EVERYTHING PASSES EXCEPT THE PAST

Decolonizing Ethnographic Museums, Film Archives, and Public Space

ALLES VERGEHT AUSSER DER VERGANGENHEIT

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FOREWORD

Aloña Elizalde

Migration, climate change, economic inequality—these and other challenges can be seen as the consequences of centuries of colonial rule. The former European colonial powers are having a difficult time facing up to this fraught chapter in their history and accepting responsibility for the consequences. This goes for Germany, too. German colonial rule is still a largely overlooked chapter in German history. Only gradually is it finding its way into school curricula, and public debate about the country's colonial past and its ongoing consequences only just got started a few years ago. The murder of tens of thousands of Herero and Nama in the colonized areas of southern Africa was not regognized as genocide by the German Bundestag until 2016, after years of political pressure from the victims' descendants, including several lawsuits against the Federal Republic of Germany. This dark chapter of twentieth century history has become known to a wider public as a result, but Germany has yet to issue an official apology.

The European cultural institutes will have to take up some formidable challenges in the postcolonial world if they are to really "matter" in future. The (post-)colonial debate has been writ large for many years now at the Goethe-Institut, where we are discussing and grappling with these issues in several different projects involving experts, artists, activists, and representatives of various museums and collections. These projects include Museum Conversations about the future of museums, which took place in seven different African countries, and the Burden of Memory, a fund to support cultural co-productions focused on (Germany's) colonial history in Africa. Our digital Latitude Festival in the summer of 2020 brought together a number of these discussions about the enduring present-day impacts of colonial structures and how to overcome them.

Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain all colonized parts of Africa and must now bear their share of the burden of the past. Calls to decolonize public space, museum archives, cultural institutions, and outmoded mindsets in these countries have been gathering momentum in recent years.

The Goethe-Institut in Brussels, in association with the Goethe-Instituts in Barcelona, Bordeaux, Lisbon, and Turin, started up the project "Everything Passes Except the Past" in 2019 to bring together various perspectives on this debate in southwestern European countries and undertake a collective critical reassessment. The project is named after Belgian sociologist Luc Huyse's book (*Alles gaat voorbij, behalve het verleden*, 2006) about how people from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe cope with the suffering inflicted by colonization and occupation. Our project sought to take an honest look at colonial history and its impact on present-day cultures, to raise awareness of power structures past and present, and propose ways to overcome them.

This two-year project took an artistic and discursive approach to coming to grips with a past that remains present in the museums, public spaces, and photo archives of the colonizing countries, whether in public monuments, film archives, or artifacts obtained by European museums and collectors during the colonial period, mostly under dubious circumstances.

We made the most of the first year of the project, 2019, to do research and share knowledge, holding workshops with African and European experts in Barcelona, Bordeaux, Brussels, and Lisbon. The aim was to pool various aspects of the research, outline the practices and possibilities for artistic treatment of the subject and create a space in which to negotiate even thorny issues without hardening the fronts between opposed views, as all too often occurs.

In September 2020 we joined forces with the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo to put on an exhibition called "Everything Passes Except the Past" in Turin. The show asked about the role of documentary photographs in memory culture, the ethical issues involved in using colonial pictures and how to overcome their troubling narratives. The exhibition included artworks by Grace Ndiritu, Bianca Baldi, Alessandra Ferrini, and the Troubled

Archives collective, which challenged, confronted, and reassessed past and present views of colonialism.

The project concluded in October 2020 with an online festival featuring four panel discussions and a total of fifteen panelists. The festival received over 500 views in more than twenty countries across five continents. In addition to a keynote talk by Bénédicte Savoy, activists, artists, experts, and researchers from Africa, Latin America, and Europe, including Didier Houénoudé, Christian Greco, Ayoko Mensah, Daniela Ortiz, Yann LeGall, and Tania Adam, discussed the sensitive subject of (neo-)colonial entanglements from various critical analytical and artistic perspectives.

Coming to grips with European colonialism and its ongoing repercussions has become a very topical matter in today's public debates. But how can African and European societies move forward now? What is to be done with African artworks looted and hauled off to Europe by the colonial powers? Should we purge our cities of controversial monuments, place names and street names? And create memorials to the victims of colonialism?

I hope our project and this book will have spurred us all on to take a step forwards together and pointed up concrete measures to deal with the enduring consequences of colonialism.

I am delighted such a large number of the experts involved in the project over the past two years agreed to contribute to this publication.

My special thanks go to all the participants from African, Latin American, and European countries, whose great expertise and steadfast faith in the project made it possible in the first place. I would also like to thank the project's partner institutions for taking part in this experiment: the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium), L'ISELP (Brussels), Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món (Barcelona), Musée d'Aquitaine (Bordeaux), and Culturgest (Lisbon). And I would like to thank the Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, without whom the exhibition and the closing festival could not have taken place, for their strong support and dedicated collaboration.

I would also like to extend special thanks to my colleagues at the Goethe-Instituts in Barcelona, Bordeaux, Brussels, Lisbon, Rome, and Turin for the fruitful exchange and marvelous cooperation.

Special thanks as well to my predecessor, Cristina Nord, who initiated the project, oversaw the first workshop in Brussels, and pointed the way forwards.

Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Jana Johanna Hæckel, our project coordinator, exhibition curator and editor of this book, who ran the project with unflagging commitment, expertise, and patience over the past two years.

Brussels, December 2020
Translation from the German by Eric Rosencrantz

INTRODUCTION

Jana J. Hæckel

Looking back at the past two years from the perspective of today's dichotomy of "closed borders" in a "global world," the physical encounters during "Everything Passes Except the Past" were the most precious, but difficult moments. The initiative to collaborate with museum experts, researchers and artists from the African continent made preparations for our workshop-meetings a nerve-wracking experience. Many European visas for the African participants were only confirmed on the very day of departure, confronting us with neo-colonial border politics, arbitrary administration and the privileged side of trans-nationality in the form of a European passport. Frantz Fanon described the process of decolonization as a "total liberation that involves every facet of our personality,"[1] noting that colonial structures affect more than just the political, economic and cultural sphere; they leave deep psychological traces and scars. It is this particular relationship, the inseparability of the personal and the political, that makes working on colonial trauma so important—and challenging at the same time, as it requires a climate of trust and safety. I hope that we were able to create this very precious if fragile space, and I would like to sincerely thank everyone who took the time to travel, talk, listen, explain, discuss, and "agree to disagree" during the many hours of—emotional, sometimes explosive, but always respectful—debates that often went deep into the night. Without your participation the project and this publication wouldn't have been possible.

The arguments of this book were thus amplified by a particular historical moment with paradoxical consequences for the role of our project, which has relied on the possibility and need for connection through physical encounters. While the world has been struck by a pandemic that forces us to stay at home, disconnected, and with European borders closed for the first time since WWII, nationalist movements continue to take advantage of populist-driven identity politics and exploit the growing fear of migration and economic decline. At the same time, though, we are also witnessing a calling for the diversification of cultural and political institutions linked to a critical reappraisal of colonial

1 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Grove Press, 1961), 233.

histories. When we started preparing the project in 2018, the discussion of colonial heritage was in a different place. Experts and activists who were calling for the decolonization of museum archives, urban areas and, more generally, of mind-sets did so from a mainly marginalized position. This has changed, if only recently. The Black Lives Matter protests that took place even in Europe after the murder of George Floyd revealed a growing public awareness and engagement against racist violence and historical injustice. In the wake of the demonstrations, several colonial statues and monuments were defaced, and some were ultimately taken down in cities including Brussels, Bristol, and Boston. The colonial legacies of monuments, ethnographic collections and image archives are now squarely in the spotlight of political and social debates.

As the heated discussions around the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin reveal, ethnographic museums have to face demands for a critical reappraisal of their collections that are based on the assumption of "anthropological difference" and the representation of the "other." The publication of the restitution report by Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy in November 2018,[2] commissioned by French president Emmanuel Macron, has put pressure on ethnographic museums, ethnologists, politicians and historians. But it has also shown that good intentions need to lead to actions, and that not all the promises that were made are leading toward a better understanding. Criticism of ethnographic museums and their institutional politics is not new and has already been discussed in Europe for fifty years.[3] Nevertheless, dominant colonial narratives are still being reproduced and a critical remediation of human remains and objects in ethnographic museums has not yet translated into an according exhibition practice. How can the transformation of a colonial institution

2 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics" (*Rapport sur la restitution du patrimoine culturel africain. Vers une nouvelle éthique relationnelle*, 2018), November 25, 2020, http://restitutionreport2018.com.

3 Bénédicte Savoy, *Afrikas Kampf um seine Kunst. Geschichte einer postkoloniale Niederlage* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2021).

into a space for postcolonial discourse[4] succeed? How can institutions extend the process of decolonization and put it to good use? And what can artists, researchers, and activist from the Global South contribute to this difficult process? With this in mind, our publication examines how colonial legacies are identified, researched, and addressed by artists, activists, museum experts, and researchers in ethnographic collections, colonial image archives, and the public space. The publication presents a subjective albeit incomplete overview of different visionary postcolonial practices and considers the visibility and invisibility of specific colonial histories as they intersect with future, "potential histories."[5]

It is quite an undertaking to summarize the sixteen contributions to this book. Rather than giving a simple overview, this introduction would like to address the huge variety and cross-section of contributions. Encompassing a broad range of text forms (conversations, academic essays, text and image-based artworks, code of practices, fictional texts) and writing techniques (from academic to experimental writing), the contributions deal with various practices (activist, artistic, academic, curatorial, and performative) and concepts of postcolonial thinking. Following the non-academic, horizontal structure of our workshop-based research phase in 2019, we gave carte blanche to the participants, who chose the topic, form and length of their contributions. While we organized and held our international workshops in various languages (English, French, German, Italian, and Portuguese,) and with the help of interpreters, we decided to publish the book in English to reach as many readers as possible. With the awareness that this undertaking favours the dominant culture of English, we worked with the help of an English-speaking editor and translators. I nevertheless would like to sincerely thank all

4 "Postcolonialism" emerged as a movement consolidating and developing around the ideas of Edward W. Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak. It describes the historical period or state of affairs representing the aftermath of Western colonialism; it is here and in the following used to describe the concurrent project to reclaim and rethink the history and agency of people subordinated under various forms of imperialism.

5 Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History*: *Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso Books, 2019).

contributors who did not write in their mother tongue and refer to Édouard Glissant's pœtic philosophy of relations, which serves to remind us of the untransability but also the interconnectedness of language: "I speak and, before all, I write in the presence of all world's languages."[6]

The texts in this book are organized according to three sections, based on the different workshop and research topics of our project: ethnographic museums and the debate on restitution, the opening of colonial film archives and dealing with colonial legacies in the public space. Each chapter concludes with a "code of action and reflection" (pages 137, 213, 291) which was developed together with the project participants during and after the workshops held in 2019 (page 26). We hope to tackle and stimulate the debate on the decolonization of ethnographic museums, public spaces, and image archives and to reach as many institutions, political decision makers, and individuals as possible. However, it seems important to mention that the postcolonial criticism of institutional politics dœs not remain an elitist discourse of the cultural sphere, but that it instead manages to develop as broad a social appeal as possible. It was the activists participating in our project in particular who reminded us that postcolonial practices should be as hybrid and interdisciplinary as possible and include education in schools, higher education and universities in this process (see page 291).

The first chapter "New Perspectives on Postcolonial Museum Practices" proposes visionary theoretical, practical, and ethical foundations for future museums based on trans-national cooperation and on an artistic and curatorial remediation of ethnographic collections. In the wake of the "global turn" in the field of the arts, several ethnographic museums started cooperating with artists in working on a critical remediation of their collections and colonial image archives.[7] This new development shows a growing recognition of the value of their subjective historiographies

6 Édouard Glissant, "From Introduction to a Pœtics of the Diverse," *boundary 2*, vol. 26, no.1 (spring 1999): 119 and Édouard Glissant, *Pœtics of Relation*, trans. Betsy Wing (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

7 Jill H. Casid and Aruna D'Souza, *Art History in the Wake of the Global Turn* (London: Yale University Press, 2014).

drafted by artists on the basis of the contested image archives and collections[8], and it proved especially important for the undertaking of "Everything Passes Except the Past." As discussed by scholars from the fields of contemporary art and anthropology, artistic interventions within ethnographic museums can overcome the ethnographic gaze and show a way out of the "representation crisis" of ethnographic collections and colonial image archives.[9] The expertise of artists does not necessarily lie in scientific knowledge, rather in their subjective, autobiographic, æsthetic, and material sensibilities. This is why artistic works offer unexpected points of view, new material approaches, and surprising constellations.[10] Within this horizon the following questions were important for the development of our workshop discussions: how do artistic practices face the history of colonial violence, as epitomized in the image collections and displays of ethnographic museums? What opportunities lie in the subjective and often autobiographical research conducted by artists and activists? How does intuitive knowledge-production differ from more scientific approaches? What can European institutions learn from the work of researchers, artists and activists with a diaspora background and/or coming from the Global South?

In their conversation "Colonialism Then, and Now" the art historians Didier Houénoudé, Bénédicte Savoy, Pascale Claude and Guido Gryseels discuss the current state of restitution politics in Africa and Europe. By analyzing different institutional practices in ethnographic museums in France, Germany, and Belgium, they point to the efforts and mistakes that have been made and refer to the existing expertise of researchers on the African continent in

8 Most prominently at the the Museum of World Cultures Netherlands, under the direction of Wayne Modest, the Welkulturen Museum Frankfurt, under the direction of Clémentine Deliss, the Grassi Museum in Leipzig and the Rauthenstrauch-Jœst-Museum, under the direction of Nanette Snœp.

9 Margareta von Oswald, Jonas Tinius, *Across Anthropology. Troubling Colonial Legacies, Museums, and the Curatorial* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020).

10 Larissa Förster, Friedrich von Bose, "Concerning Curatorial Practice in Ethnological Museums: An Epistemology of Postcolonial Debates," in: *Curatopia: Museums and the Future of Curatorship*, ed. Conal McCarthy, Philipp Schorch (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019), 95–122.

order to demand a new "relational ethic" between Africa and Europe. The essay "Walking Through: Thoughts on the Metabolic Practice of the Museum" by curator and cultural historian Clémentine Deliss proposes a conceptual model for a new postcolonial, institutional practice. Her manifesto-like text describes the advantages of a trans-institution that clashes the functions of a university, a museum and a body. In this sense, the museum-university she proposes is an extension of the post-ethnographic museum, a hybrid venue based on a new architectural metabolism that includes the necessary technical configurations for transdisciplinary inquiry. In "Barcelona, Colonial Metropolis: Guidelines for Fighting Amnesia," the anthropologists and historians Alberto López Bargados, Andrés Antebi Arnó, Pablo González Morand, and Eloy Martín Corrales discuss their critical inspection of colonial heritage in the framework of their research group OVQ (which stands for "Observatori de la Vida Quotidiana"). Focusing on decolonial research and exhibition practices, OVQ seeks to open up a space for reflection and criticism around the colonial history that has largely been forgotten in the contemporary history of the Spanish state. In "The Dry and the Wet," cultural theorist Lotte Arndt analyses Assaf Gruber's film *The Conspicuous Parts*, which was commissioned by the Museum for Natural History in Berlin. Her close reading discusses the film through the theoretical eye of Jacques Rancière and within the framework of institutional provenance politics in Germany in France. As Arndt shows, Gruber's film insists on the afterlives of the imperial and colonial order that the natural history and ethnographic museums have helped build, and it extends these productively beyond the exhibition halls to the bodies of the visitors themselves. The engaged statement "White Tinted Glasses: On the "Difficult" Heritage of Italian Colonialism" by artist and researcher Alessandra Ferrini addresses the controversial debate on the reopening of the Museum of Civilizations in Rome. Ferrini criticizes the institutional politics of the museum as "Eurocentric" and claims that Italian society has since long refused to acknowledge the implications of, and responsibilities towards, its own colonial past and its legacies. "Healing the Museum," an essay by artist Grace Ndiritu, introduces a performance project she has been developing

since 2012. According to Ndiritu, "museums are dying," as they are not able to address their complex histories and stay connected with their diverse audiences. As an alternative, she proposes shamanistic approaches as a way to re-activate the dying museum as a space for sharing non-rational ways of thinking and experience. Bianca Baldi's artistic contribution takes an archival photograph with a group of settlers posing in front of a sycamore fig tree in west Addis Ababa as point of departure. In her poem on colonial entanglements, the tree speaks to us as a nonhuman witness of the Italian occupation, challenging the idea of historical time, memory and alternative futures.

The second chapter, "In/Visible Heritage: Rethinking (De) Colonial Film Archives," discusses the role of colonial films in our collective and national memory. In many European countries, the reappraisal of the colonial past focuses on how European museums and archives deal with ethnological artifacts and the restitution of looted objects. But there is another legacy of colonialism that is far less visible in this discourse: film material from colonial contexts, which is largely kept in European archives. To whom does this material belong? How and to whom should it be made accessible? What are the consequences of these structures for the collective and national memory of the formerly colonized countries, and what are the strategies for dealing with archived materials?

"De/colonial Film Archives," a conversation between the film makers Didi Cheeka, Fradique, Filipa César, and Tamer El Said, moderated by film and video curator Stefanie Schulte Strathaus, tackles the relationship between archive, memory, and power. The participants discuss the artistic confrontations with colonial archive materials made by filmmakers and artists from Europe and Africa, emphasizing decolonial archive practice as a new way of seeing archives for the future. Anthropologist Inês Ponte reflects in "Archives, Films, and Memories: Ingredients to Remember and Forget the Past" on the various discussions and presentations held during the Lisbon workshop that formed part of "Everything Passes Except the Past." Her precise observation and analysis of the artistic and discursive contributions point to the need for a trans-national exchange and engagement with the preservation

of colonial film archives, highlighting their important role for our memory culture. In her contribution "The Kiosk Museum," curator and researcher Yaa Addæ Nantwi writes about the visionary concept of the "Kiosk Museum," a traveling museum in Ghana housed in a mobile architectural structure. The Kiosk Museum, invented in 2015, seeks to repair the disconnect between the museum and the public with a carefully curated collection of artworks and films that adapts its exhibitions to the region where it is exhibiting. The artistic contribution by Daniel Blaufuks combines stills from his film based on archival found footage, *Judenrein* (2019, 11 min), with text fragments. His work reflects on the absence of Jewish people in the Polish village Klimontov, which was marked by a pogrom after the end of WWII. Blaufuks emphasizes the importance of archival images for memory culture and the responsibility we have towards the (in)visible violent histories of the past.

The third chapter "All Statues Must Fall? Conflicts and Iconoclasm in Public Space" discusses the relationship between public space, colonial traces, and body politics, as well as the challenges and perspectives of tearing down or replacing monuments and street names. While ethnographic museums and image archives tend to reach selected groups of people, public space lends itself very well to an "inclusive" debate, as "spatial realities" offer opportunities for finding resolutions. How can the process of decolonization be expanded and put to good use by cities, governments and institutions? What can we learn from the work of activists, researchers, and artists in this difficult process, and what are the inherent ethical and political questions?

In "Small Is Beautiful: Postcolonial Walking Tours as a Form of Street Justice," the activists Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, Christian Kopp, and Yann LeGall introduce the visions, motivations and struggles they face in their work for their collective, Berlin Postkolonial. By using the strategy of decolonial guided tours as a "realm of witnesses," they highlight the importance of orality and individual memory for understanding traumatic colonial experiences. The writer and activist Karfa Sira Diallo elaborates in "Bordeaux's Forgotten Past" on the effects of a suppressed conflicted history on French society, specifically in his city of residence, Bordeaux.

Within his work as head of the organization he addresses the importance of decolonial memory work, for example regarding the history slave trade, and he calls for a new, critical reading of the past that dismantles colonial legacies and its consequences for today's societies. The researcher Duane Jethro recapitulates in "Addressing Colonial Residues in Catalan Barcelona" his experiences during the workshop held in Barcelona, which was marked by protests held by Catalan separatist movements. Jethro uses his personal observations during his stay to reflect on existing, shared, transnational modes of troubling colonial residues, such as public confrontation through indigenous ritual performance, or the festive celebration of the removal of a statue. "Traffic, Sex Work, and Migration as a Colonial Discourse" is a fierce statement on the connection between migration, (neo-)colonial entanglements and sex work by artist, activist and sex worker Linda Porn. The text tackles the contradictions of postcolonial engagement in the Global North and points to the effects of disingenuous immigration laws that lead to the trafficking and smuggling of human beings. "There won't be a future for anyone if our past stays in the shadows," an experimental monologue by artist and film maker Sally Fenaux Barleycorn, gives insight in the six lives of the fictitious character "Sha." Using the form of Afrofuturistic storytelling, Barleycorn lets past and future collide to reflect on the traumatic experience of migration.

The practices, methods, and gestures outlined above in each chapter of this book, all point to the importance of trans-national exchange, the inclusion of alternative knowledge production and diasporic experience, and of long-term engagement with artists, activists, and researchers from the Global South. The work on this project has taught me so much and confronted me—at the same time—with my own blind-spots and lack of knowledge, especially regarding Germany's own colonial history, which is still not taught in German schools to any meaningful extent and is strongly connected with the colonial legacy of other European countries. It is therefore a great pleasure to see how the structural changes that we imagined during the last two years are taking root, for instance, when museum teams involve participants of our workshops in their educational departments, when artists participating in the

project are invited to conferences and exhibitions, or when schools and universities ask to use the material that we produced for their teaching. May the knowledge that this project has yielded continue to grow and be put to good use in the future.

Our special thanks go to all the participants from African, Latin American, and European countries, whose great expertise and steadfast faith in the project made the project "Everything Passes Except the Past" possible in the first place:

BRUSSELS WORKSHOP
Christine Bluard, Laurent Courtens, Clémentine Deliss, Hartmut Dorgerloh, Yann LeGall, Didier Houénoudé, Guido Gryseels, Dada Kahindo, Lars-Christian Koch, Katia Kukawka, Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, Wayne Modest, Placide Mumbembele, Grace Ndiritu, Kalvin Soiresse, Géraldine Tobé, Laurent d'Ursel

LISBON WORKSHOP
Inês Beleza Barreiros, Ganza Buroko, Daniel Blaufuks, Christine Bluard, Filipa César, Didi Cheeka, Inadelso Cossa, Liliana Coutinho, Fradique, Wolfgang Fuhrmann, Yaa Addæ Nantwi, Sana Na N'Hada, Maria do Carmo Piçarra, Inês Ponte, Tom Rice, Cristina Roldão, Tamer El Said, Raquel Schefer, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus, Catarina Simão, Antje Van Wichelen

BORDEAUX WORKSHOP
George Abungu, Lotte Arndt, Bianca Baldi, Sammy Baloji, Irene Calderoni, Laurent Courtens, Dalila Dalleas Bouzar, Michæl Dieminger, Didier Houénoudé, Guy Lenoir, Toma Muteba Luntumbue, Ayoko Mensah, Placide Mumbembele, Maureen Murphy, Freddy Mutombo, Pascale Obolo, Carolina Orsini, Margareta von Oswald, Kalvin Soiresse, Sara Torres

BARCELONA WORKSHOP
Tania Adam, Andrés Antebi, Kokou Azamede, Azkona & Toloza, Sally Fenaux Barleycorn, Karfa Diallo, Gala Pin Ferrando, Yann LeGall, Duane Jethro, Hannimari Jokinen, Billy Kalonji, Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, Grace Ndiritu, Gustau Nerín, Daniela Ortiz, Oriol Pascual, Linda Porn, Justo Aliounedine Nguema Pouye, Silvia Albert Sopale

Exhibition and virtual debate festival organized by the Gœthe-Institut in collaboration with Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin: Tania Adam, Bianca Baldi, Simona Berhe, Irene Calderoni, Troubled Archives (Rokia Bamba, Antje Van Wichelen), Rosa Anna Di Lella, Liliana Ellena, Alessandra Ferrini, Bernardo Follini, Christian Greco, Didier Houénoudé, Yann LeGall, Ayoko Mensah, Grace Ndiritu, Carolina Orsini, Angelica Pesarini, Daniela Ortiz, Patricia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Bénédicte Savoy, Igiaba Scego, Federica Terone

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CHAPTER I

NEW PERSPECTIVES ON POSTCOLONIAL MUSEUM PRACTICES

COLONIALISM THEN AND NOW

A conversation between

Bénédicte Savoy
Didier Houénoudé
Guido Gryseels

Moderated by

Pascal Claude

PASCAL CLAUDE Good morning and welcome. We are going to start right away by talking about Germany, because as you have pointed out, Germany is the European country where the debate around colonialism and more precisely about the restitution of works of art is the most advanced. Who would like to share their experience on this issue first? Ms. Savoy?

BÉNÉDICTE SAVOY Thank you. I have been living in Berlin for twenty-five years and I can confirm that in recent years, the discussion on colonialism and more specifically on the history of what we call ethnographic museums, both in Germany and Europe, has become a topic that we hear about all the time in Germany. All you have to do is turn on the radio or the television, open the newspapers or speak to students: for the last two years or so, everyone has become increasingly interested in the question of colonialism, which has been put on the programme of the German public radio, for example. The Goethe-Institut, which is doing excellent work on a global scale, has put this subject at the top of its priorities. So, we can say that indeed, Germany is intensely discussing colonialism and its many issues. But Germany is not a single entity. Its different voices are manifold, and the levels of speech are multiple; there is civil society, which is itself polyphonic, there are the authorities and their various organisations, there is the press, and at all these levels, we have the impression that an extremely interesting debate has been initiated. If I compare it to what is happening in France, since I have followed developments there somewhat in parallel, I can say that in Germany it is a bottom-up debate that has really taken place in the midst of society, whereas in France it's the project—as far as the restitution of works of art is concerned—of a young and impatient president who tried to initiate a debate at a time when it couldn't bear any fruits, because there was no debate in the first place. Or if it did exist, it was not a debate that had caught the attention of French society. It seemed rather poor to me, to be honest.

PC Why and how has Germany taken up the issues around colonialism and restitution? And why is the debate so peripheral in France or even here in Belgium?

BS There are certainly many answers. One of these is twofold: ten years ago, the colonial past didn't exist for many Germans. People basically didn't know that Germany had had colonies, or if they did, they would quickly reduce this fact to formulas such as: "Yes, but it only lasted thirty-four years. Look at the English, the French, the Belgians: it was much worse." It was a kind of electro-shock to discover something that belongs to your history and that had been entirely submerged according to a logic of amnesia, a colonial amnesia, as my colleague Jürgen Zimmerer called it. That is the first element. From the moment that this awareness took root, a thorough debate ensued, as Germany has been accustomed, since the second half of the twentieth century, following the catastrophe of the Second World War and the historical dramas that it both experienced and caused, to working on history.

PC Is Germany more used to memory work?

BS German society has developed an intellectual and social toolbox to work on difficult and painful issues. That includes the history of the reunification of the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany. There are tools and an experience of how to use them. What's more, Germany, unlike other countries, knows that a society that works on its history—even if it's a very heavy history—is a better society. Keeping family secrets, not talking about them, stifling things, makes a society unhappier, weaker, and more prone to social tensions. Talking about these secrets, even if it is difficult, is liberating in a positive sense.

GUIDO GRYSEELS I fully agree with Ms. Savoy. I wanted to add, first of all, that the debate in Germany took place in a less emotional atmosphere than, for example, here in Belgium. That is due to the fact that the colonial period of Germany in Africa ended in 1916. In Belgium, there is not one family that does not have an uncle, a father, or grandfather who worked in the Congo, so it is very emotional. When I am in a Belgian household, it doesn't take ten minutes until someone shows me an ethnographic object from the Congo or Rwanda that was brought back by a missionary uncle. In Germany, there isn't this strong emotional dimension. Secondly, Germany is indeed by far the most advanced European country in this debate. The German Minister of Culture published

a paper that clearly states Germany's strategy for dealing with its colonial past and the question of restitution. But even more importantly, it provides the necessary funds. Germany is the only European country that has not cut its budgets for culture and science. For example, once the strategy-paper was approved, the Ethnological Museum of Berlin was able to appoint eight additional scientists for provenance research. This is something other European countries can only dream of.

PC **How many scientists are doing provenance research in your museum?**

GG There is one for the entire collection—which is one of the largest in the world!

PC **What had Germany stated regarding the question of colonialism and restitution, in broad terms?**

GG I think that Ms. Savoy knows Germany better than I do, but it was clearly acknowledged that colonialism is an immoral system, that there have been unequal exchanges, that we must regognize the fact that a large part of the collections that come from Africa, from the former colonies, were acquired under unequal conditions, sometimes even in the context of looting or desecration, which was forbidden in Europe at that time. It becomes clear that something has to be done and that provenance research is essential to answering the question of how these collections did come to Europe, especially to Germany, and if they were acquired legally or taken away through looting. Germany provides the necessary funds for all this indispensable research.

PC **Mr. Houénoudé, Germany is apparently very much at the forefront of the debate. You studied in Germany and you live in Benin. Do you agree?**

DIDIER HOUÉNOUDÉ I do. When I arrived in Germany, I was surprised to see how present the memory work was. There were exhibitions on the colonial period almost everywhere, which was still very little known to the German public, and there were a lot of programmes about World War II on TV. I found it quite daring to approach one's own history so frankly. I commented on this to my thesis supervisor and she said, "Look, I belong to a generation that didn't really experience the war, but our parents were extremely silent about that period.

We didn't realize it at first, but then we wanted to know what it was all about." Those of my generation as well as the young people I met were indeed very interested in that history. Once I visited an exhibition with a friend who, at the end our visit, burst into tears: "Why is it always us Germans?," she asked. I think that Germans have had a rather traumatic history and today there are those who are trying to reconnect with this history, to grasp it. This might explain why Germany is less afraid of tackling the dark spots of history and opening up new fields of research.

PC **We heard earlier that Germany has the tools to question its history and memory. Are these intellectual tools for exploring our past and our responsibility missing in Belgium?**

GG Absolutely. In Belgium, the public debate around the colonial past and the question of restitution is very recent. It has been mainly initiated through the opening of our museum. Before that, it took place within very limited circles, among intellectuals and historians. Also, there are very few means for in-depth research on this subject in Belgium, but things are starting to change—even on a political level. I am optimistic, but we still have to deal with that emotional dimension of the debate.

PC **Ms. Savoy, a few years ago you turned things upside down in Germany when you were part of the committee of experts that was preparing the arrival of the new museum that collects non-European works in Berlin. What exactly did you do?**

BS I am glad that you ask that question, otherwise we would have continued praising Germany. Unfortunately, there are some dark spots in the painting. Besides, it would be too simple to say that some people do everything right and others do everything wrong. Things are quite tangled up. As you may know, the city of Berlin had at its center the castle of the Prussian kings, the Hohenzollern Schloss, which was slightly damaged during World War II. After the war, it was on the Eastern side of the city. The GDR decided, for ideological reasons, to dynamite the castle and built the "Palace of the Republic" (*Palast der Republik*) instead. Right after reunification, the Federal Republic of Germany blew up that Palace of the Republic to build a copy of the former castle of the kings of Prussia. You see, memory work is not easy when you repeatedly dynamite what doesn't fit... There is now this counterfeit

castle in the heart of Berlin, as if nothing had happened, a place that in fact denies and erases history; not by speech, but by the power of architecture—and Mr. Gryseels mentioned the weight of architecture, the weight that a colonial museum can have. The Federal Republic of Germany has equipped itself with a very big, fake castle without knowing what to fill it with. The genius idea then was to put the ethnological collections in it. "Genius idea" with a lot of quotation marks, since we can easily understand how problematic it is to put in this very place that denies history the collections that some people have been asking for a long time to return, to which the only answer they were given was: "Oh no, it happened a long time ago; you can't reverse, you can't erase history." That is a striking ambivalence! This castle is a difficult place to welcome these collections, which often have a difficult past. The situation gets terribly muddled. I tried to bring up the subject by saying that it's fine to imagine showcases, to imagine that, with this museum, we're going to be the showcase of world culture. But is it still fine when you show the Benin Bronzes that were pillaged in blood, as part of an atrocious act? Are you really going to show that? It's going to be difficult to show them without any kind of explanation! The reaction to this was often: "You again with your stories of origin. Give us a break!" It was said nicely, by the way, always very amiably. Until one day I decided that I couldn't possibly continue working under this lead blanket that covered the historical circumstances of how these collections were established. That's when I withdrew from the committee of experts.

PC **Because you felt helpless at the time, that you were not heard?**

BS Because I had said what I've just said to you in every way possible: in the hallways, at conferences, with colleagues. And you say things in every way possible when you're someone like me whose tool is language; sometimes you say them whispering, and at other times, you say them in a way that tries to get everyone involved. But it became clear to me that it didn't work, and I thought I should withdraw and explain the reasons for this withdrawal. The interview I gave on that occasion, during which I just said to the press the same things I had been saying within the institution, had the effect of a bomb, and it led to the consequences that we all know.

PC **You said in an interview that you dared to break a family secret. It had consequences, though. The lines started to move.**

BS Yes, I think that's why we're here. The lines started to move, but they didn't start moving easily. At first, there was an opposition: the first reaction of the museums in Berlin was to say, "Nobody is interested in that debate; it's peanuts!" I think it was only when Emmanuel Macron asked me and Felwine Sarr to work for eight months on the question of restitution that the German authorities realized that it isn't just a local issue, limited to Berlin, but on the contrary, a much broader and deeper one, which has to be taken seriously. That it is not a provocation, but instead necessary to tackle the presence of these collections in our cities. Numerous small provincial towns in Belgium, England, and France have an African museum. The objects that can be found there, that are here among us, actually work on us—even if we don't know anything about them. In my opinion, it is better to know what is going on than to continue to be manipulated by collections that perhaps create toxic atmospheres.

PC **Does that mean that the provenance should be indicated?**

BS It means that there needs to be a discussion first. We mustn't be afraid of talking. In my opinion, at least as far as German museums are concerned, there is the need to open up to this debate—and some have already opened up. The fact that the debate has been banned for a long time has brought us to a situation of conflict that no longer fits into our time. We are at the beginning of the twenty-first century and we have African colleagues, men and women, in the various universities, museums, and in civil society, who are our friends, our partners, people with whom we have strong ties in history and sometimes a common language. We have much to share with each other. The museums allow us to formulate these things, but we must go down that path serenely, joyfully and aware that we are in the process of doing something for the future, for our children, to improve relations between the African and the European continent. These relations are difficult at the moment. When, as a French person, you are traveling in African countries that were formerly colonized by France, you experience what a terrible reputation France has—quite comprehensibly. We have to work hand in hand to change that.

PC **Would you agree that "speaking" is the keyword, the first step to addressing the question of restitution of African cultural heritage?**

DH I completely agree. We need to talk. For a long time, Africa has been denied its history. Africa, according to a certain French president, had no history. It is as if Africa was an appendix of the world, or simply did not exist, and I think we must deconstruct the ideas and stereotypes that Europe and the West have of Africa. Africa is changing. Today, many Africans study outside of the continent, not only in France, not only in the former colonizing nations, but in other countries as well. They travel a lot; they learn new things. Through our history we have become hybrid personalities: my native language, the official language I speak, is French for example, and so French has come into my life and into the lives of many other Africans who were colonized by France. Also, there is a new, growing perception that Africans have of the world, and we must take this into account. Africans today are quite shocked that for a long time nobody wanted to talk about their history. During French colonization, they were told that they were Gauls, that they had Gallic ancestors. Today, I guess we all know that we are not Gauls, that our ancestors were Africans of course! It becomes clear that we must deconstruct all the lies around the colonial period. Colonization was traumatic; it was a lie and many things were said in the name of colonization to erase part of our Africanness. It is legitimate that we now feel the need to talk about Africa the way it was and to acknowledge that part of our history has been torn away from us. It is essential that we embrace this dimension of our history. If there is no dialogue, no exchange between the former colonizing nations and Africa, I think it will be difficult to turn the page. And yet, we need to turn the page to move forward.

PC **Turn the page together.**

DH Absolutely: together. There still is a lot of silence, for example between France and Africa. Nowadays, Africans speak without any complex, but at the same time, they also expect France to react accordingly.

PC **There is the expectation of a response, so to speak?**

DH Exactly. Africans feel they're facing a wall, and that can sometimes lead to a form of radicalization of the youth. They have the impression that no one is listening to them.

GG I think Mr. Houénoudé is right. Africa has been changing a lot. There is now a new generation of young people who are very dynamic, who ask questions, who are much more critical. But things have changed a lot here in Belgium too. Belgium has never given visas to people from Congo, Rwanda, or Burundi—its former colonies. As a result, Belgium remained a white society for a very long time. Thirty years ago, there were perhaps 20,000 Africans in Belgium. Today, they are 250,000. A study of the African diaspora in Belgium showed that, although most of them have a fairly high education, many are unemployed, cannot find work or even a home. They experience racism. This generation increasingly asks questions. Where does Belgium's difficulty in embracing its multiculturality come from? Where does this racism originate? These people make the link with the colonial past, and this helps to keep the debate very much alive.

BS I just wanted to react to the beautiful image of turning the page together. I think that before we can turn it, we have to read it! We have to read it out loud and read it together. But the problem is that it hasn't even been written yet. So, we actually have to write it first. That's the work that we have been doing hand in hand, Felwine Sarr and I: writing and reading it out loud together. History is never a closed story and it has to be written in a way that future generations can complete it with their points of view. It has to be written in an open manner and together, with the means currently available. We shouldn't skip any steps. It is only after we have written and read it together that we can turn the page. The question of the museums helps us in this endeavour, because museums are institutions, places, that are the most obvious legacy of this colonial past. It is mainly through them that the debate can be brought forward.

PC **So, is the museum a good entry point for addressing the colonial question in its entirety?**

BS One thing is certain: if we don't tackle this question in a cooperative manner, the different sides will gradually harden until the very moment when the looted population will take back their works of art by force. It happened with Napoleon: the Belgian commissioners went to the Louvre in 1815 to take back their works of art by force. That's how objects normally return.

PC **Mr. Houénoudé, you spoke of the possibility that the younger generation radicalizes itself if nobody listens.**

DH That's what we're witnessing today. There are, for example, the debates about the CFA franc or about how Africans are still being treated by the French today. In response to that, part of the African youth is becoming increasingly radical. There is the feeling that the elders, our parents, and grandparents, have had a rather ambiguous attitude towards France, to which they have not been able to say straightforwardly "no!". Today, these young people are rising up when they observe the somewhat obscene relationship between France and certain African countries, when they feel that they are not heard—and they want this uprising to be as brutal as possible. This is what we are trying to avoid. We are trying, as Ms. Savoy says, to walk hand in hand, trying to write the story in order to turn the page.

GG I wanted to come back to the role of museums. For most Belgian children, the first encounter with Africa was a visit to our museum. Over more than a hundred years, our museum was a colonial museum that manufactured colonial propaganda. It's not surprising that the majority of Belgians grew up with a view of Africa that was still pretty much colonial. We have to admit this. That is why, when we renovated the museum, we paid a lot of attention to the colonial period as well as to the history of Africa. I think that for many Belgians, Africa was discovered by Stanley in 1885, in the belief that there were no cultures and no people, except for some fishermen. This is why one room in our museum gives great importance to the history of Africa before colonization. In the following rooms, we treat colonization itself. When I go to a debate, there is always someone who asks: "Why do you never talk about the positive aspects of colonization? We built roads and hospitals, people went to school, and in 1960, the Congo was one of the richest countries in Africa. Why don't you talk about that?"

PC **This idea is still very widespread!**

GG Yes, absolutely. But I don't criticize individuals; I criticize a system. Colonialism is a system of governance based on military occupation, a racist and authoritarian governance, and on the exploitation of a country. That is the principle of colonialism. With

today's eyes, we see that it is an immoral system from which we must distance ourselves. That doesn't mean that there weren't many people who worked in those times with a lot of idealism. I know many doctors who vaccinated people in the bush under extremely difficult conditions. I'm not condemning, I'm not saying that this person was racist and only went there to exploit others, but it was a system based on principles that were unacceptable. This is what makes the debate so difficult: people are always talking about individuals. Every time I give a guided tour in the museum, I am told: "But my uncle was different, my father tried to do his best!". That's not the subject of the debate.

PC **You said your museum used to be a colonial museum. Would you say that it's a decolonial, or a decolonized museum today?**

GG I am not going to say that our museum is already decolonized. It is work in progress. We have very large collections that have all been described by men, mostly white men. We don't have an African perspective yet. Our diversity policy needs to go much further to achieve this. Up to now, the way of collaborating with the diaspora happened mainly through consultation. The next steps should be making decisions together and questioning how we do research.

PC **What are the next steps in preparation?**

GG We are working with the diasporas; we have a residence programme for African scientists to come and study our collections; we have completed the re-appropriation of the collections through artist-in-residence and journalist-in-residence programmes, and we also have several provenance research projects. Moreover, we have a good collaboration with some museums in Africa: in Congo, Rwanda, and Senegal.

PC **It is important to have these dialogues between museums in Europe and African museums.**

DH Absolutely, because there hasn't really been any direct exchange, any cooperation so far. Or, more precisely, cooperation has been one-directional. Europe would come and give lessons to Africa. It is a bit like colonial history, which is based on the assumption that cultures are not equal and that some cultures are superior to others. That legitimized the colonial enterprise. I think that today, we must try to erase this inequality between

cultures and try to speak as equals with African nations, taking into account that this very idea of a superior Western and an inferior African culture is partly radicalising today's young people and pushing many of them to take refuge in the idea of an idealized, forlorn Africa where everything was beautiful and whose progress has been stopped with the arrival of the West. There is the danger of seeing young people become Afro-centrist by bringing everything back to Africa. Hence the importance of being able to communicate, to dialogue with the West—and to do this on an equal footing. Another point concerning this dialogue between Africa and the West involves allowing Africans to make their own decisions, for example in terms of conservation in museums. Africans should be free to decide how they want to show their collections and not simply duplicate what is done in Europe. I think we Africans really need to be allowed to do what we want to do.

PC Should Africa reinvent the museum?

DH I think so. The museum is a Western invention. In Africa, there are museum experiments that don't work at all, while others do.

PC What kind of museum experiment dœsn't work?

DH For example, the fact that an object is displayed in a museum. In Africa, that's not how you see an object. An object is alive, in the first place.

PC You don't put it in a showcase?

DH No. Why would you put an object behind a pane of glass? Why would you put an ancestor behind a pane of glass? It dœsn't make any sense! To put an object in a showcase is to freeze it completely while the object is alive. You can compare it to a living human being. In Africa, there are different practices for preserving and displaying objects. I think we have to rethink the museum, because the form with which it was introduced during colonization somewhat distorted the way Africans look at objects. Few Africans put masks in their homes, at least until recently, because a mask is alive. Why would I put a living object that is loaded with force in my living room? We have to take this aspect of African culture into account to rethink a museum as being more in line with our aspirations and more visible to the younger African generations.

