Cosmopolitics and Biopolitics

Ethics and Aesthetics in Contemporary Art

Edited by Modesta Di Paola

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgments

The seed of inspiration for this book was planted during the *International Conference Art and Speculative Futures* organized by the research groups AGI (Art, Globalization, Interculturality) and AASD (Art, Architecture and Digital Society) from the University of Barcelona (UB) and Mediaccions from the Open University of Catalonia (UOC). An event that took place at the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona (CCCB) and at the Arts Santa Mònica from 27th to 29th October, 2016. "Session A: Cosmopolitism" was focused on the cosmopolitical approaches from the arts aiming to describe the possibilities of mutual co-existence and living with difference, understanding that the creation of any political horizon is based on the birth of sustainable relationships with otherness. First and foremost, we thank colleagues who have participated to the Conference. This book is important because of people who have contributed to it, sharing with us their theoretical approaches and ideas about issues recently born around cosmopolitics. Therefore, we would like to wholeheartedly thank our contributing authors: Renate Dohem, lecturer at the The Open University of London; Emma Brasó, art historian and curator of the Royal College Art of London, and Christian Alonso, a predoctoral researcher and teacher at the Department of Art History of the University of Barcelona. A special word of gratitude is for the keynotes of Session A: Alpesh Kantial Patel, director of the MFA in Visual Arts Program and an Assistant Professor of Contemporary Art and Theory at Florida International University in Miami, Florida, and Ursula Biemann, artist, writer, and video essayist based in Zurich, Switzerland. They offered us interesting arguments about a new cosmopolitical aesthetic that, from within the real world, is always more closely structured in artistic practices that pursue ethical, political and biopolitical interests.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to the directors who have organized the *Conference*, Lourdes Cirlot (Department of Art History, University of Barcelona); Pau Alsina (Studies of Art and Humanities, Open University of Catalunya), and Anna Maria Guasch (Department of Art History, University of Bar-

celona), director of the research group AGI, whose lines of research propose to generate theoretical, historiographical and critical devices that allow contextualizing contemporary artistic practices in today's society, semantically structured around the values of identity, locality and interculturality in a global world.

Modesta Di Paola

Introduction: Cosmopolitical aesthetics

Modesta Di Paola

Cosmopolitical aesthetics should be understood as a specific conceptual subject matter that is directed towards two levels of interpretation. The first refers to transdisciplinary experimentation and the extension of the aesthetic into everyday life and politics, expressing itself towards a vast visual narrative that situates contemporary art in social, political, and general-public contexts as well as intimate ones. This new aesthetic orientation is the result of a natural process of sedimentation, of concepts used in an overlapping way with the aim of overcoming the impasse experienced by traditional aesthetics resulting from the impossibility of constructing a definition of art that can base itself in ideas of beauty, form, imitation, or imagination. Until recently, aesthetics has focused above all on the psychology of the user, generally revealing two types of aesthetic concentration – one "immediate", which is generated through seeing and hearing (in the 1750s, Alexander Baumgarten derived the discipline's name from the Greek *aisthanomai,* perception via senses), and the other "mediated", which is to say filtered by thought and imagination. From this perspective, the interconnection between the terms "practical" and "aesthetics" could be presented as somewhat contradictory. However, the complex relationship that art weaves today with society and politics has made it indispensable to rethink the contemporary concept of aesthetics, so much so that in the last few years important contributions have brought this discipline to a more practical and specific application, rehabilitating it as a vital argument in the theory of contemporary art. Some recent theoretical contributions – such as those of Jacques Rancière (2004, 2009), Alain Badiou (2005), Gavin Grindon (2008), and Jill Bennett (2012) – position aesthetics to detect the social, political, and technological functions that provoke new ways of perceiving, feeling, creating, and imagining contemporary art. Thus understood, we use the term "aesthetics" to refer to a field of research that, following the arguments of Jill Bennett in her book *Practical Aesthetics: Events, Affects and Art After 9/11* (2012),[1]

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1 https://www.academia.edu/19902278/Practical_Aesthetics_Events_Affects_and_Art_After_9_11_chapter_1.

is as vital to social and political theory as it is to artistic practices. This new orientation challenges the notion of an art opposed to and separated from "real life", and instead supports the idea of a new way of reading contemporary artworks, understood as part of the perceptive processes, through "practical, real world encounters" (Bennett, 2012: 2; see also Alpesh in this book).

The second level of interpretation is directed towards "cosmopolitical" thinking, understood as a "seismograph" (see Guasch in this book) that detects the ethical and political content of contemporary artistic practices, offering the opportunity to extend the conceptual basis of art history towards a more global and intercultural dimension. We refer in particular to the abundant production of discourses that during these last decades have placed cosmopolitanism on the centre of the stage, highlighting the importance of an ethics of responsibility and of hospitality as a law written into human culture.[2] Recent analysis of cosmopolitanism has been emphasising not only the importance of the notion of cultural pluralism at a theoretical level but also the need to contextualise it in contemporary social, ethical, and political realities. The question of a new cosmopolitanism is much more evident in the book *Cosmopolitanism*, in which Chakrabarty, Bhabha, Breckenridge, and Pollock highlight how cosmopolitanism cannot be understood as an objective phenomenon but rather as a kind of work in progress.[3] Cosmopolitanism has to be an open concept, which explores more than it defines discourses and practices about society and culture. When Bhabha speaks of vernacular cosmopolitanism, he refers to the mobility of this concept and the possibility of constituting a cosmopolitanism whose aim is the analysis of processes of transculturation and hybridisation and, thus, the defence of plural realities, post universalist and post-human.

From the field of history of art and visual studies we have focused especially on the fundamental contributions of Marsha Meskimmon and Nikos Papastergiadis, whose concepts about the "cosmopolitical imagination" (2011) and "aesthetic cosmopolitanism" (2012) recognise in contemporary art the interconnections between the real world of the public domain and the imagination at a more ethical and social level. These tendencies can be traced back to

2 There is a vast production of texts and essays written from very varied disciplinary approaches. It is seen above all in Jacques Derrida with his essays *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort!* (1996) and *De l'hospitalité* (1997), in the post-colonial thinking of Homi Bhabha (1994) and Kwame A. Appiah (2006), and in the transnational anthropology and sociology of James Clifford (1997), Ulrich Beck (1998) and Jürgen Habermas (1998).

3 Breckenridge, C. A.; Pollock, S.; Bhabha, H. K.; Chakrabarty, D. (eds.) (2002). *Cosmopolitanism*. Durham, NC.: Duce University Press.

biographical experiences of migrating artists, and also theorists, and to their habitual daily encounters with "newness" (Bʜᴀʙʜᴀ, 1994) in the "real-world" (Bᴇɴɴᴇᴛᴛ, 2012).

From this double perspective, by cosmopolitical aesthetics we refer to critical theories whose principles achieve a hospitable and responsible behaviour towards the world in its totality, social and natural (cosmo-political). It is here where art – detecting complexities and conflicts – reveals a specific interest in the ethical and political dialogue that is established between individuals and social groups, in many cases denouncing the utopia of the modern project of establishing universally a pacific solution between human beings and non-human life forms. Artists of various tendencies reflect on the degree of conflict provoked by the state of emergency of the social world (referring above all to weak human groups such as exiles and immigrants) and the natural world. This attitude is evident in artistic projects that offer a theoretical basis for debates about globalisation, the ethic of hospitality, and the culture of inclusion. This is to say that cosmopolitical aesthetics move between concepts such as identity of relationship, conflict, hospitality, and migration, revealing the relationship that humankind establishes with its bio-geo-political environment.

In this context, the terms and concepts used to represent hospitality, welcoming, and inclusion become inadequate and insufficient because they, in turn, represent systems and attitudes that are equally inadequate in terms of the complexity of the contemporary human and natural condition. The subjects covered in this book question, beyond real or imaginary borders, the constant mobility of bodies, artefacts, and other cultural and natural products. In a political landscape in constant expansion, one sees flows that lead people, goods, and processes into situations of conflict and upheaval. Composed as an exhibition of arguments in articles, this book seeks to outline from contemporary social and cultural theories the advances of an artistic narrative that reveals the historical, political, and ecological dimensions of the interaction between human beings and ecosystems, tracing the commitments and implications between the ethical, political, and epistemic putting into play that these can cause to arise.

Ideas and concepts about cosmopolitanism

"Cosmopolitismo" (from the Greek κόσμος (kosmos), "cosmo" and πολίτης (polítēs), "citizen") is a word first used by Diogenes of Sinope (c. 412-323 BCE). This expression was based on the marginality of the human being regarding

the life of the citizen integrated into the *polis*. The Cynical philosopher presented himself as the "citizen of the whole world",[4] an itinerant being at the margin of conventions or the roles imposed by society, living according to his most intimate and genuine nature and in accordance with it. The idea of human virtue that is identified with the "state of nature" is strengthened in the classical era with the Sophists and, above all, with the Stoics, who promoted an ideal of "culture of humanity" that could be reached by freeing oneself of individual needs (autarky) in favour of a wider perspective of the human universe. This is the cosmopolitanism referred to by Fathers of the Church, who identified the world as "the only home for everyone" (Tertullian in *De pudicitia*, c. 217-222 CE). Classical cosmopolitanism loses almost all its ethical connotation and its relationship with nature in the eighteenth century, since it began to be associated with subjects involving anti-nationalist ideas and to be configured by means of the norms of political rather than ethical behaviour. The plan for perpetual peace that could be achieved thanks to a political league of nations became, with the Abbé de Saint-Pierre[5] and above all with Immanuel Kant (1795), the focus of the political and philosophical ideals of the European Enlightenment.

In his essay *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*,[6] Kant tries to construct politically an international peace capable of guaranteeing a legal security for all citizens. The need to leave the state of nature – which is to say, the state of war – leads Kant to formulate his idea of peace: this cannot be based on the disastrous consequences of war, or its economic, social, and moral mechanisms. On the contrary, Kant's peace is of a legal variety, regarding law as the means for a real change at the institutional level. From this perspective, Kant suggests an idea of international public law that is based on specific and rational articles. One of these, the third article of the *Peace*, is based on cosmopolitical law, the condition of universal hospitality. Hence the formation of a "cosmopolitical constitution" would correspond to the building of a universal State able to guarantee the rights of all men and women, given that all are citizens of the world to the same degree. The citizen would thus be an inhabitant of the world more than a foreigner, a person who moves physically from

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4 Diogene Laërtius in *Vite dei filosofi* dedicates a substantial section to Diogenes the Cynic and the fame built around his enigmatic figure.

