assimilated is quite interesting, because this is the only way to be accepted in a society which sometimes tends to deny your human value. In the actual world, we are more often judged by our market value rather than by our human value.
I am wondering now what one could understand as a positive form of contamination? That probably depends on the intellectual attitude of the contaminated one. I think you have to be intellectually prepared and you have to be aware that what you bring in from your culture is important. Then, when you are contaminated, you can combine the two together and become a multicultural person, but if you're not prepared, then you run the danger to just replace it.



NURIA KRÄMER

Dr Sacko, I would like to deeply thank you for the insights you have offered us into your personal experiences, showing us a complex interplay of one's own culture with foreign cultures. You reflect diversity in terms of embracing difference, and that every single personal story matters. Thank you.

Author
Kae Amo

Location
Kyoto

Kae Amo, Japanese anthropologist born in Yokohama, she is currently a lecturer at Kyoto Seika University. In 2019, she worked at Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (TUFS) teaching African culture, especially in French-speaking countries. Kae Amo worked for a long time as a research fellow at the France-Japan Foundation of the l'Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris (2013-2018) and coordinated the research program "Understanding Africa-Asia relations". Holder of a doctorate in anthropology at EHESS, she lived for ten years in Senegal where she obtained a master's degree in sociology from the University Cheikh Anta Diop in Dakar (UCAD). Her main research topics are: Islam in sub-Saharan Africa, urban youth, education and mobility in Africa and in Asia. For artistic creations, her pseudonym is Amoï AMANE.
kaeamo.com

Title
Feeling Colour 感染

Tag
Cultural Identity
Affect
Resonance

Material



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P. 155

Kae Amo
Feeling Colour
感染

THE COLOR OF YOUR FEELINGS

Bumadogy Guinean husband

Amoï Japanese wife

"French-Japanese-Guinean girl.

*The term 感染(Kan-sen) in Japanese is composed by 染(some-ru)or dying and 感 (kan-jiru) meaning "feel", "feeling".

LOVE "INFECTION" in a Multicultural FAMILY

By Amane Amoï (Kae AMO)
Lecturer in Global Studies at Kyoto Seika University

「愛してる」って言いますか？ Can you say "I love you" to your partner?

But living in France we saw other couples saying everyday...

空気吸うように言っとる…

Moi aussi Mon amour (Me too, my love)

Oh, ma chérie, je t'aime, ma belle... (My darling I love you, my beauty)

しかしフランスでは…恋人に対して「アムール(愛)」「マ(モン)シェリー」「ジュテーム」は毎日の愛情確認 ②

In the beginning of our relationship, we were shy "culturally"... it was difficult to say "I love you".

From typical Japanese family

from traditional Guinean fulani family

①

日本でもギニアでも、普通あまり表立って「愛してる」とか「好きよ」をパートナーに言わない(ですよね)？

5 years later ④

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH MY BABY... I LOVE YOU, TOO, DARLING

ME TOO, I LOVE YOU BOTH

ぶっちゅ

我が家は子供が生まれてからダダ漏れになった。

③ I tried once... and my husband was shocked.

Tu sais, je… je …j… Jet'AIME! (You know, I...I..love you)

Gava bien?! (What's going on!?)

旦那に試しに言ったところびっくり仰天された。

※あくまで我が家の事例です。This may not apply to all couples.

川の字 -"Kawa no Ji"

In Japan, the mother sleeps most of the times with her baby. This may pose some problems for multicultural couples...

日本では当たり前の添い寝、国際家族では炎上用件・・・

10:00 p.m.

There is no room for me to sleep...!!!

せまっ！ これじゃ眠れないよ

ぎゅう Gyu Gyu… ぎゅう…

00:00 a.m.

WAAAAA

ビクッ

03:00 a.m.

ZZZZZ

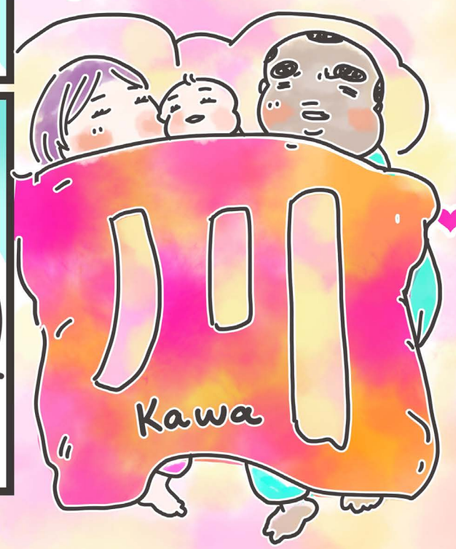
05:00 a.m.