PC Ms. Savoy, let's talk about the report you wrote with Felwine Sarr at the request of Mr. Macron. When I meet Mr. Sarr a few months ago, he told me two things: one, that he was very surprised to discover that there were such huge numbers of African objects in Europe, and two, that he was struck by the apparent impossibility of dialogue and the disturbing questions one is confronted with while visiting European museums.

BS First of all, I would like to pick up on what Mr. Houénoudé said, because it seems extremely important to me. It's not easy for us to understand that what we consider as objects in Europe are considered, in other parts of the world, and particularly in some African countries, as subjects; subject-objects that act and certainly have some form of power over society. When we consider that these "objects" could in some cases return to the regîons where they were created, we also have to think about the possibilities of recharging them. This could for example work in places where certain cults or families, to whom these objects belonged, still exist. Just remember that the objects were not taken from African museums but from families, religîous communities, dynasties, palaces, and all kinds of places that partially still exist. We could, therefore, imagîne a multitude of resocialization—as we call them in our report—of these objects. Obviously, if the cults no longer exist, the objects could go to museums, because they are of interest to art historians, and historians of religîon. Some objects could go back to families and some others could be updated in other ways. When we went to the National Museum of Mali in Bamako, we discovered conservation models that were explained to us by the director of the museum: some works are lent for rituals to the respective village, stay there for a week and, when they are no longer needed, are returned to the museum. There are cases where the ritual only takes place every five or ten years and the museum lends these objects again whenever needed. There are many hybrid and innovative forms of restitution that can be imagîned! What is more, and we have to repeat it time and time again unfortunately, our African colleagues—museum directors, curators—are very responsible people. Nobody will put the returned objects in a museum in a way that lets everyone touch them, thus breaking the objects in three days. That's not what it's

about at all! We need to find devices that work in the twenty-first century, that work with the different audiences, but that also work with those objects that function differently from ours. Besides, when we look at our altarpieces, they weren't objects made to be shown at the Louvre. And we should remember that, when the Louvre first opened as a museum, some people laughed at the old ladies who were praying on their knees in front of Rubens' retables. Also, when they were returned to Belgium in 1815, they went straight back to the churches and were not put in museums. As you can see, there are a lot of parallels, of subtle things to think about, and you have to allow yourself to think them through.

Getting back to the report: first of all, I can only share Felwine Sarr's astonishment at discovering that so many objects from Sub-Saharan Africa are to be found in European museums. The numbers and the size of the inventories have indeed been considerably underestimated. When you visit the African department of the Musée du Quai Branly, you see around a thousand pieces displayed in the exhibition. In reality, the Musée du Quai Branly has 69,000 pieces in its inventory.

PC **For the sake of comparison, how many objects are there in your museum, Mr. Gryseels?**

GG 125,000, so we have twice the amount of the Musée du Quai Branly!

PC **And how many works are on display?**

GG Around 600, so less than half a percent of our collection.

BS To continue the comparison: Berlin has 75,000 objects from Sub-Saharan Africa, and the British Museum in London has 55,000. In other words, if we add up all the European inventories, the number is dizzying. Unfortunately, the German museums do not publish their inventories and we do not know to this day how big their collections are. Compare this spectacular number to that of the National Museum of Bamako in Mali, which has 8,000 objects. 8,000! The imbalance becomes obvious. I see that Mr. Gryseels is about to say that Kinshasa has 40,000 objects, which is almost as many as the museum in Vienna, admittedly. In any case, the numbers are considerable and if you put them on a world map, you can see that Africa has little or very little, apart from Nigeria and Congo-Kinshasa, that the United States and Canada

has little, that China, even though it's very interested in Africa, has almost no ancient African collection at all. Everything is in Europe! And why is that so? Because it came in colonial times. And to pick up on what Mr. Gryseels was saying earlier: not only was colonialism an unjust system of exploitation of natural resources, it was also, as Felwine Sarr and I discovered with great shock, a system—and we need to stress the term "system"—of exploitation of cultural resources. It's not about an uncle who brought back a couple of objects. Colonialism consisted of systematic campaigns that brought massive amounts of objects back to Europe. During the so-called scientific French campaigns from 1928 to 1938, for example, up to 10,000 objects were brought to France every single year. When we look at a region such as western Cameroon, which is home to the Bamileke culture, an extremely rich material culture, the massive exploitation of objects took place on a daily basis, since Cameroon was occupied by three colonial nations: England, France, and Germany. Today these objects, many thousands of them, are among us. As for Felwine Sarr's surprise at the difficulty of a dialogue when it comes to these objects, I know exactly what he means. It still is a reality. Finally, as far as the report is concerned, we had the full support of the team at the Musée du Quai Branly. They opened up their inventories and helped us in our endeavour. We were never prevented from working. However, the president of the Musée du Quai Branly was dissatisfied with the report.

PC **Why was he dissatisfied?**

BS It remains a mystery to me—and even more so at a time when Mr. Macron has announced that he wanted to return important works of art to Benin and other African nations—that the president of the Musée du Quai Branly, Stéphane Martin, at first took a stand in the press—in Paris Match and Le Figaro—to say that he completely backed this project, and that it was indeed scandalous—those were his words—that 95% of African heritage is outside of Africa. He first agreed with Mr. Macron, but he did not agree later on when we said the same thing in our report. I guess that, in the meantime, things had changed in his career and that he had less of an interest in agreeing with Mr. Macron.

GG Let me make a small parenthesis on the numbers. Basically, Ms. Savoy is right: a very large part of the African cultural heritage

is in the West. We nevertheless have to be careful with the figures. In our museum in Tervuren, we have 125,000 objects, but they are largely testimonies of material heritage in form of day-to-day objects, such as knives, forks, and pots. The masterpieces we have are merely a tiny part of the collection. The Metropolitan Museum in New York has 15,000 objects and one could easily conclude that our collection is ten times larger. However, the Metropolitan Museum only accepts masterpieces and therefore these 15,000 objects are of much greater value than most of our 120,000 objects. As I said, we need to be careful when it comes to numbers and not compare the value of one collection with that of another, simply on the basis of a figure. This being said, the day before yesterday there was a major UNESCO and ICOM conference on restitution in Brussels, at which Pierre de Maret, former director of the ULB, publicly said that 99% of the masterpieces of the Congo are to be found in the West. There is still a great cultural heritage of Congo, but all the masterpieces have left the country. We have to acknowledge that.

PC **Ms. Savoy, let me ask you the two questions which, undoubtedly, you have heard the most after submitting your report: First, if there is restitution, will we empty the European museums? Second, will Africans be able to welcome and protect these works in their museums?**

BS Actually, there are five such questions that block any debate. The first question, or concern, can also be called "Pandora's box:" we're going to empty the museums. Second, there is the presumption of incapacity: Africans will not be able to preserve their own heritage. Third, there is the concern of whom we are going to give these objects back to, because we don't know whether to return them to families or to the respective states. Fourth, there is the belief that these works have been saved and protected from the Africans themselves. The fifth question is that there is no official demand for restitution in the first place, so why make such a fuss? All these questions and concerns, which are undoubtedly legitimate when asked by true professionals, immediately block the debate when asked by a broad public. Let me get back to this idea that we're going to empty our museums. In fact, nobody in Africa, of our many interlocutors, wants to recover 180,000 objects

at once—spoons, forks or pots. What they ask for is a few pieces that have historical, psychological and symbolic importance for certain regions. In the early 1970s, Nigeria made a restitution request for the collection of the Benin Bronzes that can be currently seen in London, Berlin or Vienna. This official request concerned some pieces that would be lent to Nigeria as a long-term loan. That's all Nigeria was asking for: a few of the thousand objects that are kept in European museums. Another example: the request that the Republic of Benin recently presented to the French ministries—that was co-formulated by Mr. Houénoudé—concerns twenty-six dynastic pieces taken from the Royal Palaces of Abomey in 1892 during a punitive expedition. At that time, the partial destruction of the palaces meant the destruction and the end of an extremely important monarchy and its history. The king was sent into exile and history came to an end. The connection to the monarchy's past was lost. Today, the remaining palaces, which are partly under the protection of UNESCO, are huge and empty. Benin is asking to get back twenty-six objects—twenty-six! If the Musée du Quai Branly loses these twenty-six pieces, that certainly play a central role in the scenography of the 1,000 works on display, but it still has 69,000 objects in its repositories to invent something else. In other words, when some people say that we're going to empty our museums, it's simply to scare people.

PC **How do you choose the objects you want to see returned to your country?**

DH Restitution requests mostly concern regalia, i.e., objects of power. The government of Benin is insisting on getting back the objects that belonged to the Abomey dynasty. It is a question of dignity, and it is necessary to restore the dignity of the people. These objects were taken as treasures, as war trophies, as a proof of the West's superiority over African kingdoms. The idea here is to reappropriate our history. One of the most significant examples is the attitude of a Minister of Culture of Benin whom I accompanied to Paris. We wanted to meet the French authorities following the refusal of President Hollande's government to honor Benin's restitution request. We had hoped to discuss with the French side and try to revive negotiations. Unfortunately, we were not received, so we went to the Musée du Quai Branly instead. The

minister's reaction at seeing the objects from Benin on display was unequivocal, he was amazed to see that the thrones of the Kings of Abomey were two meters tall. The copies of these thrones that we currently have in the Abomey Museum in Benin are very small. It's quite shocking to discover such big a discrepancy!

PC **I read that, with your students, you have to work with photos almost all the time.**

DH That's right. When I say to my students that they are the heirs of an extremely rich culture, they take me for an idiot! They haven't seen any real testimonies of that history, and the objects they can see in Abomey do everything but testify to a rich culture and a powerful kingdom.

PC **Your students must think that you're making things up!**

DH Exactly. I tell them that one day maybe they will visit the Musée du Quai Branly Museum and understand what I'm talking about. It is difficult to teach art history. It's also difficult to build confidence among a generation of Africans who feel that they have been led up the garden path and who have since decided to take their revenge. We need these objects, these essential elements of our culture to give them self-confidence and to explain to them that the reason why we lost the colonial war was not that we were inferior, but that the balance of power at that time was different. We have to make sure this generation can be proud of its history in order to pursue the path of development. As for the Africans' ability to take care of the returned objects, I think the debate has been completely distorted from the very beginning. In the Kingdom of Dahomey, there already existed a system of conservation of objects. Anything that was produced under a given king was part of the royal treasure. When a king succeeded another king, he inherited the crown treasure and could add new objects to it, and he would order his craftsmen and artists to do so. Over several years, these objects were shown to the population in a parade as a display of the king's power and wealth. So, there was a form of conservation existing at the time. Today, many Africans attend Western schools, where they learn Western methods of conservation. Fortunately, some African institutions have come into being, such as the School of African Heritage (École du Patrimoine Africain), which for more than twenty years has

trained over a thousand African museum professionals. Perhaps the political will was lacking in the past, but this is changing with, for example, the decision of the government of Benin to set up museums that meet international standards. Though I honestly don't know what exactly we mean by "international standards"—it might merely be something the West wants to hear before proceeding to restitutions. In any case, we have built museums to international standards and we have professionals who can take care of these objects. I don't see what the problem is.

PC **Maybe the question of means?**

DH If a government decides to build museums to international standards and to train professionals, it means that they also plan to make the necessary means available. We shouldn't be alarmed beforehand about the Africans' pseudo-incapacity to take care of their objects. Africans must not have their hands and legs tied, hearing things such as: "You can't do it anyway." Let them make their own experience and then we can judge!

PC **Among the questions that prevent us from thinking is the one that museums do not receive restitution requests from African countries. Mr. Gryseels, have you already received such a demand?**

GG I have not had any formal requests so far, but for me, the question of restitution is one of dialogue and cooperation. I am in permanent dialogue with the museums in the Congo and Rwanda. In the Congo, I was told by colleagues that restitution is not an immediate priority, that there is the need to build the capacity to receive returned objects first, but that, at the same time, the dialogue has to be continued. The museum in the Congo, for example, has no collection at all for a certain period, whereas we do here in Belgium. This mainly concerns symbolic objects such as masks of kings. Also, we have a unique collection of the Giant Masks of the Yaka, of which only twenty-four are known worldwide. We have eighteen of them in our museum, while there are none left in the Congo. I would be open to a discussion on restitution, since the Yaka are an important people and I would perfectly understand if my Congolese colleagues wanted to display them in one of their museums.

PC But that request was never made?

GG There was no official request, but we're discussing it. There finally is a new museum in Kinshasa that opened a year ago and we will take it from there. To give another example: Rwanda has the idea of doing a major exhibition on Rwandan drums, which are known throughout the world. There are almost no drums left in Rwanda, but we have 800 of them in Brussels. Collaboration here is possible and we are currently discussing the modalities. Also, when we talk about capacity building, and Mr. Houénoudé mentioned it before, we have to encourage South-South collaboration. There are a lot of Africans with a lot of expertise; there is the School of African Heritage in Benin that is doing a remarkable job, but we need a lot more resources to encourage this collaboration in terms of public service, in terms of conservation. There is a lot of expertise in some countries, less in others. Mostly, the means are lacking. But all that is feasible as long as we have an ongoing debate and exchange.

PC How strong is this collaboration between African countries?

DH It is beginning to take shape. We have to thank some of the pioneers who believed that expertise existed in Africa and that we should build on it. I would like to mention Webber Ndoro, director-general of ICCROM, who for a long time was director of the African World Heritage Fund. Today, mobility among researchers from the South is being established between several countries. For example, I am thesis director for many students studying in other African countries; I am invited to take part in projects that are being set up in the countries of the South. I think this is the beginning of a dynamic that will increase and should be encouraged over the next years. However, we must not ignore the cooperation that already exists between the countries of the South and the North. We should rather rethink how this cooperation takes place. For a long time, it was characterized by a strong paternalism on the part of the West concerning Africa. Today, African colleagues no longer need to be taught lessons. They have their subject of study and the interests that go with it. It is crucial to talk to them as equals and to find together new ways of looking at the world, find new paradigms.

PC Do you still have lessons to give?

GG I don't. But let me get back to something Ms. Savoy said about the issue of inventories. I think it's essential that museums in the West open their inventories. Last year the director-general of the National Museum of Rwanda told me that he was appointed president of the Presidential Commission of Rwanda to identify African cultural property in the West. He went on explaining that he didn't even know where to start, since he was told that some objects were in Germany, some others in the Vatican, while other voices said that they were to be found in Belgium instead. Therefore, one of the first steps I took was to give a USB key with all the data on the Rwandan objects present in our collection. That helped to solve some misunderstandings, as sometimes there are rumors in Rwanda that we have a particular drum, even though we don't. We want to be transparent. That's one thing. The second thing: one year ago, I was at a conference on restitution organized by the Goethe-Institut in Kinshasa, at which one of the speakers said: "What interests me personally is having access to the photos, films and archives that you have in Belgium." This can be done very quickly. We can digitize all the collections of photos, films and archives and return them to the country, which would facilitate the process of restitution. We have to move on doing simple things like that—if there are the means, of course.

PC Ms. Savoy, part of the final title of your report was *Achieving a new relational ethic*. Do we need to first resolve this "crisis of relationality," as Felwine Sarr calls it?

BS That's what we're working on. When you listen to Mr. Gryseels, you hear things you wouldn't have heard five or ten years ago; maybe even less than that. Therefore, I would like to welcome his words, because we still don't hear many museum directors in Europe speak like that—especially men! It's because this question of restitution has been opened that institutions on both sides of the Mediterranean—with their sense of responsibility, their intellectual tools and their networks—have started to think things through. This new relational ethic of sharing digital copies, sharing films, making large loans, and so forth is a new way of doing things. We could have easily done it much earlier; why

didn't we? Because, as Mr. Houénoudé described earlier, there was this arrogance or condescension, the notion that Africans merely needed food, while the spiritual food was for us Westerners. This way of thinking has come to an end. What's important to say here is that the work we've been doing is not an act of repentance, of self-flagellation of the West, or only of African empowerment. We are working for the future, we the descendants of those who were colonized and those who colonized, who are now saying out loud: "This is our history, this is our historical burden, this is what we have in our respective backpacks, but we are moving on in the twenty-first century on new bases, for our children and grandchildren." It's not difficult to trust, to talk and to listen to each other, to argue and say: "I don't agree!" Yet this is precisely what we still need to learn. Let me share one more anecdote, because it struck me considerably. At one of the first meetings that we held in Dakar with colleagues from the African continent as part of the preparation of the report, which Mr. Houénoudé attended as well, one African colleague said that it would be good if objects were returned to them. That way Berlin could be abolished. At first, I didn't understand the remark, which quite shocked me, to be honest. Later on, that same colleague explained that if there is restitution of objects, African states can let these objects circulate in directions that go against the borders that were imposed by the Berlin conference in 1884. As an example, some pieces belong to cultures that are located all along the Niger Valley that were cut off from each other, suddenly belonging to different countries after the European colonizers had drawn their borders. These state divisions do not work at all, not even today. My colleague's idea was that if Mali recovers objects that come from the Niger Valley, it could then circulate them to Niger and even further, all along the Valley, allowing the people to regain awareness of themselves, their shared history and culture that existed before the arbitrary separations of the Berlin Conference. For me, it's beautiful to abolish Berlin metaphorically by returning objects that will circulate differently. The reason that the African museums and institutions need to recover part of their heritage is that only when they do so, only when they have the right to discuss, to decide themselves how they want to circulate these objects,

things will be easier. The monopoly on circulation, which up to recently exclusively belonged to the West, must be abolished and different possibilities must be made available.

PC To conclude, I would like to ask you, Mr. Gryseels and Mr. Houénoudé, what new relational ethic you dream of?

DH A relational ethic that is more respectful of the other. You know, many colleagues of my generation are no longer in the victimization syndrome. The questions that our elders have spent their entire lives trying to answer are not questions we necessarily feel concerned by any more. We feel concerned by the debates that are topical today, the challenges of the twenty-first century. These questions concern climate change and to many other things that are much more important for us. We are not ignoring our past, but rather taking ownership of that past and trying to move forward. A new relational ethic could mean the opportunity to work with colleagues from the West in the easiest possible way. African researchers have to come to the West and do research here because Western archives are more complete and all the documents on the colonial period are in the West. But it is very difficult to get a visa. For an African academic who wants to do research, it takes a long time to get a visa, if it is even approved, as many are simply refused. Those things have to change; Africans have to be taken more seriously and treated respectfully.

PC What about you, Mr. Gryseels?

GG I want to see the Van Eyck exhibition of Ghent travel to Kinshasa! (laughter)

PC That's a nice conclusion!

GG Yes, I think that not only do we need more partnerships, exchanges and joint exhibitions. Africa needs to learn from our cultures too. And why don't Van Eyck, Rembrandt or Bruegel ever go to Africa? That, for me, is my long-term dream.

PC Thank you to all three of you for this thorough and thoughtful exchange!

Conversation in the context of "Les Deutschlands" at Flagey, Brussels, January 26, 2020. Transcription and translation from the French by Thomas Küchenberg.

WALKING THROUGH: THOUGHTS ON THE METABOLIC PRACTICES OF MUSEUMS

Clémentine Deliss

A few years back, I walked through as many ethnographic museums in Western Europe as I could. I wanted to witness their status in contemporary civil society, understand the contradictions evoked by their outdated modes of display, and learn more about the power structures behind the inordinate mass of artifacts they hold under lock and key.

I began by focusing on the immediate constituents of the museum experience. I sought to match the body of the visitor with the corpus of the collection and the museum's broader metabolism. I wondered, in what manner do members of the public move through an exhibition space? For how long do they engage with the displayed artifacts? What is the relationship between seeing, feeling and thinking? Are visitors provided with a chair purposefully placed in front of a vitrine to enable lengthier contemplation? Or do they stand upright as if facing a screen, ready to swipe on and rarely moving up close or bending down to peer at the underside of an exhibit?

The museum as a spatial configuration of inhabited meanings adapts only very gradually to change. Timing is a curatorial unit, placement is clearly demarcated, artworks are hung according to norms, lighting and air humidity are coordinated with conservation requirements, and the visitor readily accepts this monitoring environment, which anchors and regulates their perception. If a video is projected, there may be an opportunity to lie on a carpeted floor, slump on a mattress or find a stool to sit on. Hours can be spent in this way because new media are recognised as requiring a longer period of intake than a painting, photograph, sculpture, or set of artifacts. Robert Harbison noted in 1977, at a time when video works began entering museums, that the "immersion in the object that stops time is achieved by treating it as an existence to be lived in rather than something to be stopped in front of or looked at, and one can almost tell from people's movements whether they have entered a painting or are only staring at it."[2]

The bias against the body of the spectator dates back to the European Renaissance when architects and designers saw the

2 Robert Harbison, *Eccentric Spaces* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000),147.

gallery as a "fixed theater of spectatorship" intended "to regulate strictly the viewer's range of motion and object of focus."[3] As museum spaces gradually evolved over the course of the eighteenth century from private house museums into public institutions, those "unruly social bodies" who once engaged in "flirting, playing, eating, drinking, talking, laughing, and napping" on ottomans, benches, or at tables, were gradually removed.[4] By the early twentieth century, the curatorial trope had become one of "disembodied opticality," whereby seating became limited to a short stop-off point along the museum's scenographic route to ease the "æsthetic headache" (Fuss and Saunders). Indeed, with the ensuing advent of the white cube environment, the fear of a "re-embodiment of the spectator" works to rid rooms entirely of any means of repose or study, leaving only banal exit signs to indicate the "intrusive" presence of human biology.[5] As Fuss and Sanders explain, "art's visual consumption owes much to the flow-management philosophy of department stores, which rarely provides seating in the main shopping areas. A seated patron, after all, is not likely to be a consuming patron; consumer culture requires bodies on the move, not bodies in repose. Simply put, the bench is anathema to the capitalist space of the modern museum."[6] Interestingly, there is remarkably little literature on the relationship between exhibitions and human bodies.

In the twenty-first century, the museum—now hygienist—is obsessed with its own dirty data, cleansing and disinfecting its contaminated past, in particular the bloody residues attached to the traumatic memories of slavery, colonialism, and the Holocaust that are embodied in its collection with their absence of legitimate provenance. Collections become the toxic witnesses to genocidal practices.[7] Indeed, narratives in museum ethnology retain master-slave terminologies that concur with the language

3 Diana Fuss, Joel Sanders, "An Aesthetic Headache: Notes from the Museum Bench," in: "Interiors" ed. Johanna Burton, Lynne Cooke, Josiah McElheny (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), 65.
4 Fuss and Sanders 2011: Ibid., 69–70.
5 Ibid, 2012: Ibid., 72.
6 Ibid, 2012: Ibid., 75.
7 Ciraj Rassool aptly points out that ethnographic collections are "genocidal collections" (conversation with the author, January 2019).

of seclusion, preservation and control, such as the keeper, the custodian and the conservator. Held in inaccessible crypts, belongings acquired, looted, or wrenched away in the name of science, trade, or diplomatic exchange are sedated and safeguarded through their juridical inscription within the annals of an other's institution. In the never-ending ethnographic present (James Clifford), anthropologists then and now continue to reflect the image of the slave onto their interlocutors from other cultures, erasing the individual identities of the artists, designers, and engineers whose works they acquire and loot. They have propelled anonymity onto what they collected in the name of "ethnos." We are now faced with the "incalculability" (Mbembe) of the act of restitution. Some artifacts have been lost, and others have changed location. In short, as Mbembe concludes, restitution is "beyond quantification," a phenomenon or state of play that must be recognized.

Ann L. Stoler states that "colonial presence" is articulated through a "political grammar" that "occludes (...) hides and conceals, creates blockage, and closes off."[8] To be clear about this: there are no named artists, designers or producers of so-called ethnographic artifacts in European collections. Controversially, one could begin to see this as an anti-colonial counterstrategy of intentionality, what I will term not as "name undocumented" but as "authorship withholding", specifically as—not authorship withheld, i.e., in a past modus, but the withholding as an ongoing tension, a self-willed retention, coupled with and motored by Eurocentric presuppositions of the quality of museums in former colonies. This is a conceptual and political issue that causes trouble for restitution and provenance studies—in themselves part of the philology of anthropological, genealogical thinking. Today the absence of the artist's name, whether it has been violently excluded or intentionally withheld, destabilises claims of ownership, future patenting, and other forms of capitalisation in art that have to be shared.

Remediating the ethno-colonial museum requires a synesthetic process that not only engages with the conditions of institutional blindness but also with the architectonic structures through

8 Ann L. Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham and London: *Duke University Press*, 2016).16.

which human beings are engaged in acts of sentient cognition with materialised histories from the past. The ethnographic museum adapts quasi automatically to its juridical and administrative features, economic imperatives, and performative articulation, like a breathing, digesting, expelling and restituting morphology of human interaction. The question is, how do we ascertain whether the ergonomic engineering of the human body in the parkour of the museum's architecture, actually affects the scope and scale of hermeneutic unfolding? In 1992, whilst he was president of ICOM, the former president of Mali, Alpha Oumar Konaré, valiantly suggested that all museums in Africa be "killed" to allow for a new approach to culture and heritage to flourish.[9] This was said against a background of colonial museums that promote their own power structures (South Africa 1825-1892: 6 museums; Zimbabwe: 1900: 2 museums, Namibia, etc...). So the question becomes: can one ever succeed in revalidating an institution that has colluded with the violence of colonialism, for example, by re-evaluating former ethnographic collections, and insisting on their access and visibility, in order to develop, as Mbembe rightly noted at the MoMA conference, "different modes of measuring, of inhabiting, and of sharing the planet?" Because, as he suggests, the future of life and the future of art are intertwined more than ever.[10] The decolonial process in art history today cannot be undertaken without full access to these disenfranchised objects that have been sequestered and fetishised by museum anthropology. Isolated, they have no identified author, no attributed maker other than through the nomos of the grouping, caste, tribe, or nation of people, to which they are designated to belong, as recorded and confirmed by the ethnographer. Their intellectual property rights are obfuscated and even denied.

Museum collections are idiosyncratic composites. They reflect the egos of scientists and historians, the foibles of curators and

9 Alpha Oumar Konaré, former president of Mali and president of ICOM, stated "that it is about time that we questioned the fundamental basis of the situation and 'killed' – I repeat killed—the Western model of the museum in Africa in order for new methods for the conservation and promotion of our heritage to flourish" (Konaré, Message from the President of ICOM, 1992).

10 Achille Mbembe closing keynote speech at the MoMA conference, "The multiplication of perspectives," April 28, 2019.

artists, and the political desires of museum directors to compete for new gifts and rare acquisitions. In contrast, museum or university research collections are transitory, named only in relation to an inquiry. For lacking in recorded authorship, they remain outside of the art market and are assembled because the paradigm of the moment suggests that we shall learn something from them. As constellations of material artifacts or archival documents, we rely on their ability to support teaching and ignite further research at specific moments in time. However, this value is quickly superseded by any results they generate, as well as parallel transformations in the arts and sciences that may contribute to qualifying their ongoing validity. When reanimated through contemporary, heteroclite assemblages that deconstruct their initial, source-centric classifications, they infer alternative narratives and interpretations that both collide and collude with one another; their reappraisal has the potential to "squat" or "spam" the canon. As exercises in visual thinking, such collections can play a generative role in transdisciplinary education and knowledge production. Their remediation is exemplified most blatantly by the weight and burden of ethnographic collections. Remediation encourages conceptual liminality across modes of representation from science to art, from paideia to pœsis, such that to hoard them is to handicap their energy as "epistemic objects" (Rheinberger) able to weave new nodes of contact into the texture of human relations.[11]

Could such charged collections, effectively booty from the grey zone of scientific anthropology, become the focus for a new space of "critical resistance" (Derrida)?[12] The tightly coordinated environment of the exhibition actually works to tame the tension inherent in these sealed-off storage spaces, as if the curator were dealing with a feral, uncontrollable energy yet to be exploited. Nevertheless, these holdings can be read as multiplex organisations of material ingenuity or stored code. For

11 Hans-Jörg Rheinberger speaking at "100 Years from Now: The Opening" at Haus der Kulturen der Welt, November 25, 2020,https://185.203.112.46/talks/keynote-eigenzeit-revisited.

12 Jacques Derrida and the Humanities, *A Critical Reader* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, 24–26).

Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy, "these objects are also the bearers of a reserve of the imagination as well as the material manifestation of forms of knowledge [*savoirs*]. Fishing nets that encode algorithms from fractals to anthropomorphic statues in passing by amulet-filled vests: the work of decoding the various forms of knowledge they conceal as well as the comprehension of the epistemes that have produced them still remains largely a work to be done. (...) It is indeed a question of re-activating a concealed memory (...)."[13]

Restitution has become both the central bone of contention and the most effective commodity for characterising the future of ethnological museums. Each of these maculate museums seeks the stamp of approval that comes with outing one's colonial collections by admitting to the blatant absence of solid written and photographic documentation. As a result of public lobbying and academic concern, and just as a generation of custodians is about to enter retirement, museum anthropology is experiencing a renaissance. Ironically, this renewed verve goes back to the source to recreate missing pieces of information omitted at the time of acquisition. All this is performed under the guise of object biographies and provenance studies. Arguments for and against restitution abound, but while these initiatives are addressed, ways of working with these vast collections retained in the vaults of museums in Europe need to be worked on as well.

How can one engage in a revision of these collections in the twenty-first century?[14] Why do these so-called ethnographic collections remain shrouded in non-visibility? What is stopping former European colonisers from providing space and access for students and researchers from the world's many cultures, including indigenous producers, to study their heritage? What is the hurdle that blocks this process? Conservation? Toxicity? A deep-seated notion of ownership? Should legal leverage for rights of access be left to the unwieldy politics of repatriation and the

13 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, *"The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics,"* November 25, 2020, http://restitutionreport2018.com, 42–47.

14 See contribution by Clémentine Deliss in: *Hello World. Revising a Collection*, exhibition catalogue Nationalgalerie—Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, ed. by Udo Kittelmann and Gabriele Knapstein (München: Hirmer Verlag, 2018).

underrepresented efforts of indigenous communities? When will architects consider the challenge of transforming repositories from nothing short of object-prisons to new spatial environments for experimental inquiry, for creating what I would like to name: "museum-universities?" This hybrid proto-institution would make university level inquiry flow into former ethnographic collections, basing all new research on the potentiality created by constellations and assemblages of artifacts, documents and photographic archives.

Today, there is growing recognition of the value of subjective historiographies drafted by artists on the basis of contested archives and collections. Whether this takes place in Southeast Asia, on the African continent, or in Belgium, the engagement of artists demonstrates the desire to define a new, malleable, heuristic space that draws together different faculties, methodologies, and shifting social contexts into the museum of the twenty-first century. This may indicate that an intersection between museum and university might help in the remediation of colonial collections, and thereby activate new forms of experimental visual inquiry. "Where do we land today?" asks Bruno Latour.[15] Is this common space a local context of land, soil, and ethnos, or a singular, monocultural plantation once again? Do we need to work toward a multiplicity of critical zones and common places that take into account the plurality of organisms, of living beings, of various cultures and existences? If the museum is to provide artworks with the oxygen necessary for their renewed emission and reception, it needs to take on the complexities of cognitive and emotional responses generated within its walls, to open up histories and their complaints to metabolic operations. To identify the "somato-political" (Preciado) dimensions of the museum leads back to the corpus of the archive and its collection, those organs that generate excessive structures of containment built on what Ann L. Stoler succinctly defines as "imperial duress," which is "a pressure exerted, a troubled condition borne in the body, a force exercised on muscles and mind."[16]

15 Bruno Latour, *Où atterrir ? Comment s'orienter en politique* (Paris: La Découverte, 2017).
16 Ann L. Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in our Times, 7*.

Within the space of the last six months, the question of sequestered artifacts held in the vaults of former ethnographic museums in Europe has been debated in state sessions, in academia, through art exhibitions, via the medium of artworks, in the international press, and even in an increasingly colloquial, conversational manner. The majority of people one speaks to have a sense that something is being withheld and that thorny queries and theories exist regarding these collections and their possession. The metabolic has become more decisive in its metaphorical and even paradigmatic inference. The organs of matter are interchangeable, no matter whether they consist of fossils and bones or are formulated from raw elements such ivory, wood, or bronze. The museological morgue confines the corpus and its meanings, regardless of their materiality, by hindering access, preventing circulation and stymying the process of reevaluation.

So, what is at stake today is the sense of a "vital relationship" (Adorno) that brings new understandings of cultural infrastructure to the museum. How to conceive of the conjunction of formalised knowledge production in exhibitions with free-style educational methods that take over the normative architecture of a museum and initiate an auto-curatorial mode on the part of the visitor? What forms of temporary occupation and non-capitalized activity are possible in the museum of the twenty-first century? Could new formulations of higher education extend more aggressively across the museum, the art school and the university? To articulate the museum's complexity through its collections requires a restive curatorial methodology that tests out the effects of a clash between different positions, be they based on æsthetic, art critical, cultural, historical, or scientific propositions. One approach to this decolonial dialogue is through experimental exercises initiated between artworks with recognised authorship and un-documented artifacts, both subjected to processes of allocation, classification, and marketability.

The museum-university banks on the unmonetized research collection of past and present, implementing the traction generated by restitution politics to form new epistemological alliances that contradict and exacerbate the normativity of inherited nineteenth century genealogies. This differentiated use of the museum is an appropriation—even a usurpation—of its current condition within the civic environment. In this sense, the museum-university, which I propose as an extension of the post-ethnographic museum, is a hybrid venue based on a new architecturalonic metabolism that includes the necessary technical configurations for transdisciplinary inquiry. We now need to develop a legal argument to enable rights of access to these vast "ethnographic" collections for researchers of all nations, cultures, and schools of thought. Only rights of access can generate a museum of the commons and with it, an equitable reassessment of colonial collections whilst they are stored in Europe. "New institutions," wrote Ivan Illich in 1970, "should be channels to which the learner would have access without credentials or pedigrees—public spaces in which peers and elders outside of his (sic) immediate horizon would become available."[17] Like Illich, Joseph Beuys also wrote that the museum needed a department of objects that, like a university, would generate a "permanent conference on cultural issues."[18]

If the museum is an unfinished enterprise (Glissant) initially constituted by European imperialist representation, then the ultimate vector today needs to be the humans to engage in an emancipatory and ecological dialogue with the existence of everything that the museum and its collections provide and evoke: a museum without condition, to paraphrase Jacques Derrida's university without condition. Such an open, untethered location with no vantage points or attempts to direct the mind towards the confines of one experience or another would be a field, an expanse, an agronomy where every visitor would farm modest poly-cultural meanings from unmastered works, slowly apprehending the metabolism of the museum as a body.

17 Ivan Illich, *Deschooling Society* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970).
18 Joseph Beuys, Frans Haks, *Das Museum. Ein Gespräch über seine Aufgaben, Möglichkeiten* (Wangen: FIU-Verlag, 1993).

At the forthcoming Biennial of Graphic Arts (2019) curated by Slavs and Tatars, I shall be testing out the concept of the Museum-University with a group of students of art research, product and communications design and curating that I have been teaching for the last six months at the Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, or HfG. Over seven days in late July, the "Metabolic Museum-University" (MM–U) will squat exhibition spaces in Ljubljana, thus transforming the presentations of the Biennial into an unusual and ironic clash between a museum, a university, and a body. Like a "benign tumour", the MM—U will foster conversations between artworks to alter the framework encountered by the public and dislodge expectations through simple gestures that encourage reflection and repose. The vacant space that epitomises the central area in a painting show, or the flows between sculptural elements in the classic modernist gallery, shall be occupied by visual interlocutors and incongruous objects (Valéry).[19] Furniture will extend beyond the normative vitrine or the solitary bench offering visitors to the Biennial the chance to sit down, read, listen, and watch stimuli lectures, engage in informal conversations, and even take part in experiments and rehearsals. Folding chairs will have their own tongue-table, retina-light, and mini-beamer enabling participants to project images and information into the gaps between exhibits. Each day, the MM—U will be based at another venue of the Biennial where it will focus on a different organ of the human body.

Organs of the Week
Day 1: Lungday (performance)
Day 2: Tongueday (speech and translation)
Day 3: Eyeday (visual thinking)
Day 4: Brainday (humour and satire)
Day 5: Skinday (technofossils)
Day 6: Liverday (detox)
Day 7: Heartday (trust and alliances)

19 Paul Valéry, *L'Ame et la Danse—Eupalinos ou l'Architecte* (Paris: Éditions du Sagittaire, 1931), 52–55.

The MM—U will be open to all and every visitor will have the option to become a student, stressing the freedom to learn in different ways. The configuration of all these elements will help to transform how we respond to exhibition and museum collections in relation to our existences by developing the museum from a place of controlled consumption into a poly-cultural co-working space.

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BARCELONA, COLONIAL METROPOLIS: GUIDELINES FOR COMBATING AMNESIA

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Pablo Gonzáles Morandi
Eloy Martín Corrales

Winds of change are blowing through the halls and corridors of Europe's ethnological museums, which, until very recently, remained under lock and key and were as immune to the course of history and the struggles for memory as effigies of times gone by. The latest major current comes from the south, and who knows whether it is threatening to turn into a gale that could make the masks tremble on their pedestals. In a dramatic speech at the University of Ouagadougou on November 28, 2017, French President Macron proposed the temporary or permanent restitution of African cultural heritage to the continent and made a vague commitment to implement the necessary conditions for that within a maximum of five years.[1] This represents an unexpected change of attitude on the part of a country like France, which had transformed the thirst for pillage into a lofty form of æsthetic and cultural appropriation. It seems obvious that such a declaration could not be made without subjecting the historical process of domination that had condoned the ongoing pillage of items from societies outside Europe, namely colonialism, to severe criticism. Thus, in February of the same year, the then-candidate for the Presidency of the French Republic described colonialism as an outright "crime against humanity."[2]

Therefore, in a context where a largely repressed past appears to be carving out an opening for its return, old European metropolises and countries appear to be adapting, with varying degrees of enthusiasm, to the demands for heritage return that invariably follow a recognition of the moral responsibility for their own colonial past. It would be presumptuous to claim we are facing the definitive end of a process that entailed the widespread concealment of the colonial experience of European countries throughout the twentieth century, and to believe the colonial fracture referred to some time ago by Bancel, Blanchard, and

1 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Toward a New Relational Ethics," November 25, 2020, http://restitutionreport2018.com, 1.

2 "En Algérie, Macron qualifie la colonisation de « crime contre l'humanité », tollé à droite," *Le Monde*, November 25, 2019, https://www.lemonde.fr/election-presidentielle-2017/article/2017/02/15/macron-qualifie-la-colonisation-de-crime-contre-l-humanite-tolle-a-droite-et-au-front-national_5080331_4854003.html.

Lémaire[3] has been healed, but there undoubtedly are increasing signs indicating that the silence and indifference of the institutions that guard these collections—and of the beneficiary states that accommodate and fund them—are unsustainable. Italy was probably one of the first countries to make progress on recognition and reparation processes linked to their colonial experience. They returned the famous Axum obelisk to Ethiopia in 2005, and in 2008, they signed a Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Libya, in which they recognized the profound damage inflicted on the Libyan people through the colonial wars and made a commitment to pay compensation of five billion dollars over the following twenty years. Following a long legal controversy, Great Britain admitted in 2013 that systematic torture was inflicted on various Kenyan peoples during the repression of the Mau movement and announced that compensation of twenty-three million pounds would be paid for a total of 5,228 recognized victims. For its part, the German state has recently acknowledged its moral responsibility for the genocide committed against the Herero and Nama peoples between 1904 and 1908. As usually happens, the first expiatory act in the summer of 2018 consisted of the return to their descendants of various remains of human origin—skeletons, fetuses, skulls, skins, etc.—kept in German institutions. Even Belgium, a country that resisted any kind of revision of its colonial responsibility in Central Africa until recently, has just taken its first step in the opposite direction.[4]

No one imagines that the eventual reparation agreements will be reached without tensions or resistance. But nor does it seem possible to sustain for much longer the illusion that colonialism constitutes a mere footnote in the history of the old European countries, an accident that passes unnoticed in the flow of a narrative still replete with exceptionalism and self-complacency, even today. The mark that centuries of colonial domination has

3 Nicolas Bancel, Pascal Blanchard, and Sandrine Lémaire, *La fracture coloniale* (Paris, La Découverte, 2005).

4 In April of 2020, the Belgian Prime Minister, Charles Michel, publicly apologised on behalf of the federal government for the kidnapping and deportation to Belgium of thousands of mixed-race children from Congo, Rwanda and Burundi between 1958 and 1962, and whose existence contravened the laws of segregation in force under the Belgian occupation.

left on institutions representative of the old countries, such as the army, hospitals, chambers of commerce, and, naturally, the museums, cannot continue to be regarded as something natural that spontaneously emanated from European genius. This might be one of the effects of the advent of what Annette Wieviorka has called the "era of the witness."[5] Once the bolts that locked memory in the field of a non-transferable subjectivity have been loosened, the moral and epistemological value attained by witnesses can challenge the solidity of official narratives fueled by the states that have inherited the colonial privileges. Thus, the potential contained in the countless testimonies that confirm colonial barbarism in all its manifestations is inexorably released, forcing European societies to accommodate as best as they can these uncomfortable and disturbing figures, which now populate the landscapes of recent memory.