5 Abbé de Saint-Pierre (1713 [t. I and II], 1717 [t. III]). *Projet pour rendre la paix pérpetuelle en Europe*. Utrecht: Antoine Schouten; re-edit. Paris: Garnier, 1981; Fayard, 1986.

6 Original title *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf* (trans. 2003, *To Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. Hackett Publishing).

one side to another of the planet, an active subject who opens his interior and intersubjective vision to the public and political interest. With his vision, Kant has elaborated some conceptual positions of considerable contemporary relevance: in the first place, that cosmopolitanism is not a philanthropic concept but rather the right of a foreigner not to be treated with hostility; secondly, that the right to visit corresponds to any citizen according to the law of sharing *with-* the world; and thirdly, that public law needs a cosmopolitical thinking to oversee the rights of all men and women in general.

During Romanticism, in line with modernity, man was considered to be the centre of the world (anthropocosmism). In this atmosphere and thanks to the socialist movement and proletarian internationalism, the idea was developed that cosmopolitanism was an inherited attitude of the bourgeoisie and national nihilism. The twentieth century has tried to recover the Kantian vision of cosmopolitical law under democratic values. Ulrich Beck in his *The Cosmopolitan Manifesto* theorises that "without a cosmopolitan democracy we move towards a technocratic world society" (Beck, 1998: 30). According to him, transnational conflicts and dialogues have to be set out explicitly and organised. What is the objective of this global dialogue? The values and structures of a cosmopolitical democratic society:

> In the age of globalisation, there is no easy escape from this democratic dilemma. It cannot be solved simply by moving towards "cosmopolitan democracy". The central problem is that without a politically strong cosmopolitan consciousness and corresponding institutions of global civil society and public opinion, cosmopolitan democracy remains, for all the institutional fantasy, no more than a necessary utopia. The decisive question is whether and how a consciousness of cosmopolitan solidarity can develop. The Communist Manifesto was published 150 years ago. Today, at the beginning of a new millennium, it is time for a Cosmopolitan Manifesto (*ibidem*: 29).

The cosmopolitan, in other words, is a citizen of the world whose responsibilities are based on a post-national conception of the State, of justice, of science, and of art. The renovation of cosmopolitical ideas during the final decades of the twentieth century has been characterised by democratic ideas, driven by the constitutions of the League of Nations and then the United Nations.

Jürgen Habermas, returning to the question of Kantian cosmopolitanism in his text "The Constitutionalization of International Law and the Legitimacy Problems of a Constitution for a World Society", has proposed a global political order as a form of democracy (Habermas, 1998, chap. 7). Globalisation and the formation of plural societies – characterised by conflicts and cultural ten-

sions – make necessary the reorganisation of relationships between states, so a more concrete form of a global democratic society can be achieved, beyond national boundaries. To this end, according to Habermas, politicians should opt for a cosmopolitan orientation and co-operate through a "common will". A new definition of universalism, sensitive to differences, would be the key to reconsidering international law in which inclusion – a concept understood not so much as assimilation but rather as opening – has a fundamental role in imagining a global society constituted politically on different levels. In our contemporaneity, together with the idea of nation-states there are also global organisations such as the United Nations. However, between these two levels, there is an intermediary transnational level that has still to be developed. Habermas claims that if this level were realised, global players would lose the right to wage war that is today the monopoly of sovereign governments. An international community, at a supranational level, would take the form of a reformed United Nations, a society of "others" that would share differences.

From this perspective, Habermas seems to be the direct heir of Kant's philosophy about cosmopolitan law (Delahunty; Yoo, 2010), certainly not thought of in the form of a world characterised by the League of Nations, but rather as a democracy marked by the functional and normative centrality of law as a legitimate medium for social integration. It is interesting to observe that although he advances a careful reading of Kant's text, Habermas does not examine the third article in which the analysis of hospitality was treated rigorously.[7] In his ideal cosmopolitan State, Habermas proposes law as the universal and global form of inclusion, for which it would not be possible to think of the assimilation of others within a communitarian politics. In this sense, Habermas's omission in relation to the ethics of Kantian hospitality represents the idea of a cosmopolitan state that includes the right to diversity and where, as a result, hospitality no longer has any reason to exist.

The renewal of cosmopolitical ideals is on the rise at the start of the twenty-first century. As it is easy to imagine, some of the discourses about cosmopolitanism today – especially those related to the phenomenon of the globalisation of the economy and of information, but also to terrorist attacks after 9/11, the humanitarian crises caused by armed conflicts, and mass migration – have been fed both by the Kantian principles of a universal vision of hospitality (Brock and Brighouse, 2005; Benhabib, 2006) and by the foun-

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7 See note 16 of the chapter "Ospitalità impossibile. L'integrazione nell'ordine dell'ospitalità" by Tito Marci, in Cotta, Gabriella (ed.), *Concordia discors. La convivenza politica e i suoi problema*, *op. cit.*, p. 187.

dation of a single world government capable of proposing specific solutions to the crisis of the nation-states (HEATER, 1996, 2006; SKOLIMOWSKI, 2003). *After Cosmopolitanism* (2013), the book edited by Rosi Braidotti, Patrick Hanafin, and Bolette Blaagaard, should be read from this latter persepctive. In this work, they put forward the idea that our globalised condition forms the central bond of contemporary cosmopolitan claims and that a radical transformation of cosmopolitanism is needed as a possible solution. Cosmopolitanism does not have to refer to a transcendental ideal but rather to the material and real condition of global interdependencies. To do this, what is called for is a cosmopolitanism that is also a cosmopolitics, in the sense of a more attentive interest in the material reality of our social and political situation and an interest less focused on its metaphorical implications. In her article "Becoming-world", Braidotti argues that cosmopolitanism as an economic and social concept can be considered an affirmative and useful response for interpreting current practices. However, cosmopolitanism should perform a mutation that starts with understanding the importance of the structural immanence in the model of ethical-political relations in the double philosophical concept "becoming-world" (BRAIDOTTI, 2013: 8-27).

From cosmopolitanism to the cosmopolitical aesthetics

In recent years, new theories associated with neomaterialism and geo-eco-philosophical thinking – above all from Gregory Bateson, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Donna Haraway, Rosi Braidotti, Deane Curtin, Karen J. Warren, and John Protevi – have enriched the possibilities of reconsidering the epistemology and ethics of human relationships in their reconfiguration in the extended field of the sciences and ecology, including in the cosmopolitical the natural element connected to the social and the cultural. The loss of the natural element, of the vision of the vegetable and animal world, in favour of a politics of relationships that are established between countries has coincided with the absolute annulment of the balance between *cosmo* and humanity, drawn in terms of power and dominance. In the colonial vision, just like other ethnic groups – historically characterised by relations of tension between dominator and dominated – nature too must be domesticated and controlled.

From these premises, it seems impossible to find assonance between the concept of cosmopolitanism and ecology, a field of study that is mainly concerned with the environment. Seemingly different from each other, cosmopolitanism describes the relationship that is established between human beings,

ethics, and the politics that regulate the living together of people of different nationalities, while ecology is related to vital processes, to interactions and adaptations, to the movement of matter and energy through communities of life, and the development of ecosystems. Social ecologies today demonstrate the interdependence between the humanitarian and ecological crises provoked by a modern system of a central and centralising character. Thus, the distance of disciplinary interests has recently become a topic of discussion in academic fields and in artistic praxis that, overcoming the modern acceptance of cosmopolitanism, try to develop the idea of cosmopolitical, understood more as an ethical and political tendency born from the willingness to find positive and responsible solutions to create a radical change in relationships between people and between people and other, non-human, forms of life.

One more direct relationship between the cosmopolitical and ecology is offered to us by the Swiss artist Ursula Biemann who, moving in a hybrid disciplinary field, has recently carried out a major artistic project entitled *Forest Law* (2014), in collaboration with the Brazilian architect Paulo Tavares. The project consists of a synchronised video projection and a bilingual artist's book, *Forest Law | Selva Jurídica. On the Cosmopolitics of Amazonia*, which shows the influence of Michel Serres's book *The Natural Contract* (1992 [1995]) and the legal action taken by several international lawyers to protect the ecosystem, *in primis*, of the Amazon forest.

During the congress *Art and Speculative Futures* held in Barcelona in 2016, Biemann gave a lecture, *The Cosmopolitical Forest* (2014-2016), whose importance consists of laying the artistic and conceptual foundations of a cosmopolitical aesthetics understood as the discursive praxis between living human and non-human systems.[8] *The Cosmopolitical Forest* is based on a global search concerning the territorial and climatic changes caused by large-scale extraction activities and the engineering of territorial systems. The artist thus focuses her attention on the social and biological micro-dynamics caused by the escalating competition between states and multinational corporations over the control of these strategic natural resources. The fieldwork brings the artist to confront realities and encounters that allow the development of a work which mixes the aesthetic of the documentary, vast cinematic landscapes, poetry, and academic results, narrating a planetary reality in rapid mutation. Ursula Biemann's theoretical intervention has naturally opened a big debate that has seen the outlining of the crucial difference between cosmopolitanism and *cosmopolitics*. This

8 http://geobodies.org.

difference lies in the fact that humanity is no longer the centre of the cosmos, but rather part of life itself in its most absolute vitalist configurations, in its cycles and readjustments, migrations, the movement and matter that is transformed by reconnecting to the "common" space of the Earth. Directed as it is towards future ways of being, the cosmopolitical system generally intersects the field of the core competences in aesthetics, imagining other possibilities of existence in which the relationship between an ethical and juridical dimension of human and non-human life should be balanced. More specifically, for Rick Dolphijn, the cosmopolitical is guided by two closely interrelated themes: (1) "being cosmopolitan", as the modernist idea about cosmopolitism in which modern philosophy sees the human being as the starting point and the centre of knowledge of the world; and (2) "being cosmopolitical", as the post-human and non-human idea of the politics of everything. To be cosmopolitical is not so much about taking the human being as the centre of a global world ("cosmo-politic") and much more about the politics of how everything works in relationship to many forms of knowledge that interact with each other. The goal of cosmopolitical projects is the way in which human knowledge is confronted with other ways of knowledge and how the human being opens himself or herself up to other forms of being, which is a very difficult and fragile process of what we identify as the post-human and non-human knowledge of the cosmos. Here, the cosmo-*political* must be understood as the common world that links human beings and non-human beings together.[9]

From this definition, cosmopolitical aesthetics combine ethics and politics not only between humans but also between humans and other non-human forms of life. Within the international debate about the human rights of having free access in the "world territory" (Kant), today there is a drive for a strong ethical and legal posture designed to protect the right of nature to a harmonious existence with the human being. In accordance with holistic thinking, in violating a person's individual rights one also violates the rights of nature itself, for which reason nature itself must be defined as a legal entity. Like the life of human beings, nature possesses a set of inalienable rights, including the right to comprehensive respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structures, functions, and evolutionary processes. The rights of nature are related to the modern cosmology that tends to proportion

9 See the recording of the debate about the difference between cosmopolitanism and cosmopolitics, available on the University of Barcelona website, in which various speakers at the congress, among which one can highlight Ursula Biemann herself and Rick Dolphijn, outline a post-human definition of the cosmopolitical: http://www.ub.edu/ubtv/video/the-cosmopolitical-forest-round-table.

to human beings and in general all living beings the same right to existence. Transdisciplinary artistic projects favour biodiversity and its development in communities, in accordance with the desire for conservation and restoration of the environment and providing a real critique regarding the relationship between humanitarian and natural crises, the movements of human masses, and migrations in the ecosystems. The understanding of the multiple implications that these conditions bring with them in the sphere of the relationships between human beings and non-human entities remains the fundamental problem of human and natural sciences, and offers possibilities for artistic production and contemporary culture.