感染 KAN-SEN

天音(あまね)アモイ
(阿毛香絵(あもうかえ))
京都精華大学
国際文化学部講師

感じる・染めると書いて感染と読む。ここでは色んな色に染まった多文化家族事情について描いてみました。

Kawa no Ji : Two parents and a child in the middle, lined up sleeping in the shape of the kanji character 川 Kawa='river'.



Author
Alexander Garcia Düttmann

Location
Berlin

After growing up in Barcelona, Alexander García Düttmann studied in Frankfurt am Main with Alfred Schmidt and in Paris with Jacques Derrida. Since 1992, he has lived in San Francisco, New York, Melbourne, and London, and he has taught at Stanford University, The University of Essex, Monash University, New York University, Middlesex University, Goldsmiths College, and the Royal College of Art. Currently he is professor of Aesthetics and Art Theory at the Berlin University of the Arts.
Düttmann has published a number of authored books, many of which have been translated into several languages. His research in the past few years has been focused on the philosophical problem of deconstruction, the concept of exaggeration in philosophy, Theodor Adorno's moral philosophy and the work of Italian filmmaker Luchino Visconti. Currently, Düttmann deals with the question of participation in art and politics; he next will investigate the question of the contemporary in art, the relationship between photography and philosophy and the question of immortality in contemporary philosophy.

Title
The Enthusiasts

Tag
Affect
Resonance

Alexander García Düttmann The Enthusiasts

Is enthusiasm discredited, ridiculed and endangered these days?

Enthusiasm is sparked by something, an idea or a thought, whether political or not. But enthusiasm and ideas are not identical. When I hear X or read Y or see Z or feel XYZ, when I am enthusiastic about an idea or a thought, then I think I am dealing with two perspectives, which I can barely distinguish and therefore hardly take in. One perspective knows alternatives and directions. Either I become a pupil, an adept, or an epigone — and subject, consciously or not, my enthusiasm, my involvement in the force that carries me beyond myself, to the idea developed by X, Y or Z. Too late... In the other perspective, I develop an idea myself, as X, Y or Z did and are still doing with their mind or body. Uncertainty... In both cases, however, the enthusiasm before, simultaneously, and indeed that continues, has a different effect: as a pure medium or element, as pure enthusiasm. My tension peaks, on the crest of a wave, which stands still, as it were, because it is moving so fast. I cease to be a recognizable self. Enthusiastically pursuing and developing X, Y or Z's idea itself requires this pure enthusiasm — enthusiasm whose content is not simply determined by the idea, upon which it does not imprint its form.

In pure enthusiasm, in the enthusiasm that erupts and proves irresistible, everything touches each other, everything is permeable to everything and everything merges into everything else, in unbridled and unchecked promiscuity. The perspective of pure enthusiasm is thus a perspective with no perspective.

It is precisely this excess that makes enthusiasm monstrous, stubbornly opposed to any attachment to content, to any direction towards insight and knowledge, to any prefiguring by knowledge and any forewarning by enlightenment, however difficult separating the one — enthusiasm — from the other — the idea, the enigmatic and transparent thought proves to be.

Their special enthusiasm always leaves enthusiasts, those who grow excited about something and thus bind themselves to it, completely free and completely spellbound — by everything and nothing.

An impossible pedagogical model: creating situations in which to pass on a surplus of enthusiasm, for whose formation and transmission no procedure exists, as little as it does for fostering a receptiveness that ought to enable generating something, enthusiastically and tensely, an idea or a thought that strikes enthusiasts as if it came from outside. Start thinking, whoever you are and wherever you are. Do not betray enthusiasm, nor its excess, nor the beginning before the beginning, which may have already betrayed you.

The model disappoints everyone about to cognize or nursemaid, or indeed immunise, enthusiasm. Enthusiasm is radically egalitarian, a non-coded force that cannot even be said to be a force. Its manifestation does not necessarily mean that a new idea or thought flares and crystallizes. Enthusiasm may always succumb to powerlessness. Its power may vanish, helplessly and at any time. Enthusiasm may come up short, and exhaust itself in a lack of ideas.

Everything touches everything, everyone touches one other — and nothing seems to happen. Enthusiasm electrifies, so quickly that it goes unnoticed. When? Always and never! The never is both structural and historical, without these aspects coinciding. It is structural: when could enthusiasm be relied on? It is historical: when could one rely less on enthusiasm than today? The always is also structural and historical, but it is both at once: enthusiasm is a surprise.

What the other person does, the witness, the observer, the seer, who is enthused, in the course of irresistible and unexpected contagion, which seems compulsive, indeed if they do nothing at all, or if something happens to them, whether they become a communist or a fascist, an artist, a scientist, a craftsperson, a philosopher, a lover, a dancer, a worker in the Donbass Symphony: all of this lies outside the model, which turns out to be none at all. I can try to argue, convince, control, influence, threaten, beat, correct, show, and teach. I can try to channel enthusiasm. But I will face barriers, be it by making the other person my adept or an epigone, a disciple, or by killing thinking — the idea, the thought — before it could even begin.