Enzo Traverso has recently pointed out that the contemporary obsession with the past, which has turned memory worship into a veritable European civil religion, is the result of the crisis in utopian expectations that, until recently, had focused our attention on the future.[6] With hopes of a redemptive future dashed, European societies are now instead obsessed with scrutinizing their own past, in search of references that might satisfy a certain sense of community. The appearance of memory in the public sphere may well be the product of melancholy, but the fact is that neither societies nor their institutions, which include museums, can maintain for much longer the silence which protects the old, civilizing fantasies, that carefully studied amnesia, consisting of ignoring the evidence and basing institutional discourse on ever more flagrant omissions. To paraphrase Marx, the tragedy concealed in the past now appears as a farce.[7]

In Spain, at least until now, collective recognition of the horrors of colonialism and its consequences for the present has come in small doses. In fact, denunciation of those atrocities provokes deep suspicion, as they are recorded in a local register

5 Annette Wieviorka, *L'ère du témoin* (Paris: Plon, 1998).
6 Enzo Traverso, *Melancolía de izquierda* (Barcelona: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2019), 37.
7 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Barcelona: Ariel, 1985).

that adds a new and unexpected complexity to their meaning. A well-known case is the stuffed body of the Bushman hunter—in reality, a "Hottentot" from the Cape region—which was on display at the Darder Museum until 1997, popularly known as the *Negro of Banyoles*. In 1991, Alphonse Arcelin, a doctor of Haitian origin living in Cambrils (Tarragona), started a campaign to remove the mummy after discovering that it was exhibited in a display case in the Banyoles museum in Girona. The celebration of the Olympic Games in Barcelona the following year led to significant international backing for the campaign, but strong opposition from the people of Banyoles and a notable part of Catalonia's political and international elites, loath to give in to pressure applied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Madrid. This delayed the mummy's return until 1997, three years before the repatriation—who knows if it is permanent—of these remains to Botswana.[8]

The vicissitudes that surrounded the Negro of Banyoles' return to Africa are not an isolated case. To begin with, the Spanish state obviously has its own accounts to settle for the period that gave rise to its imperial glories. Caught up in that hornet's nest, in 2015 the government of Mariano Rajoy did not miss the opportunity to publicise a law that—notwithstanding its many incongruities—gave the descendants of the Sephardic Jews expelled in the fifteenth century access to Spanish nationality. Perhaps the prominence given to the main myths of the Conquest has opportunely overshadowed Spain's modern colonial enterprise in Africa, which began with the Berlin Conference and resulted in a minor empire composed more of enclaves or sanctuaries that, from 1939, were handed over to the victorious troops of the Civil War (Ifni, Sahara and a large part of the northern part of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco), than of extractive colonies (Guinea). Nevertheless, the crude controversy that has arisen

8 For a lucid account of the trials and tribulations suffered by the Negro of Banyoles, see Frank Westerman, *El negro y yo*. (Barcelona, Oceáno, 2007). Westerman himself has recently pointed out that the remains were returned to Botswana due to a mistake in their identification. See: Miquel Molina Barcelona, "El Negro de Banyoles fue enterrado en un país equivocado," *La Vanguardia*, November 25, 2019,https://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20190302/46768019743/africa-negro-disecado-taxidermia-banyoles-racismo.html. https://www.lavanguardia.com/cultura/20190302/46768019743/africa-negro-disecado-taxidermia-banyoles-racismo.html.

in recent months over the letter that the President of Mexico, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, reportedly sent to Pope Francis and the King of Spain, calling on them to apologize for the outrages committed during the conquest and colonisation of America, just as he was calling for a "shared, public and socialized narrative" of the common past to be drawn up,[9] represents a very clear sign of the denial comfortably installed in society.

If the contemporary debates on the creation of Spain's overseas empire continue to be dominated by an ostrich-like policy, and if the exceptionalism doctrine ("*We* colonized well, in contrast to the *other* European empires") still appears to be hegemonic when judging the colonising endeavours in America,[10] what can we expect when it comes to the modern colonial enterprise, which is practically absent from the secondary education curriculum—and largely from that of higher education too—and which is taboo in public debate? It is not by accident that, in recent years, the only political initiatives that have tried to address the omission surrounding colonialism have come from the Catalan context which, because of its own history, is more sensitive to the ravages caused by what Kipling called "the white man's burden." In 2005, the political party Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya [ERC, or the "Republican Left"] submitted a proposal to parliament calling on the Spanish state to acknowledge its use of chemical weapons in the Rif war in the 1920s, which was rejected by the votes of the PSŒ and PP parties. It is true that there is an exception to this induced amnesia, namely that of the Saharawi people, who have been in exile in the Tindouf "hamada" for over fourty years and who, for complex historical reasons, are the subject of broad,

9 "López Obrador pide en su carta al Rey un 'reconocimiento público' de agravios y una ceremonia conjunta en 2021," *Europa Press*, November 25, 2020, https://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-lopez-obrador-pide-carta-rey-reconocimiento-publico-agravios-ceremonia-conjunta-2021-20190327110911.html.

10 Javier Rodríguez Marcos, Jesús Ruiz Mantilla, Vargas Llosa: "López Obrador tendría que haberse enviado la carta a sí mismo," *El Pais*, November 25, 2020, https://elpais.com/cultura/2019/03/27/actualidad/1553702694_101809.html.

far-reaching solidarity in the Spanish state.[11] Nevertheless, aside from the cases mentioned, the only public demonstrations of recognition of responsibility and of solidarity with the victims of Spanish colonialism have taken place in the municipal sphere, a political domain that is less concerned with the affairs of State and, for that reason, more open to initiatives from civil society.

That same head-in-the-sand policy galvanizes the practices of Spanish ethnological museums. Though open to a variety of views on the contemporary world, to public participation, and to an intersection of languages and discourses, these institutions are reticent about revealing the footprints that betray their participation in the colonial legacy, perhaps because they feel that legacy detracts from their symbolic and moral legitimacy to act as a social voice.[12] In terms of pieces from the areas subject to modern colonization (principally Africa), Spanish museums offer modest collections, consistent with the scope of Spain's colonial empire. This bears little resemblance to the exhaustive ambitions and exclusive aura that surround the collections of other, sister institutions in European states such as Great Britain, France, Germany, or Belgium. Perhaps for the same reason, this is not a question either of collections subsumed in an esthetic register that has integrated them into the field of works of art, regardless of the adjective affixed—first, ethnic, etc.—even if some efforts have been made recently in that direction.[13] However, despite its modesty and lack of "charm", the map drawn by the provenance of the bulk of those collections matches, with few exceptions, the limits of the Spanish colonial empire: northern Morocco, the Sahara and Equatorial Guinea. The omission of this glaring

11 Alberto López Bargados, "*Ces orguellieux seigneurs du désert saharien. Images coloniales et postcoloniales des sahraouis en Espagne*," Annuaire de l'Afrique du Nord, no. 39 (2001): 363–378 and Alberto López Bargados, "Le Sahara face à son miroir: poétiques du point mort," *Cahiers d'EMAM*, no. 24 (2015): 1–13.

12 The narrative omissions surrounding colonialism do not only affect the "African collections" in Spanish museums. See, for example, the thoughts on the Museum of America in Madrid by Marisa González de Oleaga and Fernando Monge: Marisa González de Oleaga, Fernando Mong "El museo de América: modelo para armar," *Historia y Política*, no. 18 (2007): 273–293.

13 More specifically, the Museum of World Cultures was created in Barcelona in 2015 with a permanent exhibition of objects from the five continents displayed with clearly æsthetic intentions.

fact, its deliberate irrelevance, has only been possible over the decades by means of what is elsewhere called "museographies of dissimulation."[14] Thus, for some time, the institutions have passed over these coincidences with the argument that these acquisitions were the result of legitimate purchases, and not the fruits of plunder in the course of military campaigns. However, this argument was already refuted by Cicero, who recalled that the act of purchase cannot demonstrate its morality if the seller, an inhabitant of a conquered country, does not have the full freedom to decide whether or not they want to keep that legacy for their descendants.[15] In a situation of objective inequality, pressured by the capitulation of their government, the misery which a defeat plunges them into and the various constraints to which the colonial regime then submits them, it is logical to question the legitimacy of the commercial dealings between the owner of an asset and a trader from the colonizing country who desires that asset. Ultimately, whether it forms part of the spoils of war or the result of a scientific expedition organized to increase the country's museum collections, the acquisition and conservation of those objects turns those cultural institutions into "heirs of an asymmetrical history."[16]

At this point, it should be clear that collections with a colonial origin are, by their very nature, "historically sensitive." In other words, their acquisition frequently implies the use of force or coercion to varying degrees, in contexts of dependence or subordination, and that exhibiting them served—and still does in too many cases—to justify and tacitly disseminate racist, discriminatory ideologies.[17] Denouncing those dissimulation logics and omissions that foster both self-deception and self-complacency is a duty for those who, like the team that makes up *Barcelona, Colonial Metropolis*

14 Alberto López Bargados, "Museografías del disimulo: el legado colonial y la memoria de Barcelona como metrópoli imperial," *Quaderns-e*, no. 21 (2017): 188–192.

15 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Towards a New Relational Ethics", 2018, 8.

16 Felwine Sarr, Bénédicte Savoy, "The Restitution of African Cultural Heritage. Towards a New Relational Ethics," 2018, 4.

17 "Guidelines on Dealing with Collections from Colonial Contexts,"German Museums Association, Berlin, (2018), 9, November 29, 2020, https://www.museumsbund.de/publikationen/guidelines-on-dealing-with-collections-from-colonial-contexts-2/.

[hereinafter "BCM"], want to revisit a recent past of domination and settle some scores with the hope that this will, in one way or another, have an impact on the present. Since 2009, the BCM team of anthropologists (Andrés Antebi and Alberto López Bargados) and historians (Pablo González Morandi and Eloy Martín Corrales) has sought to open up a space for reflection and criticism around a colonial project that has largely been forgotten or reduced to a few footnotes in the contemporary history of the Spanish state. The goal we have set ourselves throughout the last ten years has been to participate in developing what can be considered simply as some "counter-memories" of colonialism, namely, in giving shape to and disseminating narratives that produce a crack in the official memory and in the cognitive frameworks that have become dominant because of, among other things, the ongoing support they have received from the public authorities. Those frameworks, which are of varying scale and scope and, in a way, antagonistic, as they appeal to two distinct "demos"—the Spanish and the Catalan—nevertheless interact in the colonial field to play, once combined, a decisive role in shaping the omissions which affect that field. The former, permanently inscribed in that amnesic intellectual horizon called the "transition culture," associates the colonial enterprise with the imperial dreams of Francoism and, given the establishment of a sort of ontological conclusion to that regime under the 1978 Constitution, absolves the subsequent democratic system of all responsibility for the colonial atrocities committed in the name of a regime with which it would maintain no more than an accidental link. The latter, on the other hand, which constitutes one of the ideological foundations of Catalanism, dominant in Catalonia at least since 1980, presupposes that Catalan society only participated indirectly in the Spanish colonial enterprise, forced to do so by the circumstances that derived from the long night of Francoism, and that in any case, the Spanish state and society, the sole heirs of the colonial empire, had to assume responsibility for it.

As we have just pointed out, however much these two frameworks are presented as antithetical, they combined their forces in the colonial field and provided all kinds of excuses to justify a solipsist narrative of Spanish (and Catalan) democracy, as well as the consequent

marginalization of the memories of organizations, associations and groups of veterans from the colonies, who have tried, largely in vain, to highlight their own narratives.[18] Nevertheless, the intersection of these two frameworks in the colonial field is partial and, so to speak, unfinished; as a result, their collision generates discursive paradoxes and unexpected contradictions when different kinds of symbols are superimposed, arguments that lead nowhere and tend to undermine the absolute confidence conveyed by the official memories. Thus, in the area where two narratives, both dominant in their own sphere, merge, there are "occurrences" that are difficult to explain: tropical wildlife conservation centers based in the heart of the Guinean jungle which, in reality, are international factories for exporting species in danger of extinction and material goods of the native peoples; veteran soldiers who fought to safeguard Spanish sovereignty over African outposts, who stand to attention when they hear the military anthems of their former units and who return to those enclaves years later to hoist the Catalan "Senyera"; large companies that now ascribe to the pro-sovereignty credo with the same enthusiasm that they expressed for the principles of the Francoist "Movimiento" before; demands by former colonial subjects for the citizenship rights they were robbed of, and which would make those fighting today to renounce those same rights in the name of self-determination blush; and, above all, institutions that turn their back on their own past, which they conceal for themselves and, by extension, for those people who visit them in search of the pleasure of knowledge, however painful that might prove to be.

The confusion caused by the deconstruction of those official memories of colonialism is made very clear in the two exhibitions that the BCM has organized to date, both in the temporary exhibition hall in the Barcelona Museum of World Cultures. The commitment to the BCM projects demonstrated from the outset by the Museum of World Cultures, following its effective integration with the Ethnological Museum in 2016 to form a single, municipally owned institution, was neither easy nor comfortable. Institutions are subject to powerful inertias and coercing them to join and engage in

18 Alberto López Bargados, "Memòries d'una mili a les colònies," Ifni, la mili africana dels catalans, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona (2019), 61–87.

a new trend constitutes an act of determination. The first of those exhibitions, inaugurated in the same year, 2016, titled "Ikunde." Barcelona Colonial Metropolis, restricted itself to reviewing the origin of the Guinean collections at the Ethnological Museum, founded in 1949 as the Ethnological and Colonial Museum, and the close relationship that the ethnographic missions to what was then Spanish Guinea maintained with a wildlife conservation center opened by the Barcelona City Council in the continental region of the colony in 1959. Spanish Guinea (currently Equatorial Guinea), a small tropical colony formed by the River Muni on the mainland and Bioko Island, saw a Spanish presence from the end of the 18th century on, but this was only formalised with the founding of the colony in 1900, a status it would maintain until it achieved independence in 1968. For years, the center established in Ikunde (on the outskirts of Bata) by the primatologist Jordi Sabater Pi supplied Barcelona with native specimens, including the famous albino gorilla that became an icon of pre-Olympic Barcelona, "Snowflake." By combining them on the conceptual and exhibition plane, Ikunde highlighted the coincidences that exist between capturing wild animals, taking instant photographs and acquiring objects of ethnological or artistic value to propose a broader view of colonial plunder and its contours. At the same time, "Ikunde" restored the central position occupied by Barcelona, and Catalan society as a whole, in the Guinean colonial adventure, where the commercial bourgeoisie from the Principality monopolized the extractive practices linked to the exploitation of native cacao, wood and wildlife[19]. "Snowflake," who embodied the friendliest and most cosmopolitan ideals of a big city aspiring to become a global tourist hub, in reality constituted an open door to a veiled history of unpunished appropriations carried out in the name of science. To a certain extent, "Ikunde" showed how a victim of colonial plunder became a privileged item of Barcelona merchandising. In the colonial carnival, Snowflake was one of its most photogenic symbols.

19 A. Antebi, P. González Morandi, A. López Bargados, E. Martín Corrales, *Ikunde. Barcelona, metròpoli colonial*, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2017.

We think it is important to stress that, at BCM, we are not interested in defining colonialism as an immanent reality, as an oil stain that impregnates everything, but rather in tracing the specific marks which that colonial legacy has left on our institutions and recognising the affinities, even minor ones, that we find between the policies adopted during the time of the colony and those that are formulated today. Our intention is to focus attention on the details instead of making grandiose statements about the intrinsic evil of colonialism which, by now, are self-evident. We do not wish to engage in an abstract theory of the legacy of colonialism, something that Bayart and Bertrand denounced years ago, but rather reveal the possible lines of continuity that unite colonial and post-colonial experience, without assuming that such a continuity constitutes a universal axiom.[20] We believe that the second exhibition we organized, which opened in 2018 and was also held at the Museum of World Cultures, satisfies that objective. It explores the private memories of Catalan conscripts sent to do their military service in the small enclave of Sidi Ifni, on Morocco's southern coast. Once the Spanish Civil War finished, Ifni, a poor colony founded in 1934, became a private preserve of the victorious troops, a destination for promoting and giving free reign to the imperial dreams of the Francoist regime. Despite the regime's propaganda, which insisted on the brotherhood achieved between the Spanish people and their Arab neighbours, the enclave faced a war of liberation between 1957 and 1958, following which Spanish sovereignty was reduced to the city of Sidi Ifni, which would definitively be returned to Morocco in 1969. In that context, the young men sent to do their military service in 1957 were immediately immersed in an armed conflict to defend the Spanish enclave from what was for them a completely unexpected enemy. And those who continued to arrive in that coastal garrison to do their "mili" after the end of hostilities in May 1958 did so in a context dominated by the tension of an unresolved conflict; in most cases, they were sent to the line of blockhouses and trenches that protected the border.[21]

20 Jean-François Bayart, Romain Bertra.d, "De quel « legs colonial » parle-t-on ?," *en Esprit* (December 2006): 134–160, 144.

21 A. Antebi, P. González Morandi, A. López Bargados, E. Martín Corrales, *Ifni, la mili africana des catalans*, Institut de Cultura, Ajuntament de Barcelona, 2019.

The Ifni veterans still get together periodically, and even organize annual commemorative trips to the old enclave, a veritable tourism of colonial memory. The marginalization of their collective memory exemplifies the phenomenal induced amnesia regarding that episode at the hands of the Spanish authorities. The veterans have sponsored a legislative initiative to grant them the status of war veterans, with the corresponding allowances and compensation; however, they had to wait until 2007 before receiving a minimum of public recognition for what they had suffered in the name of the state. So far, however, this has not resulted in anything other than a purely symbolic form of compensation.[22] Obviously, this is not the best time for tributes to veterans of a colonial war, but it is equally obvious that dragging out the administrative procedures in the hope that the claimants will gradually die off, one after the other, constitutes a particularly perverse form of cynicism. It is our impression that this cynicism represents a distinctive type of response that the State customarily offers to those who demand the right to be remembered.

In the immediate future, BMC is planning a new project, which this time focuses on the northern part of the Spanish protectorate in Morocco, which became independent in March 1956. Once again, the significant collections treasured by the Barcelona Ethnological Museum are a vital element of the project, especially the expeditions that the museum organized to the protectorate in 1952 and 1954, when it was still under Spanish rule. In this case too, the amnesia is deafening. Clearly the recent tragic history of the Rif region, which so far has culminated in the civil revolt of 2016 and 2017, is to a large extent the result of the devastation produced by the Spanish occupation, which in its modern version began during what Spain calls the African War (1859–1860). We readily tend to overlook the fact that one of the demands that mobilised the Rif population in 2015 was precisely for a cancer hospital to deal with the high incidence of cancerous tumours in the region, which have been attributed to an environmental toxicity that dates back to Spanish bombardments, using mustard gas, of Riffian

22 Final Provision Nine of Act 39/2007, November 19, on the military career.

fields and villages in the 1920s.[23] The list is much longer, though. How can we ignore the decisive role played by the conscription of Catalan soldiers in the war in Morocco in the outbreak of Barcelona's so-called "Tragic Week" in 1909? How can we gauge the impact of the figure of Abd el-Krim el-Khattabi and the Rif Republic on the birth of pan-Arab ideologies? To what extent was the Spanish Civil War merely the transfer of the colonial warfare model to a metropolitan context by rebel Africanist army officers? What role should we reserve for the indigenous troops, such as the Groups of Rif and Ifni Rifles in the Francoist victory in 1939? Whichever perspectives are adopted, the histories of Morocco and Spain, especially throughout the twentieth century, share a tremendous amount of common ground. It is therefore tempting to conclude that "morofobia" [Moor phobia], so firmly ingrained in the Hispanic imagination, is at the root of the hatred and contempt targeted at the Moroccans who have opted to settle in Spain in recent decades, of (once again) cynical immigration legislation and, why not, of the portrayals that tend to portray the Muslim religion as a threat to community harmony. But let us focus on the details. Examining the history of ethnological expeditions to colonial Morocco, retracing the routes so carefully described in the inventories, inquiring about the group of intermediaries who dealt with the leader of the expeditions and the Museum's first director, opens a veritable can of worms. As usually occurs when intellectual adventures pursue the restitution of a certain sense of justice, even when it is deferred, and when they create a space not envisaged for denunciations, you know where it starts, but not where it will end.

23 Layla Martínez, "Antes muertos que humillados!. Un año de lucha en el Rif ," November 29, 2020, https://www.elsaltodiario.com/observatorio-arabe/antes-muertos-que-humillados-un-ano-de-lucha-en-el-rif. On Spanish bombardments of the Rif, see: Sebastian Balfour, *Abrazo mortal. De la guerra colonial a la Guerra Civil en España y Marruecos (1909–1939)*, (Barcelona: Península, 2002). You can also consult *Arrash*, a documentary by Tarik El Idrissi and Javier Rada (2009), with a Creative Commons licence.

THE DRY AND THE WET: RECONFIGURATIONS OF OBJECTIFICATION AND DESIRE IN ASSAF GRUBER'S FILM THE CONSPICUOUS PARTS

Lotte Arndt

> "Dioramas are meaning machines [...] time slices into the social organisms that made them."
> (Donna Haraway, 1984, 52)

> "Haunting is one way in which abusive systems of power make themselves known and their impacts felt in everyday life, especially when they are supposedly over and done with [...], or when their oppressive nature is denied."
> (Avery Gordon, 2008, 16)

> "The legacies of European colonialism are immeasurably deep, far-reaching and ever-mutating, and so decolonial work and resistance must take on different forms, methods and evolve accordingly."
> (Sumaya Kassim, 2017)

After decades of activist advocacy, pressing issues of self-reflexivity, provenance research, and repatriation have in recent years slowly begun to be addressed in museums with collections from colonial contexts, but only a few institutions have worked actively on shaping a "post-ethnographic" museum.[1] Today, the situation differs widely from one country to another, and from one museum to the next. Roughly a year and a half after the publication of the *Report on the Restitution of African Cultural Heritage*, commissioned by the French government from Bénédicte Savoy and Felwine Sarr (November 2018), most museums with contentious collections in France continue to defend their unilateral control over their archives and exhibits. They have been rendered "inalienable and imprescriptible" under the French heritage law, as Emmanuel Kasarhérou, president of the Musée du Quai Branly—Jacques Chirac, who has been at the time of the statement Assistant Director of the Heritage and Collections Department, recalled in an interview displayed in the exhibition "twenty years," which is dedicated to the

1 The Weltkulturen Museum Frankfurt, under the direction of Clémentine Deliss (2010–2015), and the Musée de Neuchâtel in Switzerland are among the rare early examples to the contrary.

past two decades of acquisitions.[2] The show proudly celebrated the wealth of the collections, promoted the voice of the museum as staged by the heads of departments on more than a dozen screens, demonstrated the careful work of the staff, and left out nearly all contentious topics. While single restitutions or long term loans have been enacted (such as the French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe handing over the sword of El Hadj Oumar Saïdou Tall to Senegalese President Macky Sally in November 2019 or the twenty-six objects to repatriate to the Republic of Benin)[3] no general legal framework has been defined, and any further repatriation will require new legislation. Newspapers and radio stations in France regularly report the positions of museum directors, mostly hostile to any major shifts in authority over the collections. In fact, most museums remain unwilling or ill-prepared to engage seriously with concerned critical voices, and until recently, activists had seldom addressed the museum field.[4] It remains to be seen if Emmanuel Kasarhérou, in his new position as president of the Musée du Quai Branly, will be able to change this policy, as he announced repeatedly in the spring of 2020.[5] More than a year after the restitution report was published, France remains far from shifting power structures, democratizing museums by opening up participative proceedings, and connecting historical wrongdoings to present-day claims for equality.

2 Emmanuel Kasaréhou, "Making acquisitions for national collections," November 25, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cYJHUQpmhe4 .

3 Manon Laplace, Felwine Sarr: "La France a manqué de solennité lors de la restitution au Sénégal du sabre d'El Hadj Oumar Tall," *Jeune Afrique*, November 25, 2020, https://www.facebook.com/103327681334851/videos/302822231119345/.

4 A prominent recent counter-exemple of an activist intervention occurred on 12 June, 2020, the day of the reopening of the Musée du Quai Branly following the Coronavirus lockdown, when a the activist Mwazulu Diyabanza together with four other persons removed a Bari funeral stake from Chad from its display case and walked it towards the exit, broadcasting their action live on social media to highlight the need to return objects to the African continent in reparation of the consequences of colonization. https://www.facebook.com/103327681334851/videos/302822231119345/.

5 "Les musées doivent trouver un "chemin de retour" pour les œuvres pillées pendant la colonisation, estime le nouveau directeur du Musée du quai Branly," *radioinfo*, November 25, 2020, https://www.francetvinfo.fr/culture/patrimoine/les-musees-doivent-trouver-un-chemin-de-retour-pour-les-oeuvres-pillees-pendant-la-colonisation-estime-le-nouveau-directeur-du-musee-du-quai-branly_3984505.html.

Some 1000 km away, symbolically situated at Berlin's city center, the Humboldt Forum was at that very same moment set to open after ten years of controversial construction in the newly built replica of the Prussian castle on the city's Museum Island.[6] Since the end of May 2020, a cross, roaring high above the city, crowns its cupola. In parallel to this reactionary architectural choice, the Humboldt Forum recently created a position for postcolonial matters, held by literary scholar Ibou Diop, and exhibited the first Afro-German artist, Philip Kojo Metz. These developments appear to herald the progressive institutional integration of parts of the broad-ranging activist coalitions that have advocated strongly against the presentation of the collections that come from the Ethnographic Museum in Dahlem, having underlined their contentious colonial history and argued for restitutions.[7] The federal government has established a small department titled the German Contact Point for Collections from Colonial Contexts, which will focus on restitution issues.[8] The Gœthe-Institut has announced that their programs will address postcoloniality and sustainability. And when in February 2020 Theresia Bauer, Baden-Württemberg's Minister for Science, Research and Art, opened a conference on the future of Stuttgart's former ethnographic museums, the words "colonialism," "restitution," "provenance research," "partnership," and "source societies" permeated her speech.[9] But it took nearly a day for the writer Sumaya Kassim

6 For comprehensive documentation of the critic and opposition, please see the website www.nohumboldt21.de, the traveling exhibition Anti-Humboldt-Box by Artefakte// anti-humboldt (Brigitta Kuster, Regina Sarreiter, Dierk Schmidt) and AFROTAK TV, and the early criticism voiced by the Alexandertechnik/anti-humboldt group "Der Anti-Humboldt: Eine Veranstaltung zum selektiven Rückbau des Humboldt-Forums," https://www.sophiensæle.com/archiv.php?IDstueck=668 (all last retrieved on November 25, 2020); and "Eine Veranstaltung zum selektiven Rückbau des Humboldt-Forums," http://johannespaulræther.net/antihumboldt/humboldtforum/. (all last retrieved on November 25, 2020). For documentation and analysis of the overall process, please see Friedrich von Bose, *Das Humboldt-Forum. Eine Ethnografie seiner Planung* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2016).

7 For extensive documentation of the large, civil society coalition No-Humboldt 21, see https://www.no-humboldt21.de (last retrieved on November 25, 2020).

8 Konzept für die Errichtung und Ausgestaltung einer Kontaktstelle für Sammlungsgut aus kolonialen Kontexten in Deutschland, https://www.kmk.org/fileadmin/Dateien/pdf/Kultur/Konzeptpapier_Sammlungsgut_ENDFASSUNG_œffentlich_dt.pdf (last retrieved on November 25, 2020).

9 Linden-Museum Stuttgart: "The New Museum. Ideas for the Ethnological Museum of the Future," November 25, 2020, https://www.lindenlab.de/en-conference.

to finally link colonial collections to present-day racism, and to address tokenism and condescension on the part of museums. She recalled the recent (short-lived) decision by the liberal politician Thomas Kemmerich to agree to be elected as Prime Minister of the state of Thüringen with the support of the far right party AfD, and she also held a minute of silence for the victims of the racist murder of nine persons in Hanau that had been perpetrated a week earlier.

The two national contexts differ considerably: while a defensive position and top-down approach remain dominant in French museums, and decolonial struggles mostly prioritize other goals, provenance research and restitution issues have become a state affair in Germany. But what will happen if "decolonization" is turned into an institutional program and critical voices are integrated into official structures? There are serious reasons to doubt that big state museums "can and should promote 'decolonial' thinking, or whether, in fact, they are so embedded in the history and power structures that decoloniality challenges, that they will only end up co-opting decoloniality."[10]

ART AT THE MUSEUM FOR NATURAL HISTORY

It is in this context that I wish to discuss *The Conspicuous Parts*, Assaf Gruber's film that was commissioned for "Art/Nature. Artistic Interventions at the Museum for Natural History" in Berlin, and which has been shown in the permanent exhibition since 2018.[11] The program "Art/Nature" was conducted by the museum itself and the German Federal Cultural Foundation between 2014 and 2018 to highlight the historical links between artists and natural history collections: "By accompanying naturalists on expeditions, artists have contributed to tell the story of life on Earth, recording, sketching, and depicting what they have seen and documenting the collections in the exhibition rooms through their drawings

10 Sumaya Kassim, "The Museum Will Not Be Decolonized," November 25, 2020, https://mediadiversified.org/2017/11/15/the-museum-will-not-be-decolonised/.

11 For a more in-depth presentation, see: Anita Hermannstädter, *Kunst/Natur. Interventionen im Museum für Naturkunde Berlin* (Berlin: Edition Brau, 2019). I would like to thank Sybille Neumeyer for her insightful comments about the program.

and presentations."[12] The program joined a long list of museums that have delegated, at least in part, the critical interrogation of their collections to artists to encourage "artistic reflection on the role and functions of natural history museums in the twenty-first century."[13] It has functioned as one element in a heterogeneous institution, composed of departments and individuals who sometimes adopt and uphold opposing approaches. A prominent example is the intense debate over the museum's star piece, the reconstituted skeleton of a Brachiosaurus brancai (taxonomically reclassified as Giraffatitan brancai in 2009), which was excavated in the former colony of German East Africa (now Tanzania) between 1909 and 1913. Tanzanian petitions for the return of at least parts of the excavated finds date back to the 1980s, during the era of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).[14] However, the Federal Foreign Office and the Natural History Museum have not responded publicly to claims for restitution. To date, General Director Johannes Vogel maintains that the excavated fossils were brought as raw material from Tendaguru, while the "scientific and cultural achievement [happened] in Germany."[15] As Holger Stœcker aptly points out, this argument designates the African continent as a mere supplier of raw materials, while cultural value is described as exclusively generated in the West—a binary view that actualizes a well-known colonial tradition. Also, the ICOM Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums gives preference to the "free flow of knowledge" about collections deemed to be in "global custodianship," thus privileging intangible aspects like knowledge transfer over a critical inquiry into ownership,

12 "Art/Nature: Artistic Interventions at the Museum für Naturkunde Berlin," November 25, 2020, http://kunst.naturkundemuseum-berlin.de/en/about-us/.

13 Ibid.

14 Holger Stœcker: "*The Brachiosaurus brancai* in the Natural History Museum Berlin. A Star Exhibit of Natural History as a German and Tanzanian Realm of Memory?" 2019, https://boasblogs.org/humboldt/the-brachiosaurus-brancai-in-the-natural-history-museum-berlin/ (last retrieved on November 25, 2020).

15 "Muss das Museum sich von Dinos trennen? Johannes Vogel im Gespräch mit Thorsten Jantschek," Deutschlandfunk Kultur, 19.1.2019, https://www.deutschlandfunkkultur.de/direktor-des-naturkundemuseums-johannes-vogel-mussdas.990.de.html?dram:article_id=438741, 22.1.2019. Quoted in Stœcker 2019. (last retrieved on November 25, 2020) January 22, 2019.

origins, and accessibility.[16] In contrast to the director's position, a far-ranging research project funded by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) was initiated in 2015 at the Natural History Museum to focus on the colonial, museum-related, and scientific histories of the Berlin dinosaur,[17] the result of which was a voluminous book.[18] Stœcker reports that the "museum has also offered to support and cooperate with Tanzania on palæontology and museum-related matters. This means that the Berlin dinosaur may not only develop into a prominent realm of memory in colonial history within the environment of museum politics that has been set in motion but also act as a starting point for transnational cooperative projects in the realms of science and heritage."[19] Nevertheless, important obstacles persist in institutional politics, and despite the fact that researchers have made alternative propositions for the exhibition labels to include the colonial acquisition context and the contentious character of the fossil exhibits, these have not yet been integrated into the displays.

16 "ICOM Code of Ethics for Natural History Museums," November 25, 2020, https://icom.museum/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/nathcode_ethics_en.pdf.

17 "Dinosaurs in Berlin!", Natural History Museum Berlin, November 25, 2020, https://www.naturkundemuseum.berlin/en/dinosaurs-in-berlin, 21.9.2019.

18 Ina Heumann, Holger Stoecker, Marco Tamborini, Mareike Vennen, *Dinosaurierfragmente. Zur Geschichte der Tendaguru-Expedition und ihrer Objekte*. 1906–2018, (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2018).

19 Stœcker 2019, *op. cit.*

Assaf Gruber: *The Conspicuous Parts*, Exhibition view, Museum for Natural History, Berlin, 2018, Courtesy: Assaf Gruber.

The "Unrechtskontext", or "context of injustice," as defined by the German Museumsbund[20] in relation to collections of colonial provenance, is obvious with regard to the dinosaur skeleton, as the paleontological excavation and the transfer of the finds to Berlin would not have been possible without the conditions provided by colonization.[21] The exhibits shown in Assaf Gruber's film instead reveal more varied situations: an alpine diorama from the early twentieth century of a German landscape, a specimen in the wet collection, which stems from many different places and times, and the Cuban coral reef brought to East Berlin as part of a scientific collaboration undertaken between the socialist states in 1967. They do not specifically point to a colonial regime; instead, they raise broader questions of objectification, scientific discourses over nature, and the materialization of global politics in museums.

Gruber's film does not directly address institutional questions, but it deals with its sensible, perceptible manifestations. The

20 Deutscher Museumsbund, "Leitfaden zum Umgang mit Sammlungsgut aus kolonialen Kontexten," November 25, 2020, https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/dmb-leitfaden-kolonialismus.pdf.

21 Ina Heumann, Holger Stoecker, Mareike Vennen, "Dinosaurier und Provenienz. Konjunkturen des Kolonialen, 1909–2018," in: *Dinosaurierfragmente*, 254–275.

film focuses on how conservation techniques attempt to delay transformation and decay in the collections, and thus to enable the museum physically to control their status. By recurring to intertwined micro-histories, it interrogates the multiple vestiges that these politics of objectification have left by linking them to present-day consumer cultures. The calmly narrated film depicts the museum as an institution that strives to remain in control while strong resonances of global political tectonics run through it. Gruber shows how the museum promoted the beauty of German alpine landscapes in the context of early twentieth century nationalist warfare, later becoming a site to demonstrate the German Democratic Republic's scientific strength in the 1960s, and ultimately a setting where more than a century of taxonomic classification and conservation serve as a disquieting stage for a present-day criticism of capitalist consumer cultures. The first part focuses on the diorama and a natural specimen collection, where the materiality of the exhibits and the fixed visual arrangements in the museum set the stage for the nearly mute characters' interactions. The middle part introduces historical documentary footage of the scientific missions conducted to collect the future exhibits. The final part reverses the dynamics and focuses on nearly static arrangements of human bodies in a sauna, engaged in vivid, fictional dialogues. The images are accompanied by a very meditative music. They interlace diffracted micro-histories and snapshots of biographies that reflect the grand movements of History.[22]

My close reading will focus on how Assaf Gruber's work strives to trouble the museal order to show its lasting consequences for the present-day distribution of the sensible, of what we perceive. In the spirit of Jacques Rancière, it participates in creating the preconditions that unearth covered histories for us to see.[23] I am interested in how the film navigates structural binaries like dryness and wetness, cold and heat, and light and darkness, which run through the scenes, while refusing to treat them as stable

22 Nicolas Feodoroff, "Daphne et Thomas," November 25, 2020, http://www.film-documentaire.fr/4DACTION/w_fiche_film/56898_1.

23 Jacques Rancière, *Politics of Æsthetics. The Distribution of the Sensible*. Trans, Gabriel Rockhill (London, New York: Continuum, 2004).

oppositions. And I will stress that Gruber uses the overbearing presence of human bodies and narratives of desire to upset objectification, however without providing deliverance. In its multiple intertwinements, the film establishes states of disquiet and unease that point to the lingering of historical trauma.

A TAXIDERMIST AND A NOVELIST IN SEARCH OF THE DRY AND THE WET

The plot follows two fictional characters, a novelist and a taxidermist who meet at the Natural History Museum in Berlin. The writer, Catherine, is researching for a novel about a scientific expedition to the Caribbean, and the taxidermist, Daphne, is investigating the history of the institution's founding director. They explore what structural anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss might have described as the wet and the dry; while Catherine looks out for evidence of sensual encounters in what is known as the "wet" collection (which, according to visitor information, comprises 233,000 glass cylinders that hold approximately one million organic bodies suspended in transparent, liquid solutions) and researches the history of a coral reef from Cuba, Daphne handles dehydrated objects, displays, stuffed animals, and dioramas. In spite of the seemingly opposing material status of the realms that the two main characters engage with, both operate within states of contention that are fissuring, notably through the slumbering histories of the collections that arise throughout the film.

The underlying tension of the film results from the gap between the visual level, based on the structural opposition of the wet and the dry, the warm and the cold, the bright and the dark, and the narrative dimension, which evolves from silence to speech, from the visual to the verbal. In this movement, the two main characters are both active agents who observe and handle objectified lives, and who themselves become objects of the camera's scrutinizing eye.

Daphne at the workshop. Film still.

Taxidermist Daphne's work consists of preparing dead animal bodies for their display. She is shown in the workshop where she prepares an animal skull. The film introduces her entering the diorama of the Alps, cut off from the publicly accessible part of the museum through a transparent but impermeable glass front, able to communicate with the outside world only through sign language. She wears protective clothes and gloves, and she breathes oxygen from a bottle through a tube. The diorama is a closed world, a "peephole to the jungle,"[24] as its historical creator Carl Akeley phrased it, allowing a metropolitan audience to access faraway landscapes effortlessly.[25] Here, the emblematic landscape of the Alps, frequently associated with proud national self-representation in German history, bask in allochronic eternity. At first sight, nothing seems to perturb the display of the diorama, which was built during World War I. This suggests that the museum expends its efforts to maintain a space of ahistorical quietude in which the ethnographic denial of temporal cœvalness described by anthropologist Johannes Fabian[26] obstructs a view of the

24 Paul Akeley in a letter to H.F. Osborn, March 29, 1911, in: Florence Ostende,Claire Garnier, *Dioramas* (Paris: Flammarion, 2017).
25 Noémie Étienne, Nadia Radwan, "Introduction, L'art du diorama, 1700–2000," *Culture & Musées*, no. 32 (2018): 11–23.
26 Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York City: University of Columbia Press, 1983).

decomposing states of early twentieth century Europe itself. But as the film progresses, the taxidermist cannot breathe for an extended period of time in the sealed alpine space without suffering intoxication from the residues of biocides applied to preserve the exhibits.

The taxidermist Daphne inside the alpine diorama. Film still.

THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AS A BURIAL GROUND

At a later moment, the film reports that Willy Kükenthal, the museum's director for four years until his death in 1922, had asked in his last will for his burial ceremony to be held in front of the diorama. There are rumours that his ashes were placed underneath the life-size installation. Beyond its peaceful visual appearance—which the film treats as treacherous, through close-ups of the decomposing paint and the glass eyes of the animals—the alpine diorama turns out to be a potential graveyard not just for the stuffed chamois. Kükenthal may still be lurking around, as one of the characters suggests. The wish for permanence that underlies the diorama and that stands at the core of positivist natural sciences remains inscribed in the present. It extends beyond the killing of the specimens included in the collections and exhibited in the diorama and showcases their lasting material stability. This allows spectators to "see the same things" when they come and "look

through" the window onto the arranged sceneries, while remaining outside them. As Donna Haraway analyses, the diorama offers the communion of past and present, with the wish to control the future, through "the sense of vision by the craft of taxidermy."[27]

Willy Kükenthal's burial ceremony in front of the alpine diorama. Film still.

Gruber's film points to the discontents of this conservation ideology.[28] The focus lies on the tools that are necessary to produce and maintain the slick appearance of exoticized environments, as the camera scrutinizes the hidden entrances of displays, the backstage spaces of the museum, the taxidermist skilfully preparing an animal skull at the workshop, the fire extinguisher behind a Balian Buddha figure, and people dressing up with protective clothes. The staged beauty of the alpine environment, alluding to fresh air and wide-angled views over a harmonious landscape, happens to be built on top of a burial ground and to employ toxic conservation methods for its maintenance.

27 Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden. New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text*, No. 11 (Winter, 1984–1985): 20.

28 Tony Bennett, Fiona Cameron, Nélia Dias, *Collecting, Ordering, Governing: Anthropology, Museums, and Liberal Government* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017).

Exotic decoration at the entrance to the spa. Film still.

Indeed, specimens at natural history museums have been treated for decades with poisonous chemicals, ranging from arsenic-based soaps and powders for skins and feathers, to DDT and lindane fumigation.[29] Used as insecticides to protect the exhibits from decay, the poisons unfold their long-term effects, render the objects toxic, and thus require protective measures for any person in contact with them.[30] Conservation operations take place at the workshop and outside the museum's opening hours. They form part of the technology required to maintain this illusion of permanence. Mostly invisible, the toxicity resulting from conservation transforms the objectified bodies into hazardous materials. It deploys agency in the present, violently excluding organic life to create the artifacts' permanence.[31] Assaf Gruber's film shows that the stuffed reconstitution of an environment that seems to guarantee stability by maximizing the display's lifespan is closely associated with death and is haunted by unspoken taboos: early twentieth-century sciences and their discontents, scientific

29 Nancy Odegaard, Alyce Sadongei, *Old Poisons, New Problems: A Museum Resource for Managing Contaminated Cultural Materials* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2005).

30 Deutscher Museumsbund, "Achtung! Gefahrgut im Museum – vom Umgang mit schadstoffbelastetem Kulturgut," November 25, 2020, https://www.museumsbund.de/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/tagung-schadstoffe-beitræge-gesamt-16042018.pdf.

31 Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matter. Haunting and the Sociological Imagination* (University of Minneapolis: Minnesota Press, 2008).

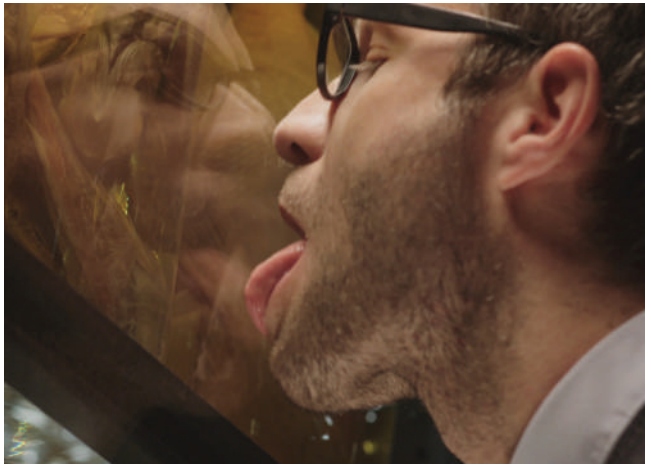
missions as the poaching of endangered species, uncanny family secrets, and the omnipresence of repressed desire and sexuality.

IN THE WET COLLECTION

The passage from the realm of the dry to the liquid, from the diorama to the wet collection, does not change the classificatory order or the viewer's relationship to the objectified bodies. The animals preserved in the liquids are just as dead as their stuffed counterparts. For conservation reasons, they are kept in a space at low temperature, removed from all daylight. Their bodies have lost their colors in the alcohol-based solutions, and they seem to glow in the spectacular setting, which is simultaneously intimate and inaccessible. They include hundreds of extinct species, a number that is growing with the progression of extinction throughout the world. That this is the last place that testifies to their former existence adds to the collection's ghostly character. This impression is emphasized through the filmic use of the automatic door that grants access to the cool and dark eastern wing of the museum, as if it were opened by an invisible hand. The huge cabinet is only partly accessible to visitors, as they remain physically separated from the shelves by a transparent glass cube structure that runs through several floors. The small papers containing the scientific appellations and other information face the inside; this generates a diverging visual access, one for scientists from within the shelves, and one for a broader audience from the outside.