Conclusions

The book *Cosmopolitics and Biopolitics: Ethics and Aesthetics in Contemporary Art* seeks to trace cosmopolitical aesthetics understood not only as the union of art, science, and the right to survive, but also as the prism through which artistic practices are developed around questions connected to transculturality, migration, nomadism, post-gender subjectivities, social and natural sustainability, and new digital technologies. This book's authors fashion a narrative that moves in the territory of "inbetweenness", between hospitality and hostility, between welcoming and conflict, between languages and intermediate languages, science, and survival in a world that is "common" more than global.

Marsha Meskimmon, in her book *Contemporary Art and The Cosmopolitan Imagination*, claims that the first step to becoming cosmopolitical is to imagine ourselves at home in the world, and where our home is not a fixed place but rather a process of mediation between materiality and spirituality, between ourselves, other men and women, and other places. To emphasise this process of moving between locational identity and the ethics of commitment, she proposes the concept of "cosmopolitical imagination", which is to say the interconnection between conversation, imagination, and art at an ethical more than political level. From these premises, the art historian Anna Maria Guasch in her article "Cosmopolitanism and global contemporary art" analyses the artistic practices of recent decades from the perspective of cosmopolitanism, showing the interconnections between transnational and translocal cultural phenomena. From the analysis of various exhibitions produced under the cosmopolitical perspectives of hospitality and responsibility, the writer detects various characteristics of contemporary art that incorporate above all the concept of "home" through the ethical processes of belonging.

In "Affect: Belonging", Alpesh Kantilal Patel explores the effects of "affect" in the formation of a practical and social aesthetics, taking as specific references three historical events: the death of turban-wearing Sikhs misidentified as terrorists after the attacks of 11 September 2001 in the United States; the death of Brazilian Jean Charles de Menezes, misidentified by British police as a terrorist shortly after the terrorist attacks of 7 July 2005 in London, and the death of teenager Trayvon Martin, misidentified as a criminal by George Zimmerman in Sanford, Florida in 2012. Patel considers a public-art memorial designed by London-based Mary Edwards to commemorate the death of Menezes, artworks by Kehinde Wiley and Adrian Margaret Smith Piper, and a cartoon by Los Angeles-based Carter Goodrich that appeared on the cover of the *New Yorker* soon after 9/11. Through the theorisation of how, in our visual culture, these artworks are important to the reconstruction of the notion of "home", he raises the question of how certain subjects are considered as "belonging" and others as not.

Renate Dohmen in her article "The global, the post-abyssal and the cosmopolitical: Casting a creative post-underdeveloped, post-peripheral, tropical eye", offers – through de Sousa Santosian post-abyssal perspectives – one possible creative response to the absence of the indigenous voice in global contemporary art, which is central to creating a positive future from the current artistic moment. More specifically, her discussion is focused in terms of a reading of the work of the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija through the lens of Amazonian conceptions of the convivial and of Deleuze-Guattarean aesthetics through the traditional art of Tamil housewives.

"The three Janez Janšas" by Emma Brasó is a description of three Slovenian parafictional artists who in 2007 officially changed their names to that of the leader of the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party, Janez Janša. Brasó argues that numerous artists from a broad geographical background are currently exploring their identity as authors through fiction. The officially-sanctioned name change was presented as a documentary film, *My Name is Janez Janša*, in which the central focus is the relationship between performative artistic action and everyday life. Through this fictional model, cosmopolitanism is characterised as an empirical material for reflecting on the formation of cultures, very similar to the process that Ulrich Beck describes as a polygamy of place that leads to the globalisation of biographies, a fundamental aspect for understanding the plural identities that are created in the contemporary global world (BECK, 2000 [1997]). From here we could pause in reading Brasó's article, extending artistic practice towards the production of "polygamies of identities" by means of creative fiction.

The phenomenon of globalisation, as I have noted, has changed the meaning of the terms local and global above all because of the constant movement of bodies and goods. From a detailed description of the concept of hospitality understood in its double Latin meaning (host and hostile), I argue in my article "(In)hospitable art. Artistic narratives in cosmopolitical aesthetics" that the phenomenon of interconnections has generated a new form of understanding contemporary art based on the twin nature of cultural experience, that specific to a place and that connected to the rest of the world in its totality. Reflecting on certain works by artists resident in Sicily, one of the focal points of contemporary migration, my focus is on the artistic narratives that are adapted in today's societies, characterised by structural inequalities, regimes of deterritorialisation and controlled mobility (as in the case of the militarised physical and natural borders of the Mediterranean Sea), operating according to an economic logic that ignores the real ecological limits of the planet.

Christian Alonso, in his essay entitled "Placing life at the centre: towards a more-than-human cosmopolitics", departs from the premise that current environmental and socio-economic crises highlight the need to abandon notions of human individuality or collective unity as points of access to any discussion on the value and operability of the concept of cosmopolitism. He argues that a materialist-vitalist approach provides an ontological horizon that enables the incorporation of non-human beings in the field of subjectivity and ethics, insofar as it accounts for other-than-human entanglements and nature-culture feedback loops in the plane of radical immanence on the basis of a cartography of uneven power relations. He explores this hypothesis through the analysis of artists' collective Quimera Rosa's bio-art project *Transplant* as an expression of a post-human cosmopolitics inasmuch as it incorporates sustainable ethics based on a notion of life-centred egalitarianism, triggering multiple becomings with sexualised, racialised, and naturalised otherness.

These theoretical positions try to establish around the new concept of the cosmopolitical an alternative aesthetics and ethics that point to forms of imagination and creativity less ideal and metaphorical and more concrete and real. Cosmopolitical aesthetics are associated more with the idea of individuating differences than with the presumed similarities, revealing not only the conflicts and contrasts that are born in the encounter, but also the possibilities of aesthetic, moral, political, and social growth in a common post-universal and post-human world.

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Cosmopolitanism and global contemporary art

Anna Maria Guasch

From the perspective of cosmopolitanism, many artistic practices of the last decade represent a true seismograph in which some of these paradoxes derived from the global intertwine and not only reflect the various transnational and translocal exchanges that are products of the global economy but can also even change the way in which we imagine, understand, and commit ourselves to the world and to others. And this from a fusion between what Marsha Meskimmon, in the text *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination*, calls cosmopolitan imagination, locational identity, and the ethics of commitment, understood as the new version of the politics of responsibility in the age of globalisation (Meskimmon, 2011: 5). How can we both literally and metaphorically be cosmopolitans from our place of origin, avoiding simplistic myths of origin and authenticity? How to analyse the different relationships between the global and the local without this becoming a mere exercise of the domination of one (the global) over the other (the local)? Can questions derived from cultural hybridisation and diaspora help us to overhaul the traditional conventions about cultural identity and interactions between cultures?

Fully reclaiming the debates about a concept of place that even overcomes the anthropological concept of place as a register of cultures and identities, what is imperative is a process of deconstructing the space of the nation as a natural category and as a homogenous place with its closed frontiers and its traditional sense of belonging. A process that situates us in a territory marked by "nomadology" in which cosmopolitanism is perceived as a metaphor for mobility, migration, and coexistence within difference, in opposition to xenophobia and limited notions of sovereignty. It is in this sense that what counts are notions of the anti-hegemonic and anti-homogenising potential of cosmopolitanism, in opposition to the power associated with Western tendencies of an imperialist hue. And, finally, the cosmopolitanism to which we allude is also perceived as a search for peace through the development of a profound sense of ethics and morality towards other human beings everywhere.

Genealogy of the cosmopolitan

With a wide genealogy that would have to go back to Diogenes of Sinope, also known as Diogenes the Cynic (c. 412 BCE), the founder of the cynical movement in ancient Greece, and passing through the foundational text of cultural modernity, Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace* (1795),[1] which establishes a *ius coosmpolitanism* (a cosmopolitan rule with its own laws that proclaims the right of the foreigner not to be treated with hostility when arriving at another person's territory) as the master principle for protecting people from war and to guarantee a universal hospitality, it is not strange that, under the conditions of the historical moment of globalisation, a cosmopolitan identity should emerge here and there which fights for the creation of a movement of global citizens, thanks also to new technologies, space travel and the images of our fragile planet floating in the immensity of space, the theory of global warming, and other ecological aspects of our collective existence.

The most contemporary visions of the cosmopolitan continue to be in part influenced by Kant's invitation to free circulation, although limited by the rights of sovereignty, of people across borders, qualities that are a legacy of the values of the Enlightenment that sought to transform the way of perceiving truth and beauty. But it is clear that, in the contemporary context, the rise of cosmopolitan thought is directly linked to the loss of faith in the modern conception of secular national identity and the decline of the concept of the nation-state united to that of internationalism.

In this line, two texts of the philosopher Jacques Derrida reclaim Kantian cosmopolitanism and its theory of hospitality as a way of confronting the growing nationalism and civil conflicts in many cultures. "Pure" hospitality is not only a principle or a concept, it is also a law inscribed in culture. And although this law is limited by the local legal system and specific types of conditions, it can nonetheless open itself to a new concept of the city, to another international law, and to a future democracy. *Cosmpolites de tous les pays, encore*

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1 Kant refers to cosmopolitanism not as a philanthropic question but as one of law. Hospitality means the right of the stranger not to be treated as an enemy when he arrives at the land of the other. Kant argues that one can refuse to accept him if there is the danger of destruction, but inasmuch as he pacifically occupies his place, he should not be treated with hostility. It is not the right to be a permanent visitor that one asks for. What is needed is more a special agreement to give the stranger the right to become an inhabitant for a certain period of time. It is only the right to a temporary permanence, a right to enjoy what all people have. Originally no one has more rights than another to occupy a particular part of the Earth. See James Bohman and Matthias Lutz-Bachmann (eds.) (1997).