Enthusiasm is contagious, an infection that also isolates (those who catch it) when its radical egalitarianism is related to a for, to an intention, a purpose or a goal. One may act in collective enthusiasm. And yet, when enthusiasm is seen in terms of a for, a for-this or a for-that, which collective action necessarily involves, then isolation has begun, and radical egalitarianism fades into the background, without ever disappearing completely.

Author
Chris Wiesendanger

Location
Zurich

Pianist, Improviser and Composer. Born in Zurich, lives and works there.
In his many projects he develops forms at the interface of composition and improvisation. The focus lies on topics like silence and act ion, gestures, movement, presence, energy, posture and concentration.
His work is strongly connected with his long time studies of Jazz and the tradition of Jazz, Contemporary Composition, Rockmusic, Electronic Music, Musique Concrète and traditional Japanese and Chinese music. From a quiet center polyphonic and polyrhythmic structures are developed, superpositions of motions contrast with emptiness and open space. The music unfolds, resonates, changes. He teaches piano and ensemble at the Zurich University of Arts (ZHDK).
Long time teaching is an important aspect of his musical work. Questioning "Teaching of Improvisation" and deep studies on "Practicing" take a direct influence on his work. Besides being a musician, he practices different martial arts. "My practice of music and martial arts is a way of finding my center, to connect deeper with the world and to learn how to move myself and other things. To share these experiences with other people is my way. I call this way; The Way of Sound. "

Title
Changes and the Affirmation of Becoming

Tag
Resonance
Improvisation
Contaminated Perception

Chris Wiesendanger

Changes and the Affirmation of Becoming – *A Critique of the Fixed Form in* Music

In his seminal work "L'Evolution créatrice", Henri Bergson wrote that experience can be understood as a duality of tendencies. The concept of tendency plays a crucial role here. Tendencies make it impossible to clearly distinguish between opposites because they are fluid rather than fixed. This results in a constant oscillation between two points, during which one point always carries with it something from the opposite side. The agents "infect" each other, so to speak.

Examples of such tendency pairings include *momentum – inertia, initiative – potential, and memory – creativity.* These pairings play a meaningful role in improvisation and can be experienced through their movements and tendencies. The tension that arises when a musical event tends towards one side or the other creates a flow, internal momentum and exchange, a constant coming and going, change and balancing movements by means of the forces that are at play. Below are some brief thoughts on the three tendency pairings mentioned above.

Momentum – inertia.

Silence is followed by movement, and movement is followed by stillness. Every silence contains the potential for movement, and vice versa. The existence of one entails the existence the other. There is movement in every single tone; a tone is never a note on paper. I listen carefully to the vibrations within the single tone and hear places in between where action becomes possible. A movement can picked up in order to steer it in a particular direction. A movement can be brought to a standstill.

Initiative - potential.

If I am too occupied with my own idea of the music to be played, I am not open to what is happening around me. I miss out on every bit of the potential inherent in the current situation. This is also determined by all of the decisions made by my fellow musicians. We perceive what is both inside and outside our bodies. What is most important is perceiving both of these together as a whole. That allows us not only to stay grounded in ourselves, but also to be penetrated by what surrounds us.

Memory – creativity.

Many decisive questions arise: What is it that I am hearing? Is it just a memory from my own listening biography? Is it even possible for me to hear something I have never heard before? How does my hearing spark an action, a decision, an intervention in the music? Doesn't all music and thus every decision occur somewhere between the two extremes of memory and free creativity? When do I hear a sound? Do I really only hear it at the moment when it sounds? Isn't the brief moment before the actual sound where the music takes place?

As an improviser I learn to flow with this flow of events; I sense emerging tendencies; I read the situation with its inclinations. I contribute my abilities to the situation. This is what allows the situation to arise in the first place. Ideas, interventions, possibilities and decisions emerge. Hearing can turn into another kind of hearing. We wonder where a hearing perspective shifts. Where is the threshold for an intervention by a decision? The improvising musician is not independent in his decisions. He is integrated in the vibrations of the music that is transpiring. We are reverberation, echo, reflection. We are infected.

When I interact with musicians, I can be completely connected to the minds of the others. Improvising means understanding the ways in which this relationship changes.

Jazz musicians like myself refer to chords as "changes". The idea of change is emphasized by this very apt expression. What is decisive is not the form, but the process of becoming. Each new chord carries the previous one within itself. It is colored; it is contaminated; and it cannot be experienced in isolation from the harmonic context.

One could say that our perception is contaminated by dualities. If I also include the concept of non-perceptibility, an area of tension arises in my perception, and thus movement in my mind. Improvisation must embody both sides of these dualities, because one cannot be without the other, and music arises exclusively from the give and take between these dualities.

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