The Wet Collection at the Museum for Natural History Berlin. Film still.

In contrast to the objectified collection, visitors introduce unpredictability, desire and relational agency. A boy and a man, probably his father, perform the first break with domestication through classification. Instead of looking through the glass, they calmly start to lick it, visibly enjoying their action. While the ocularcentric display invites them to observe, to admire the collection for its æsthetic qualities and spectacular presentation, and to wonder about its scientific value, they engage in a physical and sensual relationship with the exhibits and thus become misbehaving bodies in the museum. Their status changes as the camera, while they lick the glass, focuses on the character of the writer Catherine, who stands inside the shelves and gazes back at the child and the man with great irritation. From observing subjects, the visitors become observed phenomena, objects of curiosity and estrangement.



Visitors to the Wet Collection. Film still.

CUBAN CORALS

The next sequence leaves the museum grounds to show historical footage, sequences from a documentary film on a scientific expedition conducted by the German Democratic Republic to Cuba in 1967, with the mission of retrieving a ten-meter section of a coral reef. In 1968, the film *Forschungsstätte Museum* ("The Museum as a Research Site"), directed by Trutz Meinl,[32] was released by the DEFA, the GDR's state-owned film studio, thus reflecting the self-representation of the socialist state. As historian Manuela Bauche's detailed research on this expedition retraces, the presentation of the museum as an exclusive site of research rather corresponds to a conception that the GDR aimed to overcome at that moment. The state went to great lengths to democratize scientific knowledge and present exhibitions to audiences.[33] With regard to the expedition to Cuba, the documentary celebrates the scientific skills of the Eastern German crew, identified through the presence of the German flag on the boats. It was staged in what appears as wild, untouched nature. As Bauche demonstrates, in reality, the expedition was organized in close collaboration

32 Trutz Meinl, (kursiv) Forschungsstätte Museum (East Berlin, 1968), 35 mm, color, film.
33 Manuela Bauche, "Cuban Corals at East Berlin's Natural History Museum, 1967–74. A History of Non-Diplomacy," *Representations*, no. 141 (2018): 11.

with a Cuban team, framed by high-level diplomacy treaties but ultimately based on friendships between divers, and it took place on the shores of Arroyo Bermejo, a tourist area.[34] All these interlacing relationships were absent from the exhibition at the Naturkundemuseum Berlin in 1974.

Assaf Gruber's film superimposes excerpts from the documentary on a selection of corals from the expedition that are kept in the museum's archives and arranges them inside a landscape diorama built during that same period, which was not part of the permanent exhibition at the time of the film's shooting. The coral reef diorama was first presented in the exhibition "Research at the Museum," conceived in 1974 to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the GDR.[35] From the outset, the exhibit formed part of a political narrative that participated in the self-representation of the socialist state.

The corals are part of the institution's layered history. By bringing together the three elements and overlaying the diorama, the corals and the film excerpts, Gruber emphasizes the means by which the official self-representation of the state was fabricated, and he introduces doubts about its veracity.

34 "Die Kubæxpedition 1967. Manuela Bauche in conversation with Carsten Lüter," in *Assaf Gruber: The Conspicuous Parts*, Exhibition Publication Naturkunde Museum Berlin (2018): 13–16.

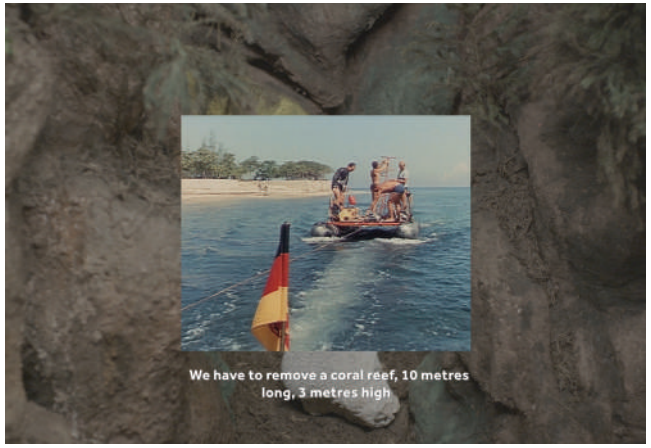
35 Ibid., 3. In the current context of the opening of the Humboldt Forum in Berlin, it is interesting to note that the scientific collaboration between Cuba and the GDR led to the foundation in 1966 of the "Tropenforschungsinstitut Alexander von Humboldt" (Alexander von Humboldt Tropical Research Institute) in Havana.

The Cuban Expedition. Film still.

The selected footage contains scenes that emphasize the masculinity of the divers and the adventurous character of the expedition; the camera scrutinizes the bodies of the scantily dressed, well-toned men, as they walk down the beach and dive underwater to recover the reef. Cuba is shown merely as backdrop for a script that highlights the robust physical and scientific performance of the Northern part of the Eastern bloc. Though a "socialist brother state," it nevertheless appears to lack any local agency. Research is instead depicted as a white male adventure into an untouched nature, and as resulting in the shipment of a total of forty-one large crates containing approximately six to ten tons of reef material for display at the Museum for Natural History in Berlin.[36] The documentary's voice-over proudly explains that the corals took thousands of years to grow. For the expedition team in 1967, they were extractable matter that enhanced the importance of their expedition, the value of the museum's collection, and, thus, the strength of the Eastern bloc. Today corals are included in the "Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora," and this law prohibits their trade. Their presence at the museum as exhibits and in the archives makes them material witnesses to extractivist science.

36 Bauche, Ibid., 5.

The images of the expedition follow the divers partitioning the reef and harpooning fish, while the commentary assures the viewer that "we are observers and collectors, not hunters." They thus contrast sharply with the voice-over and activate another structural binary. Gruber's film stands in contrast to this assertion, and shows the continuity between the intervention in the landscape and the conservation measures that constitute the museum's core activities: freshly harpooned fish is embalmed, the cut-off parts of the reef are wrapped up for transport, and the speaker's voice announces that they will soon be on display at the museum, "where everybody can see them." From an underwater environment, where they live protected from the gaze of uninstructed human visitors and predators, the coral is taken out into the air to become a dried-out exhibit. Just like the Parisian colonial exhibition of 1931, which promised the public that it could "travel the world in one afternoon" and which was actually visited by several million people, the film celebrates scientific knowledge and sovereign control over nature as a broadly accessible asset. The collected material is transformed from wildlife into domesticated exhibits, the object of the curious gaze of European audiences; from its burgeoning interaction in its underwater environment, it became a classified body, "a permanent fact."[37]



The Cuba-Expedition 1967. Collection Scene. Film still.

37 H.F. Osborn, quoted in Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden. New York City, 1908–1936," 52.

SWEATING AT THE SPA

Gruber's editing connects the masculine pride of this ideological narrative to the capitalist wellness industry in Berlin's city center today. It transits from almost naked bodies on Caribbean beaches, across an exoticist painting in dim light on a wall, to the interiors of a spa with Balian decoration, using stereotypical Asian flair as a relaxing device. A Buddha figure sits at the entrance, the light is warm, and the heated environments allow circulation between the inside and outside areas. Going from the sauna to the pools and back, undressed people, sometimes vaguely wrapped in a towel, calmly stroll and chill, swim, relax, chat, and enjoy.

In their midst, the novelist and the taxidermist sit and sweat on the benches of a sauna, immersed in intense conversation. Their liquefying bodies, their physical closeness, and the topic of their conversation contrasts with the clean and controlled environment of the museum, but also with the triumphant portrayal of the male crew in the expedition film. While their conversation carries the dynamics of this last part of the film, they are themselves physically depicted not as disembodied scientists, but as physical, sentient beings. Simultaneously, the structural similarities between the sauna, as a small, set-up environment that includes a constant play with vision—hiding, covering-up, visibility, and voyeurism—and the diorama are striking, and the film includes repeatedly shots that assemble bodies into immobile arrangements, exhibited to the viewer's gaze. The window glass unites several functions, ranging from separation and exhibition to enclosure. Rather than resolve the museum's visual regime and its objectification of living beings, it extends this to the wellness industry of the present-day.

At the Spa. Group Sauna. Film still.

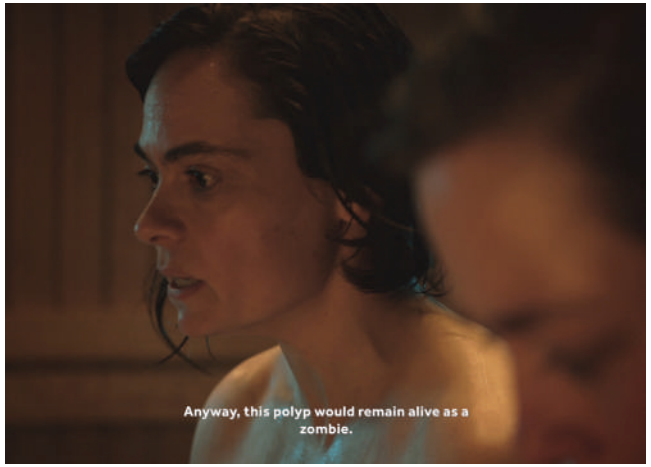
In this last part of the film, the main action takes part in the scripted dialogue between the two main characters, while the images set the scene. The exchange revolves around a scene that Daphne recalls from a summer spent at the East German lakes during her adolescence. She describes in detail the discomforting sensation of causing sexual excitement to a man sun-bathing close-by with his wife and children. The described scene introduces physical attraction into a supposedly asexual space, but more broadly the notion of bodies as agents of taboo-breaking, untolerated behavior. Aside from the discontents of Socialist Germany and its vestiges, the story resonates also with regard to the natural history museum and Freudian theories of cultural evolution as sexual sublimation. In "Totem and Taboo," 1913, Sigmund Freud developed an evolutionist argumentation that separated humankind from animals, hierarchically classified societies, and established a racist equation between childhood and primitivism to describe individual evolution.

Gruber's film has a strong interest in social taboos, precisely where they disclose the silenced parts of the great narratives. The emphatic use of desire and sexuality, and the strong presence of literary writing as a genre can be read as allusions to the history of ethnography. In early twentieth century writings by surrealists and ethnographers like Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris, the

ambiguity of the imagined sensual and wild lives that would deliver modern Europe from its rationalist burden and the consciousness of the exoticist projections inherent to these relational modes already coexisted.[38] As the film's title suggests, the visible and prominently displayed narratives and exhibits relate to a vast realm of what is untold and unshown.

The spa scenes do not save the present from a problematic past. They instead suggest the continuities, uncanny entanglements, and lingering violence of the relaxed, consumerist environment. Although the realm of the liquid promises transgression and the dismantling of fixed social roles, the scenes remain framed as a diorama, exposing the bodies to a scrutinizing gaze from the outside. While structurally opposed, the wet and the dry and the warm and the cold prove to be complementary in their quest for the conservation of objects and bodies alike, as well as their protection from menacing influences from outside. The film chooses to "stay with the trouble" and to favour ambiguity. It echoes the unease of the visitor's position in the museum and extends it to the dialogue-based parts of the film by continuously creating discomfort: the exchanges are schematic, and played awkwardly, causing irritation for the spectator, and constantly recalling that we are looking at a staged scene.

38 *Rosa Eidelpes, Entgrenzung der Mimesis: Georges Bataille—Roger Caillois—Michel Leiris*, (Berlin: Kulturverlag Kadmos, 2019) and the classic work by James Clifford and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: the Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986).



Daphne and Catherine at the spa. Film still.

Repeatedly, the conversation between the two characters introduces disruptive elements that stand in contrast with the carefree attitudes of the spa's other clients. In analogy to the ambient heat, Daphne evokes Ulrich Seidl and Veronika Franz' film *Hundstage* ("Dog Days," Austria, 2001), which uses the Austrian summer as a metaphor for social and affective misery, sexual and moral harassment, and mutual exploitation in a heavily damaged society. In Gruber's film, the characters' lives happen to be more entangled with the museum's history than initially appears. An unhappy love affair with a Cuban diver spurred the novelist Catherine to conduct further research on the coral reef and its missing parts that she observed when diving in Cuba at the same beaches displayed in the expedition film. As a white, European, female traveler to the Caribbean, searching for consolation after a breakup, she is clearly blind to the asymmetrical North-South situation that she has helped perpetuate. She speaks about nature's beauty and the experience of diving as a sensual adventure. Her touristic attitude extends the "imperial eyes" of European women who have traveled to the Caribbean since the nineteenth century.[39] And her description of her affair with

39 Johanna Abel, *Transatlantisches KörperDenken. Reisende Autorinnen des 19. Jahrhunderts in der hispanophonen Karibik* (Berlin: Verlag Walter Frey, 2015).

the diver as "love" overlooks the economic dependency of the inhabitants of this Caribbean socialist state after the breakdown of the Eastern bloc, which leads thousands of Cubans to rely on the company of visiting foreigners for their livelihood.[40]

Nevertheless, the suspicion of perturbations unwittingly surfaces in Catherine's writing proposals. Even though she considers soft porn as the most effective strategy for talking about the corals and underwater worlds, her successful children's book features as its main character a polyp, the central organ of the coral. In her narrative, the polyp outlives its dislocation from the water as a zombie, devouring the souls of those who have seduced it to leave its adapted environment. The objectification of the corals fails to silence the damage caused by the rationalist scientific endeavor, and as such, the present remains haunted by its discontents.

In parallel, Catherine compares Daphne to Antigone for her attempt to dig up the museum director's ashes. In classical Greek mythology, Œdipus' daughter does not merely demand a proper burial for her brother. She also defies King Creon's claim to absolute power and opposes her affective arguments against the imposed "raison d'état." Though the figure is only briefly evoked, it resonates strongly with the final scenes of the film, which states that there are good reasons to mistrust the established narratives of scientific and national history. As Daphne reports, the Museum for Natural History is preparing an anniversary exhibition, celebrating fifty years of the expedition to Cuba. She tells that the opening is planned with "seafood and oysters from the KaDeWe," an emblematic luxury shopping center located in the former West Berlin. By doing so, the problematic history of the socialist scientific expedition is tacitly incorporated into a triumphant Western narrative without undergoing any critical examination, its historical benefit protected through capitalist consumption.

40 For female sex tourism to the Caribbean, taking Haiti as an example, see the feature film *Heading South* (directed by Laurent Cantet, 2005).

THE AFTERLIVES OF A NATURAL HISTORY COLLECTION

With regard to the densely entangled morass that the films weaves together, the final words "maybe we are doing fine without a plot" point to a profound scepticism of any kind of institutional master narrative. But perhaps more importantly than the narrative level, the filmic construction of the continuity between the technologies of control and domestication in the museum and the exoticism in present-day Berlin's wellness industry suggests that the scientific paradigms inherited from the nineteenth century are far from dismantled. The film insists on the afterlives of the imperial and colonial order that the natural history and ethnographic museums have helped build, and it extends these beyond the exhibition halls to the bodies of the visitors themselves. Watching out for minimal traces of historical or personal traumata in the present, and emphasizing notably the domestication of bodies, the film connects the closed museum space to the contested social configurations that surround it. In the sense of Jacques Rancière's reflection on the division of the sensible mentioned earlier, Gruber tears down established perceptions, and thus provokes disruptions of meaning, where covered and hidden stories can emerge—even if only as a glimpse.

To conclude, I would like to expand the scope of discussion beyond the realm of esthetics and reconnect to the current debate on decolonizing museums sketched out in the beginning of the text. As the researcher Louis Henri Seukwa aptly points out, the vehement critique of museums and the heated debate over restitution is a metonymy of a much broader decolonial struggle, and cannot be disconnected from the notion of historical violence.[41] It loses its emancipatory potential if it treats the museum as an isolated entity, separated from its social context, without addressing existing power relations or linking it to present day racism, environmental injustice, and their contestation by social movements and concerned agents. Interrogating the conservation paradigm points to the need to privilege urgent, contemporary

41 Contribution to "Versöhnung gelingt nur durch Gerechtigkeit. Debatte über koloniale Raubkunst," Deutschlandradio Kultur, February 28, 2020.

social issues over the maintenance of exhibits and storages. Only then can the visual and material modes that were built to maintain an illusionary Euro- and anthropocentric control over the representation of the world be effectively unhinged.

WHITE TINTED GLASSES: ON THE "DIFFICULT" HERITAGE OF ITALIAN COLONIALISM

Alessandra Ferrini

On May 25, 2020, the Museum of Civilizations in Rome announced the foundation of the Museo Italo-Africano "Ilaria Alpi " (Italo-African Museum), re-housing the collection of the former Colonial Museum. Established in Rome in 1923, it was used as a propaganda tool, even after the end of Fascism and the fall of the short-lived Empire (1936–41) occupying Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Libya and the Dodecanese Islands. After its closure in 1971, its collection has laid in storage for decades.

Due to Covid-19 emergency measures, the Italo-African Museum was announced in a (poorly advertised) virtual press conference that did not allow for audience interaction or a Q&A session. Beside a statement by the Italo-Somali writer Igîaba Scego, the absence of specialists in the fields of colonial history, postcolonial and decolonial studies, as well as experts from former colonies, was made all the more worrying by the proposed inclusion of—and punctual reference to—Ancient Roman history, a foundational element of colonial and Fascist propaganda. This concern increases when considering the museum's placement within the EUR district, built to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the dictatorship.

Until now, information on the re-exhibition of the collection have only been available at informal, confidential levels, which has made it difficult to craft an appropriate response to the project. Even the conference provides little data: it outlines a series of wishes and ideas without putting forward clear plans or disclosing how activities will be funded and managed, despite the museum being set to open next year. Nor were the formation of a committee or ethical board including members of the communities still affected by the colonial trauma inherent in the collection formally announced. In addition, no explanation of the name Italo-African Museum was provided, even though its Eurocentric posture, alluding to "neutral," reciprocal relations, warrants one. At this moment, it remains difficult to ascertain the reasons behind this rushed press conference, or to evaluate its vague propositions; nevertheless, the whole operation appears intrinsically flawed, reflecting a collective color-blind attitude that has become particularly visible in light of recent events.

Taking place on May 25, 2020, the conference coincided with the brutal assassination of George Floyd, which propelled

protests, actions and debates demanding justice for black lives and the end of systemic racism. In Italy, support for the Black Lives Matter movement was firstly directed to the US context, ignoring the struggles of Afroitalians, migrants and enslaved agricultural workers (mostly from Sub-Saharan Africa), until more recently, when the #saytheirnames campaign began shifting attention to the previously disregarded victims of racially motivated violence in the country. Simultaneously, in the wake of similar actions happening in the US and Europe, demands for the removal of a statue commemorating the journalist Indro Montanelli (who, throughout his life, publicly defended having taken a twelve-year-old Eritrean concubine during the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935–36), are growing. Yet, so far, discussions on so-called "difficult heritage" have mostly regarded Fascist monuments, dissociating them from the regime's ruthless racist politics.

Italian society has indeed long refused to acknowledge the implications of, and responsibilities towards, the colonial past and its legacies. In order to maintain the "color of the nation" unchallenged, blackness has been systematically erased from collective history, marginalized and demonized—portrayed as destitute and foreign. Such context has given rise to white solidarity practices decoupled from any scrutiny of white privilege and accountability, which, similarly to discourses and operations related to colonial and Fascist heritage, have failed to recognize their rootedness in structural racist violence—ultimately reproducing the oppressive dynamics they pretend to oppose, disempowering the communities they proclaim to care for.

This text was published originally in a themed issue of *Rosa Mercedes*, vol. 02, entitled "Mutual Aid," a collaboration between Harun Farocki Institut and Journal of Visual Culture, an online project that is due to appear as the publication *Pause. Fervour. Reflections on a Pandemic*, edited by Manca Bajec and Tom Holert, with Marquard Smith. See: https://www.harun-farocki-institut.org/en/category/rosa-mercedes-en/02-en/.

HEALING THE MUSEUM

Grace Ndiritu

> "Man is a social being. Factors such as political conflict, social tension and economic stress affect his mental health. Such factors are at least as important as biological factors. Frantz Fanon paid particular attention to these social problems and his brand of political psychiatry is as relevant today as it was during his time. Alienation and oppression still exist.
>
> Unemployment is widespread and tyrannical rulers still oppress their people. Mental illness cannot be solved by drugs but by changes in the political and social order."
> —H.A. Youssef

In 2012 I began creating a new body of works under the title "Healing the Museum." It came out of a deep need to re-introduce non-rational methodologies such as shamanism to re-activate the "sacredness" of art spaces. I believed that most modern art institutions were out of sync with their audiences' everyday experiences and the widespread socio-economic and political changes that have taken place globally in recent decades. Museums are dying. And I see shamanism as a way to re-activate the dying art space as a space for sharing, participation, and ethics. From prehistoric to modern times, the shaman was not only the group healer and facilitator of peace but also a creative force, the artist.

I chose to do this because collective healing ceremonies allow us to weave together threads of intention, peace, love, equality and harmony to support social change, bridge social divides, and heal ancient rifts—even around issues that have gone unresolved for centuries. Many people associate shamanism with personal healing, but similar practices can be applied to create shifts in challenging situations all the way up to the global level. And I believe that these symptoms which are currently being enacted in society, i.e. the destruction of the environment, mass human migrations, and an increase in global acts of terrorism, specifically in Europe in the last few years, are a reflection of the fragmentation of the collective mind.

Hence, at the foundation of the "Healing the Museum" methodology is the idea of using performance as a Peace Building

tool to deal with issues of global conflict currently unfolding across the world. This includes countries that are at differing stages of rebuilding their societies post-conflict and in the process of attaining a permanent peace solution. Using shamanic performance as a tool for conflict resolution and peace building not only is a way of "healing" the museum; it is also an attempt to understand the "other" again by making the world a safer, more generous place. Using the museum as a performative platform within the human history of gift-giving seeks to heal the distrust of Western people in non-Western methodologies in the aftermath of genocide, slavery, and colonialism.

Various factors have inspired this new way of working. Firstly, I grew up in an activist household with a feminist mother who believed in the power of grass-roots politics. So, from a young age I have taken part in anti-war, pro-multiculturalism, anti-racism, anti-apartheid, and pro-peace rallies. Because of this I see critical thinking as a key mental faculty that everyone needs to cultivate actively. Institutions such as museums should play an important role in this to counter the culture of fear propagated by the mainstream media. This fixation on war has led to an unhealthy mass reliance on government and especially agencies like the U.N. to solve all problems of global conflict and to take care of all citizens. The people have given away their power to these institutions (until recent events with Occupy) by allowing them to make decisions on their behalf; therefore, people have played their part in screwing up the democratic process. And the current misuse of the democratic process by pro-racist, nationalist groups like UKIP during the Brexit fiasco in Britain and the MAGA hat movement, and the election of Donald J. Trump make "Healing the Museum" even more relevant.

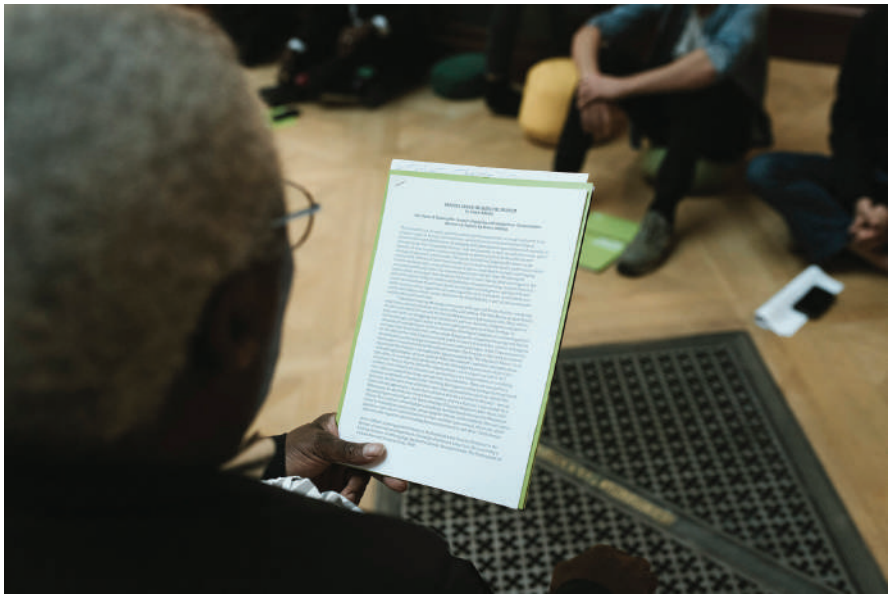
Secondly, these questions reflect the deep fragmentation within the collective mind and although once the museum could be seen as a safe place in which to espouse our views, the reliance on corporate sponsorship has changed the relationship between the museum and the public forever. How can we see contemporary art as a tool to activate good in the world? How can the general public regain the faith they have lost in contemporary art and museums to remake the world and show a different way forward?

Most modern institutions like the U.N. and museums founded after the First World War are currently out of sync with what their citizens and the audiences need. Therefore, these institutions and museums as a whole are dying. I see shamanism as a way to re-activate the dying museum as a space for sharing, by using the concept of Commensality, that is, by sharing a meal together. Commensality is a lived concept which all cultures and religions have used throughout history. It is also a cathartic way of exorcising the "demons" of war with which we are all affected, whether we live in ongoing conflict zones or are terrorised by the deluge of propaganda in the mainstream news on a daily basis. The general public has given way their power to these institutions by allowing them to make decisions for them and therefore have played their part in the devolution of the democratic process. Rather than giving into the Freudian inevitability that we as humans are just violent animals in a constant state of reaction, I want to use my project to show that we as humans can use our consciousness to rise above violence. I want to dig deeper into the subconscious of the human psyche and explore the Jungian idea of using non-rational methods like shamanism to heal the collective mind.

Therefore, "Healing the Museum" incorporates the acts of listening and receiving, giving and sharing. It requires the trust of all participants and audiences to take place. By doing so, they will see the holistic, bigger picture that we as humans are all connected. I aim to trigger a global movement for peace subliminally, in which both the audience and participants can reclaim their agency and relieve the pressure working within these powerful institutions that make decisions on a daily basis that affect everyone.

> "Soul loss is also happening on a larger scale on the entire planet. Soul loss is not limited to individual human experience. It is also quite evident that societies experience this. Examples of collective soul loss and its effects can be found by studying the experience of cultures, such as Native American cultures that have experienced genocide, or cultures in Africa where the demoralization generated by colonialism has created a cultural, political and spiritual vacuum. The Earth herself is in a state of soul loss due to the war that has been waged against her by unbridled industrialization. Even so, I have great faith in her regenerative capacity. There is much we can do as shamanic practitioners to heal, safeguard and restore the Earth and the beings that dwell there. Working on a spirit level makes many things possible. So much that happens in spiritual reality affects material reality. It is important to remember this even though the effect of spiritual healing like soul retrieval may not always be immediately evident on a material level."
> —Isa Gucciard.

It is interesting to note that the only trace of any live event, especially one that chooses to affect the unconscious in a non-rational way, can only play out in the memories of the participants that attended in the days and weeks to come. The capturing of the "dead" performance onto film can only provide a sneak-peek at the long-term goal of "Healing the Museum" as an instigator and participant in a new wave of positive development in human consciousness that is currently taking place. The main principle of the "Healing the Museum" series being; to enliven the museum once again back into action, so that the museum can re-take its proper place as a cultural space in which new advancements in art, audience participation and art education can affect society as a whole and life for the good of all beings.



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HOTEELA ITOOPHIYA

Bianca Baldi

SICOMORO CENTENARIO

You settle on my image a majestic sycamore-fig tree.

Ficus sycomorus.

Like a constant, I occupy tremendous time, a nonhuman witness in the Oromia region, west of Addis Ababa.

I challenge your entire idea of historical time, its divide into pre-and post-occupation.

What is a year or even a decade if I was already standing tall to hear the cries of victory traveling south from the battle of Adwa when the Italians were famously defeated.

An important fact is cemented here for you as you confront your settled view of time.

Here her calendar system a year of thirteen months, her clock cycle begins at dawn.

CALL FOR ACTION & REFLECTION: REPORT ON WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS IN BRUSSELS AND BORDEAUX

This document is a summary of a work in progress and reflects on-going discussions held in the context of a workshops convened by the Goethe-Institut Brussels in collaboration with the Africa Museum Tervuren and l'ISELP, on May 4–6, 2019, and a workshop organized by the Goethe-Institut Bordeaux in collaboration with the Musée d'Aquitaine, on November 6–8, 2019. The workshops were part of the project "Everything Passes Except the Past," which questions the ways in which European countries deal with their colonial past and with the persistence of colonial power relations and their thriving algorithms. The workshop brought together artists, museum experts, scholars, activists, and representatives of institutions, from various backgrounds and different privileged contexts. The results of the discussions were documented and turned into this text with the great help of Yann LeGall (Berlin Postkolonial).

THE ROLE OF ARTISTS AND ACTIVISTS IN THE MUSEUM

Is the museum a temple, a graveyard, or a medium? If it is a temple, then it is a selfish guardian of knowledge, a hegemonic instrument of propaganda, an edifice of elitist high culture that claims universality. If it is a graveyard, then it is that of colonized subjects, housing dusty and innumerable remnants waiting to be paid a visit, a place at constant pains to justify its relevance and that needs to find a way to survive in the future. If it is a medium, then it conveys multiple voices, subjects and perspectives (those of the dead and those of spirits, artists, and activists), makes prophecies, and intervenes in society to inspire movements and debates.

Obviously, the latter of the three seems the more sustainable vision. In this vein, museums should be ready to reach out proactively to the multiple communities that surround them. Only they can go against the elitist vision of a temple by making marginalized histories visible through advocacy work, artistic interventions, and information boards in and around museums. Those actors can offer a critical historiography that questions the genealogy of these institutions and how the history of museums is connected to histories of racism, power, and marginalization. By telling stories of colonial violence from non-European perspectives and based on diasporic experiences, artists, and activists are able to rehumanize the nameless victims of enslavement, colonialism and genocide, and thus add an emotional aspect to contemporary reflection and debates on how to remember and work through this difficult past. They dig up the graveyard to inspire vivid conversations and visions of the future.

The voices of artists and activists are therefore of central importance to decolonizing museums. If called upon as external advisors, then museum staff reaching out to them should be prepared and trained to reflect critically on the balance of power of such a partnership, and also on their own agenda. If advisors are called for the deep revision of texts, images, and narratives, including some from the permanent exhibition, the museum should not refuse, rather acknowledge these demands, even if they extend past the scope of the partnership.

Even though partnerships and project-based interventions are important and useful, they can often reproduce hierarchies of power between institutional and non-institutional agents. Therefore, museums should seek long-term involvement and grant activists and artists decision-making powers in exhibition management and curatorial work. Their perspectives and insights should be integrated from the outset, for instance in the early conceptual work underlying permanent exhibitions. This can support empowerment and the development of indigenous curators in European museums. Further, it can foreground alternative knowledges and diasporic experience at the core of museum practice. Even though this might clash with the continental experiences of museum staff and visitors, this intercultural meeting in exhibitions will gradually contribute to an acceptance of dualisms and differences in knowledge.

This can also stretch the decolonizing process by radically rethinking the culture of exhibitions. Every single activity in the museum should be freed from racial bias, classist structures, and gender discrimination. The use of visual material in museological spaces (physical and online) exemplifies to what extent curators and staff should reach out to receive external opinions: which photos should be shown? Which ones are violent? Which ones can be framed? Which ones require a trigger-warning? Who should be consulted when the colonial gaze is reproduced? What are the pitfalls of having a "diverse" representation of museum staff and publics? What is tokenization and how can it be avoided? Who owns which bodies and representations? These are issues that cannot be tackled in internal debates alone.

The other telling example is the fluidity of temporary interventions and the unmovable character of permanent exhibitions. While European and contemporary art forms are often placed in a continual, ephemeral timeframe and thus remain very prominent in temporary exhibitions, non-European and colonial collections are still too often framed as timeless and relegated to permanent displays. To decolonize exhibition practices, museums and curators should reconsider their understandings of core concepts of time ("present," "pasts," "future," "contemporary," "era," and so forth) and have the courage to break the dichotomies that

often shape museum practice: permanent vs. temporary, display vs. event, exhibition vs. performance.

If museums were and still are colonial institutions, how can a decolonial process take place within them? Obviously this would imply radical decisions regarding their very structures, modes of functioning, and content. Perhaps the first and easiest one would be the implementation of open spaces for community-based exhibitions. The Adelaide Migration Museum, for instance, has allocated a room that exhibits different temporary exhibitions curated by community members. This extends the understanding of "communities" that museums should consider, across the lines of geographical origin, class, gender, or ability. If such a space can be made available and the museum proactively reaches out to communities in their vicinity and encourages them to address topics of their own choice, this kind of open space can become a theater for contemporary debates on migration, discrimination, marginalization, and multilingual perspectives on a wide range of topics, from history and culture to political empowerment, art, or even food.

Another important aspect is the genuine reflection on hierarchies of power and social reproduction in staff. Every exhibition that engages with a binational context should, from its inception onwards, be ceonceptualized by at least a binational team. Ethnographic museums should also gradually ready themselves to consider appointing head curators, directors and collection managers who are able to unsettle monolingual and nation-based understandings of culture. In settler colonies such as Australia, Aotearoa New Zealand, South Africa, the US, or Canada, the role of Indigenous curators in museums is central to challenging dominant and (neo)colonial narratives that perpetuate oppression in exhibitions but also in structures and internal relationships. They bring knowledge and ways of being that confront—or at least challenge—the obsession that museums have with material culture, taxonomy, and contemplation. Their work reinstates the status of some objects as part of a social environment, through ceremonies, performances and festivities that take place within the museum. They also enable these institutions to become multilingual and metabolic bodies.

This report of action and reflection was developed based on the discussions with the workshop participants in Brussels: Christine Bluard, Clémentine Deliss, Hartmut Dorgerloh, Laurent Courtens, Larissa Förster, Yann LeGall, Didier Houénoudé, Guido Gryseels, Dada Kahindo, Lars-Christian Koch, Katia Kukawka, Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, Wayne Modest, Placide Mumbembele, Grace Ndiritu, Géraldine Tobé, and Laurent d'Ursel,
and in Bordeaux: George Abungu, Lotte Arndt, Bianca Baldi, Sammy Baloji, Irene Calderoni, Laurent Courtens, Dalila Dalleas Bouzar, Michæl Dieminger, Didier Houénoudé, Katia Kukawka, Guy Lenoir, Toma Muteba Luntumbue, Ayoko Mensah, Placide Mumbembele, Freddy Mutombo, Pascale Obolo, Carolina Orsini, Margareta von Oswald, Kalvin Soiresse, and Sara Torres.

"EVERYTHING PASSES EXCEPT THE PAST," EXHIBITION AT FONDAZIONE SANDRETTO RE REBAUDENGO, 2019

With artworks by

Bianca Baldi
Alessandra Ferrini
Grace Ndiritu
Troubled Archives

Curated by

Jana J. Hæckel

What role does photography play in a culture of memory? What are the ethical implications for the use of colonial images and how do we overcome their unsettling narratives? The exhibition presents photographic and lens-based artworks by Bianca Baldi, Alessandra Ferrini, Grace Ndiritu, and the collective Troubled Archives that confront, challenge and repurpose the colonial gaze. They expose the colonial image archive as being a power instrument of social regimentation and point to the potential for critical redesign.

Throughout history, photography has often been accused of perpetuating and upholding colonial stereotypes. Photography was not only a witness and document of the colonial regime, but also its tool and accomplice. In the course of colonialism, ethnological museums in the nineteenth and twentieth century collected an enormous image reservoir of portraits of those who did not fall under the heading of the white, Western, civil subject. The strictly formalized "race portraits" representing body "typologies" in the field of anthropology were taken under unequal balances of power and were used as proof of an alleged European superiority within a political relationship of dominance. Many of these images are still on display today in various collections, while new digital technologies, such as facial recognition used for surveillance purposes, continue presumptuous, racist modes of representation.

As theorist and filmmaker Ariella Aïsha Azoulay states in *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (2019), photography is more than a craft or practice, but rather it is a relationship that upholds empire, enforcing and reproducing systematic racism. Azoulay highlights how photography's collaboration with the historian's craft, the museum's value, and the imperial archive serves to regulate the ways in which stories are told and power relations are established. We therefore have to unlearn the history told through colonial image making.

The artists' practices introduce multiple voices that call into question the idea of the image as a document and address the responsibility that we have toward colonial photographs, even one hundred years later. Their works use, transform and edit colonial images without ignoring or erasing the harmful objectifications of

the past. They point out the close intertwining of the history of photography with the history of colonialism, whose presumptuous, manipulative mode of representation continues to the present day. By reworking and combining the biased image archive, they develop a constructively critical access to racist footage and show how colonial power structures are established and stay present to this day.

1. Bianca Baldi
"*Doors of Distance*," 2017
Printed voile and wooden construction. Dimensions variable.
"Eyes in The Back of Your Head," 2017
Video and steel construction, acrylic one-way mirror, monitor 142 x 82 x 82 cm and video 08:23 min (looped), color, stereo.

2. Alessandra Ferrini
"*Sight Unseen*," 2020
Installation, 18' video, prints on paper.

3. Troubled Archives
"*The Recognition Machine,*" 2019–ongoing
Installation, modified printer, website.

4. Grace Ndiritu
"*A Quest For Meaning - AQFM Vol. 10,*" 2020
Installation, photographs, wooden frames.

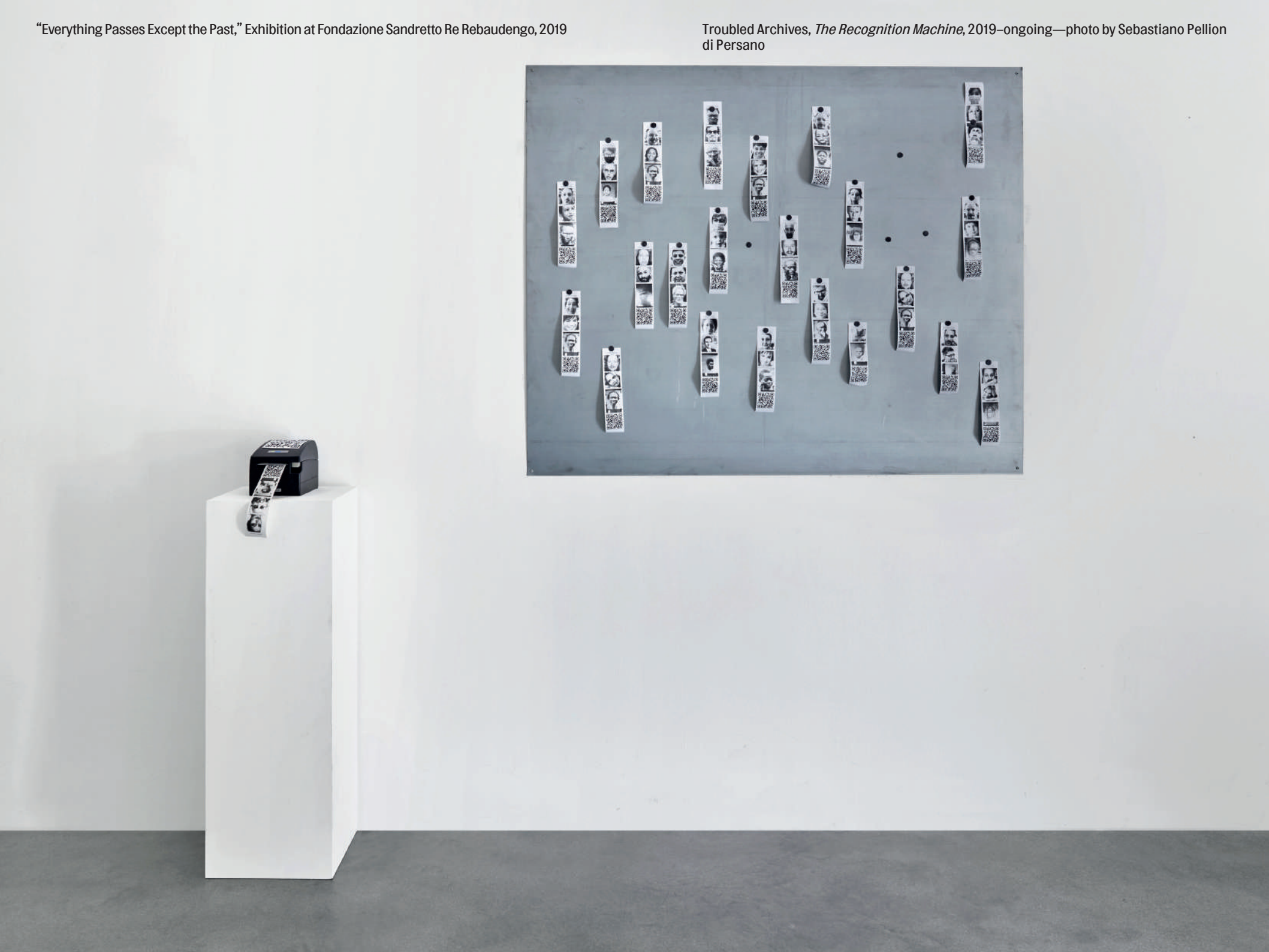
"Everything Passes Except the Past," Exhibition at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, 2019

Bianca Baldi, *Doors of Distance*, 2017 and *Eyes in The Back of Your Head*, 2017—photo by Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

“Everything Passes Except the Past,” Exhibition at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, 2019

Alessandra Ferrini, *Sight Unseen*, 2020—photo by Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

"Everything Passes Except the Past," Exhibition at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, 2019



Troubled Archives, *The Recognition Machine*, 2019–ongoing—photo by Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

“Everything Passes Except the Past,” Exhibition at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, 2019

Grace Ndiritu, *A Quest For Meaning – AQFM Vol. 10*, 2020—photo by Sebastiano Pellion di Persano

CHAPTER

IN/VISIBLE HERITAGE: RETHINKING (DE)COLONIAL FILM ARCHIVES

II

DECOLONIAL FILM ARCHIVES

a conversation with

Didi Cheeka, Fradique, Filipa César, and Tamer El Said

moderated by

Stefanie Schulte Strathaus

In many European countries, the reappraisal of the colonial past focuses on how European museums and archives deal with ethnological artifacts and questions about the restitution of looted objects. However, another legacy of colonialism is far less present in this discourse: film material from colonial contexts are largely kept in European archives. To whom does this material belong? How and to whom should it be made accessible? What are the consequences of these structures for collective and national memory in the formerly colonized countries and what are the strategies for dealing with archived materials?