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un effort ![2] is the text of a lecture written by Derrida for the International Parliament of Writers and read on 21 March 1996 in Strasbourg with the aim of reflecting on hospitality and cosmopolitanism through the creation of city-refuges as a response to the exclusion of the "other" and the rise in racism.

Apart from the field of philosophy and that of ethics, the concept of cosmopolitanism took on an important role in the context of postcolonial discourses and of a transnational anthropology, and in this regard the contributions of James Clifford, Homi Bhabha, and Kwame A. Appiah stand out. James Clifford, in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (1997), understands the role of travel as the cosmopolitan modus operandi as a "translation term". And in this sense, Clifford suggests speaking of "discrepant cosmopolitanism", which would avoid both the excessive localism of cultural relativism and the global vision of a capitalist or technocratic monoculture. In this travelling culture of which Clifford speaks, cosmopolitan and travelling people would exist together with locals and natives. Clifford's aim is not simply to invert the strategies of cultural localisation or the invention of the native and he insists:

> This is not nomadology. Rather, what is at stake is a comparative cultural studies approach to specific histories, tactics, everyday practices of dwelling and travelling: travelling-in-dwelling, dwelling-in-travelling.[3]

From another point of view, in his essay "The Vernacular Cosmopolitan" (Bhabha, 2000 and 2013), Homi Bhabha refers to cosmopolitanism in the context of British minorities and migrants. Maintaining the language, food, festivals, and religious customs of their ancestors is a way of claiming their own survival almost as a civic virtue. Bhabha holds that the local and specific histories of minorities, often repressed and threatened, are written "between the lines" of dominant cultural practices. And this is done through the concept of "cultural translation", proposed as a renegotiation of traditions. Bhabha writes that aesthetic and cultural values come from these borders *between* languages, territories, and communities and that, strictly speaking, they do not belong to a single culture. They are rather about values produced in practices that are the fruit of cross-linking and acquire meaning as cultures in understanding that they are intimately related to each other. Bhabha says that his own work as

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2 Translated into English as *On Cosmpolitanism and Forgiveness* (Derrida, 2001).
3 Clifford, J. (1997). *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

a literary critic has implied a similar process of finding his own voice between the lines of other people's texts, in the form of a translation analogous to this process (Bhabha, 2000: 139 and 140). The position of the cultural translator can be occupied, in his or her own particular field of reference, only by the figure of a privileged author or a text. And the figure of the translator is none other than that of the vernacular cosmopolitan (*ibid.*: 140).

In his most recent reflection about cosmopolitanism,[4] Homi Bhabha replaces the adjective "vernacular" with that of "insurgent" and, starting from Kant's concept of cosmopolitanism, links cosmopolitan norms to the global ethic. For Bhabha, cosmopolitanism is not what "you are" but rather what "you do": a political, aesthetic, and ethical practice. And always as a practice beyond racism and elitism and even beyond identity. Human rights, questions of hospitality, sovereignty, security or community, peripheral subjects, the exploited, or refugees are the new "citizens" of the new global "polis" which, beyond the figure of the cosmopolitan of modernity – the modern equivalent of Homer's Ulysses, Swift's Gulliver, or the *flâneur* of Baudelaire or Benjamin – does not raise questions of philanthropy so much as those of human rights. What counts, according to Bhabha, are no longer the ontological questions derived from cosmopolitanism (as occurred in Kant) but their performative dimension: how the new political subjects, and above all vernacular subjects, place an attitude of "insurgency" ahead of a homogenous era of security. Hence "insurgent cosmopolitanism" necessarily implies restructuring the scope and power of the concept of citizenship and its connections with power and legitimacy.

As Kwame Anthony Appiah, one of the most prominent thinkers of the "global cosmopolitan", argues, the borders between nations, states, cultures, and societies are morally irrelevant (Appiah, 2006). And it is then when it becomes possible to speak of a cosmopolitan community in which individuals of different places establish relationships of mutual respect in spite of their different beliefs (religious, political, etc.). Appiah, in referring to the "new cosmopolitanism", asks how we can connect our skill or capacity to respond ("response-ability") to our responsibility within the global community. And this after recognising the importance of the strategic principle of a conversation that suggests opening our "self" to "others" more from an imaginative commitment than from a mere assimilation. As Appiah argues:

4 Lecture given by Homi Bhabha during the congress *Former West. Documents, Constellations, Prospects* (Berlin, 18-24 March 2013).

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Conversations across boundaries of identity – whether national, religious, or something else – begin with the sort of imaginative engagement you get when you read a novel or watch a movie or attend to a work of art that speaks from some place other than your own.[5]

In the essay "Rooted Cosmopolitanism", Appiah quotes a father's final message to his son in which he urged him to remember that he is a citizen of the world (APPIAH, 2005: 104). Appiah not only uses a historical basis to demonstrate the longevity of the term in question but also understands cosmopolitanism as construction of the late twentieth century, precipitated in giant steps by communication over the internet, and he presents it as a description of global migrations and the interactions that have been taking place for centuries. And on this point Appiah ties all analysis of cosmopolitanism to a question of race, putting all the emphasis on the ethical obligations that are inherent to the construction of a personal view of oneself as an individual and social human being (*ibidem*: 107).

The exhibition environment

Within the exhibition environment there is an increasing abundance of exhibitions that, as with the concept of cosmopolitanism, evoke mixed feelings, giving greater visibility to a complex variety of intercultural experiences and places of appropriation and exchange. In 2007, the Espai d'Art Contemporani de Castelló (EACC) presented an exhibition project, *Nuestra hospitalidad* (ALONSO, 2007) which investigated the dynamics of the city of Castelló and the dialogues between its inhabitants and its visitors (visitors who could be in the position of tourists or of passers-by) through the activation of the term "hospitality", a word that dates back to ancient Greece but with clear allusions here also to the Buster Keaton film *Our Hospitality*, a silent comedy from 1923 which tells the story of Willie McKay, immersed in the battle between the Canfield and McKay clans. And this within the framework of a city, Castelló, which has become more heterogeneous ("coloured") through the impact of migration and which has generated multiple figures both metaphorical and real of these encounters between "natives" and "foreigners", between the Canfields and the McKays. Hence the instructions of the curator, Rodrigo Alonso,

5 APPIAH, K. A. (2006). *Cosmopolitanism: Ethic in a World of Strangers.* New York and London: W. W. Norton, p. 85.

to the five invited artists, from South Africa (Gregg Smith), Colombia (Milena Bonilla), Cuba (Oriol Guillén), Romania (Liliana Basarab), and Barcelona (Claudio Zulian). Instructions through which the artists were invited to carry out a kind of field work following almost literally the "working route" of any good postcolonial ethnographer: journey, participatory observation, dialogue, mapping, interaction, and a metaphorical use of documentation.

This explains the need for each artist not to resort to history, nor to archives, nor to specialist opinions, but rather to work with direct observations and personal feelings. These dialogic spaces around the duality of terms such as "host" and "newcomer" were clearly shown in Gregg Smith's video, which tells of the experience of the "local" who returns home (after a long period away from it) and discovers a completely new city, and in that of Claudio Zulian, who set the camera within Romanian families whose knowledge of the city of Castelló comes to them through the oral "documents" of their family members. Contact with "locals" from their nucleus of "origin" (their homes) was manifested in the work of Oriol Guillén through his installation of doors, lent for the period of the exhibition by their owners, which when passed through bring us, through video monitors, to the faces of their owners, their ways of living, surrounded by their belongings, and, finally, to their new "roots".

Later, *The Unexpected Guest. Art, writing and thinking on hospitality* was the title of the Liverpool Biennial of 2012 which, through artists including Doug Aitken, John Akomfrah, Dora García, Trevor Paglen, Superflex, and Akram Zaatari, centred its attention on the difficulty of being a host, of being a guest, and potentially of becoming someone who is not welcome. In the Liverpool project, hospitality appeared in many forms: as a welcoming of foreigners, as an attitude and code of conduct, and as a metaphor that regulates the stability of notions such as body, territory, politics, and the movement of data.

As Lorenzo Fusi holds, hospitality – derived from its Latin etymology *hospes,* which means both "host" and "guest", and *hostis,* which means "foreigner" but also "enemy" – is an ambiguous term (FUSI, 2012: 11 and 12). And it even shares the same etymological root as "hospital" and "hospice". The network of associations and intersections would create a connecting thread that links a variety of institutions, agencies, and disciplines under the same roof. Fusi suggests resorting to other systems such as biology, physics, and medicine to reinterpret the old concept of hospitality beyond the host/guest dichotomy and, specifically, to refer to notions of biopolitics and biopower, as formulated by Foucault and articulated by Agamben in his theory of the "bare life" and the "exception" in relation to the construction of sovereignty

and the legal-political order. In this sense, the immigrant, the guest, and the refugee would represent this "state of exception" or the component of the "bare life" (Agamben, 1998).

From the title of a 1953 work by Duchamp, *A Guest + A Host = A Ghost*, a good number of the works presented in the Biennial did not seek the positive side of hospitality but rather to reflect a "subtle violence" that leads us to questions such as: what are the psychological dynamics that prompt us to welcome the stranger/foreigner within our intimate space and what are the implications of this way of proceeding? Within this context, Sylvie Blocher's project, *The Series: Speeches* (2012), used a series of videos of singers whose songs were substituted by voices with various readings about the paradoxes of hospitality from Jacques Rancière, Barack Obama, Karl Marx, Angela Davis, Édouard Glissant, and Michel Foucault. The artists "rewrites" a new text about how hospitality, more than welcoming everyone, explores the ways through which bodies, gestures, and works remain united to the concept of community. New works by Sun Xun, a large-scale installation of drawings and animation in which he explores the cultural traditions of hospitality in his native China (*Ancient film,* 2012), as well as Doug Aitken's video installation (*The Source,* 2012), an approach by the artist to public art through conversations with other artists (the late Mike Kelley), film actresses (Tilda Swinton), and musicians such as Jack White, seem to reaffirm the end of the era of hospitality and the need to define a new relational structure.