On September 24 in 2019 at Lisbon's Culturgest, a panel discussion took place on the topic of De/colonial film archives as part of the series of events titled "Everything passes, except the past." Convened by the Goethe-Institut Portugal, speakers Filipa César, Fradique, Didi Cheeka, and Tamer El Said discussed the relationship between archive and power and the artistic confrontations with colonial archive materials and materials from colonial liberation struggles made by filmmakers and artists from Europe and Africa. The event was moderated by the co-director of the Arsenal–Institute for Film and Video Art in Berlin, Stefanie Schulte Strathaus.

STEFANIE SCHULTE STRATHAUS Today is September 24, the day of the unilateral proclamation of independence in Guinea-Bissau. Yesterday, the University of Jos in Nigeria announced its first Master of Arts program in Film Culture and Archiving Studies. Last Friday, new protests began in many cities in Egypt, eight years after the revolution and five years after president Sisi (Abdel Fattah el-Sisi) came to power. And last year, the Cinematheque of Angola was closed down (It was only later found out that the Cinematheque turned out to have been relocated to the Angolan Cinema Institute, merging the two institutions for bureaucratic reasons, editor's note.) and left all the films by themselves.
In Earlier talks, I stated that films have at least four modes of existence:

1. The very object as it was found in the archive.
2. The film in the sum of its manifestations, which is positive and negative prints, DVDs, videotapes, different language versions, etc.
3. The film as an ephemeral object that is its projection and the history of projections.
4. The film as discursive object that is the memory of it, print material, stills, posters, and, as Didi pointed out, oral history.

I would like to add a number five. The object as a constitutive element of the archive. How did it get there? What role dœs it play in the archive? What dœs the institutional context of the film tell us about the film, or could the film maybe tell us more about the archive in which it was found? The history of film preservation is marked by the aspiration to save the originals, a term that dœsn't even appear in the above mentioned list, and to allocate them as cultural heritage in the present days. This concept is shaped by western values based on national statehood and defining what is to be classified as cultural heritage and colonial history, and in doing so, ignoring the history of resistance and in which context it will be passed on. Decolonial archive work has the potential to turn this concept upside down. Preservation can be viewed as a discourse or a socially and politically structured practice, instead of as the natural logical way of incorporating historical moving images into contemporary life, as suggested by Caroline Frick in her book "Saving Cinema." When we speak about decolonial archive practice, we are not only talking about films from

colonial archives or documents of liberation and nation building; we are talking about new ways of thinking the archive as the future. For decades, only a small number of professional archivists working for state archives in countries which could afford spending money on preserving film, usually going by the canon, had control over the worldwide film heritage. This has changed. Digitization and decolonial thinking gave a voice to artists, filmmakers curators, and activists, who are now taking part in the politics of film archive practices.
All of you are artists and filmmakers turned into curators and/or archivists. Could you describe your journey in relation to the history of resistance and its archival documents? What motivated you to address the politics of archives in your work? In what way did these images have an impact on your artistic or curatorial work?

TAMER EL SAID I see myself as a filmmaker in the first place, and then all other practices come from this passion to work with images and to play with sound and image. I remember that when I started to work many years ago, I asked myself one question: The world is producing many images. Do we really need more images? Don't we have enough? I'm trying to ask that myself every time I'm producing a new image.
Occupation is not only occupying the land, it's also occupying the screen and the narrative. When we make films or music or theater or any type of cultural form, to which extent is this art that we produce challenging the stereotype versus creating stereotypes about others? This is a question that we should all ask ourselves.

For me, the concept of colonial film is a mentality, it's a way of looking at and designing things. It's not an era that has ended, but something that comes again and again with every practice related to film and sound. In programs, in festivals, in writing and producing new images.

I see that the work we need to do is not to resist these kinds of images, but to take this form of art to another place. Films are not made to simply transfer information. Films are made to share questions.

SSS **Could you tell us something about the reason why you are building what I would call a Counter-Archive, at the Cimatheque in Cairo, Tamer?**

TES Egypt is a country with a national archive which is not accessible. I think that if you cannot access your archive, if you cannot access your history, you won't be able to see the future. The only way to see the future is to look into the past. Didi has a very beautiful way of saying it. The other reason is that there is actually a lot of material of marginalized films produced by amateurs and people who are not supported by the state or anyone else. These images can tell you something about the situation that is very different from what you usually see. We see the archive as a way of engaging the people with the reality.

SSS **The University of Jos is now opening a Master's Programme on Film Archiving, only five years after Didi found decaying film reels in an abandoned building. It became possible thanks to his incredible efforts, and in collaboration with many partners: Gœthe University in Frankfurt, the Lagos Film Society, the Arsenal, the Nigerian Film Corporation, the National Film Institute and the National Film, Video and Sound Archive, and the DFF—Deutsches Filminstitut & Filmmuseum in Frankfurt.**

DIDI CHEEKA I got on board this archival journey by accident. We decided, me and a couple of critics, to found an institution dedicated to the creation of the first art-house cinema in Nigeria that is not pro-Hollywood oriented or even just showing Nollywood films. We inherited an old colonial building that goes back to the '40s and '60s in the heart of Lagos State, the main commercial city of Nigeria. It has an old rustic cinema, simply with some chairs and a screen. After being there for one year, we finally thought about investigating what was behind the building. We went through some gates, there was this strong smell and we didn't know what it was. I'm not an archivist, I'm just a filmmaker. We stumbled into these rooms; it was like a graveyard, but instead of human beings, there were film reels scattered all around on the floor and on shelves. We had been living with ghosts for a year and we didn't know.

I thought: wow, what triggered this mass burial of what was supposed to be material of memory and history in this country?

How come nobody has talked about this? And importantly too: What kind of films are these? They were all rusty, it was difficult to open the film cans, and we were thinking: What if not a single one could be rescued?

We never saw these images, we never heard these sounds. Could we say that we lost our memory? Can you lose something that has never been yours? To me, the most important thing was not the restoration of these images, even though I think they are important and I really wanted to rescue them. But if we couldn't see those films, we could at least have a conversation about what probably was in those images. We could construct oral history.

In my Nigerian Society in Africa we say "When an old man dies, an entire library falls down." This is what we say in Africa, because our history was and still is mostly oral history. From the very beginning, history, and memory in my society have never been personal; they have always been collective. There is this old graveyard that contains not only family history, but the entire history of the community. What affects you, also affects the community. (...) The country that sprung of my (pre)-colonial society has inherited this building of history, but memory has not been narrated the way our forefathers did. Now there is cinema and yet these images have been held back; nobody has narrated them to us.

This archive we found goes back a long way; it was originally a Colonial Archive. The British set up the Colonial Film Unit, which would later become the Federal Film Unit. It was the British Colonial Power that produced images of us—of course without any permission. We kind of inherited these images from them.

And there was the Nigerian War of 1967 to 1970. It was this war that led the Nigerian government to abandon the archive. The British, good or bad, kept their working archive, even if it was producing colonial images. They handed a working archive to Nigeria, and then, the Nigerian government, because of the war, because of the accusation of genocide and the military coups and the assassinations, decided to continue photographing their people from 1960 to 1967 to 1980. They continued photographing themselves, but they were no longer presenting it to the public and nobody had access to these buildings.

I think that we can use these images that were produced by colonialism, repurpose them, and let the material speak. We can say: OK, this is your interpretation of the images, but we repurpose something else, which is our interpretation of the images.

So there are two positions, and this actually forms my point of entry into archival practice: There is the idea of colonial filmmaking in the popular sense of post-colonialism. But I resist that theory. Every African intellectual or scholar is talking about post-colonialism, but nobody is challenging the term. It gives the impression that the most important, the only important thing that has happened in African Cinema or African History is colonialism. Which would mean that every other thing after 1960 is immaterial in the discussion of African Cinema and memory. The thing is that there really is no way to talk about cinema memory or even political memory from your country without talking about "colonial memory"; it stands right there in front of us. ("*Colonial memory" was the title of the cycle of performances, debates and films of which this panel was part of at Culturgest in Lisbon* project, editor's note).

FILIPA CESAR Yes, about the term "colonial memory:" It is a very unilateral idea, because a majority of the memories we are talking about aren't colonial memories but memories of struggle, of resistance. I think it's important to acknowledge this because it makes a difference. The people that struggle in Guinea Bissau for example never think about colonial memory; they think about 500 years of resistance and struggle and revolution. So it's important to discuss how words are loaded with a certain position from where you speak and what you're speaking about.

During our archive project in Guinea Bissau, from the moment we understood that the film material that was stored in Guinea was not relevant enough for western institutions to be invested in, to be part of a so called History with a capital "H," we had to understand that to rescue that imaginary of liberation, we would have to use militant methods ourselves. That's something that preoccupies us a lot. We are not archivists but artists and thinkers and militants, people preoccupied with this situation. This is the place where I find my voice here. It's the voice of someone who solidarizes and joins the struggle of channelling an imaginary that

is on the verge of complete disappearance. The question here is: Who has the right, who has the power and who has the means to produce what is going to be the future history?

SSS Fradique, could you tell us about your experiences in working with the archives?

FRADIQUE A few years ago I made a film, *Independência*, with a collective that became a production company, Geração 80. One of the reasons we made this film is because as Angolans, we have never seen our story told by us in a film, with archive footage, edited by us. There is one clip playing a propaganda song that the Portuguese regime did in 1961 in response to the first uprisings by our people. The song was "Angola is ours." In the Archives this song was normally played with beautiful images of Portuguese living in Angola, playing tennis, going to the theater, having a happy life. When I saw that image, it came as a sort of shock to me, seeing how they really thought the country was theirs. The propaganda films never showed the other side, especially colonial propaganda films. So we cut together the same song, showing the other side, showing the people we interviewed, testimonies of the liberation struggle. That was the other important reason to make this film: we interviewed about 700 people to start building our own archive made of oral testimonies.

The whole process of dealing with archives in general is a challenge. The film has thirty-eight minutes of archive footage and only one minute of it actually is from an Angolan archive. Everything else came from Portugal, England, United States, Belgium, Romania, and France. The one-minute footage was the moment of the declaration of independence, and I made sure that this minute came from Angola. It actually is off-sync because that's how bad the footage was. We had good footage from a Portugal archive, but I said no, this minute has to be from our archive.

An experience I made while working with archives in Europe is the following: The archive that asked us for the highest price was the national TV from Portugal, RTP. The archive that charged us zero for it was the military archive in Portugal. They understood what the film meant; they understood they should not charge for it. Nevertheless, it is interesting to see how hard it really is to find the material you're looking for. You go to Europe to look for

material from Angolan freedom fighters, but you can't find it. If you want to look for Angolan freedom fighter footage, you have to look for Angolan terrorists, because that's how it was labeled. And you spend hours searching and finally don't have another choice than to enter the mind-set of who archived it, just to be able to find that footage. These issues have to be addressed.

SSS **I think what becomes clear from your statements is that dealing with those different archives needs—as you described it Filipa—a guerilla archiving practice. Filipa was the first one who started digitizing footage. She worked with Korn-Manufaktur, a small company in Berlin, which donated an old scanner. Later on, the Cimatheque in Cairo got the same scanner model from the same place, and in the meantime it also traveled to Nigeria. Things like these are only possible because of underground practices and the incredible support of individuals. So it seems to me that it is necessary to create some kind of counter-business, a parallel world in the business of archival work. What should established institutions learn from those practices? What is the main problem that you face when you're trying to get footage from other places?**

TES Many problems. The example you stated, Fradique, reflects the mentality and the misuse of resources. There is one film that will be digitized twenty times in different places, while other films are deteriorating because no one is taking care of them. First of all, I think that every image is important. Every image has a story and this story can be seen differently in different contexts, in different places and in different times. But who has the power to decide that one image is more important than the other? In which context and in which time? Maybe what we think is unimportant today, will be very important in a few decades. The decision of preserving a certain image is not only a decision for ourselves, but also for the next generations. There definitely are images that we will lose forever. With everything we produced over the last thity, fourty, fifty years, less than ten percent or five percent of the whole of history of cinema is actually digitized.

The other thing is, as you said, that when institutions get bigger, the process of decision-making, of categorizing and of dealing with it becomes a huge thing. I remember when I saw some colonial films about the Arab region from the beginning of the twentieth century,

between 1900 and 1915, from the collection of the BFI, I was so shocked. These images were made more than 100 years ago, and they are still the reference for any image that is produced in big films, for example in Hollywood, when it comes to our region. These images were made in a moment when they were the only source of information. There were just a few travelers moving around the world. If you look at a Souk-scene in any big Hollywood film today, you can see that the images are still taken from that same reference—as if the world was still there, as if people would never travel, as if there was no internet, as if they wouldn't even do the minimum effort of just googling the new images from this Souk. This is an important issue.

Also, if you want to use those images, you have to pay a lot of money. It really still shocks me. 100 years ago somebody shot my grandfather on film, and now I want to use this material of my grandfather, and I have to pay for it! Nobody asked my grandfather if he wanted to be portrayed or not, and now we have to pay for using the pictures of our grandparents. It's unbelievable.

SSS **I would also like to address the materiality of film, something that Filipa and Fradique consider in their work. It is the opposite of what archives often aim at: objectivity in film digitization and restoration, the idea that you could restore a film and make it look like "the original," following previously established criteria. Filipa, you've said that certain archivists tell you in relation to that, that your archive project is a failure. In what sense?**

FC Basically, we digitized—we never say recovered or restored, because we really digitized the moment, that very moment in which we encountered the material that day. The day before it was different, the day after would be different. In other contexts you would have to spend millions to first clean it, then restore it, and then bring it to a state where it can then finally be digitized. And we didn't have these means at all. We were trying to find a method that mirrors the gestures of that struggle. It had been said, by professional archivists, that this project is a failure. But it depends on what concept you have of what is failure and what is success. For me, in this very context maybe it was even a compliment. Regarding the economic situation, Sana (*na N'Hada, the militant filmmaker from Guinea Bissau and partner of Filipa César in the research and digitization project*, editor's note) used

to say to me: the fact that this country is so poor economically has been actually protecting it. But at the same time, the lack of economic interest in the country also makes it very difficult to find means for this kind of project.

It was Harun Farocki that brought us in touch with Reiner Meyer, the scanner engineer. He was developing a specific scanner for archive material that had one particular feature that the professional scanners from ARRI didn't have: it could move the material independently from the perforation. Film material shrinks when it comes to this state, it gets dry, the vinegar syndrome attacks it, there's a decomposition process. So the position of the perforation is different and it never properly gets into the hooks. Reiner Meyer scanner provided a laser to detect the perforation—no matter where it was displaced to—and scan a frame. That made it possible to turn the very decayed film reels into moving images again.

The idea was to look at the material as a body of inscription. There are many other ways of inscribing resistance, you know, from oral history, from songs, from cloth weaving, there are various forms of inscribing various forms of codes. So we started to look at this archive as a form of an inscribed body including its decay. We wanted to document the material as an object itself—not reducing film to the representation in the images—and we accepted the scratches, the fungus on it, and it became a method. We did not do this only because we cannot do it better, because we have no means to do it better, but because we wanted to tell some information about this struggle through the material itself. Those materials are in Africa, in conditions and places where there is no electricity, there are no fridges or climatization. This tells something, it tells information about the material itself. Also, these reels were thrown away during the war in 1998–9, and recovered by the filmmakers themselves. All of this is part of the inscription.

SSS Can you talk about your responsibility towards history as a filmmaker who is using those archives?

DC In Ghana, there is the word "Sankofa." It's depicted by a bird flying, but with its head turned backwards, and there is an egg on its back. It's trying to pick the egg with its beak. There is a translation for it: it means that it is not taboo to return to the

past. In order to go into the future, you have got to return to the past. Some time ago when I began this journey, I went to see the director of the Nigerian Film Corporation, owners of the national audio-visual archive, and there was a top Nollywood actress in the room. I didn't know the lady, and he said to her "Please forgive him, he works with archives, he's always in the past." So what we want to do is take the archive away from something that is dusty, that is something which only old men with beards and grey hair do, to something which is pertinent to a young audience. In a country in which history has been abolished from Nigerian classrooms as a stand-alone subject, archival practice has become an act of public memorial, a memorial work saying "this happened at one moment in time." What we want to do is to take it out of the past and bring it into the present. Memory is not something that is past, it is something that connects us, something that also enables you to go into the future. This is my primary responsibility to the audience, whether they are in Nigeria or in the UK or in Portugal. It is this attempt to interweave the past, the present and the future so we can have this proper conversation on what is probably a historical trauma that makes my country want to forget everything that has happened before.

A few weeks ago I was part of a panel in Berlin; the title was "translocation of historical artifacts." But the title was wrong, it's not about "translocation," as if we were trying to conduct advertising for imperialism. We did not sit down and decide to translocate artefacts—they were abducted. So it's also good that this discussion is happening against the backdrop of the argument for the restitution of historical artifacts that were abducted by colonial powers from colonized countries. We are here in spaces that are not decolonized. As important as the restitution of museum pieces is, for Africans the most important thing in order to fully appropriate the colonial experience is that we want these images, we want the archives decolonized, we want you to restitute our audio-visual archives. So that we can have discussions in colonised spaces, but also to have this conversation in our own decolonized spaces in our own society. We want these discussions to arise.

SSS It is also important when we talk about films, to talk about the fact that film reels are objects, they are not a film yet. A film only exists in the moment of its projection. Without cinema projection and without screenings, the films do not exist. This (*pointing at the image of an old film reel projected behind them*) is the carrier of what you see when you put it into a projector. Therefore, archive work and showing films go hand in hand. The responsibility is not only about rescuing; it's also about contextualizing it. It's interesting that the Cimatheque in Cairo opened as a cinema and then quickly understood that they HAVE TO be a counter-archive if the cinema wants to have a future.

TES In the end, all of this is about social justice. How we allow people to access this form of art in every aspect. I believe that everybody has the right to watch and produce and access any material at any time with no conditions. Everybody in the world has the same right. This has to be the goal in the end.

FRADIQUE We make the films for our generation, but also and especially for the next generations. The responsibility is to share stories with people, to make them talk. But I am also inspired by what Didi has done, and Filipa as well. Our cinematheque from Angola has been closed down last year, and the archive is now just like Didi found it in Nigeria; it's just there. So I think the first thing I'm going to do when I'm back is go there and take it. Because if no one is telling the story, if no one is doing anything to save the archives, then you have to take responsibility for it, because this can't wait. If we do not save and recreate the archives, then memory is lost.

Transcribed by Teresa Althen

ARCHIVES, FILMS AND MEMORIES: INGREDIENTS TO REMEMBER AND FORGET THE PAST

Inês Ponte

To begin with the story of a boy who either lived in the present, or was consumed with recalling the past, is to remember part of a fictional short story by Argentinian writer Jorge Luís Borges about the young Irineu Funes. An accident caused Funes to forget nothing, and to remember every detail of the past, thus making him suffer from an inability to differentiate or elaborate on his memories. Remembering everything made him incapable of thinking about the past. Funes' condition contrasts with "Everything Passes Except the Past," an international workshop on the politics of memory, sponsored by the Gœthe-Institut, which took place over several days in September 2019 at Culturgest in Lisbon, in tandem with the cinema program "Re-imagining the post-colonial archive." Unlike Funes' condition, this event considered the relationship between remembering and forgetting the past.

With the aim of stimulating a wider debate on the past through dialogues between films and people from various parts of the world, the workshop brought together a number of cultural producers, archivists, researchers and artists dedicated to creating, preserving and diffusing partial, incomplete memories. The result could not have differed more from Funes' meticulous memory, so precise that it neither discarded nor compared anything. Alternating between public and internal sessions, debates focused on how to work in, with, and on film archives; it ultimately drew a map with multiple viewpoints on the mutability of memories.

The wide range of participants, in their diversity of practices and origins, led to many comparisons of ways of working on memory through archives. By bringing together speakers from Angola, Belgium, Egypt, England, Germany, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, the Netherlands, Mozambique, Nigeria, Portugal, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, the origin and work of the participants revealed unique relationships with the archives with which each person at the workshop had become involved, and which included various types of film archives. The space for dialogue between participants who work on forgetting and memory from various perspectives and resources made the workshop captivating. Each participant brought his or her own story and perspective on balancing between thinking about the past, living in the present, and dreaming about the future of memory. They

showed how they are different and what they have in common, the extent to which each person knew or was unaware of each other's stories, and how much they have to offer one another. For example, one participant shared the story of Funes.

Film materials stored in archives are stimulating resources for working on the construction of memory. As both inheritance and testimony, they can serve as valuable tools for working on the politics of memory, on what we remember and forget about the past, and in so doing, they bear witness to the instrumental role of archives in these processes. An archive lives when it is used, but it is only valid when the material it holds enters into the public space. This idea is grounded in a desire to encourage public access to archives, an access that frees the past from the dominion of memories built by those who hold either political, economic, or social power. This liberation allows people to use the archives to think about memory and history in their different dimensions and overlaps, disparate or complementary, to reflect on collective, personal, institutional, subordinate, intimate, and public memories.

Diversity was one of the keywords used to define the world of film archives. National public archives were referred to in many of the debates, but the cases presented also included archives with large or small collections, that were specialized or far-reaching, institutional or informal, public or private, newly-built or long-standing, decaying or dynamic, collaborative or selective.

With the advantage of establishing a dialogue between people in different positions in history, the plurality of perspectives provided a complex cross-section of the issue of memory built on the nation-state and its ambiguous relationship with film archives. Fighting different official narratives and national imaginaries instituted in equally plural and unequal societies, the participants have pursued their work between dominant and forgotten memories. The discussions on this alternative effort by an extensive range of people trying to invert current policies of forgetting and memory yielded a call for civil society to play a greater role. This role could provide a new basis for the future, one that differs from the current situation.

The partiality of existing records, as well as the particular focus placed on them, provides the opportunity to think in the present about both the occurrences of the past and the diverse meanings added by the passage of time. Given the structural political changes that the world has experienced in the last century, it is a challenge to think about the mutability of memory through material produced for documentary purposes. While an accident may have given Funes the ability to retain the entire past, no archive can achieve that nature. The urgency of constructing archives results from the need to place multiple versions of history in the public space, and to preserve a broader range of memories than the ones currently used by dominant narratives. In the stories of each of the participants, we find motives and ways for recovering the past, and contemporary meanings of constructing memories.

TEARING DOWN BORDERS: EMERGENCY ARCHIVISTS

Let us begin with the peculiar story of an independent Nigerian filmmaker. Nigeria is the African country with the biggest commercial film industry, often called Nollywood for its equivalence to Hollywood. While visiting an abandoned building, this filmmaker accidentally happened upon several deteriorated reels containing remnants of films produced in the 1940s and 1950s by the colonial cinema unit established by the British government. Because he sensed the partial nature of the memories in his hands, the filmmaker gradually became an accidental archivist over the years who is trying to restore a collection whose rough history led him to question how nation states support policies of both remembrance and of forgetting, and who is investigating how successive governments activate or deactivate archives, depending on whether such resources can convey a history that these powers want to maintain. Deteriorated records no longer talk so much about the past they refer to, but they talk fairly loudly about the policy of forgetting that has ruined them.

Or the story of an Egyptian filmmaker who became an emergency counter-archivist. The doors to his country's national archive are closed, limiting access to the fragments of memories it holds. By refusing its citizens the opportunity to discover them, it hampers the subsequent work of decoding these fragments of the past

and using them to think about the country's history. Or the story of an Angolan filmmaker who spent six years producing film footage to build an archive of oral memories about a past that his country's official history has omitted.

These are stories of archivists who did not become so by training, but because, at some point in their lives, they were faced with the need to set up archives for deteriorating memories that were soon to be forgotten, closed or suppressed, in all cases side-lined. These stories are both overlapping and unique, revealing turbulent relationships with the domains of national memories. They are the stories of people trying to expand the dominant public memory, to break the supremacy of access and control by any government or national structure—who struggle so that Funes' inability to think does not dominate their memories. Induced by official politics of memories, they reveal ways of resisting forgetting through the creation of new materials and new uses for old resources, of fragments of memories that have hitherto been side-lined.

Besides being new archivists, these filmmakers also share the fact that they grew up in countries which became independent relatively recently, as the archivist-filmmakers are roughly the same age as their own countries. It should, however, be noted that other workshop participants have embarked on a similar struggle to deal with older countries' memories concerning pasts of colonial domination.

Archives are structured repositories whose dynamics depend on their archivist, a considerably more transitory element compared to the potential permanence of institutions or collections. The story of a German archivist who sees the users of the archive where she works as potential archivists is useful here. This archivist values what each user has to say about the fragments of memories of the world that she is protecting. She regards archives as guardians of fragments, by definition incomplete, and in the interactions of the present, she sees the possibility of adding valuable aspects to them, whether of knowledge, new production, or new reflections. In a context dominated by film archives that store national film productions, this one is supplied by a film festival dedicated to world-wide independent, militant,

and resistance film. Is it by chance that the archive where she works has such a unique collection?

In the discourse of these guardians, researchers, or producers, there was a notable convergence in addressing historical moments through different relationships in the production and use of documentary film records, in that they all seek to challenge current perceptions of the past. Insofar as parameters that are taken for granted in a certain context are called into question in another, this common objective made the gathering especially fruitful, raising the question of the politics of memory and various relationships to the construction of history. Archives also store the cracks in the dominant memory and can generate controversy, be it about access or control over the material, or about dominant public narratives established in the past.

THE BEWILDERMENT OF FRAGMENTS OF THE WORLD'S MEMORY

The travel required to gather these people in the same place raised the issues of territoriality underlying material produced in different parts of the world, but which is now stored in the archives of former metropolises. The impact of the inherent contradictions of these political changes, in a sphere that is largely immutable, prompts questions regarding the identification of these materials and their ease of access.

What can be done to establish a path between material filmed in one territory and stored in another, usually the former European power? These legacies remain largely unknown in both the now-independent countries, and those with pasts of colonial control. The ways of knowing them remain subjugated to the historical categories that have been called into question by fairly recent political changes. As shared histories lived from opposing perspectives, until recently some dominant and others subordinated, the latter struggle for a place from which they can question the former.

An Angolan director, intrigued by the fact that he could find only a few images of guerrillas from the fight for independence in Portuguese archives, soon realised that a search for "terrorists" gave him a much wider panorama of the kinds of images he was

searching for to access his history. Archives are both places that retain materials produced in the past and systems with pre-established means of organization. If memory emerges as a contested territory, archives emerge as repositories where the forgetting of successive generations can be shaken by tools created and used in the past. It makes archives themselves contested territories, not only because of the contents they hold, but because of the structures used for indexing or accessing them—tools now used to produce resistance and revolt. Archives help us think about the construction of the world's memory and their unique partiality makes them so stimulating.

If there are multiple versions of history, depending on who writes it and who reads it, is it possible to connect all archive databases together? In other words, how can institutions with different levels of formality communicate and collaborate with each other? How can we redistribute the disparate material held by European archives within the non-European territories that have become independent nations? What are the possible frameworks for such a redistribution? Who could be involved?

Accessing film material archived at a transnational level is not easy, nor is reusing it. The majority of archives charge prohibitive amounts to low-budget independent productions (whether due to regulations on copyright, production, or costs of the process of facilitation); only a minority offer a free usage of the images in their custody.

We now come to the matter of access, the recurring feeling induced by many archives throughout the world of being a closed door, sometimes slightly ajar, but rarely fully open. The frequent adoption of restricted-access policies has come to create relatively restricted layers of privilege for researchers, filmmakers, and, increasingly, artists. For these researchers, filmmakers, and artists, privilege of access comes with the responsibility of interrogating intentions—whether of these fragments, of the events that created them, or of the condition of archived fragments—and the responsibility of opening a discussion in the public domain over fragments of a now-forgotten past, shelved in narratives constructed in other times, using specific perspectives.

To overcome the closed-door sensation of film archives, we need to debunk the idea that preserving the materials they safeguard consists exclusively of physically preserving them for the future. The matter has been called into question by the increasing revelation of material in various states of preservation. What future is there in this limited access in the present? When this is closed off, who does that memory serve, and for what purposes? From the growing number of films that interrogate archival material, tracing back memories hitherto incarcerated in archives or subjugated to dominant narratives, we know that an open door allows us to think today about the changing meanings that fragments of the past may suggest to us, the present-day viewers, who become then the new archivists of such past and present meanings.

Perhaps the ideal future for archives is to replace the feeling of a closed door with that of a revolving door that strengthens mutual collaboration and makes their images and their past histories circulate, bringing them alive for the present.

RESIST FORGETTING THE OTHERS: MEDIATION AND COLLABORATION WITH IMAGES FROM THE PAST

Below are stories about activities involving fragments of the past, which aim to disturb existing supremacies. These are stories about ways of overcoming some of the difficulties of establishing other constructions of memory, thereby acquiring greater control over their stories. Inequalities in infrastructures, both in terms of preservation and access policies and the politics of memory, have not prevented work from being done; they have made it difficult, but its emergence is unshakable. What remains pending is the visibility of the resulting work, which makes telling these stories even more important.

A Congolese cultural producer is collaborating with European museums and archives to get artists and cultural producers in his country to work on images produced in colonial times. He uses artistic practices to get young people to deal with these images of the past. The producer started the project via remote access, but technological mediation hindered a fluid interaction between historically connected strangers. The producer overcame

this obstacle by visiting one of the Belgian archives in person, where he was faced with the emotional challenge of dealing with the inequality he saw etched in these photographs and films. While showing these images to his family upon his return, he was given ways to heal those emotions, and he was reminded of the importance of working with these images of the past today, to use them to add dynamics from the present.

His story resonates with that of a Belgian artist who carries out her work in German museums on photographs depicting people from all over the world, images reconfigured in systems of abstract categorization that were established several decades ago. As is often the case, these images dehumanize the subjects portrayed. They are rarely used today and little known, which prevents discussions about their existence and their preservation. How can another future be imagined without discussing this past or marking it with a present?

Like the work of archivists and artists, that of researchers mediates between films of the past and the present, a present marked by decades of independence of the territories where the film records were produced. We can point to the story of an English researcher who has studied British colonial films produced in various parts of the world and now held in British archives. His research aims to facilitate access to these films, as well as critical interpretations of their making through a contemporary approach to these weighty colonial productions. Or to the Portuguese researcher simultaneously researching stories of films produced in colonial times and their counterpoint, films of militancy and resistance to Portuguese colonialism. These films produced in territories that suffered long periods of colonization establish gestures of domination and resistance through the same tool: cinema.

We should also emphasize the role of collaboration, for example, between a Portuguese artist and a Guinean director, who seek, through forgotten militant films, to recover the living memories of their production. Mistreated through neglect since their production, their physical restoration was made possible through the aforementioned German archive, which has an unapologetically transnational collection. It is also the

transnationality of these collaborations that helps establish dialogues with these legacies in the present-day. How different is the case of a Portuguese director of German-Jewish origin who works on the border between personal and collective memory, and who looks at his personal history to question a social history?

In a workshop with people from different backgrounds, the question of the participants' various languages arises, which leads to the inevitable selection of a "lingua franca". Any choice implies aspects that may or may not eventually become problematic. In the non-public events there was simultaneous translation from English to French so that some of the participants could follow and participate in the discussion. Simultaneous translation made the participants' linguistic diversity audible. The audiences at public events added further difficulties to navigating the diversity of languages, contexts, and experiences of those involved. To deal with this Tower of Babel, events open to the public involved either simultaneous or consecutive translation. The enthusiasm generated by the possibilities of a meeting dedicated to sharing between people from different countries with diverse experiences created expectations that were difficult to meet in a context where hardly anyone heard their mother tongue. Learning about the memories and experiences of others requires an effort of patience that not everyone is always willing to make.

In the internal sessions, the program aimed to include screenings, which quickly created time constraints for the debate. The organization responded by quickly revising a schedule that had taken months to develop to allocate more time to dialogue about people's experiences and for group discussion.

The documentary films and excerpts shown during the workshop, in public or internal sessions, also covered a wide spectrum, both in terms of context and production location, and included films produced both in the distant past and more recently, some constructed using fragments of the past. Digitized analogue films were screened, some restored and others in the physical condition in which they were found, along with recent films that use archival materials in the most varying conditions. The films and excerpts previously chosen by some of the participants set the tone for debate. Let us briefly consider their reception.

IT'S NOT THE FORM, IT'S THE TEXT

I will not be impartial in my choice, as I have selected films that employ a similar formal device ("dispositif") that provoked different reactions among the viewers. On three or four occasions, the participants saw excerpts and films in their entirety that suggest that the viewers' reaction to these images with a documentary appearance was conditioned not so much by their form, rather by their textual qualities. To highlight the different reactions to formally similar films that were nevertheless shaped by different discursive approaches, I will consider them in a different order from the one in which they were shown. I will reorder them through their narration device, from a more authoritative one to others in which the narrator's posture or of his or her text look to impose other relations with images.

Let us take as a reference an audiovisual format that uses an explanatory narration, constructed on the basis of the distance between those who film and those who are filmed, characteristic of many films produced in colonial contexts for propaganda purposes. This form also epitomises the style of television journalism reporting and educational documentary, both in contrast to the authored documentary. While the first genre has now come to be associated with propaganda purposes, the second continues to value authority and veracity—but not as documentary cinema. For this there is the third genre: authored documentaries.

So as not to forget the deafness of colonial cinema's discourse to the subjects it filmed, one of the participants projected a short colonial film produced in Cameroon in the 1940s whose sound had deteriorated to the point of being difficult to understand, and accompanied it with a transcript of the narration. This gesture highlights the weight of the textual aspect in the perception of the images; it reveals the narration as an indicator of the kind of authority that a film seeks to have.

We will start by talking about an excerpt from *The New Egyptians* (1977, by Michael Croucher, England), a documentary produced by the British television channel BBC about the daily life of a family living in Cairo. The British speaker explained what the image does not explicitly convey to a viewer unfamiliar with

the context. Sarah Maldoror's documentary, *Fogo—Île de Feu* ("Island of Fire," 1979, 23 min. Cape Verde), produced through a commission from the PAIGC, a liberation movement that became the dominant political party in both Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau, formally adopted the same tone. Its assertive discourse about the inhabitants it portrayed was a carbon copy of the same strategic expedient, where the voice of those filmed appears obliterated. Among the audience members, the question asked applies to any of these films: how much of their text was produced in collaboration?

There was a more ambivalent reaction to Daniel Blaufuks' film, *Judenrein* (2019, 11 min.), which sought in his narration to offer a reflection on social dimensions that the images alone did not show, namely the change in the population demographics of a Polish village, where a Jewish majority became a small minority and then ultimately disappeared, at the hands of both the Nazis and then the local, non-Jewish residents themselves, who killed the few Jews who returned from the concentration camps in pogroms held "after" the end of World War II. Found for sale in the virtual world, the images that the narrator considered have no known author. The off-screen speech results from a negotiation between history and image, a conscious choice to highlight a story hidden in the images by questioning the images. The choice was made to build a personal discourse on the visual and material aspects, mediated by their relationship with these images and the media holding them. After the screening, an animated discussion ensued regarding the value of a personal text as a counterpoint to the usual, seemingly detached nature of texts in colonial films. We had the opportunity to see a similar narrative device in *Préface à des Fusils pour Banta* ("Preface to Arms for Banta," 2011, 26 min., by Mathieu Kleyebe Abbonnenc), a short film combining the use of archival photographs with animation. The text, narrated by a female voice, included the outline of a project by Sarah Maldoror, which did not find its final form as a film. In completing an unfinished project thirty years later, the text of Abbonnenc's film plays with an imagined past of what it could have been.

The public screening of a silent film, which consisted of a documentary record of the first national assembly of Guinea-

Bissau, in 1973, was widely applauded. The film was presented with the living testimony of Sana na N'Hada, its director, who was present in the room, in a recollection translated into English by the artist Filipa César, with whom he has collaborated. The audience participated in a real-time negotiation between the moving images, memory, and its translation, in a session that showed how Guinean cinema was born at the same time as the country itself.

Other films that used the device of narration combined interviews or speeches by their participants, as in the case of *Uma Memória em Três Actos* ("A Memory in Three Acts," 2016, 64 min. by Inadelso Cossa, Mozambique); as well as *Carnaval en Guiné Bissau* (1980, 13 min. by Sarah Maldoror, Guinea Bissau). Even bearing in mind that these voices are always mediated by the current discourse of political propaganda and the hitherto silenced discourse of their experience of the past, there were variations among those who were given a direct voice. Thus, the same device appeared with different connotations.

Reactions to the viewing were followed by conversations that inquired how the films were produced, distributed, and used. In most cases, these aspects are absent from the film itself, but could be obtained from the multiplicity of devices supporting its screenings: in its program, in its presentation, or in its discussion. In the awareness of the ephemeral nature of their work, the presenters worked even harder.

OPENING MEMORY TO THE WORLD AND CONNECTING THE WORLDS OF MEMORIES

By bringing together the voices and experiences of filmmakers, artists, archivists and cultural producers, the workshop was instigating and inspiring. Aiming to discuss the legacy of film archives, the debate not only revealed the intensity of the question of memory, but also the vitality of work on fragments of the past that is being carried out in various parts of the world. It opened the door to new dialogues between different practitioners as well as between agents familiar with opposing historical narratives. It established the possibility of building networks and connections between bodies of knowledge, practices, interests,

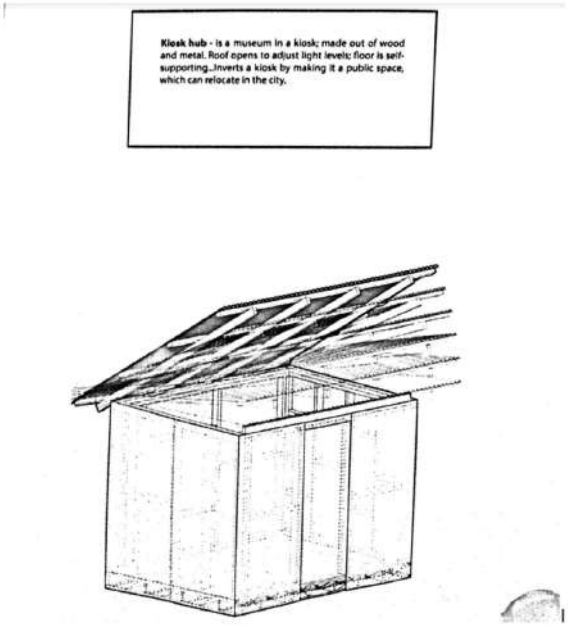
ideas, experiences, and outlooks. The audiences that attended the cinema sessions discovered how film archives can be used as places to make us question what we learn through our eyes, both from watching films and discussing them—why and how were they made, and where were they shown?—in order to think about the past and the memories we have of it today.

The workshop enriched an evolving debate in Portugal over film archives, different fragments of the past, structures for their preservation and identification, and their uses. We are far from having the capability of Funes' unfailing memory, but the workshop showed us that this is not the capability we are missing. What we lack is more spaces for us to listen and think together about issues of memories.

This text was published for the first time on *BUALA* (www.buala.org), an open-access website that provides a digital home for multiple voices from Africa, Brazil, Europe, and beyond. See: https://www.buala.org/en/afroscreen/archives-films-and-memories-ingredients-to-remember-and-forget-the-past.

THE KIOSK MUSEUM

Yaa Addæ Nantwi



> "The museum in the Ghanaian, and wider African context, is a problematic interpreter of cultural heritage and knowledge...What then would be a form more suited to our context that would not alienate, but rather welcome people to explore its contents?"
> —Nana Ofori-Atta Ayim, *Kiosk Culture*

The Ghana National Museum opened on March 5, 1957 as a public institution with seven integrated units: a museums division, a monuments division, an education unit, an administration unit, a security unit, a technical unit, and a science museum unit. It currently falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Tourism, Arts, and Culture (Gavua/Kuntaa, 2). However, the museum lacked substantial support and leadership, and this led to inconsistent operations in the 2000s, with frequent strikes and its eventual closing in 2016 for renovations. Today, many do not even know that such an institution exists. The number of visitors had dwindled and according to art historian Kojo Gavua, "prior to its closure... patronage of the gallery among Ghanaian adults in particular [was]

significantly low. The majority of the local museum audience has been children and students of first and second-cycle educational institutions." This speaks to how the narratives that the museum creates does not resonate with the general public's sense of leisure or appetite for art (Gavua/Kuntaa, 2). What started as an opportunity to showcase Ghanaian creativity implicitly inherited the ethnographic lens on African art and narratives stemming from the colonial gaze permeating the early stages of Ghana's institutional art history. Before its establishment in 1951, it started as a department of archeology and museum all in one, under the umbrella of University of Ghana, before eventually being split off into the National Museum (Antubam, 200). 40% of the Museum's inventory comes from British archeologist Charles Thurston's collection, meaning that many of the objects do not have documented artists or histories and continue the colonial misrepresentation of local art (Fogelman, 20).

Museums have long held a contentious role as knowledgeable authorities on Africa while largely excluding African voices from defining our own narratives. Considering the lack of local patronage and public recognition, how useful then is a replica of this institution in a Ghanaian context? How can we reimagine a structure that reflects the environment in which it is situated?

Similar to the Gold Coast Film Unit's mobile caravans used to screen documentary films, newsreels, and colonial government information films in the 1940s and '50s, the Kiosk Museum seeks to repair the disconnect between the museum and the public. Its structure was traveling all regions of Ghana, bringing art to the people and adapting each exhibition to the art and culture of the region.

In the confusion of a post-colonial city, Accra's acknowledged architecture aspires to western cultural markers: skyscrapers, elaborate buildings gifted by various embassies, and a lot of glass. The ubiquitous kiosk operates in a liminal space, hypervisible in the Ghanaian landscape while simultaneously ignored, an icon, repetitive in every frame, juxtaposed into every scene (Iddriss).

Historically, these temporary, nomadic formations function as sites of contact between people, buyers and sellers, but in this case, their inclusive nature has been repurposed to allow

for cultural exchange. The subsequent transformation is a form of space-making as a decolonial act, a breaking down of pre-imposed ways of using space to allow for new ways of relating. It is an attempt at creating a space that documents and shares cultural narratives in a more contextual and thus relevant setting. Such an approach acknowledges an embodied knowledge that speaks to the social, cultural, political, and economic diversities of the community for which it is intended.

Created by Ghanaian Art Historian Nana Ofori-Atta Ayim and the collaborative architects DK Osseo Asare and Latifah Iddriss, the Kiosk Museum saw its debut at the 2015 Chalewote Festival, which introduced the theme of "African Electronics," a practice rooted in the use of alternative technologies for cultural production. It represents methods and ideas of liberation for Africans in particular that involve architecture, science, and technology to alter the present reality and create new futures. The African Electronics manifesto (also known as "We Be Technology") states:

> "*African Electronics* is a popular term describing indigenous esoteric knowledge that Ghanaians use to create the impossible. It is the grand manifestation of our most powerful creative ability as a people, the cryogenic refrigerant that has kept our technologies alive across time... African Electronics is timelessly regenerating the next wave of transformative energy...With African Electronics, we look at how race, culture, art and technology merge to create a different kind of world that is inclusive, diverse, electric, and on the move. How do we imagine a world where we are technology and in full control of our systems and data—our histories, realities, and dreams?"
> —(Accra Dot Alt, 2015)

To this effect, the kiosk museum takes an architecturally familiar space to reveal the potential for cultural engagement in contexts where exclusivity is not synonymous with value. Instead, "The dynamism and inclusivity informs the participatory nature of these open cultural phenomena" (Ayim 11). As a carefully

curated collection of artworks and films, the exhibition adapts to the region in which it is being displayed. Specific to its 2015 debut, items were collected from Jamestown with permission from the local chief, by speaking to people who worked and lived there, and then by creating an accompanying exhibition of materials that showed Jamestown to those who are invested in its everyday reality. Writing on this process, Ayim states: "Every object displayed, though they draw from a common repertoire, are flexible in their interpretation, so they are constituted anew with each telling. Often their interpretation or translation are more marked by what is unsaid, by spaces and ellipses, rather than what is spoken." This form of display is facilitated by ephemera. The kiosk presents what may be read as impermanence as an opportunity for ongoing inquiry.

Scholar and curator Dana Rush contextualizes the concept of ephemera in an African artistic praxis in her essay "Ephemerality and the 'Unfinished' in Vodun Æsthetics," centering this framework around "action, interaction, and potentiality," in a way that presents the idea of unfinished as "an intentional ongoing, indeed permanent state of anticipation" (Rush, 60). Similarly, *Ephemera as Evidence: Introductory Notes to Queer Acts* by Jose Esteban Muñoz describes ephemera as capable of creating space for those who have been "locked out of traditional histories." He writes: "Ephemera is always about specificity and resisting dominant systems of æsthetics and institutional classification, without abstracting them outside of social experience and a larger notion of sociality" (Muñoz). In this sense, the kiosk museum exists as a conduit, showing the community to itself, documented and, though culturally informed, not ethnographic, as there is no distance between the art and the person, rather a bridge. The content exhibited, traditional Ga rites and everyday life, as well as the space itself, were designed to deconstruct hierarchies of knowledge and instead invite people to bring their full selves into their experience of the art.

The physicality of the kiosk also incorporates a way of building that resists the insular nature of conventional gallery spaces. The kiosk (as pictured on the first page of the essay) is made out of wood and metal with a roof that opens to adjust light levels.

Architect DK Osseo Asare describes this process as "inverting a kiosk by making it a public space, which can relocate in the city." Considering that kiosks were in essence constructed as solutions for a lack of physical space, they are often nomadic in nature and grow into clusters when settled on available land. They also utilise makeshift materials left over from construction, mimicking the design of shipping containers by using sheet metal processed out of decommissioned vehicles and machinery. Latifah Idriss describes this as an "architecture of life, as it brings what was previously discarded and left to decay back into use."

Grounding this exhibition technique in ephemera and public participation frames how the kiosk museum is able to close the distance between exhibition and everyday life to remain relevant in a Ghanaian context and offer itself up for interpretation alongside the backdrop from which it was pulled.

In December 2019, the Kiosk Museum re-launched in preparation for a ten-month tour of Ghana. Starting in Accra, each month-long exhibition features collected sculptures, films, and artworks from the respective region. Each third week involves a weekend of workshops, in Accra's case, a design forum open to the public where solutions to community issues were discussed and visually planned out. Over the course of 2020, this process was recreated, each with its own set of challenges and local nuances. The test lies in how to continue to share culture in a way that is contextual to the museum's location. By resisting traditional gallery structures to make room for experiential cultural engagement, the role of the museum as a static entity is circumvented. Each doing is an undoing of the strict lines that the gallery creates in favour of a space where art is shared, public, and ongoing.

KIOSK MUSEUM, VERSION 1 (AUGUST 2015): JAMESTOWN, ACCRA

Agbako, The Kiosk Museum's 2015 rendition was received well with lines of people queuing up to go inside what seemed like an everyday kiosk. Some even mistook it for a place of commerce before becoming fascinated with the art on the walls enough to stay for longer. The kiosk was thus able to invite people in by taking a staple from everyday Ghanaian life and using it to exhibit art.

Inside Agbako. This exhibition is in a sense, annotated. It took cultural elements such as Ga symbols of culture (as written on the walls in 5.7) and explained them in relation to the art, in continuity of this ephemeral practice of using the everyday to invoke a sense of closeness.

KIOSK MUSEUM, VERSION 2 (DECEMBER 2019): OSU MANTSE PALACE COURTYARD, ACCRA

AGBAKO (EAGLE SYMBOL): The eagle is the symbol of the Asere people of the Ga ethnic group, one of the seven clans alongside the Gbese, Ngleshie, Akamajie, Abola, Otublobun, and Atukpai. Inspired by the Asere's history as the first clan to land on Ga soil, the eagle likens their power to a watchful bird in the sky that oversees all Ga lands.

BUFFALO HORNS: Duality is a recurring Ga motif. Horns, usually from a buffalo or ram, are decorated and carved into a flute that is used to announce the presence of a chief. These horns also play an important role in the annual traditional twin festival celebration by the Ga people. They are often brought out in rituals that celebrate the spiritual value of twins (dual spirits) by serving them mashed yam with palm oil and pouring libations to them.

WULOMO OUTFIT: The Wulomo are spiritual leaders of the Ga community and wear white as a symbol of truth and purity. One is born into a lineage of priesthood and begins training at home during a seven-day initiation. Initiates are then mentored by spiritual elders to grow into their position as a cultural authority. Depending on their clan, wulomo have specific lifestyles such as dietary restrictions and periods of isolation that allow them to perform their duties.

SAMAI SYMBOLS: Similar to the language of Adinkra Symbols, the samai symbols of the Ga people visually communicate proverbs and philosophies. Rooted in Ga history, their meaning has largely been forgotten over the years but their imagery is still commonly used.

MATSU (traditional incense): Matsu is a natural incense from the flower of the palm tree used traditionally for purification before entering sacred spaces such as chief's homes and shrines.

NYRANYRA: Nyranyra are herb wreaths worn for protection and prosperity during Ga festivals and celebrations.

SESE: Sese is a wooden pot used in Ga ceremonies for the pouring of libation and herbal cleansings.

FILMS

Agbako (2017), Nana Ofori-Atta Ayim—A 27-minute documentary exploring Ga cultural landscape through contemporary artists from Accra Road to Kukurantumi (1983), King Ampaw—a Ghanaian classic featuring the migration from a rural village to the capital, Accra.

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JUDENREIN

Daniel Blaufuks

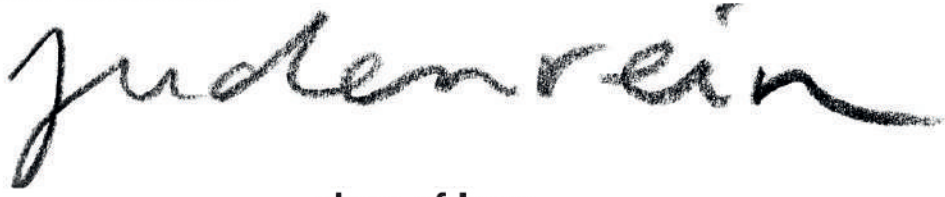
I read: in 1914 more than half of the people in Klimontov were Jews. Nevertheless there had been continuously manifestations of anti-semitism. In 1927 the police chief terrorised the Jews insulting them on the street. In 1930 all three Jewish restaurants were closed. In 1936 Jewish businessmen were paralysed by a ban. All this contributed to the grow of Zionism and in 1938 many young left for Palestine. On September, 13th, 1939 the German army entered

Klimontov.

We see the people coming out of what is certainly a church, one by one in their best Sunday clothes, some staring defiantly towards the camera and others ostensibly avoiding its gaze. I see their faces and I feel they show mistrust and discomfort toward either the camera or the person behind it. Am I reading too much in these images? Do they recognise the **outsider**? Is it an **outsider**?

The Jewish homes and stores were plundered and in October the Jews were ordered to pay an enormous amount of money. Most were taken daily to forced labour. In March the SS burned the Jewish books and prohibited the Jews to have access to wood or coal. In October 1942 the SS and the Polish police gathered the Jews in the market square and marched them to Zlota, 18 kilometres away, shooting the elderly and the sick on the road. From there they were boarded on trains to **Treblinka**.

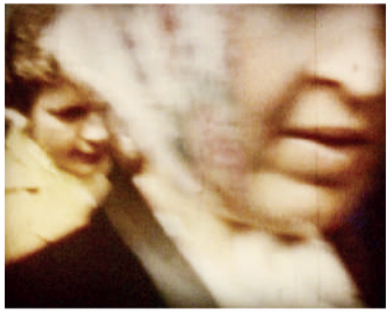
The remaining five disabled Jews of Klimontov were murdered and the town was declared



clean of Jews.

The ones still in hiding were kept like animals and often killed like one.

I read: when six of the Jews managed to return to Klimontov, they were killed, among them a pregnant woman, in a house on Sandomierska. This was in April 1945, a month after liberation. In 1946 there was once again a progrom in the countryside not unfar from Klimontov. 40 Jews were killed by peasants and members of the community. The killings took place openly and attracted a crowd of onlookers and bystanders and after that many went to celebrate with vodka. I read: one victim allegedly said to his murderer, a childhood friend:
We ate with one spoon and you want to kill me?



In the following years the communist school books largely ignored the Holocaust and focused on Polish martyrdom. The 125 Jewish properties had meanwhile passed somehow into the hands of their former neighbours, where they still remain to this day.

And life went on in Klimontov.

But then why is this woman **hiding her face** from the camera with her handbag? Does she remember? Does she suspect who the man behind the camera might be? Who is the man **behind the camera** and why is he filming this? Is he one of them, or a rare tourist, or, perhaps, someone who **came back**?

The story of the Jews of Klimontov is told in this amateur film by their

non-presence,

they are in between each and every frame, they are present in the silence of this silent movie, in the fragments of every image, perhaps even mirrored in the faces of each one we see here. And maybe constantly on their minds as well.

As **anti-semitism**, **racism** and **fear** of the other are once again rising in Europe, let us not forget that these sentiments were here all along, always here, waiting for their moment to arise. **Once again**.

The **archives** contain not what we remember but what we have forgotten, or at least, partly forgotten or remember mistakenly. That is why we need the archives, to retrieve memory, to clarify **memory**, to extract memory from artefacts such as these **images**.

Whoever shot this film was in **search of something**. A memory, perhaps, or, more unlikely, a guilty face of **recognition**. In fact, this film must have been made more than thirty years after the war, at the full height of communist ruling in Poland. Soon everything would change again. The film itself, however, of the peasants of Klimontov leaving the church, reminds me now of other films in history, such as the one of the workers leaving the Lumiere factory in Lyon or the images of the **Theresienstadt Jews** walking like **ghosts** in their invented town in the fake documentary made by the Germans.

Film, as photographs are, is a **memory of a memory.**

Once there were Jews in Klimontov.
They are no more.

CALL FOR ACTION & REFLECTION ON DECOLONIZING FILM ARCHIVES

This document is a work in progress and reflects ongoing discussions that converged in the context of a workshop convened by the Gœthe-Institut Portugal at Culturgest in Lisbon between the September 24 and 27, 2019. The workshop was part of the project "Everything Passes Except the Past," which questions the way European countries deal with their colonial past and with the persistence of colonial power relations and its thriving algorithms. The Lisbon workshop brought together around twenty artists, filmmakers, scholars, archivists, and representatives of institutions, from various backgrounds and different privileged contexts to focus mainly on colonial archives. Despite the multiplicity of voices that characterized the workshop, many participants who contributed to this document felt a common urge to express a call for action & reflection for a decolonizing practice of archives holding film collections from colonial contexts. Thus, there is no single author of this document. We are also aware of sister manifestos and related initiatives that we either acknowledge or solidarise with: Manifesto to liberate the image, FIAF Declaration on Fair Use and Access, CCAAA policy statement: Sharing of heritage, ICA Principles of Access to Archives, UNESCO endorsed Universal Declaration on Archives, IASA Ethical Principles for Sound and Audiovisual Archives, & more.

This call for action and reflection addresses all those engaged with running European institutions maintaining colonial film collections; archivists, directors, technicians, scholars, curators, and political figures.

Today, the material documenting images, sounds, text, dance, gestures, and life of colonized subjects and territories is primarily held in European archives, with few or no public catalogs. These archival materials are also evidence of the imbalanced power relations generated and perpetuated by colonialism. Continuing these troubling relations, access to these archives is rigidly controlled, limited, or costly. This renders them inaccessible to people struggling to reclaim their countries' narratives and restore the collective memories erased or destroyed by centuries of colonial propaganda.

The word archive is deeply rooted in its Greek etymology as it derives from archon—leader, ruler, governor. The archive fuses the material and the architecture that safeguards it, to affirm and maintain power. The power of the archive is precisely that of disallowing people access to their own data. Therefore colonial archives continue to constitute colonialism and remain one of its onto-epistemological objects. Archival documents are instituted to legitimize and legalize expropriation, occupation, slavery, and extractivism. Just as colonialism capitalized on lives, territories, and resources, colonial film archives continue to generate audiovisual wealth from the imagery produced from that violence. "Postcolony" is used here to refer to territories, countries, and communities once subjugated by European colonial rule and the ongoing structural fragilities inherent to their postcolonial condition.

Film, along with other lens based technologies, was further developed to serve state surveillance and warfare. It performed a seemingly "enlightened" prosthesis of a God-eye, manifesting the omnipresence and omniscience of the Western colonial project, ignorant of its blind spots. Anti-colonial struggles of the twentieth century were aware of this structural power of media and the need to hijack lens technologies and redirect them into countering colonial imaginaries.

For the structural decolonization of European film archives, the reproducibility of the physical matter of film and digitisation pose specific problems as well as possibilities different from those of restituting plundered artifacts to the postcolony. Instead of returning an "authentic," "original" object to a dispossessed community or looted location, the reproducible plasticity of film makes it more urgent to open up a broader discussion about sharing and providing access. In the case of colonial film, restitution takes place with the allocation of resources to create an ecology of dialogue and sharing between European film archives, independent initiatives, and state institutions of the "postcolony."

This call for action and reflection on decolonizing archives proposes the following acts to those engaged with institutions holding colonial collections and invites them to reflect on their archival systems and practices:

ACT 1. CALL FOR DIALOGUE AS A DECOLONIZING PROCESS

The decolonization of colonial film archives requires specific processes that can only be initiated in dialogue with those representing archive holding institutions and those subjected to the objectification of colonial violence.

This dialogue should take place between independent actors and representatives of institutions, civil society, and cultural policy and address the access, usage, redistribution, restitution, reproduction, digitization, dissemination, and shared heritage of archived colonial film material.

Learning from subjective agencies and recognizing that colonial relations are places of intergenerational trauma can be important facets to inform these processes. The differing institutional models and contexts require equally different tasks for decolonization.

ACT 2. CALL FOR ALLOCATION OF RESOURCES AND ACCESS

To enable the above mentioned dialogue, European archives should provide permanent resources to finance and organize the sharing of their collections with artists, activists, filmmakers, researchers, and other interested parties, particularly those from former colonized countries.

Resources for access and research should be part of a structural change towards decolonization. Ideally, this would include research grants for projects that work with the archives and also contribute to structural changes.

European archives should invest in liberating their collections from copyright restrictions and create comprehensive catalogue listings and make these easily accessible.

ACT 3. CALL FOR SUPPORT OF ARCHIVE PRACTICES AND STRUCTURES IN THE POSTCOLONY

European archive institutions should embrace transnational responsibility and work to rectify the imbalanced power relations with archive structures and archival initiatives in the "postcolony." The structures and bureaucracy of the Colonial era impeded the establishment and maintenance of functional archives, with ongoing impacts.

Often, the most critical and relevant archival practices are initiatives of individuals, independent actors, and civil society working to recuperate, maintain, and activate instabile or fragile materials.

European archive institutions should support infrastructure to, independently establish archive facilities for the preservation digitization, and dissemination of colonial or anti-colonial film material in the "postcolony."

ACT 4. CALL FOR CODES OF CONDUCT

As a result of above mentioned actions, codes of conduct should be put into place for the handling and usage of the material to prevent the reproduction and reification of colonial, racist, or gender violence.

These codes of conduct should focus on a practice of decolonizing access, search criteria, captions, synopsis, and tagging of archive material, without erasing the former models that reflect the cultural codes that inform the construction of coloniality.

Each archive structure should develop a specific code of conduct that is kept open for permanent revision and renegotiation by those working in the archive as an ethical form of mutual collaboration.

CONCLUSION

The decolonization of film archives can never be initiated without including the subject once rendered an object of cinematographic extraction in its process. Simultaneously, processes of decolonization are never to be accomplished tasks but conditions to be inhabited. To return the subject back to the archive also means to embrace other forms of cognition and knowledge production such as vivid subjectivity, emotion, and affect. Rather than remaining a site of power, a decolonized archive chooses to be a place for empowerment.

First signatories

1 Antje Van Wichelen
2 Catarina Simão
3 Corinna Lawrenz
4 Daniel Blaufuks
5 Diana McCarty
6 Didi Cheeka
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20 Teresa Althen
21 Tom Rice
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CHAPTER

ALL STATUES MUST FALL?

CONFLICTS AND ICONOCLASM IN PUBLIC SPACE

III

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL: POSTCOLONIAL WALKING TOURS AS A FORM OF STREET JUSTICE

Mnyaka Sururu Mboro
Christian Kopp
Yann LeGall

I. MNYAKA SURURU MBORO

It all started in 1984, 100 years after the Berlin Conference, also called the Congo Conference. At the time, together with other Africans in Berlin, I organized an event to remember how European leaders divided the African continent and drew their own borders. That is when I started becoming aware of traces of German colonialism in Berlin. A colleague told me that there is a so-called "African quarter" in the district of Wedding in West Berlin. Not because Africans live there, but because these streets bear the names of countries, towns, or lakes in Africa. So we went there, and as I walked through this neighbourhood, I read: "Ghana Street," "Cameroon Street," "Zanzibar Street," "Tanga Street," "Usambara Street," and I found it wonderful. To me, it meant that Germans somehow think of Africa, that they recognize our existence.

But then, as we were walking, we came across "Peters Avenue." Then it struck me. It took me one or two minutes to catch my breath again. I knew who Carl Peters was: an Imperial Commissioner in the Kilimanjaro region. So I asked myself: what do they want to show the world? 100 years after colonialism, were they still celebrating him? I knew from Tanzanian perspectives how brutal this person was. He used to hang my people, the Wachaga from the Kilimanjaro region. We call him *mkono wa damu*, which means "the bloody hand." He was even criticized by Germans for his violence in East Africa. The press at the time called him *Hänge-Peters*, which means "Hanging Peters."

STORYTELLING: FROM GRANDMOTHERS TO GUIDED TOURS

My grandmother used to say that God punished Carl Peters for his crimes by hanging him on the moon. One evening, we were outside with my grandmother. She told me to look at the moon, and when I looked, she asked me, "What did you see?" "Nothing." "Look again. And this time, take your time, and tell me what you saw." I didn't see anything. "Look again!," she insisted. I refused politely. "Please tell me a story," I asked. She said, "No. Let us look at the moon together. Can't you see the black shadow in there? Does it look like a human being?" "Yes," I admitted. She said, "It is a human being who is there." I didn't believe it, but I had to listen.

She went on telling me that because Carl Peters was so brutal, people in my area believe that God punished him by hanging him in the moon. She told me, "Don't worry. Peters will not come down anymore to hang our people."

So when I saw the *Petersallee*, or "Peters Avenue" in 1984, I could not believe it. I asked myself: how can a Christian nation glorify such a man? My German colleagues did not know the dark side to this story that I instead did. So, when I had the chance, I started doing guided tours to tell people about what I knew about German colonialism in Africa.

My way of telling the stories has changed, but it is not an evolution that can be tracked. It usually simply depends on the group I am with. Usually, before I start the tour, I ask them who they are and what they are interested in. I have experienced a variety of reactions to the way I tell history. Some said to me, "It is too brutal. You cannot talk about that in this way, especially when children are present." Often, I disagree. How do you decide what should be told and what should be silenced? I personally would rather face the reality. Even though I build a kind of story, a narrative, to relate colonial history in East Africa, I remain close to the facts. Such facts, brutal as they are, must be told. I learned them from my grandmother and other elders, and they told those stories in a very straightforward tone. This is what I got, and this is the method I use. Books often try to present facts in some sort of packaging. I often ask myself: for whom is this story written? For instance, some people do not believe me when I tell them that the official end of the First World War (November 11) does not reflect the actual end of the First World War (November 18 in East Africa). Certain things have to be mentioned. When it comes to the Holocaust and to massacres of other groups by the Nazi regime, Germans face that in a very direct way. When I talk about colonialism, hanging, oppression, and rapes, I still often experience backlash.

During the tours, you meet people who live in this neighborhood. Many among them are against our initiative and oppose our call for renaming some of the streets, like "Peters Avenue." Over the years, some people have even come to confront me in front of the groups I was leading on a tour. They cursed or insulted me,

shouting words that should not be uttered, like the N*word. "What are you doing here? Go back to your...," and so on. Some of them were aggressive. Once, someone even brandished a baseball bat and the police had to intervene. But the police have not always been on our side. Another time, some of the locals who lived near the Nachtigalplatz square came shouting at me, disturbing us. So, I called the police. When they came, they first asked me to show my ID. They thought we were organizing a demonstration that was not legally registered. I told them, "This is a guided tour. The authorities are aware." To put the matter at rest, they merely asked us to leave the area. And one final anecdote: once I was with students, sitting along the Petersallee. Among the students, there were three young Afro-German ladies. A couple came to me, in front of the group, and said "You're lying. Go back to your country." Those young ladies lost their composure and started crying. They told their fellow students that we have to do something against racism and ignorance.

When I take students, scholars or grownups to the African quarter, I tell them the stories the way my grandmother told me. Often, I see in their eyes that it strikes them. They start understanding me. Not all of them want to hear the dark side of history. Some say, "That is the past, and what does it have to do with me? At most, some of the colonialists were my great-grandparents." When this kind of reasoning comes up, I look at them and say: "If you don't have anything to do with it, and we as victims of colonialism are calling for renaming streets with the names of people who fought against colonial rule, then leave it to us. This way, both sides of history can be told."

EXPANDING, SHARING, AND GIVING BACK KNOWLEDGE

I already knew quite a lot about East and Southwest Africa. With my colleagues, I also started learning about Cameroon and Togo. The methods Germans used in East Africa were not that different from those used in other colonies. I knew the names of many officers stationed in East Africa, and then, I found out that the same ones were also sent to Cameroon or Southwest Africa. Hans Dominik, Hans Glauning or Lothar von Trotha for example, ordered many of the infamous *Strafexpeditionen*, or "punitive

expeditions" in East Africa before oppressing others elsewhere. I started comparing it to what colleagues told me about Cameroon and Togo. We could relate. I met Cameroonians, Togolese people, and German historians like Christian, who went through the books so that we can expand the knowledge that we want to give to the people who take our tours.

People often forget that here, in Germany, you have more references about German colonialism than in Tanzania. Of course, buildings and churches from that time still stand there. But here, in the archives, there is a lot! Most of the knowledge that remains in Tanzania comes from the oral history from our ancestors. In the Kilimanjaro region, when we talked about Mangi Meli, the leader of the Wachaga who was murdered and whose head was taken away by German soldiers, we didn't have all these photos that you can find here in Berlin! Of course, the ones who knew him could remember his face, but they are no longer alive. What I'm trying to say is that, from photos to documents and stolen artifacts, there are so many references to German colonialism here that Germany should share with us, either by making copies available or, in the case of looted treasures, giving them back. It would be very educative. When you look at a photo, it might become easier for you to understand and motivate you to learn more. This knowledge should be shared with younger generations in Tanzania. I often tell youngsters in Tanzania about what I have learned here, but some of them believe that I am cheating them. There is still a lot of work to be done to make those archives available, especially when you consider that someone like me has often had a hard time obtaining access to these precious documents.

TRANSFORM THE CITY AND SHAPE FUTURE GENERATIONS

Since the 1980s I have wanted to see three streets in the African quarter renamed. This would do justice to the victims of German colonial rule. Carl Peters, Adolf Lüderitz, and Gustav Nachtigal were respectively the founders of the colonies of German East-Africa (Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi), German Southwest Africa (Namibia), Togo and Cameroon. Their names show that this neighbourhood was (and still is) a "colonial" quarter. Across the

years, I kept asking myself: how long should this take? But I feel that with the guided tours, people are slowly understanding why it is necessary to talk about our responsibility regarding colonial history. As the British say, and as I always say as well: "Small is beautiful." Nowadays, the support for renaming those three streets is growing. This part of history is not taught in schools and it remains marginal at the university level. So, we need these tools. One person who is convinced may lead to a street being renamed, and then, some day, it might ultimately result in an official apology for the Herero and Nama genocide. Because of our work, which includes events and demonstrations, institutions have started talking about this history. This is good. It must continue.

Since the early 2000s, we have been lobbying political parties. As the debate over renaming streets grew louder, the conservative CDU party used the issue to gain voters in the African Quarter. In 2011, they put up big posters in the African Quarter saying "With us, streets will not be renamed." They even had flyers which they dropped in mailboxes. In 2018, the district council officially decided to rename those streets, and I am looking forward to leading a tour there with the new names. Yet I fear for this decision, because political parties tend to change their positions quickly. An initiative by local inhabitants now wants to take the case to court.

At least the tours give me the energy to continue. I believe that, if all locals were prepared to take the tours, to hear and listen, to learn about what the founders of these colonies did, then they would be on our side. Besides, we have allies in the government, organizations, and even in African embassies. Still, some should become more active. They are the ones who can support us so that things can be solved in a proper way, because this history is not only a one-sided history. It should be addressed in different institutions and with different perspectives. It is necessary for younger generations to know this history, so that what happened in the past will not be repeated.

Many young people have picked up the torch that we held in 1984. My daughter has been accompanying me and she has developed performances in the African Quarter. Younger experts like Josephine Apraku and Kwesi Aikins also lead tours there. Besides, many of our organization members have accompanied

me and they now have the knowledge to lead tours themselves. Jacqueline Mayen from the organization Afropolitan Berlin also offers special guided tours focusing on the history of women in colonialism. We also wish to develop other tours with our newly founded alliance Decolonize Berlin e.V. We have already led groups through the central district of Mitte, from Wilhelmstraße (where the Berlin Conference took place) to the Humboldt Forum, that former Imperial Palace which has been rebuilt to exhibit art and artifacts that were stolen from African communities. But there are also hidden corners, like that mural at Ermeler-Haus that depicts enslaved Africans plucking tobacco for the Brandenburg-Prussian traders. There are still many stories to be told, and even more to be unearthed. *Mapambano bado yanændelea*!

II. YANN LEGALL & CHRISTIAN KOPP

In May 2019 in Brussels, the participants of the workshop "Everything Passes Except the Past" were invited to follow a tour on the traces of colonialism in the historical center of the Belgian capital. Kalvin Soiresse Njall from the initiative "Collectif Mémoire Coloniale et Lutte contre les Discriminations" (CMCLD) was our guide. He took us to the ING or BNP Paribas Bank headquarters and the Royal Palace, landmarks where decisions about the Congo region were taken without representatives of the people who lived there. The tour ended at the statue of Leopold II, a figure who embodies colonial oppression and violence.

In October 2019 in Barcelona, artist and activist Linda Porn led the participants to the imposing statue of Christopher Columbus. In a performance that took place around the column, from one engraving to the next, she unfolded the crimes of Spanish colonialists in the West Indies. By reading excerpts from the writings of Bartolomé de la Casas, she debunked the myth of discovery and reminded that eyewitnesses were on hand to attest to the brutality inflicted by Columbus and the settlers on Indigenous people. Many tourists who came that day to admire the statue stared at our group and probably wondered what Linda Porn was telling us.

Despite the longevity of monuments such as those to Leopold II and Columbus, urban landscapes are always in motion. They are

constantly shaped by authorities, companies and communities who decide what can stay, what should be changed or demolished, and what comes next. Institutions and governments often opt for carving their histories in architecture by erecting statues of heroes propagating the myths that crystalize the birth of nations and their achievements in world history. Even postcolonial states have followed this trend, toppling effigies of colonialists and renaming streets and squares with the names of important anticolonial figures and landmarks.

Sometimes, the traces left on landscapes seem indelible, as if someone had used a permanent marker on a whiteboard. Would a mayor of Barcelona dare replace the Columbus column? At this date, this is hard to imagine. If not destroyed in accidental circumstances, these colossal monuments seem to "outrun death," as Achille Mbembe has argued in the case of statues.[1] During our workshop in the Catalan city, Karfa Sira Diallo argued that living among traces that commemorate colonialists is helpful for a critical reappraisal of this history. To him, founder of the organisation Mémoires et Partages based in Bordeaux and Dakar, those "monsters" of the past can stay. When their names and faces are out in the open, a trial can indeed take place. They can be summoned to answer for their crimes during guided tours. Besides, information boards or memorials to their victims can be erected next to them. With this kind of contextualization, curious passersby can learn about the biographies of Louis Faidherbe, Carl Peters, or James Cook. This compromising evidence can shed a different light onto their legacy and reveal the dark side of European modernity: colonial oppression.

DEFACE, TOPPLE, OR SIMPLY TELL THE STORIES

When groups disagree as to whom should be celebrated and how, some choose to stain, tag, or scratch the whiteboard. Gatherings and acts of civil disobedience have become more and more visible in the last decades, especially with regard to the corporeal presence of state criminals in busts and statues. Transnational

1 Achille Mbembe, *Critique of Black Reason*, trans. Laurent Dubois (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 126.

movements such as Rhodes Must Fall (Cape Town and Oxford), the use of red paint on Columbus Day, and the recent toppling of the statue of Edward Colston in Bristol represent some of the most visible actions calling for the disappearance of a "culture of taste" that celebrates conquest and colonial oppression.[2] We believe that they are neither provocations nor vandalization. They are just the visible tip of an iceberg that hosts decades of traumatic experiences in states who continue to deny their responsibility in histories of brutality, enslavement, racism, disenfranchisement and, oblivion.[3] Regardless whether these interventions are art, graffiti, or both, Joseph Pugliese sees them as "street justice" in the context of settler colonial Australia. They "articulat[e] what would otherwise remain unsaid," and are the "tactical exercise of informal justice by the dispossessed and disenfranchised."[4] With #BlackLivesMatter protests in North American and European cities, these acts are gaining momentum and legitimacy. In 2018, 2019 and in June 2020, statues of Leopold II in Brussels have been sprayed or unbolted from their plinths by activists who refuse to be forced to look up to a King who launched Belgian colonialism and ordered massacres in the Congo region.[5]

2 In his book *Slavery and the Culture of Taste*, Simon Gikandi offers an important critique of white European esthetics of the seventeenth to nineteenth century. He demonstrates how statues, paintings and other forms of visual art fully contributed to propagating ideas of racist hierarchy. Black bodies were used as props to the representation of taste and wealth, mostly pictured behind aristocrats, as servants. Besides, he reveals how slavery and the ownership of enslaved Africans had been viewed as a mark social status in Anglophone literature at the time, especially in the U.S. See: Simon Gikandi, *Slavery and the Culture of Taste* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

3 Francis Nyamnjoh has interpreted the smearing of Cecil John Rhodes' statue with human excrement at the University of Cape Town as a symbol of the "unfinished business" of a "wounded black community of students, and by extension the rest of black South Africans, who were yet to feed on the purported fruits of liberation." Francis B. Nyamnjoh, #Rhodesmustfall: *Nibbling at Resilient Colonialism in South Africa* (Oxford: African Books Collective, 2016), 77.

4 Joseph Pugliese, "Julie Gough's Forensic Archæology of National Forgetting," in *Hunting Ground: September 8–December 31, 2017*, ed. Julie Gough (Virginia: University of Virginia, 2017): 7–8.

5 RTBF, "Le buste de Léopold II au parc Duden «déboulonné» par des militants anti-coloniaux," RTBF.be, November 25, 2020, https://www.rtbf.be/info/regions/bruxelles/detail_parc-duden-a-forest-le-buste-de-leopold-ii-a-t-il-ete-deboulonne-durant-la-nuit?id=9808178; and Nicolas Franchomme, "La statue de Léopold II à nouveau vandalisée ce week-end", last retrieved on November 25, 2020.

Beyond the limited metaphor of a whiteboard, landscapes are also settings and playgrounds. As settings, they hold vivid memories anchored in stories kept by those who lived them, witnesses to bygone events and times. As a playground, the city is up for grabs among those who claim the urban space in their different practices of everyday life. People who do not enjoy the power to shape the landscape resort to many tactics to make their stories heard. Protest, occupation, demonstrations, and flashmobs seek acknowledgment at the highest level in the public sphere. They strive for media coverage, public debate, and political reaction. But simple walks in the city or guided tours also participate in those constant struggles for the recognition of marginalized histories in a space dominated by hegemonic decisions. They might seem petty in comparison to a massive demonstration, yet they often manage to reach deep levels of personal and emotional implication. Indeed, as Mnyaka Sururu Mboro's contribution has shown, they are something like a gloomy family story-telling. He does not refrain from telling what some would not hear, giving historical facts that are sometimes hard to swallow. As forms of street justice, tours allow interaction and discussion. Questions can be asked and debates can take place in the intimate setting of a group of less than twenty-five participants.

Guided tours are the realm of witnesses. Not in the sense of eyewitnesses in a trial, but as witnesses of the past who pass on their experiences to younger generations, or to those who are strangers to these experiences. The combination of intergenerational memory (the role of grandmothers for instance), diasporic experience (as Africans or Afro-Europeans in Europe), and local memory of colonialism (in Tanzania, Senegal, or the DRC) are "repertoires of embodied knowledge."[6] The knowledge of Kalvin Njall, Karfa Diallo, Linda Porn, and Mnyaka Sururu Mboro testifies against the celebration of colonial oppression out in the open. It talks about racism, dehumanisation, genocide, and highlights experiences of "wounded identities," resistance, as well

6 Marianne Hirsch, *The Generation of Postmemory* (New York City: Columbia University Press, 2012): 2.

as exile and uprootedness. The tours are tools for descendants and communities of victims to fulfil a duty to *zemburuka, hangana, tunga*, as advocated by Vekuii Rukoro, Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero: "Remember, reconcile, reconstruct."[7] Because these witnesses "cannot not remember," they have an imperative to tell, and they need to stitch those broken threads together again.[8]

Besides, witnessing is contagious. Or rather, when someone becomes implicated in this history, when they learn about the value of this history to descendants of the colonized, they might pass on the stories they have heard. I (Yann) have lived in the so-called "African quarter" in Berlin for the past five years. I have brought students on tours with Mnyaka Sururu Mboro. When friends and family members come to visit, they cannot escape my wish to tell them part of the history of this colonial quarter, whether they want to hear it or not.

THE CITY AS AN OPEN MUSEUM: DIGITAL FUTURES OF URBAN ACTIVISM

We are indeed both tour guides as well, Christian in Berlin and Yann in Potsdam. These neighbouring cities still celebrate their imperial architecture. Potsdam is even a city where a critical perspective is found to be lacking. Our colleagues Elisabeth Nechutnys, Anna von Rath, and Lina Fricke from Postcolonial Potsdam started offering tours in the famous Sanssouci Park in 2014. In those tours, we disrupt the silence about the involvement of Brandenburg-Prussia in the enslavement of Africans, we unveil the racist and exotic portrayal of non-Europeans in Prussian art and architecture, and we reveal events and figures that link Berlin and Potsdam to Namibia, Ghana, Togo, Cameroon, Tanzania, and even China and Papua.

7 These were the words foregrounded by the Paramount Chief of the Ovaherero in his written address for the launch of the community-based Hosea Kutako University. Due to a lack of funding and government support, the university could not sustain its activities and its web domain is no longer accessible. See Rukoro, Vekuii, "Welcome," Hosea Kutako University, last retrieved on November 25, 2020.

8 Here we draw on Giorgio Agamben's discussion of the three etymologies of "witness." From Latin, the witness *as testis* provides a testimony in a trial; the superstes bears the imperative to tell her/his story. From Ancient Greek, the martis "bearing witness to his fate," the one whose death compels remembrance. See: Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz—the Witness and the Archive* (Princeton: Zone Books, 1999), 17–26.

In Potsdam, the city is a museum and the museum is the city. Many buildings and parks are in fact owned by the Foundation for Prussian Palaces and Gardens. This foundation even officially considers the Sanssouci park as a museum rather than a green public space. No picnics are allowed, for instance, nor is walking on the grass. But how can a park be a museum if visitors can only learn about Prussian history when they purchase audio-guides, or when they actively book a tour with Berlin Postkolonial or Postcolonial Potsdam? How can you confront neophytes and non-professionals with the darker side of local history, namely the involvement of Brandenburg-Prussia in the transatlantic trade of enslaved Africans? We have argued until now that guided tours have an added value because of their intimate setting, but many people cannot get spontaneous access to the expertise of Kalvin Njall, Karfa Diallo, or Linda Porn. Some live far away, while others are unable to walk. What can be developed to pass on this knowledge to those who are unable to attend guided tours?

To remedy this, Postcolonial Potsdam has called upon the support of the local university to develop a digital audio-guide. The Covid-19 lock-down measures have proved that the cultural sector should reconsider its nature in the digital era. Museums and concert halls have tried to call upon their digital presence to propose interactive experiences that enable visitors to be there without being present in situ.[9] Besides, museums are no longer closed spaces. The District 6 Museum in Cape Town and Wayne Modest and his crew, at the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam are examples where professionals have not hesitated to leave their sanctuary and actively search for spaces in the city where they can intervene and meet to convey grassroots perspectives on ethnography, colonial legacies, and experiences of migration. With those recent approaches in mind, Postcolonial Potsdam proposes an interactive map with guiding features that can take an individual or a group through the park without being present physically. To keep the perspective of witnesses, the generic texts are sometimes accompanied by the voices of activists who

9 The British Museum and the Rijksmuseum for instance offer some kind of street-view tours online.

give their perspectives on the matter at hand. To debunk the presence of the alleged Peak of Kilimanjaro in Potsdam's New Palace, Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, and Kenyan author Oduor Obura intervene. In Potsdam's Dutch Quarter, anthropologist and activist Jessica de Abreu tells about her experience in leading protests against the racist tradition of Black Pete in the Netherlands. Their embedded voices provide a polyphonic experience that allows for multiple perspectives and emotional reactions to those places and their histories.

OUTLOOK: A EUROPEAN MEMORIAL FOR AFRICAN VICTIMS OF RACISM AND COLONIALISM

Ways of experiencing the city have evolved. Digital alternatives to urban history may offer remote access to museums and monuments and thereby enable some kind of immersion into colonial history through the mediated voices of witnesses, street views, photo archives, and videos. Yet, nothing can replace the situational and emotional depth of personal accounts and eye-to-eye contact. In guided tours, those at the receiving end become more than just consumers of knowledge. Some might become implicated subjects.[10] The work of Karfa Diallo, Kalvin Njaal, Linda Porn, and Mnyaka Sururu Mborothose is passed on by means of orality and affect. And there is no denying that the voices of those witnesses of colonial oppression, racism, and resistance

10 Michæl Rothberg recently wished to break away from binary paradigms, expanding the politics of representation beyond the dichotomy "victims" vs "perpetrators," and furthering the possibility for solidarity in remembering. To him, individuals might indeed intervene in practices of remembrance as outsiders breaching the borders of collective memory by underscoring their own relationality to the past of "others," without appropriating its discourse, its codes, its authority. Therefore, considering one's position as "implicated" can foster "robust and politically efficacious forms of self-reflection [...]. Such attention also serves to caution us against self-righteousness and to encourage us to acknowledge how we are caught up in the very policies we oppose." See: Michæl Rothberg, "Trauma Theory, Implicated Subjects, and the Question of Israæl/Palestine," *Profession* (May 2, 2014).

11 Memory in the brain belongs to the limbic system and one of its core organs, the hippocampus. It is interesting to note that the recognition of anchoring places and the emotional character of histories are also cognitive elements controlled by this neurological network. See: Flavio Dell'Acqua and Michel Thiebaut de Schotten, "A Revised Limbic System Model for Memory, Emotion and Behavior," *Neuroscience and biobehavioral reviews 37* (2013).

have remained carved in the memories of many of those who followed them through the city. In fact, the hippocampus, the organ of individual memory, remembers better when facts are framed by storytelling, with a narrator, protagonists, and a setting.[11]

But as far as reconciliation is concerned, nothing can replace a national gesture for the acknowledgement of colonialism. Fourteen years ago, the Committee for an African Memorial in Berlin (KADiB) organized their first march to commemorate the victims of slavery and colonialism. Every year in late February, they remember the end of the Berlin Congo Conference and the division of the African continent with speeches, song, and testimonies. Polyphonic versions of Enoch Sontoga's *Nkosi Sikele iAfrica* resonate in the streets of Berlin. Cameroonians, Senegalese, South Africans, Tanzanians, and Germans take part in a communal remembrance of colonial violence. They remind that this history is not only limited to German colonialism.

The Berlin Conference indeed also satiated the colonial appetites of the Kingdom of Belgium, the Netherlands, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, and Italy. A memorial on the Wilhelmstraße for the victims of colonialism would pave the way for a supranational acknowledgment at the European level. Despite the continued deaf ear turned to this claim, the development of technology such as holograms and augmented reality could soon give rise to an immaterial memorial. This would be thumbing one's nose at reluctant political parties and conservative groups. Many have not yet understood that, with the increasing importance of African countries in the global economy and of people of African descent in Western societies, the acknowledgment of colonial history has become inevitable.

BORDEAUX'S FORGOTTEN PAST

Karfa Sira Diallo

> "I as a man of color do not have the right to hope that in the white man there will be a crystalization of guilt towards the past of my race.[...] There is no Negro mission; there is no white burden. I find myself suddenly in a world where things do evil; a world in which I am summoned into battle; a world in which it is always a question of annihilation or triumph.[...] No, I do not have the right to go and cry out my hatred at the white man. I do not have the duty to murmur my gratitude to the white man. My life is caught in the lasso of existence. My freedom turns me back on myself. [...] One duty alone: that of not renouncing my freedom through my choices."[1]
>
> —Frantz Fanon, psychiatrist and essayist from Martinique

Bordeaux is not a city of memory. More precisely, those who run the city have had a habit of forging a selective memory for centuries now. To keep its hold on power, each oligarchy has its own recipe for Bordeaux stewed in oblivion-inducing lotus flowers.