This was also reflected in the work of Suzanne Lacy, *Storying Rape* (2012), a series of performances in which the artist tried to define hospitality as a "relational structure" based on cohabitation, in which everyone has the right to be in the same space at the same time, a structure in which inalienable human rights are not questioned or granted as a gift by someone who has more privileges or authority than others. The "right to be" cannot be confused with an "act of generosity", Fusi concluded (Fusi, 2012: 15). The Biennial also referred to – as can be seen in the works of the group Superflex*,* founded in 1993 by Jakob Fenger, Rasmus Nielsen, and Bjørnstjerne Christiansen *(Foreigners, please don't leave us alone with the Danes!,* 2014), and of Mona Hatoum *(Doormat II,* 2000) – inhospitality and how, within the so-called "fortress Europe" and in light of increasing restrictions on immigration, an unfamiliar fear and a xenophobic psychosis were generated among people of the old continent towards practices and international agreements such as the Schengen Treaty.

A new exhibition – or, to be more specific, a platform of nine exhibitions, workshops, and events – *Host & Guest,* celebrated at the Museum of Tel Aviv in 2013, started out from the philosophical, political, literary, architectural,

and artistic reflections derived from Kant's essay *Perpetual Peace* (*Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein philosophischer Entwurf,* 1795) and Derrida's writings about hospitality linked to the seminars he gave in Paris in 1996 (DERRIDA; DUFOURMANTELLE, 1997). Different artists such as Dora García, Raqs Media Collective, Kimsooja, and David Tartakover worked on the possible meanings of the words "hospice", "hostile", "host", "hostage", "guest", "ghost", and "hospitality", terms which in English derive from a similar origin and describe a network of obligations and tensions that since long ago had characterised the relations between host and guest. In what conditions does the guest arrive? As an adventurer or as a refugee? As a vagabond or as a victim? To conquer or to collapse? And what happens when the visitor arrives at our door and we reply to him with new questions related to the colonisation of language, to the symbiotic and sometimes parasitic ties between cultural institutions and their workers and consumers, to the problematic of the political-geographical border zones and other concepts referring to the unknown, to exile, or to the host as hostage?

Conclusion

From a cosmopolitan perspective, more than directly relating identity to place or to the act of sharing a secure home, the works included in this turn seek to restructure the concept of the citizen and his ties with power and legitimisation. Thus, we could speak of a cosmopolitanism that evokes mixed feelings, that names and makes more visible a wide spectrum of intercultural experiences, places of appropriation, and of interchange. A cosmopolitanism that recognises places of interplanetary crossing: complex and unfinished routes between the local and the global, including a sense of cultural diversity beyond rigid geographical borders. And incorporating the concept of "home" through processes of belonging and ethics, both of ideas of dwelling and of hospitality.

All of which would place us facing a radical change which, more than asking what is it that works of art show us about the world, asks us to what degree we can help ourselves to participate and potentially change the parameters through which we negotiate with it. And always starting from the supposition that spaces and subjects are mutually constituted in a dynamic exchange and that subjects are disembodied, transindividual, and generous – that is to say, open to encounters with many different "others":

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Reconceiving subjectivity beyond the isolating fortress of monolithic individualism has important ramifications for thinking differently about the subjects interpellated through the impact of globalisation.[6]

According to M. Meskimmon, contemporary art circulates across the length and breadth of the same paths as global capital, and its signs cross the routes traversed at the same time by powerful metropolitan elites and migrants left to their economic fate. And it is not surprising to think that the different processes of cohabitation and living that individuals generate through these economies must be articulated by the route of work. And the now habitual processes of "representation" – such as one's own autobiographical translation, one's common place, or one's experiences of belonging to a transnational movement – are not always sufficient.

M. Meskimmon's thesis is that any aesthetic intervention in the processes of interweaving concepts of place and individual provide new bases to reconsider questions of knowledge, agency, and political commitment in a globalised world. What is important is how to negotiate the sense of belonging to a place from the critical reclaiming of a subjectivity understood as an inter-subjectivity, an interbody practice, embedded within multiple levels of interchange, and, more specifically, a generous and emotional form of subjectivity in conversation with others "in" and "through" difference. Hence resorting to the concept of cosmopolitanism, which we understand as a specific and relational matter, directed at a cultural diversity beyond narrow and defined geopolitical borders. A cosmopolitanism tied to the concept of home through processes of belonging (feeling at home) and of ethics, through ideas both of dwelling and of hospitality (HEDETOFT; HJORT, 2002. Cit. MESKIMMON, 2011: 6 and 7).

A cosmopolitanism that asks us how can we connect with each other more through dialogue than monologue and what is aesthetic is the most profound sense of the word: as a politics that operates in the interface between materiality and imagination, between the individual and the social, the local and the global. And, as M. Meskimmon argues, the first step to convert ourselves into cosmopolitans is to imagine ourselves at home and in the world at the same time, where our homes are not fixed objects but processes of material and conceptual commitment (APPIAH, 2006: 85) with other people and different places (MESKIMMON, 2011: 8).

6 MESKIMMONN, M. (2011). *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination.* London and New York: Routledge, p. 6.

But perhaps the most interesting thing is to warn that Meskimmon does not so much undertake a revisionist analysis of the concept of cosmopolitanism but rather – starting out from Kwame Anthony Appiah and his idea of proposing the cosmopolitan in its intrinsic connections with conversation, imagination, and art at the level of the ethical – seeks to ask questions about the potential of contemporary art to generate a critical and specific "cosmopolitan imagination", an aesthetic of opening that recognises its place within the world and which at the same time is responsible for it.

And in the same line that Rob Wilson points to in "A New Cosmopolitanism is in the Air: Some Dialectical Twists and Turns" (Wilson, 1998: 355), M. Meskimmon understands the "cosmopolitan imagination" as the key element for generating a global sense of ethical and political responsibility in the individual:

> Cosmopolitan imagination is an emergent concept, it does not describe law or public policy and it cannot assure compliance in that sense. However, it is also a future-oriented and generative concept, able to locate and affect us profoundly by transforming our relationship with/in the world. Cosmopolitan imagination generates conversations in a field of flesh, fully sensory, embodied processes of interrogation, critique and dialogue, that can enable us to think of our homes and ourselves as open to change and alterity. Understanding ourselves as wholly embedded within the world, we can imagine people and things beyond our immediate experience and develop our ability to respond to very different spaces, meanings and others (Meskimmon, 2011: 8. See also Harvey: 2009).

And contemporary art in this sense is one of the most significant ways in which the "cosmopolitan imagination" can emerge and be articulated. And like the concept of "cosmopolitan imagination", art is not the synonym of legislative power, it cannot oblige us to act, its register is emotional and not prescriptive. It would be better for us to speak of art in relation to its ability to transmit the intimate relationship between the material and the conceptual, invoking different geographical experiences of home, rejecting simplistic myths of origin and their corollary of constructions of "authentic" identity, and placing ourselves at the meeting point between the real and the imaginary, taking part in a critical dialogue between "ethical responsibility", "locational identity", and "cosmopolitan imagination" which tries to answer to the following question: what role does art perform when designing and reconfiguring the political, ethical, and social landscape of our times?

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"Affect: Belonging"[1]

Alpesh Kantilal Patel

Drawing on everything from artworks and a cartoon to police documents and a personal anecdote, I consider three temporally discontinuous events in the past to engender an ethical future across racial, ethnic, and national lines. More specifically, I examine the fatal misrecognition of South Asians as "terrorists" shortly after 9/11 in the United States; of Jean Charles de Menenez, an electrician originally from Brazil living in London, as a "terrorist" after 7 July 2005 or "7/7" in the UK; and of teenager Trayvon Martin as a "criminal" in Sanford, Florida, on 6 February 2012 in the US (CNN Library, n.d.; Independent Police Complaints Commission, 2007; National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, n.d.). I will hone in on "affect" to examine the complex manner in which visual identification – or misidentification in these cases – takes place and thereby connects these disparate events. "Affect", roughly, refers to feeling before cognition. Simply put, at stake in this chapter is how certain subjects are considered as "belonging" and others as not; and the role of artworks in reconfiguring belongingness in ways that move beyond the simplistic cosmopolitan/national binary and towards something akin to what Isabelle Stengers has defined as the "cosmopolitical proposal" (2005). This proposal privileges the space of not knowing and of slowness that I will argue these artworks bring into being – it is a world (or cosmos) – making that is marked by lack of fixity that nonetheless does not discount the possibility of the "ethical future" that I invoked at the beginning of this paragraph. It is through a focus on affect that I will animate the latter.

Theorising affect

To define "affect" more specifically before moving forward I will draw on several theoretical models that mobilize the concept in relation to artistic practice and critical writing, in particular art historians Jill Bennett's conceptualisation of "practical aesthetics" (2012), Amelia Jones's theory of "queer feminist durationality" (2012), and Marsha Meskimmon's "affective criticality" (2011), respectively. Bennett writes that practical aesthetics is "defined by an orientation to real-world experience" and provides "a means of inhabiting and moving through events" (BENNETT, 2012: 36). Given my focus on real-word experience, this is a particularly appropriate model to begin my discussion. As she also notes, practical aesthetics "examines aesthetics of connection that posit links between events" (*ibid.*: 36). By "aesthetics" Bennett is specifically invoking the more recent use of the term as a "general theory of sensori-emotional experience" which brings together art, psychology and the social rather than being concerned with judgement and highly fraught notions of beauty and taste (*ibid.*: 2).

Bennett notes that since its origin aesthetics has always promoted the idea of perception via senses, or *aisthesis* (*ibid.*: 1; cf: Baumgarten, 1961). Affect, as the core feature of *aisthesis*, is the medium of practical aesthetics (*ibid.*: 13). She further notes that affect is a defining feature of social, cultural, and political relations, however "unlike meaning, iconography or a formal quality, affect is not easily anchored in an image" (*ibid.*: 21). It is mobile, and in this way aesthetics is not "a means of categorising and defining art" (*ibid.*: 13). Rather, aesthetics traces "the affective relations that animate art and real events" (*ibid.*: 13). While affect is something activated in the social, it is ultimately experienced by the individual. "Practical aesthetics", then, allows for a "study of (art as a) means of apprehending the world via sense-based and affective processes – processes that touch bodies intimately and directly but that also underpin the emotions, sentiments and passions of public life" (*ibid.*: 3).