As if ashamed of the genesis of its prosperity, Bordeaux is vague about the story of its wealth. To this day, any mention of the "ebony" trade or Nazi collaboration during World War II is taboo. Hardly a word is said about the black slave trade, one of the mainstays of the triangular trade that filled the city's coffers for three and a half centuries, and Bordeaux only half admits that the city's institutions helped round up Jews for deportation during the Nazi occupation.

Bordeaux flourished as a hub of commerce and served as a refuge for the French government during the last three wars against Germany (1870, 1914, and 1940). Its oligarchy still thrives on denial. With its maritime connections to Africa and the West Indies, Bordeaux served as a regional platform for the triangular trade in the eighteenth century. The French slave trade borrowed all the modern mechanisms to promote trade, including tax incentives, bonuses for the outfitting of ships, and the codification of the life of slaves, who were referred to as *biens mobiliers*, i.e. "movable

1 Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986).

property," in Article 44 of Jean-Baptiste Colbert's Code Noir. Compared to other European slave ports such as Nantes and Bristol, however, Bordeaux has taken a long time to acknowledge its slave-trading past. Has Bordeaux perhaps forgotten it?

Our city, like most of the ports along the Atlantic coast, followed the general drift of a permissive and acquisitive eighteenth century collective consciousness, and was subsequently slow to include this dark chapter in the official history of the city.

In the light of the French National Assembly's 2001 declaration of the slave trade and slavery as crimes against humanity, as well as Nantes' recognition of its role in the trade, and the persistence of discrimination and racism in France, it is more imperative than ever now to undertake educational and consciousness-raising efforts "travail pédagogique" in order to understand and grapple with the contemporary ills of extreme poverty in the Caribbean and in Africa, modern-day slavery and the failure of social, economic, and political integration policies in France.

Mémoires & Partages is a advocacy organization that has emerged out of the turmoil and agitation of a revolt against a local history that has forgotten this painful past. We combine local activism and educational campaigns, public and cultural events, debates and discussions to shed a different light on certain social issues. One such effort, following up on the work of historian Eric Saugera,[2] was to help with the publication in 2004 of Danielle Pétrissans-Cavaillès' *Sur les Traces de la Traite des Noirs à Bordeaux* "Retracing the Slave Trade in Bordeaux." This book provides proof of the impact of the port's slave-trading operations on the urban, social, economic, and cultural development of the Aquitaine capital. Furthermore, it exposes the whole system of economic and family alliances which, above and beyond the ship-owners, ran this trade—a business that provided a livelihood for "one out of nine Frenchmen" in the eighteenth century.

Mémoires & Partages seeks to actively participate in the elaboration of a pluralistic collective memory that testifies to

2 Éric K. Saugera, *Bordeaux port négrier* (Paris: Karthala, 1995).

the deportation of thousands of slaves on ships from Bordeaux.[3] We intend to take a stand in the national public debate against an official memory that puts others down, thereby denigrating questions of otherness.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF GRANDEUR

Bordeaux's obliviousness has given rise to a whole mythology. Many of the city's denizens actually believe that black slaves were bought and sold in Bordeaux, and that some were kept in chains in the cellars of certain town houses! It is true that a number of shipowners and captains as well as colonists came back with black servants, the former slaves of rich merchants ("nègres employés comme domestiques, esclaves de riches négociants." The syntax is unclear: did they buy the slaves of rich merchants [in the colonies] and then employed them as servants in their Bordeaux homes?), but the fact is that no slaves were ever sold in Bordeaux.[4] Bordeaux had four thousand black inhabitants in the early eighteenth century, which necessitated the Edict of 1716, a decree that broke with the medieval tradition of emancipating slaves on French soil. The city's arsenal of racist and repressive regulations was rounded out by the *Police des Noirs*, harsh policies imposed on the city's black population in 1776, and the Dépôts de Noirs, a special prison for blacks, traces of which are still visible at the city's Tribunal de Grande Instance (the high court, formerly the Fort du Hâ).

In the meantime, given the economic and financial interests involved, the city had indeed entered into the slave trade and the operation of colonial plantations. In the construction of its historical identity, Bordeaux has always foregrounded its direct trade with the West Indies, i.e. selling its products to the Caribbean and buying sugar, cocoa, coffee, rum, etc. from the region, and omitted the fact that the production of these raw materials and finished products was heavily dependent on a vast system of exploitation and human suffering: that of the slave plantation. This

3 A total of about 500 ships from Bordeaux deported at least 150,000 blacks from Africa mainly to the West Indies from 1672 to 1826.

4 Saugera recounts that in 1571 the Bordeaux authorities liberated a cargo of slaves carried by a Norman ship.

omission has given rise to an oblivious, incomplete, fragmented memory that scoffs at a whole chapter of modern history, that of exploitation, slavery, colonization and racism, for which the New World slave plantations served as the scene and testing ground.

This construction was made possible by the strong connections that have always united the city's economic, political, and intellectual powers that be: before the long reign of Jacques Chaban Delmas, some of the city's mayors were also owners of slave ships, such as Jean Barthélémy Gramont (1746–1816) and Alexandre De Bethman (1805–1871). The official history of slavery has retained only its commercial and economic side, deliberately omitting the harrowing human suffering it entailed. This obliviousness had its cultural manifestations: La Mémoire de Bordeaux, a municipal association whose mission is to reflect on memory, did not commence its work until 1940, i.e., near the end of colonization. The Musée d'Aquitaine held a major exhibition in 2000 entitled "Regards sur les Antilles" (with the Marcel Châtillon Collection), which passed up an opportunity to re-examine the city's colonial past, instead merely presenting yet another skewed, detached view of the past—an oversight intended to preserve Bordeaux's grandeur. In 2009, under pressure from various associations, four rooms were added to the museum, but the watered-down narrative rankled a number of observers, including the Bordeaux-based writer Anne-Marie Garat, who aired her criticism in an op-ed piece in *Le Monde*.

This enduring taboo is abetted by academia as well: historians at the University of Bordeaux have never even addressed the subject. With the exception of a 1995 study by the Nantes-based historian Eric Saugera, Bordeaux historians have not produced a single book about the extent and complexity of a business whose impact has left no aspect of this large French region untouched. The easiest argument was to hide behind Nantes, the slave port par excellence, beside which the Bordeaux slavers could give the illusion of being novices in the slave trade. In the domain of public law, moreover, Colbert's "Code Noir" (after which a ship plying the Garonne was named) merely elicited comments that it represented progress in terms of positive law.

Manifestations of this obliviousness can be seen in the very walls of the city: some of Bordeaux's beautiful town houses still proudly display mascarons representing negro faces! The tourist office even sells miniature reproductions thereof to tourists, captioned (in a cavalier response to our request) with a ludicrous euphemism: "This mascaron goes to show that African people passed through Bordeaux!" Furthermore, a number of the city's streets are named after shipowners whose fortune derived wholly or in part from fitting out slave ships or running colonial plantations. Lastly, since 2001, some museums have been holding exhibitions about the slave trade, but the iconography is generic at best. In a word, Bordeaux's clear conscience rests on a lie by omission, a deliberate forgetting.

THE FAILURES OF FORGETTING: FOR A NEW PARSING OF THE PAST

Recently, civil society has mobilized through associations to denounce the yawning gaps in Bordeaux's official history and to extract an acknowledgment from the city, which prides itself on its former eminence as the first colonial port in the eighteenth century, of its buried slave-trading past.

The first cracks in this wall of amnesia appeared in the 1990s. Pan-Africanist student movements as well as academics and intellectuals held symposiums and conferences with a view to exposing the sordid side of the story: the oppression, exploitation, spoliation, and suffering of black men—and their resistance. These events were not yet structured as calls to come clean about the past, however, for they were confined by the local powers that be to the expression of moderate consensus views and enveloped in a national collective consciousness whose sole recollection of slavery was abolition. So it was a matter of showing the evidence before making any appeals. After the 1995 publication of Nantes-based historian Eric Saugera's aforementioned study on Bordeaux, the first of its kind, the real work of memory—which is not the duty to remember—emerged in a collective movement started up in 1998 around an event: the 150th anniversary of the abolition of slavery. This national event caused two shock waves: The first was the "sanctification" by the French republic of the abolition of

slavery, a sort of self-glorification that yet again partook of a sort of organized amnesia. This national history was confined to the evolution of the abolitionist movement, excluding any mention of the suffering and resistance of the slaves. It gave rise in turn to the second shock wave, which materialized in a demonstration by the student association Africapac (of which I was the head at the time). The demonstration was called *Journée aux Mornes* (*Day of the Hills*), a reference to the hills overlooking the plantation where slaves would forge plans for resistance before going back down to their daily drudgery. The new movement denounced the appalling and inadmissible refusal to recognize part of the collective identity constructed around these men's resistance, a disregard that amounted to a denial of their very humanity.

But an alternative history exists: the story of how the slaves organized their own resistance. It involves revisiting the French Revolution, which is also based on an omission! In 1789, powerful lobbies (from Bordeaux, Nantes, and La Rochelle) were opposed to the spirit of the revolution, in particular to extending the principle of equality to the colonies. A resistance movement emerged from 1789 to 1794, including a liberation movement in Saint Domingue in 1791. After swearing the "Serment du Bois-Caïman" (Oath of the Cayman Woods, a voodoo ceremony that ushered in the insurrection), the black revolutionaries of Saint Domingue succeeded in urging the Convention to abolish slavery for the first time in 1794. This first successful slave rebellion could only have occurred in Saint Domingue. The "pearl of the West Indies" and the richest colony in the Americas, Saint Domingue was a cash cow that produced nine times as much as Guadeloupe and Martinique combined, and it was almost entirely owned by Bordeaux merchants, the masters of the island's 400,000 slaves.

In 1802 Napoleon Bonaparte re-established the slavery system, which remained in place for another fifty years before collapsing under pressure from the Maroons (runaway slaves), whose most remarkable figure was Louis Delgrés in Guadeloupe. Thus, this history reveals that the founding of French national identity did not coincide with the founding of the identity of the black slaves.

And yet the city of Bordeaux "honored" the great hero of that revolution, Toussaint Louverture, by naming a cul-de-sac after

him—as though the emancipation of the slaves merely led to a dead end. This "acte manqué" by Bordeaux's élite with regard to the only successful slave rebellion testifies to the enduring hold of the colonial unconscious on this city.

1998 was a turning point: it broke with the forgetting as well as with a moralistic parsing of the past (like the one that prevails at Gorée, the island off the Senegalese coast which served as the biggest hub of the African slave trade) that seeks to stave off discomfiting questions today.

Mémoires & Partages subscribes to this new reading of the past and, on the strength of that commitment, seeks to act on the present.

MÉMOIRES & PARTAGES

Mémoires & Partages is an international civic association, based in Bordeaux and Dakar, which, through cultural campaigns and activism, calls for an interpretation of history based on real and undistorted facts, not on moral imperatives. We seek to generate a dialogue between memories, to move away from the dichotomy between universalist and multicultural conceptions of society and towards a cosmopolitan society (Mbembe 2000) that is not based on a single narrative. We propose a pluralist vision and an exchange between the memory of abolition and that of resistance in order to give rise to a conception of citizenship based not on smug universalism, but on mutual acceptance and recognition. The object is to summon up memories that have been silenced, repressed, or suppressed, to recognize their distinctive nature and legitimacy and, at long last, create a dialogue between these memories and those of the French Republic.

We harked back to the beginning.

For there was a point at which everything we'd taken for granted eroded, the lights went out, night fell. We were auctioned off like mules, bred like studhorses, treated worse than beasts, as "chattels." We were groping in the dark, we needed a new light.

That I must remember! We had to grapple with despair in order to re-invent the world, to be "worthy of what happens to us" (Deleuze). This is why we tried to develop a vocabulary to translate and share our experiences.

The idea has always been for Mémoires & Partages to constitute a truly living and intergenerational memory of the city, an attempt to break free from linear history, its commemorative passivity, or on the contrary, the terror and messianism that inhabit it. The campaigns we support are imbued with this idea.

By questioning the forgotten, even concealed traces of the black slave trade, we staged re-enactments in two events that helped to retell local history in different ways.

I won't dwell here on the commemorative "Oath of the Cayman Woods" gathering that concludes one such event each year. This gathering on the Quai des Chartrons, opposite the Colbert boat, combines a moment of solemnity and contemplation (including speeches and flowers thrown into the Garonne River) with musical conviviality.

But I will describe at greater length an unprecedented event: the first Nuit du Patrimoine Négrier, or Night of the Slavers' Heritage, in which participants revisit the traces left by shipowners in Bordeaux, the buildings and prosperity they bequeathed to posterity and the honours heaped on them by a grateful city in the names of its streets—which are ordinarily named after sources of local pride or meritorious public figures. But this tour of the city also retraces the itinerary of slaves, from their capture to their emancipation!

Initiated in the late 1990s, this annual memorial walk began in a spirit of protest, but gradually changed as institutionalized obliviousness gave way to the collective memory of the people of Bordeaux. And it gave rise, almost spontaneously, to an urban and social project, for we needed a place to summon up reflection on slavery and, by extension, on colonialism in general.[5] How could we create a space for dialogue between memories? Thus was born the Maison Contre les Esclavages, or Anti-Slavery House.

The Maison Contre les Esclavages bears a message of truth about the history of black slavery, which must be extended to include forms of slavery in Black Africa as well as in Arab Muslim countries. But this will also be a place of mutual understanding,

5 It had various precursors, of course, including Aimé Césaire, who as early as 1948 criticized the mask of civilisation.

of openness and appreciation for cultural diversity. A space for cultural initiation, interaction, and itineraries.

The slave trade is a history of successive generations; we are their heirs, and we bear the marks of that genetic and cultural heritage. The Maison Contre les Esclavages constitutes a new stage in the transmission of collective memory and the teaching of the history of slavery, tasks previously carried out mainly by associations. The object is to shore up official recognition by establishing a permanent site that is recognized at the local, regional and national level as having cultural, artistic, festive, and even spiritual dimensions that are accessible to people from all walks of life. Such a center will enhance the visibility and coherence of campaigns to combat discrimination and promote integration and memory activism by providing the public with information, documentation, and support in efforts to educate younger generations about the past.

This project reflects the development of Mémoires & Partages, which, in its protest against forgetting, offers a way to forget. For we can't talk about forgetting nowadays, only of attempts to forget. Orchestrating the sharing of memories is a way of making forgetting really possible. This is where remembering and forgetting, memory and silence, obliteration, and mourning meet. For forgetting is not in contradiction with memory, it is actually a constituent element thereof. To remember is also to forget.

The Maison Contre les Esclavages is a project conceived in this spirit, alternating between the work of remembering and the work of forgetting.

At a cost of two million, it will be located on the right bank of the Garonne, whose banks were also forgotten for a long time, until the 1990s. There is a certain logical coherence, by the way, in concurrently redeveloping the historic port and revisiting the history of slavery.

The project, with support from a number of public figures, is making headway. It is important to bear in mind that this is the only site of its kind in all of France. Nantes, a forerunner in these matters, inaugurated a Memorial to the Abolition of Slavery in 2012, but it focuses exclusively on Western colonial slavery, on this single chapter in history and especially the abolition of slavery,

without adequately covering the martyrdom of the victims, as well as their resistance and contributions.

In the current context, Bordeaux has a lot to gain from this project. As the last major city in the world to remain amnesic about its slave-trading past, Bordeaux can turn this remembrance into a resource for its own renewal and to augment its standing in the world.

The next step would involve efforts to advance African peoples. Why not grant scholarships to French students, whether of immigrant origin or not, to study in African high schools and universities? And why not provide support for projects such as the "return" of children of immigrants to their parents' native countries, which is all too often portrayed in a pejorative light? After all, being confronted with foreign cultures is a source of creativity and enrichment: just think how many black intellectuals have developed their minds through total immersion in foreign cultures, in places like Paris!

RACE AND OTHERNESS IN PRESENT-DAY FRANCE AND BORDEAUX

The idea, which has yet to be accepted today, is that slavery, like colonization, did not generate progress: the civilizing mission was a failure. How can France, the country that prides itself on first declaring the Rights of Man, justify refusing to reimburse Haiti for the 90 million gold francs it exacted from the newly independent nation to compensate French slave owners?

The plantation and the colony, the laboratories of Western racism that were consigned to the background and considered "case closed" for so long, are no longer far away: they have been displaced and reconfigured within society. People used to have to forget their past in order to fit in; present generations are calling for an end to this forgetting.

Taking this position as a point of departure, the point is to try to comprehend the situation in France and the issue of racism. Why ban the concept of "race,"[6] that taboo in French republican

6 An imperfect, essentially Anglo-American term that conflates questions of skin colour with cultural origins and social class.

society, that "beast" deplored by Achille Mbembé? To ask this question is to acknowledge diversity. To rehabilitate the question of "race" is to discuss and critique colonialism. We no longer have a choice! To break away from an abstract universalism that hasn't proved its effectiveness, we need to question this view of the other and stop essentializing and complicating it.

How can we comprehend the current crisis in France without considering how we look at the "other?" How can we defend shared and purportedly universal values before acknowledging the "other?"

The "other" is frightening. President Macron's only response to the protests against racist and police violence after the killing of George Floyd was to close the door on any debate and blame activists for an alleged communitarianism, which was actually a complete fabrication.

France puts a global spin on its problems before facing the problem at its own social core: its relationship to alterity. The black experience of French incomprehension and indifference towards the other is still so bitter that it's hard to talk about it. This experience makes us furious and violent, impelling us to get involved, to find the words to express what we feel. The future of France will depend on the ability of the nation to make room for this "other."

For a long time, those who refused to accept the sway of colonial thinking, a mindset of brutality and venality, would simply leave. But now they're going to stay and fight. This is another way of viewing campaigns to debunk symbols of racism: as a way of making demands.

The killing codified by the Code Noir continues to resonate. Behind the live murder and George Floyd's world are the two pillars of denial: historical silence and the invisibility of the victims. The denial of this violence continues to expose victims to death in the form of exclusion, rejection, and political disenfranchisement. So this is not merely a matter of demanding basic rights; it is a struggle for life. Beneath the history of the Republic, the model of the victors, lie the stories of subjugated peoples, heretics, ethnic groups, minorities who are prepared to break out in violence if the wounds they have suffered under the yoke are not acknowledged.

SHARING OUR ANCESTRY

Mémoires & Partages seeks to participate in addressing all these questions. Its ultimate issue and its real struggle are, above all, about memory. On that basis, it has given rise to concrete projects and a way of thinking that has matured through action. And the idea of the Maison Contre les Esclavages is beginning to catch on.

The point is to "claim" and be able to choose our ancestry, whatever our origins: black or white or Creole ancestors for black or white or Creole descendants. It is a matter of identifying with those subjected to suffering, acknowledging the resistance put up by those broken by the colonial and plantation systems, those who, in the face of adversity and hatred, succeeded in inventing skills and cultures that have radically changed the world.

No one is responsible for what happened before their time, but for what they themselves do. We must ask ourselves what we do with the legacy bequeathed to us. Unlike the "duty" of memory, which infantilizes us, the "work" of memory is a responsibility. To do this work of memory is to be a "warrior of collective consciousness," to take action in order to share a collective consciousness of diversity.

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MISUNDERSTANDING THE PAST

Duane Jethro

"Colonial monuments in Catalan territory remain standing, as do policies of institutional racism imposed on migrants from the former colonies."
—Daniela Ortiz, *Still Standing*

"Not only has Europe attempted to justify colonialism as somehow bringing civilization and progress to the presumed savages and heathens, but without a twist of irony Europe continues to in effect present itself as the one who know best how to challenge said history of colonialism and the racism it has engendered."
—Mahdis Azarmandi and Roberto D. Hernandez, *Colonial Redux*

CENTER FOR CURATING THE ARCHIVE

UNREST

Before delegates arrived in Barcelona for the third workshop of the Gœthe-Institut's two year-long project, "Everything Passes Except the Past" in October 2019, the city was ablaze with political unrest following the conviction of Catalan politicians. Convicted of "sedition, misuse of public funds and disobedience," the implicated politicians were handed down prison sentences ranging from nine to thirteen years by the Spanish state.[1] The Catalan government rejected the verdict, saying that it was "an insult to democracy [that showed] contempt for Catalan society."[2] The court's decision enflamed smouldering sentiments about the ongoing "Spanish repression" of the Catalan people and disdain for the popular movement for independence.[3] Hundreds of thousands were drawn to the city's streets in overwhelming protests. On Friday, October 18, a general strike was held, halting freedom of movement for tourists and visitors alike as public transport was brought to a standstill and access to the world famous Sagrada Familia Church was blocked. Flights were cancelled at the Barcelona-El Prat airport, and the flow of domestic news was throttled or even cut: "Catalan public TV and the main Barcelona TV channel ceased broadcasting news, as did at least one of the online dailies, in support of the general strike."[4] In the evening, as the day's main demonstration dispersed, "rioting broke out around Plaça Urquinaona in the city center," leading to familiar apocalyptic scenes of violence and unrest:

1 As quoted in "Chaos at Barcelona airport as protesters clash with police after independence leaders jailed." November 25, 2020, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2019/10/14/spain-braces-protests-catalan-leaders-jailed-13-years-independence/.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid. This is a highly simplified account that, for reasons of time and space dœs not adequately reflect the various, complicated, perhaps even contradictory political interests that different groups have vested in the separatist movement, or their allegiances to the Spanish state.
4 "Clashes Escalate in Barcelona as Catalan President blames 'infiltrators' for violent protests." The Guardian, November 25, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/17/catalan-president-blames-infiltrators-for-violent-protests.

> "Black smoke rose 10 metres above the city as protesters set fire to rubbish bins and a newspaper kiosk."[5] Police tried to break up riotous groups with foam bullets, batons and water cannon, as amid the chaos and upheaval, thousands gathered in the surrounding streets chanting: "The streets will always be ours!"[6]

The Catalan struggle for political autonomy was therefore being articulated through a claim to public space.[7] As workshop delegates gathered to think about "How to deal with colonial residues in public space" in Barcelona, the city' streets seethed with widespread restlessness about present day political repression, political freedom, and the right to public space. The present, rather than the past, seemed to be the most urgent matter of concern. Yet, I wondered, if the streets belonged to pro-independence Catalans, who did Barcelona's statues commemorating the Spanish colonial past belong to? To which claims to public space and political autonomy were these problematic commemorative forms tied? And what space would there be for reconsidering their significance and the legacies of that past amidst the roiling pro-independence protests?

It is possible to see Catalans as colonized. To recognize that they are subordinated by a "Spanish state [that] has sought to colonise Catalonia by attempting to suppress their culture and identity through the imposition of a homogenous 'Spanishness'" (King 2004, 39). But it is also true that Catalans share in a history of Spanish colonialism. Catalans are therefore a people oppressed, even colonized, but who share a rich history of participation in the Spanish colonial enterprise and the slave trade (Fradera and Schmidt-Nowara 2013; Ringrose 1998). The scholars Mahdis Azarmandi and Roberto D. Hernandez (2017) have called out

5 "Violence Erupts after pro-Catalan general strike in Barcelona," The Guardian,November 25, 2020, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/oct/18/catalonia-general-strike-protests-independence.

6 Ibid.

7 "The Streets Will Always be Ours: Catalonia, a referendum from Below". November 25, 2020, https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/can-europe-make-it/streets-w/ and the documentary "Catalonia: the streets will always be ours!" by Reel News, November 25, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hUTZEW9yir4.

these complicated, silenced entanglements between the Catalan present and the Spanish colonial past. They show how Barcelona, capital of the autonomous community of Catalonia, bares out this ambivalence, as "On the one hand, Barcelona celebrates Spanish colonial history and the conquest of the Americas in particular, while the involvement of Catalans in the colonial project remains in the margins" (Azarmandi and Hernandez, 2017, 4). While, "On the other hand, existing debates over removing and renaming colonial monuments, and addressing colonial history and racism, are situated within the past with little or no relevance to local racial politics today" (Azarmandi and Hernandez, 2017, 4).

In what follows I ethnographically inhabit the coincidental space between the undulating Catalan political present and Barcelona's unaddressed colonial past, plotting workshop scenes of events, interventions, and occasions that trace modes of grappling with, rather than addressing, legacies of the colonial in public space. Colonial residues are pervasive, distributed, and diffuse and they persist in ways that resist the kind of closure suggested by the word "address." They are instead struggled against, made sense of, worked with but never fully overcome. These scenes therefore sketch models of sociality that could represent modes of working through specific constellations of power inflected by the colonial. Drawing extensively on the work of Azarmandi and Hernandez (2017), my ethnographic reflection of our workshop therefore considers where the struggle for Catalonian independence meets the politics of colonial heritage in Barcelona and how racial difference figures in it. By doing so, I show how celebration, confrontation, and conviviality represent three models that I observed over the course of the weekend and which serve as attitudes of wrestling with and against colonial residues, and as a means of making sense of the complicated politics of the present.

REMOVAL

One unusually hot October morning, delegates were taken to the public square Plaça d'Antoni López to view an empty plinth that once held the statue of Antonio López. We learned that through philanthropic generosity to Catalan artistic and aristocratic causes,

Antonio López crafted an aristocratic self-image, and etched his name into the Spanish cultural imaginary. He emigrated to Santiago de Cuba, then a Spanish Colony in 1831 as an adolescent, and became wealthy dealing in the illegal slave trade. He established "business operations that played a major role not only in the industrial development of Catalonia in the nineteenth century but also in sustaining colonialism in Africa and Spanish America" (Tsuchiya 2019, 470). After returning to Barcelona in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, López made the shift from slave-trader turned businessman to philanthropist, patronizing the Catalan arts community and the elite. He sponsored Catalan writers and financed the Spanish Royal Family. Through this kind of patronage, he was able to revise and establish his public image as an upstanding, esteemed businessman who made noteworthy contributions to Catalan culture. For his efforts he was granted the title of 1st Marquis of Comillas, among other accolades, before he died in 1883. A statue, designed by a renowned architect and decorated with reliefs by master craftsmen, was erected in his honour in 1884 with a plaque that crowed his cultural esteem. It reads: "Spain has lost one of the men who have lent it greatest service."

The resemblance with Cecil John Rhodes, a figure that I was much more familiar with, was striking. As here, an empty plinth also stood on the upper campus of the University of Cape Town, where for years a brooding statue of Rhodes had sat, contemplating a road from Cape to Cairo. He had also generated his wealth through landgrabs, diamond dealing, and mining that was viciously exploitative of black southern Africans. And he had purposefully chosen architecture and education as passages to redeem his image, patronizing Oxford, bequeathing the land that the University of Cape Town was built on, and establishing the Rhodes Fellowship, for gifted white university student from South Africa to receive a proper Oxfordian education. In post-apartheid South Africa, these efforts to conceal his legacy were dramatically exposed with the Rhodes Must Fall Movement, which led to the removal of the statue from the university campus as a response to students demands for a change in the institutional culture.

Antonio López's controversial legacy as a slave trader had also drawn criticism and scrutiny and ultimately led to his statue being removed in 2018. The historian of Catalonia Michæl Eaude (2007) explains that López statue had attracted negative attention throughout the 130 years of its public display. In 1902, a local newspaper appealed to have the statue melted down and minted into coins that could be given to the poor; it was vandalized in 1936 and then removed from public viewing, only to be reinstated by the fascist Franco regime. There it remained until the 4th of March 2018. Calls for its removal and the renaming of the square had been brewing for some time, but from 2015 matters began to move in the city council. Akiko Tsuchiya (2019) explains that complicated shifts in national but also citywide politics of memory and history opened the way for removal. The final decision came "following a vote in the Barcelona City Council that was initiated by the CUP (Candidatura d'Unitat Popular; Popular Unity Candidacy), a left-wing pro-Catalan independence party, and supported by other citizens' groups that protested the monument's role in symbolically upholding the legacies of slavery" (Tsuchiya 2019: 486). What is significant here is, as Azarmandi and Hernandez (2017) point out, is the overlaps between anti-fascist and antiracist politics that informed the decision to remove the statue. They ask, for example, does the decision to remove the statue and rename the plaza represent the same conversation for [the mayor] that it does for anti-racist organizations who have spearheaded the challenge over the past decade? Is her agreement to remove it premised upon a challenge to kidnapping, transporting and enslaving of Africans, or to the fact it was re-erected by Franco after anarchists destroyed the original?" This misalignment of motivations suggests that contested commemorative forms mark a rich rift in anti-racist and anti-fascist, perhaps even Catalan politics of memory.

On March 4, 2018, the date of its removal, a special farewell celebration was held.[8] There was live music from local bands. There were circus acts, and even a small fireworks display timed to coincide with the official moment of the statue's raising. Footage online shows that it was a joyous festive affair. The sociality gathered around the statue recalls the festive, playful, yet fierce annual "street renaming festival" I recalled Afro-German activists staging in Berlin for the renaming of the M_hrenstrasse. It also recalls

the jubilation following the removal of the statue of Cecil John Rhodes.[9] This festive joviality gathered against colonial residues therefore serves as one model for addressing their place in public. When purposefully organized, scheduled and programmed around removal, and perhaps as an annual occasion, this sociality turns a statue's silent, omniscient power against itself, returning the gaze and gathering the esthetic and historical significance they command, redirecting it to draw attention to related causes that are ultimately more worthy of attention in the present.

On that morning visit, we took in the sun, and as our program was being recalibrated, our group decided to seize the moment, and take a group picture for posterity. It was sweetly ironic: a group of artists, academics, and curators rethinking colonial residues, posing at the foot of what was once a "slave trading philanthropists" statue.

PERFORMATIVE ENCOUNTER

We moved on along a main boulevard to the central roundabout at Port Vell, which connects to La Rambla. The morning traffic was thick and noisy, pooling around the roundabout. Tourist groups with flimsy maps and sunhats moved along the sidewalks. The forty-meter-high column of the Christopher Columbus monument then rose up before us. We negotiated the complicated traffic intersection and entered the island on which it stood. It took a few minutes to fully absorb the spectacle; it seemed to rise endlessly into the sky. We circled it, observing the richly decorated reliefs visually relating episodes of the narrative of Columbus, first journey and return that covered the eight sides of the base. High above us, Christopher Columbus stood pointing in the direction of the "New World," as it is still perversely described, while in his other hand, he held a parchment or a scroll, as if caught in the "moment

8 https://www.barcelona.cat/infobarcelona/en/farewell-celebration-for-the-antoni-lopez-statue-2_620919.html, last retrieved on November 25, 2020.

9 The parallels between Antonio López and Cecil John Rhodes are striking. Rhodes had also made his fortune through black labor in the mining industry. He used it to style an image of himself through arts, architecture, and educational philanthropy as a noble, self-made man of stature. One prominent statue of him, a brooding figure, positioned at the foot of the Jameson steps at the University of Cape Town was removed in April 2015, almost three years to the day prior to that of López, following sustained student protests that spread across the country and made international news.

of seeing land in the far distance."[10] Completed in 1888 for the Barcelona Universal Exhibition, and built entirely with Catalan labor, the monument commemorates Columbus as the pioneering seafarer working in service of the Spanish Royal family (Mahdis 2016). Placed at this prominent and highly public spot in the city, the monument not only anchors vehicular and pedestrian traffic. It also symbolically grounds the Spanish story of a national past as founded by a heroic figure who broke open the doors of possibility for the colonization of the Americas. It is inscribed, "in commemoration of the discovery of the Americas," and "Barcelona is presented as having played a crucial role, what city advertisements claim to have been a 'great feat'" (Azarmandi and Hernandez 2017, 4).

Left uncriticized, its oversized celebratory æsthetic continued to broadcast a message of colonial celebration, commanding an æsthetic power that still registers in Spanish society today. It registers the ambivalence Azarmandi and Hernandez signaled earlier, of celebrating a problematic past while denying its ongoing legacies, such as racism and the migrant border regime in the present. It has been criticized on exactly these grounds. For example, the artist Daniela Ortiz's visual artwork *Still Standing* juxtaposes important registration documents required of migrants to Spain with a photograph of the statue, with a commentary that draws out the absurdity of the statue's silent, mammoth presence and the indignity of Spanish domestic border machinery. One comment reads: "The monument to Christopher Columbus remains standing. The requirement remains standing for migrants to present a settlement report who are in the process of acquiring a residence permit under the jurisdiction of the Government of Catalonia" (Ortiz 2020, 80).

Standing around on that morning however, we were enlisted into a public reading of another, potent confrontational text by Barcelona artist Linda Porn. Using a blown-up sixteenth century image of the discovery of the new world depicting the savage conquest of the native people as a backdrop, Porn stood dressed in indigenous headwear. Invoking her female indigenous body as a theater of confrontation, she read aloud a text that indicted

10 "Monumento Colon." https://vanderkrogt.net/statues/object.php?, last retrieved on November 25, 2020.

Columbus and the Spanish for their violent transgressions against indigenous peoples across the Americas, saying: "The cross not only forced us. It put it in the jugular vein to accept the white God. The white sword/phallus, it penetrated us. No trace of dignity in our bodies, in our brown bodies. And [then] immortalize it in this enormous phallus of the white conqueror."[11] It was a powerful, confrontational performance that turned the gaze back on the statue, one that highlighted feminist themes and the possibilities of feminist, decolonial action. We took Linda Porn's performance in with awe and focused attention, pausing and listening carefully to her words. It seemed she provided us with another model of sociality and action for engaging colonial residues. While it would be ideal to remove, break down, and sell the statue to fund causes supporting migrants in the city, Linda Porn provided a different, less invasive, yet still potent model of action, setting forth performative indigenous confrontation; she gathered and directed a confrontational sociality against the statue by using indigenous language and rhetoric to domesticate and incorporate it into an indigenous decolonial worldview.

CONVIVIAL REFUSAL

Two days after the workshop, on the morning of Sunday 27 October, I checked out of my AirBnb, and made my way across the city to meet colleagues before departing later that day. Traipsing across the city, I was surprised by a growing number of flag-carrying Catalans slowly filtering in from alleyways that broke off from the neatly partitioned squares in *Eixample*, moving in the same direction. Little groups, families mostly, twos and threes, gathered and walked roughly in the same direction building into a major peaceful demonstration. I was now immersed in demonstrations that until then had been in the background of our workshop. Reaching a main boulevard, we were met by a river of yellows and reds, thousands of flag-waving Catalans proudly marching down hill into the main rallying squares.[12] It struck me how white and homogenous the protests were, as if there were no subgroups within the separatist movement, especially those identifying as Afro-Spanish.

11 Performance text "El falo de Colón." (2018), As shared by the artist Linda Porn.

Later, I rang the bell to an apartment not five minutes from the Plaça de Catalunya to attend a late lunch meet up, upon the invitation of a friend. Soon I was five floors above the streets, welcomed into a living room where the warm afternoon sun elbowed its way through the large windows. Everyone was young, black, and spanish-speaking." The living room dining table was filled with potato crisps, beer, guacamole, and glasses of ruby red vermouth.

There was a big group crowded around the cooking pots in the kitchen and a robust, raucous conversation bubbling that seemed as familiar as it was totally foreign in Spanish. I was introduced to the guest for whom the lunch was arranged. It was her farewell celebration. She had arrived in Spain years ago from Santo Domingo, and, fed up with life in Barcelona, she had decided to return home. Back in the living room, I sank into the couch and started a conversation with some of the guests in a mix of broken English and Spanish. The Catalan demonstrations down below were a point of discussion. One visitor related her story about the frustrations of making her way through the city through the crowds. Relating her story in Spanish, she passed a phone around showing a picture of a pug wrapped in the Catalan flag. It cracked everyone up.

I was curious; had she or any of the others there participated in the separatist protests? What about black participation in general? She said that despite being Catalan, she was black, and had been harried by demonstrators who did not consider her as being a legitimate voice in the debate. Excluded, she could therefore not sign up for the cause. Other members of the group said that the Spanish authorities were checking protestors' identity documents. Those with no papers on hand, or visitors on precarious visas, like many in the Afro-Spanish-speaking community, could be arrested and potentially expelled. Afro-Spanish-speaking people were and felt excluded from the marches since, in the skirmish between the Spanish state and Catalan protestors, they were not considered legitimate, equal participants. This is understandable. "In the Catalan context, and the Spanish context more broadly,

12 I was struck by the importance of the Catalan flag for this protest movement. Nearly every participant had one and incorporated it into a range of political gestures, by waving it, flapping and unfurling it, and wearing it like a cape.

racial others continue to be black and brown bodies, whether as citizens or undocumented migrants, who are portrayed as intrusive others and whose belonging to the nation is continuously questioned" (Azarmandi and Hernandez 2017, 9). To participate in the march was to intrude on a national debate from which black and brown bodies were systematically excluded. The politics of cessation shores up racial difference in so far as it reinforces the notion of "the Catalan nation as inherently white," yet also apparently "colorblind" (Azarmandi and Hernandez 2017, 9).

A group who had been busy in the kitchen then walked in, carrying a huge, steaming pot of stew. It was a diasporic meal for a black community celebrating the flavors of home. Once everyone had dished, the departing friend said a few words, saying how happy she was to have cooked this meal and to share it with friends. It was a sad, tender moment. We toasted, then bunched up on one end of the long table for a group photograph.

Eating, drinking, and conversing, we could not hear the helicopters, the sirens, and the chanting Catalan protestors. All of its own, for pre-set reasons but also due to coincidence, this group had come together and closed itself off. A new sociality had been established, one based on solidarity, jovialness, and feelings of familiarity. As an Afro-Spanish group with roots in various colonial diasporas, this was an occasion of post-colonial conviviality. Paul Gilroy argues that conviviality "refers to processes of cohabitation and interaction that have made multiculture an ordinary feature of social life in Britain's urban areas, and post-colonial cities elsewhere" (2005, xv). It is sparked by a "radical openness" "that makes a nonsense of closed, fixed and reified identity and turns attention toward the always unpredictable mechanisms of identification" (2005, ibid). This does not exclude race as a mode of identifying, but centers the idea of identification, of play, interaction, and sociality. At a more substantive level, conviviality "suggests good company where emnity and gloom have no place and where an individual or group can legîtimately afford to be merry" (Nyamjoh 2002, 111). Here, one can risk being open, free, expressive: "one can risk a glass too many and be hilarious in extreme... because one knows that one is in fellowship, that one is secure, that one is part of a whole that is imbued with

togetherness" (Nyamjoh 2002, 111).

The politics outside were blocked out for a few hours. But a black space of care, community, and rejuvenation is not immune, or closed off to the exclusions in operation outside. It is constituted in part because of it. But it is a space mobilized consciously as a convivial refusal to be swept away by the violence of historically informed injustice that is the reality, not a residue of everyday life. It is a space of solidarity and solace.

This space of postcolonial conviviality I think serves as another model for understanding approaches to colonial residues; in exclusionary, volatile, and highly risky political circumstances informed by colonial histories of racial discrimination, subaltern groups can separate and take space. The merry occasion of the farewell meal reconstituted what could be meant by ideas of "public" and "space" in the enclaved situation of the private home, away from the gaze of problematic colonial era statues and the rumbling protests of Catalans outside. This was a revitalising space of renewal where "competing agentive forces" of class, geographical, historical, and even chromatic difference in blackness are renegotiated (Nyamjoh 2002, 111). It establishes a temporary solidarity that to some extent reverses the æsthetic power of colonial legacies that assert social division and hierarchy in public.

DEPARTURE

With a belly full and a head spinning with Vermouth, I dashed to catch the bus for my flight back to Berlin. A few flag-waving demonstrators filtered along the tree-lined boulevard on the way to Plaça de Catalunya. The long, blue shadows of evening embraced the fountain and sculptures of the square just as my airport bus pulled away. As it purred out of the city, I was left thinking about how similar and yet different heritage dynamics in Spain were to those of Germany, where I worked and South Africa, where I was from.[13] Thinking Barcelona through Berlin, South Africa, and beyond, I realized there were existing, shared, transnational modes of troubling colonial residues, such as performativity, removal, and refusal. At another level it was perhaps the sociality that colonial heritage forms gathered or dispersed that provided clues

to ways of productively struggling with them. That is, whether it arose in post-colonial conviviality that could reconstitute public space in private, in a public confrontation through indigenous ritual performance, or the festive celebration of the removal of a statue, different, often active forms of sociality could be constituted in orientation towards "colonial residues" in ways that troubled the assumed relations they had over "publics" and "space." If Barcelona's streets belonged to Catalan protestors, as per their slogan, then they would also have to lay claim to the colonial residues scattered throughout the city. And even in this contestation, we have seen how black and indigenous subaltern Spanish were able to stake spaces of their own, laying claim, calling attention to, or casually exiting from these often hostile streets.

13 Yet I was also uncertain and could not really be sure. As an outsider with very little knowledge of the contemporary political situation, the Spanish past, and little to no grasp of the language, I could have also just misunderstood these adjacencies. Yet it was precisely in these gaps that new observations arose, about how colonial legacies could be negotiated in public spaces, not only in Barcelona but cities like this in other parts of the world.

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Workshop Discussions in Barcelona at Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món,
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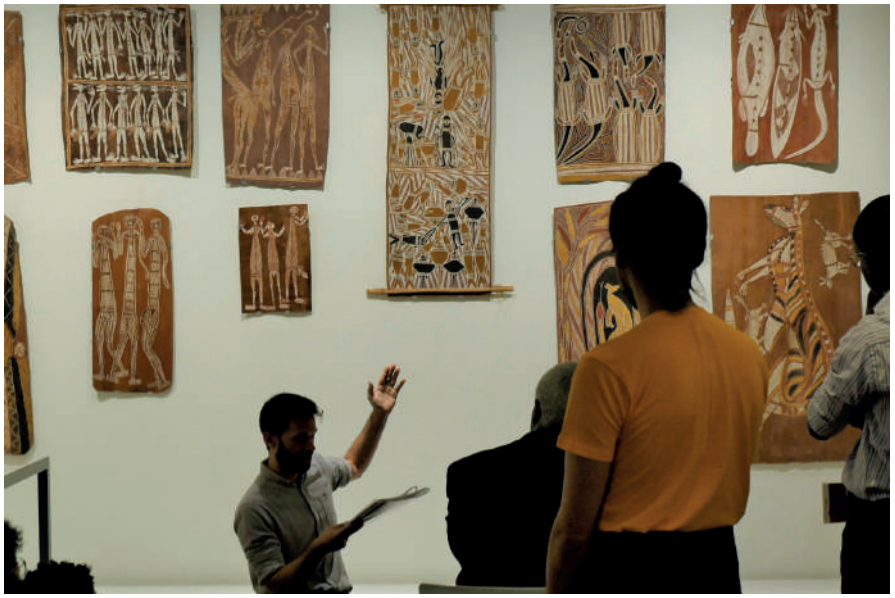

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Performance by Linda Porn at the Christopher Columbus monument in Barcelona in October 2019, © Gœthe-Institut, photographed by Robert Esteban

Performance by Linda Porn at the Christopher Columbus monument in Barcelona in October 2019, © Gœthe-Institut, photographed by Robert Esteban

TRAFFIC, SEX WORK, AND MIGRATION AS A COLONIAL DISCOURSE

Linda Porn

The colonialism and genocide perpetrated by Europeans in the Global South plundered the colonial territories with impunity. Yet, still today, they destroy cultural identities different from Western ones. The settler Cortés, when paving over Mexico, called it "The New Spain." New Spain, Hispaniola, the Viceroyalty of Peru or Cartagena de las Indias are some of the examples of the territories that settlers looted in Abya Yala, committing rape, cannibalism, death and robbery, as testified to by several Spanish and native historians, such as Bartolomé de las Casas and Guaman Poma. Downplaying, extolling, or denying colonization equates to burying its historical importance to the development of Western society, which continues its oppression by denying the genocide that established inequalities and perpetuated a system of death in our lands. It also furthers the Western tendency to avoid reflecting on this genocide. This way of thinking and being legitimizes the relationship of violence from North to South, upholding the current global paradigm of capitalism, colonialism, misogyny, racism. This narrative does not only exist in extremist groups. It lives on in racist and misogynist laws, such as the immigration law enforced by the Kingdom of Spain, which perpetuates colonialism. The concepts that justified the violence and massacring of the inhabitants of the former colonies come mostly from Catholic ideology. They have been perpetuated and refined by new, brutal churches promoting "rescue:" NGOs. Yes, they apply them to people from the Global South in Europe, to migrants. Embedded in a seemingly progressive "do-goodism," they instead extend colonialism into the present-day through concepts such as saving, rescuing, teaching, protecting, but also punishing and killing. The case of sex workers embodies this perpetuation. A convention against human trafficking, as well as smuggling for the purpose of sexual exploitation, was signed in Palermo in 2003, in full awareness of the consequences of dispossession that ex-colonies live and experience. These laws and treaties establish the way in which the people of the former colonies have to enter, produce and live inside Fortress Europe, to support a welfare society based on racist exploitation and violence towards these same people and their territories in the Global South. The immigration law criminalizes these people by locking them up in CIEs when they

cross European borders. In the case of trans women, they lock them up in CIEs for men, where they are raped and threatened with death. Cis women, because of their (non-white) race, are accused of coming to practice sex work. In a colonial and misogynistic framework of criminalization and victimization, which includes accusations of savagery and illiteracy, they are declared victims at their trial. The women's agency is denied on the basis of their sex work, because they are deemed to be savage and unaware. But the most important thing that happens is that the NGOs, under the name of a so-called "rescue," continue to take their children away from their own mothers. Declared victims of trafficking, they are locked in centers for gender-based violence, which violates their rights and those of their children. They will be granted asylum status, in exchange for forced medication as well as accepting the imposition of being labeled victims and being trafficked. Their children will be supervised and locked up by the Spanish State until they assimilate its racist and patriarchal violence. If they do not, they will be deported and their children will stay to be absorbed by either the adoption market for white families or the child protection business.

This threat to the hetero/homo, productive white family serves as a premise to return to Spanish Catholic ideas about femininity and its markedly misogynistic and patriarchal foundations. While millions of white feminists break free and leave the house to march against the gang-rape in Pamplona, migrant domestic workers are serving dinner to their children and driving them to school the next morning. Feminism for white women and patriarchy for "migras" reinvigorate notions that white feminism considered surpassed, such as the valuation of women in terms of their vaginas, which is a purely Catholic attempt to control women's bodies. So, sex workers who made a profession of their sexuality are just whores, even if women also perform this job in their marriages by providing an entire package of company, domestic services, sexual services, and in the case of mothers, reproduction and upbringing, all of this sustained by their status of NOT being a whore. The whore on a social level is the scum of femininity, which is why every woman has to stick to the straight and narrow path of raising her family instead of inhabiting the night or independently managing

her sexuality. In full awareness of the colonialism, racism, and misogyny that afflict migrant sex workers, the Spanish movement to abolish sex work is led mostly by middle-aged to elderly white women who are educated, academic, and liberated, heiresses of the first advances of womankind in the Kingdom of Spain. They see whores, especially "migra" whores, as a threat to this white hegemonic, punitive, extreme, old-fashioned, and exclusive feminist project that extends throughout Europe. A feminism that complements the patriarchy without questioning its bases or its power. The colonial Kingdom of Spain, the racist immigration law, and the misogynist abolitionist movement are the three axes used to control workers from the Global South. Upon landing at Spanish airports or on Spanish shores in precarious vessels from across the Mediterranean, women are forced and locked into the facilities provided by the Kingdom of Spain to their NGOs. The recent Francoist past of the Kingdom of Spain originated with the Catholic Church. To stay here legally, they will be forced to recognize themselves as something in which, after having left their former lives to provide a better life to their family, they would never have believed: that they are victims. All the power involved in crossing an ocean and facing a new world is reduced to the imposition of a stereotype that is to the benefit of white women: the creation of a victim. The patriarchy has always reached the victims who depend on it and who remain in the place assigned to them. It is logical that this state does not match their reality, or the reality they have wanted to transform through their lonely migratory journey. If they want to continue here, they will have to go through a pathology and medication process to obtain a residence permit. Submission, observation, pathologization, and subsequent medication will be the conditions that a woman from the Global South accused of being a victim of trafficking must accept to achieve her immigration goal. Whether she is a victim or not, since the condition of victim is a racist and misogynistic definition applied by the colonial state to the workers of the Global South, this will be the condition for remaining legally in the Kingdom of Spain. It is alarmingly common that people labeled as trafficking victims were told to come with boys, but without an adult male. The Catholic, Spanish society, in its equation of family

male and female, seizes this opportunity to apply its misogynistic Catholic equation to women workers from the Global South, whom the Kingdom of Spain will use to sustain its society of death and well-being, and as a pretext to trade in their children. It does brisk business with the alleged victims and their descendants: the State will "take care of their children" by taking over their guardianship. Before declaring them victims of trafficking, the little ones will be locked up in juvenile centers as wards of the State, subjected to its institutional violence, its business of colonial adoptions for white families, and the replacement of their identity with one founded on a notion of white supremacy. It fills its detention centers with children to vest its patriarchal institutions with the (lack of) protection of children. A feast for white, squalidly white dinosaurs.

On June 2, 1975 at the church of Saint-Nizier in Lyon, France, more than 100 sex workers protested the violence they were subjected to (and not just the famous trafficking or mistreatment by the madams of their brothels), including extortion and police violence, the absence of labor rights, as well as the abduction of their children from their homes. Years ago, prostitutes from India also protested efforts to outlaw them, expel them from their work zone, and send them to a more remote place. The struggles of sex workers have been going on for many years, and they have never called themselves slaves or traffickers, concepts that were created by the patriarchy and its colonialism, and which are now perpetuated by elite women who use all their social resources to save their dishwashers and justify their studies. As university students, they are able to separate themselves from their upbringing and the ungrateful tasks to which the female sex is often subjected. But at the same time, they help their white peers so that their society can function based on the exploitation, violence, and submission of our communities. Whores for centuries have been marginalized, insulted, imprisoned, violated, murdered, denied their motherhood, their young children locked up for having a mother who is a slut, denied by society, simply because they trade in their sexuality, just because they "don't walk hand in hand with the 'Old Man.'" Expelled from femininity, from family, from motherhood, we were supposed to submit to the "Old Man's"

protection and perpetuate the fallacy of femininity. Whores are not slaves. We are not victims. We are the people who will give birth to more women who will not let the "Old Man" pat them on the back, who will trample his approval, who will vomit his legitimization. The whores say, it's time to go suck your own dick, "Old Man!" We are forging our distance.

THERE WON'T BE A FUTURE FOR ANYONE IF OUR PAST STAYS IN THE SHADOWS

Sally Fenaux Barleycorn

To any human being who may find this letter:

My name is Sha. I am living my sixth life on planet earth and, this time, I was born among the tribe of the _O_. We live hidden in the soul of the earth. For you on the outside, it must be the year 2178.

Yesterday, I was crowned Queen of the _O_, and right at the moment when I was told why I was given such an honor, I had a strong feeling in my gut. I knew, instantly, that the only way for humans to survive in this universe depends on me telling you my story. And then, it will be on you to break the eras of silence, to speak the truth, to share our story, our experiences, our knowledge, and our identity. It is the only way...

MY FIRST LIFE

I remember very few details of my first time in existence. I remember to be a color and a sound, and I guess it would be accurate to define me as "life." There were trillions of us but in very few places on earth at that time. We lived among storms, meteorite collisions, fires, water, acids, and gas. I know now, looking back to those blinded feelings I remember well, that we were the first living creations and that by surviving against all odds, we made you possible.

MY SECOND LIFE

I came back to earth much later, as a mammal, as a lioness. I led, nurtured, fed, protected, and bred my pack. I only understand now how important it is to experience animal life early on in one's lives before coming to the human form. You get to fully enjoy life, worriless. You get to fulfill your mission, your role within your group, and to feel a sense of contentment, joy, and peace, much more easily than humans can. Making a complete sense of one's own existence at all times. Remembering it now brings me peace and reconnects me with the real purpose of life.

MY THIRD LIFE

The first time I became queen, it was in 5812 of the African era, what you would identify as the sixteenth century of your time. I reigned for thirty-four years. I was born in the royal family of the

Hausas of the state of Zazzau and I trained to be a warrior from a young age. My name was Amina Mohamud. I inherited the skills for war from my mother, the Queen Bakwa Turunku. I was known for my bravery and victorious military campaigns that led to the expansion of our state.

Looking back, yes, it was a challenging life, but it never felt so hard at the time. I clearly remember how I felt like a vessel to the wishes and hopes of my people. An amplifier of my ancestor's powers, wisdom, and visions of the future.

MY FOURTH LIFE

I do feel, in retrospect, that I must have done something wrong for which I ended up being reborn in the exact opposite of the honors and celebrations in which I had been buried in my third life. Only human beings can make such terrible mistakes...

My new life on earth started in a land very close to my previous life, but by the coast, the west coast of the African continent. I was born into slavery.

I never got in a boat, I never traveled to another place in the world, I never left the lands of my ancestors. And yet I lost everything. I lost my identity, my role in my society, my culture, my knowledge, my own will, my beliefs, and the right to express them. At that time, I don't even think that I thought of myself as "human." I had become "animal" again but without any of the peace I had experienced as a lioness in my earlier life. I was "Sub-human" in the use and exploitation of my body, in the way I was thought and talked, touched and forced, looked at, identified as... A new story about myself was being written at that time, not by any of us, but by stranger's eyes. Those stories became history engraved in stone.

It is one thing to be taken, away, to a "new world" to create something unknown to you. It is another thing to take everything you are, in your own land, surrounded by your own people, by your own symbols, and be dispossessed of oneself, of all we were. It isn't better or worse, it isn't more or less damaging or traumatizing. It simply is what happened...

I know now that very few of you, in the European States United, knew or know anything about what happened. You have directly

benefited from our enslavement, our deaths, our exploitation, and above all, the beginning of the era of silence has benefited your narrative of superiority. And you still don't know where it came from or how it was created. How can someone pay a debt that they don't even know exists?

MY FIFTH LIFE

After my life as a slave, which an early death soon ended, I was reborn as an African descendant in the diaspora. A first-generation French-Senegalese woman born in the 1990s. I grew up in the comfort of what the pain and blood of my previous life had created and I, too, enjoyed a life of unknowing.

Growing up and living in a country named France, I believed I was human again. I got to ride in the perks of the era of silence that continued to kill, in front of everyone's closed eyes, black, and brown people all around the world.

They called it migration, delinquency, "not from here," violence, uneducated, poor, hungry, terrorism, illegal immigration, with no intelligence, with no value, integration, wars, corruption, dictatorships, useless, the past, and nothing more than a thing of the past... And we all believed it. It was easier that way, it made sense. It made sense because it is a story that had been created 500 years before to justify genocide, robbery, assassination, and exploitation. And it is a convenient story that the EU presidents at this time have to maintain at all costs, at risk of losing, for France only, more than 7 billion euros a year.

I grew up happy enough, I grew up doing my best to be transparent, to fit in. No one talked to me about my past, nobody wanted to "go there," and my channels to connect with my ancestors were closed. Or so I thought.

On my twenty-second birthday, a door opened through a dream. I was in very cold water at night. It was dark, and there were just a few flashlights moving in the pitch dark. I don't know why I could barely move my arms and my legs. I couldn't swim. I could hear crying, shouts of despair begging for help. Someone reached my shirt from behind and pulled me up, trying to keep my upper body above water. But every time it pulled, it did so with less and less strength. I never felt that hand letting go of my shirt; it simply

drowned with me. When I tried to take a breath, my lungs filled with water and that's when I woke up in a panic, gasping for air, all my body covered in sweat and my face drowned... in tears.

It could have been a recollection of past events or a call from that present moment in history when people were dying in the Mediterranean Sea trying to reach the EU's borders. It all comes from the same place anyway. History repeats itself because we don't talk about it, we don't teach it as it should be taught, we don't shed light over it... so we re-live it, again and again. The ones paying the price are always the same, and the ones living with a smile in their faces and blood on their hands are the same ones too. That is what silence does.

MY SIXTH LIFE

This is the life I am living now. I was born in secrecy. Again black and fully African blooded. I have only now regained recollection of all my past lives and reconnected with my ancestors from my time as a Hausa Warrior.

Since my early years as an infant, I have lived underground, and now as a Queen of the _O_, the tribe's elders revealed to me that we are still in the United States. But we are supposed to be dead. To public knowledge, we have become obsolete. All black people in this continent were eradicated 155 years ago, slowly, carefully planned, without anyone saying anything about it or noticing anything at all.

The leaders in charge of politics nowadays are too young to remember we ever existed, not here, not anywhere else in the world. They have no ancestry to connect to for truth or answers, no books, no data written about us, and frontiers between continents have been closed for over two centuries. The Internet was destroyed even before that. The sun getting closer to earth ended all communications and glass giant domes were built over the cities to control oxygen flow and water supplies. All life outside the domes is impossible.

We, black people, we live underground. We are finally back to the sources of knowledge, wisdom, practices, spirituality, and sustainability of the original African cultures. We have looked into our past, as our only way to survive in the present and future. We

know how to heal with our bare hands, how to grow every single plant we need, we are connected to our gods and ancestors more than ever, guiding us every step of the way and... We are waiting.

It seemed to me that we were living our lives with the sole purpose of being ready. Studying, testing ourselves, working out like warriors, training our minds, bodies, souls, and spirit for something greater than our present. And only the wise.circle knows why and for what we were all preparing ourselves. And now, as queen, I get to know it too.

I feel all of my lives have prepared me for this moment. All I have learned and suffered, experienced, encountered, overcome, and felt. All of it makes me the one I am supposed to be now to fulfill my ultimate mission on earth. I regret now all the times I lost patience, I fell into despair, I mistrusted my path and my guides, wasting my life's time and energy.

After the coronation ceremony, the celebration was cut short, because my first meeting with the wise. circle was urgent. I was introduced to the need for visionary leadership, of becoming not only an intelligent and soulful decision-maker but primarily, a channel for the ancestors to speak their will through me. But, why me? Contrarily to my previous life as Amina, the tribe of the _O_ didn't choose their leaders based on a familial lineage. So, why was I elected for this? The answer: my genome.

All humans of the world can be traced back to one first, original human that contains the solid, undiluted, sterling DNA genome that holds them all. That human being is the dark-skinned black African woman originally from the Horn of Africa. And at this time and in this place on earth: that is me. And only me. I carry within me the source code of humankind.

The Caucasian society over-ground, just above us, is dying. The lack of mixing with more diverse, ancient, and stronger genomes from black, brown, and indigenous people is degenerating their DNA fast. Children are born with leukemia, and life expectancy has dramatically decreased to an average of forty-five years old. All technological innovations and investigations of the ultra-modern world they created will not save them. Only my genome can.

I told the wise circle, I didn't even take a moment to ponder it myself: I needed to get out of the underground. I needed to go

up to the dome and fulfill my purpose. My life's mission was to keep all humanity alive.

They were unanimously against it. Their plan was exactly the opposite, and the reason I had been chosen queen at this moment was to enhance my protection. The more I tried to talk to them, the less they listened or tried to understand my point of view. And for my own safety, they decided to lock me in the meditation gardens, until I'd "came back to my senses."

I write these words and made this letter reach you because I still believe you need to know that I exist, that I can save you, and that the only way forward for humanity is diversity. Diversity of DNA, of thought, of cultures, of phenotypes, of traditions, religions, philosophies, and identities. And at the same time, I am aware of what the wise circle wants me to understand: nothing will change unless you change the version of history on which you have built your world. Unless you break the eras of silence, you tell the truth and take full responsibility for the crimes you committed towards Africans, towards black and brown people during colonization, the slave trade, neo-colonization, during the times of police-border-state brutality, political abuse, and manipulation as well as the most recent black & brown obliteration.

Let me warn you: you will not find us. No matter how hard you try or how technologically equipped you believe you are. But I will come to you, I promise. As soon as I see change on your part, as soon as you'll break the eras of silence and lies. I will be there to witness change. But if history isn't repaired, life as you know it will end.

Without memory, there'll be no future.

Sha Amina Lion
Queen of The Originals.

CALL FOR ACTION & REFLECTION: REPORT ON WORKSHOP DISCUSSIONS IN BARCELONA

This document is a summary of a work in progress and reflects the on-going discussions held in the context of a workshop convened by the Gœthe-Institut Barcelona in collaboration with the Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món on October 23–25 2019, and a workshop organised by the Gœthe-Institut Bordeaux in collaboration with the Musée d'Aquitaine, on November 6–8 2019. The workshops were part of the project "Everything Passes Except the Past," which questions the ways in which European countries deal with their colonial past and with the persistence of colonial power relations and their thriving algorithms. The workshop brought together artists, museum experts, scholars, activists, and representatives of institutions, from various backgrounds and different privileged contexts. The results of the discussions were documented and turned into this text with the great help of Yann LeGall (Berlin Postkolonial).

DECOLONIZING PUBLIC SPACE: WHY AND HOW?

Since the nineties, radical activists have not shunned from using civil disobedience to push their agendas, be it for the acknowledgment of climate change, the fight against pesticides, against homophobia, or against racist violence. In recent years, statues and effigies have become central to the question of colonial imagery in the urban landscape. Cecil Rhodes, Edward Colston, Leopold II, and Christopher Columbus are just a few of the many regents, officers, government representatives, or so-called explorers whose achievements have been celebrated by being carved in bronze, granite, or gold. In contrast, the darker sides of their histories have been made visible with red paint, feces, or their being thrown to the bottom of the sea.

Street names also exemplify this issue. The tradition of naming streets for historical figures does not actually recognize the imbalance generated by the white patriarchal society, where a large majority of people deemed famous by history books (at least until the 1960s) were white men. Besides, this tradition also fails to reveal non-Western understandings of memory and the subject, where perhaps a remembrance of collective action is more important than of a particular individual.

To push for a critical reappraisal of European cities, many activists' groups offers tour guides and call for renaming streets and toppling or contextualizing statues. Taking over the public space to show their perspective on history, diasporas unsettle the status-quo by making this violence visible through educational walks and performances. Unfortunately, these initiatives and their activities are precarious. They are often praised as "volunteer work" and celebrated in the media. Yet, they demand a deep knowledge of colonial history backed by preliminary research, as well as a level of coordination and time management that is sometimes worthy of a politician's spin doctor. Paid on an honorarium basis, these critical voices have yet to be integrated into stable, city-led programs for cultural empowerment and political education. At the same time, only a few cities have to date reflected upon their colonial legacy on an institutional level. This entails a long-term conceptual effort to deal with the traces of racial and intersectional violence and oppression.

Parallel to a reshuffling of names, effigies, and monuments, an internal dialogue on institutional racism needs to take place. While looming statues of colonial leaders are still standing in front of government buildings, inside those very buildings, urban management, and district politics enact policies that further marginalize non-white populations and foreign citizens.

Finally, comparative discussions between activists' groups and city councils in different European countries should be sought. Not only can experiences be shared and solutions be exchanged, but the global character of colonialism and neocolonial structures can only be fathomed through its ubiquity in different centres of power. Histories of migration can also be stitched together by learning from diasporic groups present in other European countries. Such a dialogue can contribute to a greater understanding of Afro-European history and make the public aware of Black and PoC contributions to society. These exchanges can kickstart new partnerships that can always be showcased in twinning programs, moving exhibitions, and multimedia, such as mapping practices.

This report was developed based on the discussions with the workshop participants in Barcelona: Tania Adam, Andrés Antebi, Kokou Azamede, Azkona & Toloza, Sally Fenaux Barleycorn, Karfa Diallo, Gala Pin Ferrando, Yann LeGall, Duane Jethro, Hannimari Jokinen, Billy Kalonji, Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, Grace Ndiritu, Gustau Nerín, Oriol Pascual, Linda Porn, Justo Aliounedine Nguema Pouye, and Silvia Albert Sopale.

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION FOR THE DECOLONIZATION PROCESS

Decolonizing is a lifelong process that entails self-criticism and a critical view of language, knowledge, and worldviews. Yet it should not be considered as a burden. Just as African societies freed themselves from foreign oppression, decolonization is liberation. It is a participatory process for rewriting history with new references, away from racist representations, stereotypes, and other views that have supported hierarchies and exploitation. For a decolonial take on education, epistemologies (those systems that produce knowledge) need to be fundamentally rebuilt.

A plurality of voices is one important factor for achieving this cultural (r)evolution in European education systems. Furthermore, this (r)evolution will not only take place in schools. Education also concerns the public space. Actors and institutions participating in social and political debates should think about the plurality of their audiences. Being European does not mean being white, nor does it mean being unilingual. Experts and laypersons need to rethink together how they talk, to whom, and which representations they use. In this participatory process, the prevalence of written or visual media should be questioned. Orality in scientific and educational discourse can be a motor for decolonial thinking, where knowledge is translated into stories, where vocabulary is made more accessible, and where language becomes hybrid.

As part of the concrete tools for this decolonizing process, there is a growing demand for more transparency and accessibility to knowledge. Language is often part of the problem rather than the solution. When pupils and students do not enjoy the same proficiency in established European languages, inequalities in access are reproduced. Perhaps should we think about vulgarizing speech and texts so that information and knowledge are made more accessible for people whose mother tongues do not form part of the European vernacular.

At any rate, the platforms used for disseminating knowledge (classes, websites, Wikis, visual media, documentaries, among others) should be considered as tools of transmission and not appropriation. Concretely, pupils, students, and society in general should become aware of how non-European bodies of knowledge (for instance, medicinal properties of plants, navigation systems, astronomy, cuisine, art, physics, music, and language) have been appropriated throughout the years for Western scientific and capitalist undertakings. The tools used to convey this knowledge should be part of a critical debate on the ownership of knowledge and about who enjoys positions of power in deciding what should be taught, what is worth being canonized, and how new knowledge is produced and circulated. To achieve new ways that bring audiences to alternative models of education and alternative voices, the role of non-institutional partners in education should be considered. Artists, activists, and other members of a critical civil society have indeed used interesting ways of sharing knowledge for a long time that could be productive for the education sector: excursions (guided tours, trainings, interactive workshops), creative expression (writing, speech, performance, drama), and intergenerational transmission (story-telling, interviews) are just a few methods amidst a myriad of possibilities for a decolonized education.

Critical thinking and emancipation stand together in a virtuous circle. The more we stimulate the former, the more often the latter can occur, and vice versa. Black, Indigenous, postcolonial, and decolonial schools of thought have produced an array of methods that encourage this virtuous relationship. Unfortunately, these theories have until now remained marginal in non-university contexts. Critical whiteness theory, theories of the body, and gender studies can be suitably adapted to non-academic and non-humanities audiences. People who have experienced marginalization and discrimination because of their bodies, gender, language proficiency, civic status, or migration history are confronted with these issues on a daily basis. People who enjoy privilege need to be made aware of that very fact so that they can develop a sensibility for intersectional structures of discrimination and finally acknowledge how identity and alterity are constructed in society. An introduction to these theories through empirical examples would be a welcome introduction to the educational system. Sooner rather than later.

Finally, to bring the different sectors under scrutiny together, the role of museums as pedagogical spaces and the role of schools as museum visitors can be problematized. This binary connection between education and culture (or within this constellation, between the practice of education and the institutionalization of high culture) should create different avenues for partnerships and interactions other than the age-old "visit to the museum" that every history class organizes. Many different formats have been already implemented, such as pupils spending the night on site, interactions with indigenous curators, collaborative performance projects, and workshops. The development of these formats should be geared towards a critical reflection upon the construction of culture, the bias of historiography, and the

crisis of representation. Youngsters should be able to question their privilege in getting access to the knowledge from these institutions of high culture.

All of these recommendations are geared towards transversal goals for upcoming generations. They should be made aware of how history is constructed, who enjoys the power to define culture and alterity, and who remains too often absent from decision-making positions involving their own histories. To quote the famous slogan by the Herero and Nama Genocide committees fighting for the recognition of the 1904–08 genocides in the spheres of education, culture, and politics, it is important to recognise that "What is done for someone without them is against them." Finally, a decolonizing education sector can stimulate a "new relational ethics" in society, by developing tools and material skills, by encouraging self-empowerment and pride, and by revisiting the history of nations and of migration.

This code of action and reflection was developed based on the discussions with the workshop participants in Bordeaux: George Abungu, Lotte Arndt, Bianca Baldi, Sammy Baloji, Dalila Dalleas Bouzar, Michæl Dieminger, Irene Calderoni, Laurent Courtens, Didier Houénoudé, Katia Kukawka, Guy Lenoir, Toma Muteba Luntumbue, Ayoko Mensah, Placide Mumbembele, Freddy Mutombo, Pascale Obolo, Carolina Orsini, Margareta von Oswald, Kalvin Soiresse, and Sara Torres.

ALESSANDRA FERRINI is a London-based artist, researcher, and educator. She is a PhD candidate at the University of the Arts London and is affiliated with InteRGRace, the Interdisciplinary Group on Race and Racisms. Her practice is rooted in lens-based media, anti-colonial and memory studies, historiographical and archival practices. Experimenting with the expansion and hybridization of the documentary film, she is interested in the way historical narratives are produced and how their implied ideologies create subjects—be they individuals or societies. Her research investigates Italian foreign and racial politics, notions of resistance, positionality, and reflexivity. In particular, it is preoccupied with questioning the legacies of Italian colonialism and fascism with a specific interest in the past and present relations between Italy and the African continent. Her work spans across moving image, installation, and dialogic formats, as well as writing, publishing and collaboration.

BÉNÉDICTE SAVOY is professor of Modern Art History at the Technical University of Berlin and holds the International Chair for "Cultural History of Artistic Heritage in Europe, eighteenth-twentiest Century" at the Collège de France in Paris. Her research is mainly focused on forced transfer of artworks in times of war and during the colonial era. She is a leading voice in the current public debates on the history of collecting under imperial and colonial circumstances and issues of restitution. She has also been part of many commissions of trust including the Scientific Advisory Board for the German Tentative List of UNESCO-World Heritage Sites (2013–2014), the conseil scientifique du Musée du Louvre (2015–present), and the German Lost Art Foundation (2015–present).

BIANCA BALDI is a South African artist who deals with hidden infrastructures and narratives in her films, installations, photographs, and images. Evoking the histories of film, studio photography, and Trompe-l'œil, she positions carefully chosen objects and images revealing complex webs of political, economic, and cultural influences. Her work has been featured in large international exhibitions such as the eleventh Rencontres de

Bamako (Mali), eleventh Shanghai Biennale (China), the eighth Berlin Biennale (Germany) and group exhibitions at Kunsthalle Bern (Switzerland), Extra City Kunsthal, Antwerp (Belgium), Kunstverein Braunschweig, and Kunstverein Frankfurt (Germany).

CHRISTIAN KOPP is a historian who studied in Berlin and London. Together with Mnyaka Sururu Mboro, he is the co-founder of Berlin Postkolonial for whom he works until today. He has co-developed numerous exhibitions on German colonial history, including "zurückGeschaut" on the 1896 colonial exhibition in the district of Treptow in Berlin. He regularly leads guided tours in the German capital, be they in the streets or critical tours in museums. As a member of the project DEKOLONIALE, he works in cooperation with Berlin district museums to document places of colonial history and anti-colonial resistance. As a co-founder of the campaign "No Humboldt 21!," he has pushed for debates on restitution and repatriation in the public sphere and a critique of the newly rebuilt Berlin Palace.

CLÉMENTINE DELISS works across the borders of contemporary art, curatorial practice, and critical theory. She is Associate Curator at KW Institute for Contemporary Art where she runs the Metabolic Museum-University. Between 2010–2015, she directed the Weltkulturen Museum in Frankfurt instituting a new research lab for remediating collections held in ethnographic museums. She was a Fellow of the Institute of Advanced Study Berlin and has taught curatorial practice and art theory at ENSAPC Cergy, Karlsruhe University of Arts and Design, and the University of Fine Arts, Hamburg. She recently co-directed "Home Museum" for LagosPhoto20, and is developing "Generator," a new art infrastructural project together with African Artists' Foundation in Lagos. Her recent book "The Metabolic Museum" was published by Hatje Cantz in co-production with KW.

DANIEL BLAUFUKS is a visual artist from Germany and teaches as professor at the University of Fine Arts, Lisbon, Universidade Católica, Lisbon, and others. His numerous awards include outstanding achievements/distinctions or prizes, AICA-MC award for visual arts 2016, nominated for the Deutsche Bœrse Award 2015, Best Portuguese Documentary, *Indie*, Lisboa 2011, and best proposal LOOP, Barcelona, 2008, as well as Best Photography Book of the Year in the International Category of Photœspana 2007 and BES Photo Award 2007.

DIDI CHEEKA is an off-Nollywood filmmaker, film critic, and co-founder and artistic director of Lagos Film Society, an alternative cinema center dedicated to the founding of the first Arthouse cinema in Nigeria. He is the creator of the archival project "reclaiming history, unveiling memory" and, in collaboration with the Arsenal Institute of Film and Video Art, Didi has launched "Decasia—International Film Festival of Rescued Images".

DIDIER HOUÉNOUDÉ is a professor of Art History at University of Abomey-Calavi in Benin. His field of interest covers, among others, African contemporary art, patrimonial issues, urbanism, and development of African cities. He was chief assistant of the department of History and Archæology at the Social Sciences Faculty of the University of Abomey and counsellor to the Minister of Culture of Benin. He was Director of the Cultural Heritage of Benin, in charge of the heritage policy and of the Museums. Didier Houénoudé is currently Director of the National Institute of Art, Archæology and Culture Professions at University Abomey-Calavi. He has written several articles about contemporary art in Benin and about Beninese cultural heritage.

DUANE JETHRO is a Junior Research Fellow at the Centre for Curating the Archive at the University of Cape Town. He works on contested public cultures and the cultural construction of heritage. He has held a post-doctoral position in the research project "Making Differences: Transforming Museums and Heritage in the twenty-first century," at the Centre for Anthropological Research on Museums and Heritage, CARMAH, at the Humboldt University Berlin. CARMAH was founded by Professor Sharon Macdonald, and is funded by her 5-year Alexander von Humboldt Professorship. He has published in *Material Religion, the International Journal of Heritage Studies and Tourist Studies*. His book, *Heritage*

Formation and the Senses in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Æsthetics of Power, was published in 2020 by Bloomsbury Academic.

FILIPA CÉSAR is an artist and filmmaker. Since 2011 she has been researching the origins of the cinema of the African liberation movement in Guinea-Bissau as a laboratory of resistance to ruling epistemologies. Her film *Spell Reel* is the result of a research and digitization project that she initiated together with Sana na n'Hada, Flora Gomes, and many others in collaboration with the Arsenal Institute of Film and Video Art. The resulting body of work comprises 16mm films, digital archives seminars, screenings, publications, and ongoing collaborations with artists, theorists, and activists.

FRADIQUE, OR MÁRIO BASTOS, is a filmmaker from Angola and an outstanding voice in Angolan Cinema. In 2010 he and his associates set up the production company Geração 80. From 2010 to 2015 he worked on his first full-length documentary *Independence*, about Angola's Liberation Struggle. The film won the Angola's Cultural National Prize for Cinema. It was recognized as a remarkable step towards recovering Angola's collective memory.

GRACE NDIRITU is a British-Kenyan artist whose artworks are concerned with the transformation of our contemporary world, including the impact of globalisation and environmental justice, through her films, photography, paintings, and social practice projects with refugees, migrants, and indigenous groups. Works including *The Ark: Center for Interdisciplinary Experimentation*; *COVERSLUT©* fashion and economic project and the performance art series, *Healing The Museum*, have been shown around the world since 2012. Ndiritu has been featured in TIME magazine, Phaidon's *The 21st Century Art Book, Art Monthly, Apollo Magazine's* "40 under 40" list, *Elephant* Magazine, and *The Sunday Times Radio Show* with Mariella Frostrup. Her work is housed in museum collections such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), The British Council, The Modern Art Museum (Warsaw), and private collections such as the King Mohammed VI Collection in Morocco and The Walther Collections in New York and Germany. Her experimental art writing and images have been published by The Whitechapel Gallery in the *Documents of Contemporary Art* anthology series, *The Paris Review, Le Journal Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, Animal Shelter Journal, Semiotext(e)*, The MIT Press, *Metropolis M*, and The Oxford University Press.

GUIDO GRYSEELS is the general Director of the Royal Museum for Central Africa (RMCA) in Tervuren, Belgium. The RMCA is a federal scientific institute for research and information dissemination with respect to Africa in the fields of biology, earth sciences, anthropology, history, and agriculture/forestry. The RMCA has world famous reference collections for Central Africa and has international recognition for its exhibitions and research on cultural and natural heritage, societies, and natural environments of Africa.

INÊS PONTE is an Portuguese anthropologist interested in visuality and knowledge production. She combines anthropology with history as a way to explore relations between the local-regional-global from a postcolonial perspective in several geographies (Angola, India), as well as the potential of visual methods for research, namely, cinema, photography, and drawing. She is also a museum researcher (Angola, Belgium, Netherlands, Portugal, Switzerland) engaging with institutional and private archives. She has collaborated in transdisciplinary teams, crisscrossing anthropology with psychology, literature, art critic, education, and communication, in Portugal, India, the UK, and Angola. She has coordinated the research project *Mobilising Archives: photography in Southern Angola* (2017–2020).

JANA J. HAECKEL is a researcher, independent curator, and lecturer based in Brussels. She holds a PhD in art history and is associate researcher at the Lieven Geavaert Research Centre For Photography (KU Leuven/UCL). Her written and curatorial work examines visual representation and documentation strategies in contemporary art, with a focus on postcolonial theory and the ethics

of photography. In 2019–20 she supervised the international project "Everything Passes Except the Past" for the Goethe-Institut Brussels. Recent curated group exhibitions include "Resistant Faces" at Pinakothek der Moderne, Munich (2021), "Everything Passes Except The Past" at Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin (2020), "Performing the Border" at Kunstraum Niederœsterreich, Vienna (2017).

KARFA SIRA DIALLO is an editor and essayist. His topics are cultural diversity and memory work, especially in the areas of slavery and colonization. He is working on the recognition of the history of the slave trade in Bordeaux and currently heads the international association Mémoires & Partages in Bordeaux and Dakar. He organizes documentary exhibitions on memory, such as the *Frères d'âme* exhibition. Since 2014, he has been director of the communications agency KakatArt Consulting, which is specialized in memory intelligence. In 2018, he initiated the Black History Month in Bordeaux to commemorate the cultural contribution of African descendants to local and global history.

LINDA PORN is a Mexican artist who works in the visual arts and also as a theater actress. She creates traditional Mexican machê paper projects (sculpture piñatas), organizes performances about violence to motherhood and children and personal workshops. Exhibitions: MoMa (Museum of Modern Art) in New York / USA, Museu d›Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) in Barcelona / Spain, CCCB—Centre de Cultura Contemporània Barcelona / Spain and MUSAC, Museum of Contemporary Art in Castile and León / Spain.

LOTTE ARNDT is a French culture theorist. She accompanies the work of artists who critically interrogate the postcolonial present and the paradoxes of modernity from a transnational perspective. Within this context, her main focus is on works of art in colonial collections. Lotte Arndt is the author of a dissertation that was supervised jointly by the University of Paris VII and the Humboldt University in Berlin, on the subject of postcolonial changes in African cultural magazines in Paris. She lectures at

the School of Art and Design in Valencia, is a member of the Global Art Prospective (INHA Paris), and is currently heading a research project on toxic collections. Her most recent exhibition projects include: *Sammy Baloji. Extractive Landscapes*, Salzburg, Austria 2019; Salzburg Summer Academy with Sammy Baloji, 2019; *L'intrus* (curatorial work with Natasha Marie Llorens), Tabakalera Donostia, San Sebastián, Spain 2018; *Tampered Emotions. Lust for Dust*, Triangle France Marseille, France 2018; *One Sentence Exhibition*, Kadist Paris, France 2018.

MNYAKA SURURU MBORO is a Kiswahili teacher and activist. He is one of the founders and board members of the "Berlin Postkolonial e.V.," which deals with the hidden colonial history of the German capital. He has guided historical tours in Berlin for more than twenty years, especially in the so-called African quarter. Mboro has been politically active in the repatriation of human remains plundered in colonized resistance fighters and brought to Europe for racist research. He is also a member of different councils for the renaming of street names which have honored colonialists until today. He is also a member of the working group BARAZANI.BERLIN which develops counter-exhibitions to the newly rebuilt Humboldt Forum.

OVQ (ALBERTO LÓPEZ BARGADOS, ANDRÉS ANTEBI ARNÓ, PABLO GONZÁLES MORANDI, ELOY MARTÍN CORRALES) The "Observatori de la Vida Quotidiana" (OVQ) is an independent and transdisciplinary collective co-directed by the anthropologist Andrés Antebi and the historian Pablo González, who has been working since 1999 on historical and ethnographic research projects mainly in Barcelona. Its objective is to combine the tools of social research with the evocative power of the graphic and visual arts. In recent times, his works have explored themes as varied as the history of graphic reporterism, citizen demonstrations, colonial impressions in Barcelona or the construction of the historical memory of the neighborhoods from the domestic photographic backgrounds. OVQ works since 2015 in *Barcelona Colonial Metropolis* a research, exhibition, publication project in association with Alberto López Bargados, doctor in anthropology

and professor at the Department d'Antropologia Social of the Universitat de Barcelona. He has worked for several years in Mauritania, Sahara, Morocco and Cape Verde, on the field of colonial anthropology, on the impact of colonial policies on the morphology of colonized societies and on the ancient metropolis.

SALLY FENAUX BARLEYCORN is a film professional based in Barcelona. She started working as a crewmember in film and commercial shoots in 2009. She directed her first short film, *Skinhearts*, in 2014—granted by the Amsterdam Funds for the Arts-, a science fiction film both narrative and experimental that challenged our view about human touch and its future in western societies. Later she collaborated with Erika Lust as a guest director in *Touch Crimes*, a short film of ethical and feminist adult cinema that went into winning best SciFi film at the Toronto International Porn film festival in 2018. Meanwhile she has produced and shot independently short films like *Blame* (2017) and *Unburied* (2019). She continues to develop scripts and ideas for films, series, and short films in the genre of science fiction and social justice, always with a great dose of subtext and visual metaphors.

STEFANIE SCHULTE STRATHAUS is a film and video curator who lives and works in Berlin. She is co-director of Arsenal—Institute for Film and Video Art and and founding director of Forum Expanded, a section of the Berlin International Film Festival which negotiates the boundaries of cinema. Her curatorial work comprises numerous film programs, retrospectives, and exhibitions. Since 2010 her main focus lies on the Arsenal's film archive and on new concepts of curating film archives in general. In this context she has been working closely with archives in Egypt, Guinea-Bissau, Nigeria, and Sudan. She currently co-curates the project *Archive außer sich* with the International Short Film Festival Oberhausen, Film Feld Forschung GmbH, Harun Farocki Institut, SAVVY Contemporary, pong film GmbH and the masters program *Film Culture: Archiving, Programming, Presentation* at the Goethe University Frankfurt, taking place in in the framework of *The New Alphabet*, a project of Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin.

TAMER EL SAID is a filmmaker and co-founder of Cimatheque Alternative Film Center in Cairo, a multipurpose space that provides facilities, training and programming for the independent filmmaking community. He has also established an archive that houses a growing collection of diverse film-related material.

YAA ADDÆ NANTWI is a Ghanaian-British curator, writer, and teaching artist. The emancipatory potential of play is central to their practice, as is dream work. Rooted in indigenous African invention, Yaa works to reimagine cultural infrastructure and expand means of producing art histories. Drawn to collective knowledge-making, Yaa co-created "Black Diaspora Literacy: From Negritude to Drake," a ten week course supported by Tufts University's Experimental College. Later, they were a researcher for Ano Institute's Mobile Pavilion and Cultural Encyclopedia of African Art. Currently based in London, Yaa is a culture staff writer at AMAKA magazine and manages a digitalstudio, A-kra, which offers an online anticolonial art history incubator (Decolonize The Art World) and residency program (The Imaginarium). They have spoken at Southbank Centre, Nubuke Foundation, The Barbican and lead workshops with Autograph ABP, The Church of Black Feminist Thought, The Library of Africa and The African Diaspora, and Rumpus Room.

YANN LEGALL is researcher at the Institute for Art History at TU Berlin as part of the project "The Restitution of Knowledge" which investigates colonial spoliations in so-called "punitive expeditions." He has been a member of Berlin Postkolonial since 2015, an organization committed to a reappraisal of German colonialism and the historical origins of racism within German society and in the Berlin-Brandenburg region. His PhD project at the University of Potsdam is closely linked to his work with Berlin Postkolonial since it examines how human remains repatriation and restitution claims have stimulated a transnational memory of colonial violence. With the initiative Postcolonial Potsdam, he leads tours on traces of colonial and Afro-European history in the Park Sanssouci, and has newly developed an audio-guide-app of colonial traces in the city of Potsdam.

EVERYTHING PASSES
EXCEPT THE PAST
Decolonizing Ethnographic
Museums, Film Archives,
and Public Space

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EVERYTHING PASSES
EXCEPT THE PAST TOUT PASSE
SAUF LE PASSÉ ALLES VERGEHT
AUSSER DER VERGANGENHEIT

Everything Passes Except the Past takes an artistic and discursive approach to coming to grips with a colonial past that remains present in museums, public space, and image archives. The contributions in this book propose visionary theoretical, practical, and ethical foundations for future museums based on artistic and curatorial remediation of ethnographic collections. They also cover the role of colonial films in our collective and national memory, as well as the challenges and perspectives of tearing down or replacing monuments and renaming streets.

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