The "practical" in "practical aesthetics" does not signify an interest in interrogating "the philosophical ground of aesthetics or its historical determinations" but that which acknowledges "an aesthetics informed by and derived from the practical, real-world encounters, an aesthetics that is in turn capable of being used or put into effect in a real situation" (*ibid.*: 2). In this chapter, I will weave together evidence that "offers more than a record, a flashback or reconstruction; it generates a means of inhabiting and simultaneously reconfiguring the historical event as a radically different experience. Such an enquiry carries with it the possibility of reorienting the study of the *traumatic* event

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(that is, the shattering experience of a real event) away from the historiographical endeavour" (*ibid.*: 40).[2]

Bennett mobilizes the term "contemporaneity" to further clarify that the "event" is not temporally bound but "a principle of connection to an unspecified present, to whatever might happen next (*ibid.*: 29). To explain this point, she writes that 9/11 cannot be reduced to a singular catastrophe. That is, 9/11 did not begin on that day and its effects continue to be felt in the present *and* the foreseeable future. In this way, practical aesthetics does not delineate a historical event but rather focuses on an extension of it – backwards and forwards in time. Her example is not incidental in that she argues that practical aesthetics itself emerges from 9/11, which demanded a crucial shift in the way in which the field of visual arts (broadly construed) operates (*ibid.*: 18). Indeed, Bennett goes into great detail about how practical aesthetics cannot be explored in mainstream art history and visual cultural studies because of the constraining disciplinary foci of both (*ibid.*: 10 and 12). In short, both are too rigid to tackle 9/11's endlessly mobile affective fallout. Instead she calls for a transdisciplinary aesthetics – or an investigation of aesthetics that crosses the disciplinary confines of visual culture and art history (*ibid.*: 28 and 29).

As already noted above, but worth underscoring again, Bennett argues "an aesthetic reconfiguration of experience – to which affective connection is material – does not simply restore subjective experience to history but generates new ways of being in the event. It thereby holds out the possibility of reshaping the outcomes of a given event" (*ibid.*: 43). However, she cautions that practical aesthetics should not be conflated with activism. Rather, "Art becomes practical rather than abstract to the extent that it maintains a tension between aisthesis and signification" (*ibid.*: 46). She writes, "It is this capacity to dwell in the interval and to untangle some of its complex operations (the links – and blockages or 'hesitations' – between apprehension and action, between feeling and believing, appearing, saying and doing) that makes a creative aesthetics so valuable to the study of social life" (*ibid.*: 4). Drawing on literary theorist and poetry scholar Isobel Armstrong's scholarship, which draws parallels among theories of affect in discourses of phenomenology, psychoanalysis and other fields, Bennett also argues that "Art, like affect itself, inhabits an in-between space and is an agent of change" (*ibid.*: 26). By exploring artwork and visual culture as nimbly occupying the "in-between space", I aim to link 9/11, 7/7, and the death of Trayvon Martin by specifically bringing to the fore the manner in which visual identification takes

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2 Emphasis in original.

place, a process that has been ill-explored in the context of any of these events. In so doing, I will also suggest how artworks can be an "agent of change".

Art historian Amelia Jones, in her book *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts* (2012), extensively explores visual identification in relation to artistic meaning. Of particular interest is Jones's theory of queer feminist durationality, which "acknowledges the way in which identification still shadows and indeed deeply informs how we interpret, make meaning, and attribute value" (JONES, 2012: 236). Rather than suggesting an interest in time-based media, by "durationality" Jones is referring to our embodied encounters with art objects "which opens into connections that are born of affect as tapped into, solicited, shaped, encouraged by the prick of memory and desire that constitutes the most powerful experiences we have in engaging with the things around us" (*ibid.:* 199). Importantly, Jones insists on the identificatory aspects of affect in theorizing the encounter with an artwork that she notes both art historians Simon O'Sullivan and Jan Verwoert abstract.[3] She powerfully argues that:

> What is missing [...] is a sense of the alignment between the development of the possibility of *thinking* the rhizome [...] and what I am arguing to be among the crucial pressures that assisted in [...] the shattering of the [...] conventional perspectival system and the model of the subject it subtended and proposed: the decolonization of the so-called world and the rise of identity politics in the post-Second World War period. Without recognizing this pressure, and the role in the shifts in informing poststructuralist theories of meaning, we are left with only an abstract (if elegant) description of a shift in ways of making and interpreting art.[4]

The "rhizome" invoked here is that theorized by philosopher Gilles Deleuze and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari. The rhizome as conceptualised by them is a system without a centre and within which nodal points can connect but in a non-hierarchical manner.[5] Jones writes that the rhizome is precisely about the "*dispersals* of old binary systems" but without the emphasis on identity politics that arguably instantiated it (*ibid.*: 188). In this way, my discussion of affect will be tied to thinking about identification.

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3 Cf. O'SULLIVAN (2006); and Jan VERWOERT, lecture at McGill University, 2011 [as referenced in JONES, 2012: 214 (note 42)].

4 JONES, A. (2012). *Seeing Differently: A History and Theory of Identification and the Visual Arts*. London: Routledge, pp. 191-192. Emphasis in original.

5 For a fuller discussion of the rhizome, see the introductory chapter appropriately titled "Introduction: Rhizome" (1987, pp. 3-25).

Jones writes that "the *queer feminist* aspect of durationality is as important as the performative, rhizomatic, or temporal angle" (*ibid.*: 232).[6] Jones's invocation of "feminism" and "queer" is specific but not essentialist, and it is useful to further articulate how identification is always already wrapped up with affect. For instance, she acknowledges how feminism has "*slowed down* the super-glue certainties of art criticism and its related discourse" and how "*queer is that which indicates the impossibility of a subject or a meaning staying still*" (*ibid.*: 170 and 171).[7] The latter dovetails with the thrust of Stengers' aforementioned "cosmopolitan proposal" that similarly favours slowness. A queer feminist durational approach to practical aesthetics demands attention to visual identification as always already raced, sexed, classed, and gendered as it emerges or erupts within the complex nexus of the "performative, rhizomatic, or temporal" relationship of the viewer (in this case me) with the artwork.

Drawing on historian Carolyn Dinshaw's (2007) and philosopher Henri Bergson's scholarship (1988), Jones argues that temporality or durationality is powerful because it opens the present to the past and to the future. Jones writes, "This is where ethics lie, of course, nudging us to attend to past histories in order to avoid future exploitation, pain and iniquity" (*ibid.*: 171). Jones cites my research relating to 9/11 and 7/7 in her book (*ibid.*: xx). I re-present my research in this chapter through her theory of queer feminist durationality, in particular by exploring my personal connection to these events (especially 9/11) with an eye towards a more ethical future.

Marsha Meskimmon's theory of "affirmative criticality" in her important book *Contemporary Art and the Cosmopolitan Imagination* is crucial in further exploring ethics and its relation to aesthetics. Meskimmon draws on philosopher Jürgen Habermas's theory of the "public sphere" and Deleuze's scholarship on ethics and aesthetics, but like Jones does not sacrifice discussions of identity/identification (MESKIMMON, 2011: 90 and 93). While Bennett's "practical aesthetics" considers how artworks can re-shape real-world "events" and Jones's "queer feminist durationality" articulates a new of way of seeing – both of which allow glimpses of a more ethical future – Meskimmon's "affirmative criticality" explores the possibilities of "the potential of critical thinking to engender and affirm a hopeful, indeed better and more humane, future" (*ibid.*: 91).[8] This is particularly important in examining how an ethics can be produced through the writing of art histories.

6 Emphasis in original.
7 Emphasis in original.
8 Emphasis in original.

Drawing on the scholarship of Rosalyn Diprose, Meskimmon invokes the Greek origins of the word ethics – *ethos* (or character and dwelling or habitat) – to suggest fascinating connections between home and home-making or place and place-making. Meskimmon writes that ethics forges a link between the "material constraints of our position in the world and our agency in making, maintaining, and changing them" (*ibid.*: 19). She further writes that "The subject formed at the interstices of this critical modulation is an embodied, embedded and responsible subject – the subject who can inhabit a plurilocal, cosmopolitan home" (*ibid.*: 19). Meskimonn argues that contemporary art has the potential to produce such an "ethical, embedded and responsible subject" and the "potential to make the world, not just merely represent it" (*ibid.*: 9).

In addition, she writes that affirmative criticality as "a method of intellectual analysis and engagement" suggests that "ethics and aesthetics have significant areas of intersection and, more strongly, mutual constitution" for the art historian, too: "Where the response-ability of the subject meets a subject's responsibility with/in the world, aesthetics and ethics play in harmony" (*ibid.*: 91). My hope is that the reader's engagement with my text engenders his or her response-ability as co-extensive with his or her responsibility with/in the world. Of course, I have no delusions regarding the limits of my academic writing, which has a fairly circumscribed audience. However, I would argue that the instantiation of what might be described as "micro-ethics" – ethics at the level of a subject – and its potential affective accretion over time can be powerful in its own regard.

The aim of this chapter is to *re*-present these horrific events – rather than representing them (not only impossible but also ethically dubious) – so as to engender the possibility of inhabiting them differently. In so doing, I draw resonances among them and suggest that these misidentifications are not a "Brazilian", "Sikh", or "black" issue – although it must be noted that the latter two populations have been disproportionately targeted though not in equivalent ways – but that they affect *all* of us who are interested in living in an ethical and just world.

Event #1: 9/11: Towards multiple futures

I begin by considering a cartoon by Carter Goodrich that appeared on the cover of the *New Yorker* (see p. 43). Published roughly two months after 9/11 it explores the plight of taxi drivers after the attacks. The cartoon depicts a turbaned cab driver cowering in the seat of his yellow cab. A canopy of various

sizes of American flags is mounted on the rooftop, and the cab is also covered with American flag stickers and a "God Bless America" sticker. The hyperbolic use of the American flag in the cartoon underscores the equally excessive and overwhelming identification of turban-wearing Muslim and Sikh cab drivers as terrorists in a post-9/11 New York. Turbans not only became visual signifiers of terrorism, but also carried implicit presumptions of a lack of American citizenship. For instance, Frank S. Roque who killed Balbir Singh Sodhi, an Indian Sikh from Arizona, on 15 September 2001 was heard saying that he would "kill the rag heads responsible for September 11", prior to his assaults, and when handcuffed, he said, "I stand for Amer-

Carter Goodrich, *Untitled*, 2001. Watercolour and coloured pencil. Cartoon used for cover of November 5, 2001 issue of *The New Yorker*.

ica all the way! I'm an American. Go ahead. Arrest me and let those terrorists run wild!" (Human Rights Watch interview with Sergeant Mike Goulet of the Mesa, Arizona police department, 6 August 2002 as cited in "United States: 'We are not the enemy'", 2002: 18 [note 89]).

Given that the terrorist attacks of 9/11 were ascribed to Middle Eastern and Islamic, or Muslim, radicals, American legal scholar Leti Volpp surmises that those who appear "Middle Eastern, or Muslim-looking" – she mentions Latinos and African-Americans, for instance – practically became a new identity category in terms of United States citizenship (Volpp, 2002: 1575). Although the American flag became increasingly visible as a marker of patriotism after 9/11, the cartoon indicates that for some subjects, displaying the flag became a necessity to prevent any potential misidentification as not only a terrorist, but as "not" American.[9] Indeed, this is at least part of the reason my own parents put various flags – that are still up – in their dry cleaning business, especially after receiving at least one threatening phone call that I know of to "go back home" after 9/11.

9 See Prashad, 2001.

The visual conflation of turbans with terrorism also extends to issues of faith.[10] For instance, Sikh men do not cut their hair, including facial hair, and are required to wear turbans as an expression of their religion – "a Badge of [visual] Identity" according to the website "Sikhnet" ("Why do Sikhs wear Turbans?", n.d.). The aforementioned Volpp further notes that the long beards and turbans of Sikh men were often "conflated with [Osama] bin Laden", whose image with a beard and Afghani-style turban was heavily circulated on-line, on television screens, and in print after the US terror attacks (Volpp, 2002: 1590). As a result, Sikhs were the most vulnerable to being visually misidentified as connected to the 9/11 attacks, despite the fact that Sikhs and Muslims have separate doctrinal views, different geographic homelands, different native languages, and distinct turban styles, as noted by civil rights scholars Neha Singh Gohil and Dawinder S. Sidhu.[11] Indeed, Balbir Singh Sodhi was Sikh. The cab driver on the *New Yorker* cover is most likely Sikh rather than Muslim – as signalled by his turban, his dress, and what appears to be a beard – yet he is clearly anticipating being visually misidentified as a Muslim.[12]

Interestingly, the United States Department of Justice attempted to prevent the misidentification of Sikhs as Muslims by disseminating an educational poster among airport security staff in 2004 to educate them about Sikh head coverings ("Common Sikh American Head Coverings", 2004). Yet the poster obscured the larger problem of misrecognition of a much broader group of "Middle Eastern, or Muslim looking men" as terrorists signalled by Volpp above, and implicitly created a more appropriate object of post-9/11 animus. As American human rights and international law scholar Karen Engle notes, "[w]hether through government investigations and raids or 'private' vigilance, the brunt of the internal war has fallen on Muslims, particularly those of Arab descent (now that Americans seem to have learned the difference between Sikhs and Muslims)" (Engle, 2004: 98). In the same way, the fact that many Sikhs began to cut their hair and forego wearing turbans all together, though under-

10 This section on faith and visual identification is inspired by the conference, "Faith & Identity in Contemporary Visual Culture", organized by Amelia Jones and coordinated in collaboration with Shisha, a Manchester-based agency for contemporary South Asian crafts and visual arts, among others. The conference was held on 10-11 November 2006 at the University of Manchester in England.

11 Gohil and Sidhu, "The Sikh Turban", 19. Rajwant Singh, chief of the Sikh Council on Religion and Education (SCORE), a Washington D.C.-based Sikh advocacy group, noted that in a survey conducted by his organization in 2006, "nine out of 10 educated Americans identified Sikhs with Muslims" (*The Financial Express*, "Osama becomes a pain for American Sikhs").

12 The beard is occluded from full view given that he is cowering in fear.

standable, only seemed to reinforce the notion that turban-wearers more closely approximate "the look" of a terrorist (PAGE, 2006).

This cartoon invariably takes me back to my own experience living in New York City during the terrorist attacks of 9/11. At the time, there had been reports of violence against South Asians who apparently looked like terrorists. In particular, there were three South Asians who were visually perceived to be Arab and killed in the United States within days of 9/11: a Pakistani from near Dallas, Texas, and an Indian Sikh from Mesa, Arizona, both on 15 September 2001; and a Gujarati Hindu from Mesquite, Texas, on 4 October 2001. Balbir Singh Sodhi, the Indian Sikh from Arizona, was landscaping the front of the gas station he owned when Roque fatally shot him in the back three times. Within a thirty-minute period after shooting Singh, Roque also fired at Lebanese-American gas station clerks and into the home that he previously owned and that was occupied by an Afghani couple ("Frank S. Roque", 2004). Not surprisingly, for several weeks after 9/11 I really did not feel safe leaving my apartment alone. So, I started waking up a little earlier so I could head into the city from Brooklyn with my roommate. I felt safe not only being with a good friend, but also one who was *not* brown. To explain, my skin colour was highly charged – capable of producing a strong affective reaction of repulsion, fear, or contempt on sight in a viewing subject. White skin, on the other hand, would produce no affect at all. By merely being proximal to someone with "white" skin, I was hoping it would vitiate the affectivity of my brownness.

Approximately three weeks after 9/11, I finally did emerge alone to go meet friends of mine. It was a victory for me to be able to go out like I had always done before 9/11. At the time I worked in a film company and I would often go to the theatre alone to watch movies. In New York City going solo to a movie theatre is not a big deal. That evening after having dinner with friends, I decided to go to a theatre on Broadway and 14th Street, a well-trafficked intersection near Union Square which is a major hub of different subway lines and at the time a site of makeshift memorials.

Shortly before entering the theatre, I was hit with eggs which were thrown at me from a moving car. It was not really a violent attack in the sense that I was not physically harmed. Also, at first I was not even sure that any of the eggs had hit me. I did not see anything on my jacket – or perhaps more accurately I did not *want* to see anything because that would have it made it more real. I was hoping to escape the entire situation by going into a dark theatre. I first went to the automatic ticket machines but they were out of order so I had to get in line to get a ticket. While waiting, I decided to take off my jacket, the back of which of course was covered in egg yolk. I could no longer pretend

nothing had happened, especially since at this point those behind me in line were staring at me. Incredibly embarrassed, I left the theatre and decided to take a taxi home. I did not want to spend money on a cab but I certainly did not want to take a 45-minute subway ride in public either. I had a feeling there was probably egg in my hair, too. Fortunately, it was not difficult to find a cab that night. I cannot remember if I sought out a driver whom I thought was of South Asian descent but I did end up getting one who was. The irony is not lost on me that I typically would bristle when getting into a cab with a driver whom I thought was of South Asian descent. Often I would be asked by the drivers where I am from at which point I would indicate my family is from Gujarat but that I grew up in the US. The conversation would usually end there – perhaps the drivers could feel my lack of interest in having a conversation or maybe they were looking to connect with someone who was from the same part of South Asia from which they came. In any case, I knew my annoyance was largely connected to the fact that I never felt I could approximate what being South Asian might generally signify – heterosexual.

That night, of course, all of the above was moot. There was not anyone else I would have wanted to be with more than a South Asian taxi driver whom I believed could sympathise with my situation. I did end up sharing what had just happened to me with the driver; I might have even initiated the conversation. When I got back to my apartment I threw my jacket away – it was an old Gap jacket. Really, though, I just did not want it around as a reminder of what had happened. I did not share my experience with anyone again for years.

The *New Yorker* cartoon invariably takes me back to my experience but it also allows me to inhabit the event through a much different lens – one that to a certain degree gives me back a measure of agency. Drawing on the scholarship of Jasbir K. Puar, the cartoon underscores that "Identity is one effect of affect, a capture that proposes what one is by masking its retrospective ordering and thus its ontogenetic dimension – what one was – through the guise of an illusory futurity – what one is and will continue to be" (Puar, 2007: 215). To explain, the cartoon effectively instantiates an affect of fear and paranoia in the viewing subject that we imagine drivers must have felt after 9/11. The cab driver is clearly anticipating that this affect could lead to his misidentification as a terrorist and even to death. Through the hypervisual display of flags, he hopes he potentially avoids this future. Indeed, the visual identification of the driver as a "terrorist" is intersectional with *other* visual presumptions of race, faith, and citizenship as previously discussed. African-American feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in her important theory of intersectionality points to the importance of considering multiple categories of identity as constitutive of each

other (CRENSHAW, 1992: 94). The cab driver hopes to redirect the dominant effect (being identified as a terrorist) of the affect of fear by redirecting one vector which is entangled with it: presumption of lack of citizenship. By doing so, he potentially breaks the "illusory futurity" that "what one is and will continue to be" is constant per Puar. Put another way, Puar's (2011, n.p.) conceptualisation of Crenshaw's theory as the "becoming of intersectionality" is instructive. Puar notes that Crenshaw's cogent description of cars meeting at an intersection is suggestive of intersectionality being an "event". Puar writes that "In this 'becoming of intersectionality', *there is emphasis on motion* rather than gridlock; on how the halting of motion produces the demand to locate".[13] The cartoon effectively focuses on the motion before multiple vectors – or cars per Crenshaw's analogy – come together to locate or identify the driver as a terrorist.

Event #2: 7/7: The right to opacity

On the morning of 7 July 2005, an atmosphere of fear and panic supplanted the celebratory mood in the city of London, which had been chosen as the site of the 2012 Olympics just 24 hours before, as a series of bombs exploded within the greater London transport network during peak commuting hours. Police soon established that four suicide bombers were responsible for the tragedy – all of whom died in the blasts, along with 52 other innocent people (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007).

The city of London has survived numerous attacks over the decades, including most prominently the Nazi bombing campaign known as the Blitz from 1940 to 1941 and Irish Republican Army (IRA) bombing campaigns from the 1970s to the mid-1990s (MACLEOD, 2005; "Remembering the Blitz", n.d.). In April 1999 a lone perpetrator named David Copeland devised homemade nail bombs and deployed them in the Brixton and Brick Lane areas of London – targeting their black and South Asian communities, respectively – as well as in a gay pub in the Soho area of the city (HOPKINS, 2000). However, suicide bombings were relatively new to both the city of London and the entire United Kingdom. The media dubbed the coordinated terrorist attacks of 7 July 2005 "7/7", indelibly linking them in character to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001.

Just two weeks later on 21 July, terrorists targeted the London transport system again – this time unsuccessfully (Independent Police Complaints Com-

13 Emphasis mine.

mission (IPCC), 2007: 18). In one of the rucksacks containing an explosive, the police found a gym membership card with a photograph they judged to be "a reasonable likeness" to an image of one of the suspects, Hussain Osman, captured on Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) tapes at one of the sites where the bombs were recovered (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 19). Based largely on this *visual* knowledge, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) decided to conduct surveillance on the apartment building where Osman was suspected to have resided (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 20).

At 9:33 AM on the day after the failed attacks, an officer stationed in an observation van saw an individual leave the building. The officer checked the photographs of the suspects that he had been provided. Police believed Osman to be Somali at the time, though it was later learned that he was in fact of Ethiopian descent ("Profile: Hussain Osman", 2007). The officer described the subject leaving the building as "IC-1" or "identity code-white". However, he was unsure of his initial assessment and transmitted a message to his colleagues over the radio indicating that "it would be worth somebody else having a look" (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 55). Over the next three hours, undercover police officers followed the suspect onto a bus and into a tube station where he was shot fatally twice in the head, having been *visually* identified as the terrorist Osman by police (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 81).

The person police spotted coming out of the apartment building would later be identified as Jean Charles de Menezes, a Brazilian man. The extensive 168-page report by the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) concerning the tragic events leading to de Menezes's death indicates that his misidentification as a terrorist was the last in a chain of misidentifications. During the time de Menezes was under surveillance, police had perceived him to be "white", "North African", "Asian", "Asian looking", and "Asian/Pakistani" (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 55, 64, 76). Many of the witnesses in the tube described de Menezes as "Asian" and, in a case of double misidentification, frequently confused an undercover police officer, listed under the pseudonym "Ivor" in the IPCC report, as the suspect (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 66, 68, 69). In fact, police officers pinned Ivor to the ground and pointed a gun at his head before he was able to properly identify himself (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 65). Thus, as the tragic events of 22 July unfolded in the immediate aftermath of two major acts of terrorism – one carried out and one thwarted – police officers and bystanders alike identified Osman, de

Menezes and Ivor as Asian. According to the IPCC report, however, none of them are of Asian descent. This misidentification of all three men reveals an implicit visual conflation of Asian-ness with terrorism.[14]

The report provides important clues regarding how these identifications are made. For instance, one of the officers, identified as "Harry" in the report, indicated that de Menezes was "looking over his shoulder and acting in a wary manner. He appeared nervous" (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 55 and 56). Officer Harry read de Menezes through what French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty refers to as a "corporal or postural schema"[15] – a default position the body assumes in various commonly experienced circumstances that can be "habitual" (MERLEAU-PONTY, 1962: 152).[16] De Menezes's postural schema could be described as habitually associated with "suspicious behaviour" in accordance with the officer's observation that de Menezes was "acting in a wary manner" and "appeared nervous." This effectively rendered invisible de Menezes's identity as a Brazilian.[17]

Merleau-Ponty has theorized the inseparability of the body, the world, and the mind. He writes that:

> Insofar as, when I reflect on the essence of subjectivity, I find it bound up with that of the body and that of the world, this is because my existence as subjectivity is merely one with my existence as a body and with the existence of the world, and because the subject that I am, when taken concretely, is inseparable from this body and this world.[18]

His indication of "my existence as subjectivity" as "bound up with that of the body and that of the world" is in direct opposition to the philosophical separation of the mind and body advocated most prominently by René Descartes, who wrote that "the mind by which I am what I am, is wholly distinct from the body, and is even more easily known than the latter, and is such, that

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14 This is not to imply, of course, that the conflation of terrorism with Arab-ness is any less problematic. See Human Rights Watch's (Ahmad, 2002; "United States: 'WE ARE NOT THE ENEMY': Hate Crimes Against Arabs, Muslims, and Those Perceived to be Arab or Muslim after September 11", 2002).

15 "We grasp external space through our bodily situation. A 'corporeal or postural schema' gives us at every moment a global, practical and implicit notion of the relation between our body and things" (5).

16 As Merleau-Ponty indicates, "habit does not consist in interpreting the pressures of the stick on the hand as indications of certain positions of the stick, and these as signs of an external object, since it relieves us of the necessity of doing so".

17 Whether or not de Menezes self-identified as Brazilian is unclear.

18 MERLEAU-PONTY, M. (1962). *Phenomenology of perception*. New York: Humanities Press, p. 408; C. Smith, trans.

although the latter were not, it would still continue to be all that it is" (Descartes, 1989: 11).

Merleau-Ponty further notes that seeing involves both the viewing and the viewed subjects, who are importantly both the seen and the seer. He describes this "coiling over of the visible upon the visible" as "intercorporeity", rendering oppositional terms such as "subject" and "object" as meaningless, as they are actually yoked together. Moreover, he refers to the site of reciprocal interpenetration between and within embodied subjects as the "chiasmus" (Merleau-Ponty, 1968: 138, 140, 141). The various identifications ascribed to de Menezes, as well as that of the terrorist suspect Hussain Osman, can be described as a chiasmic intertwining of de Menezes with each police officer's own psychic desires, fantasies, and projections. Consequently, each officer's "gut" or affective identification reflects a complex intermeshing of synaesthetic, or multisensory, visuality with psychic process. In another example, many attacks on turban-wearing citizens following 9/11 involved a bizarre intimacy, with turbans unceremoniously removed and hair often pulled at.[19] As the deaths of the Sikh Sodhi after 9/11 in the US and the Brazilian de Menezes after 7/7 in the UK illustrate, "subjects" (turban-wearing or not) are never fully able to visually embody an appropriate patriotism, citizenship, or any other identification.[20]

While Goodrich's cartoon brought to the fore the becoming of intersectionality as crucial to understanding the mechanism of visual identification, the IPCC report illustrates in sobering detail how central location or site – it was de Menezes's emergence from the building in which the suspect was thought to have resided that set off a chain of reactions that lead to his death – as well as the affective readings of bodies are to this process. The permanent public memorial for de Menezes at the Stockport station in south London, where he was killed, provides another important way of reconsidering his tragic event (see p. 51).

19 Women wearing the hijab were also affected ("United States: 'We are not the enemy': Hate Crimes Against Arabs, Muslims, and Those Perceived to be Arab or Muslim after September 11", 2002: 21).

20 To extend this argument, de Menezes's legality in the UK was still unclear days after his death, fuelled primarily by a statement from the Home Office of Immigration that indicated that the stamp in his passport allowing him indefinite stay "was not one that was in use by the Immigration and Nationality Directorate on the date given." (Booth, 2005). It was not until November 2007 when the IPCC's report into the death of de Menezes was published that his legal status was definitively confirmed: "Evidence emerged during the course of the criminal trial into the Health and Safety charge that Mr de Menezes was lawfully in the country on 22 July 2005" (Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC), 2007: 21 (note 4)). The information, however, was buried in a footnote.

Mary Edwards, Jean Charles de Menezes memorial, Stockwell Tube Station, London, England. Unveiled on 7 January, 2010.

Created by artist Mary Edwards in 2010, the colourful mosaic includes an image of de Menezes surrounded by representations of flowers which replace the actual ones that overflowed from the site following his death (SIDDIQUE, 2010). His photographic image is composed of large and square tiles of the same size. British geographer Karen Wells has written she is sceptical that the memorial can function beyond its "recognition of a family's tragedy" (WELLS, 2012: 165).[21] That is, she writes, "Despite the continuing ethical demand [from viewing subjects] of the image of the face [of Menezes], what is demanded is now muted and slippery" (*ibid.*: 165). At the same time, Wells writes that for all its "foreclosure of political claims, [the memorial] may still be taken as simply a statement of presence, a refusal of erasure" (*ibid.*: 166). Wells's reading of the memorial is compelling, but I question whether the work should be seen only through the lens of instrumentality – the demand for justice – and presence/visibility.

21 Wells is drawing on poststructuralist scholars' (she cites Judith Butler and Paul Gilroy among others) readings of Sigmund Freud's essay "Mourning and Melancholia" (WELLS, 2012: 162; cf: FREUD, 1957). Wells argues that the "moment between the burial and the erection of some permanent marker on the burial site" is one of melancholia "when the meaning of a tragedy is located on the border between 'private grief and public justice'" (*ibid.*: 160). Wells further explains that the transition from melancholia to mourning becomes the moment of "recognition of the failure to make somebody take responsibility for his death" (*ibid.*: 161). This transition materialises at the moment of the erection of de Menezes' memorial. Wells does end her essay, though, with a more hopeful note. She writes that the "analysis of memorials can [...] restore them to melancholia so that they may continue to provoke us to ask political questions about the unequal distribution of violence, risk and (in)security in the contemporary city" (*ibid.*: 166).

To explain, when my colleague and friend took pictures of the memorial he was having trouble getting a clear photograph of de Menezes's face. He first thought this was due to the lighting – it was a cloudy day when he decided to take the photographs – or that perhaps the angle of his shot needed to be adjusted. Eventually he realized that the image itself is not entirely distinct. I was not able to find out if the artist or even the family had intended for the image's slight cloudiness. Whether intentional or not, I find this fascinating for two reasons. At first glance the square tiles of which his photograph is composed seem to "locate" him on a grid, not to mention fragment him. However, the blurriness (even though slight) of the photograph allows him to transcend the locationary power of the grid and underscores that he was denied what Martinican philosopher Édouard Glissant would characterize as his right to "opacity".[22] Glissant's opacity is a concept he deploys to defend the right of the postcolonial subject not to be appropriated by discourses of power that originate elsewhere. He writes that opacity is "the most perennial guarantee of participation and confluence". Glissant further notes that opacity is not the opaque or the obscure, "though it is possible to be so and be accepted as such" (*ibid.*: 191). Instead, he provocatively writes that "The right to opacity [...] would be the real foundation of [...] freedoms" (*ibid.*: 190). Here, he is referring to a nonhierarchical society in which equality is connected to respect of the "other" as different. While the memorial is clearly labelled as being that of de Menezes, the opacity of the photograph places the viewer in the interval just before signification or identification takes place. This is the in-between space where the world, the body and mind that Merleau-Ponty so eloquently writes of are interconnected and that Glissant further suggests includes a subject's right to opacity. Through Glissant's lens, it can be argued that the dominant West's conflation of visibility and "coming out" with freedom is reductive, even if well-meaning.

Event #3: Trayvon Martin: Fade to white

In early 2012 I learned that a 17-year-old by the name of Trayvon Martin, an African American male, had been fatally shot in the chest as he had been walking home in Sanford, a city in Florida which is located about an hour from where I grew up. Martin actually lived in south Florida with his mother – where I moved in late 2011 – but had been in Sanford visiting his father. Eventually it became

22 See the chapter titled "For Opacity" in Glissant (189-94).

clear that an overzealous community watch guard, George Zimmerman, followed Martin against police orders and murdered him for looking like a criminal (CNN Library, n.d.).

The scholarship of Jill Bennett, Amelia Jones, and Marsha Meskimmon in different ways argue that artworks and critical writing can in fact be more than a mute mirror of the world. They may not achieve the goals of traditional activism but they can initiate micro-activism – not the grand-sweeping change on a macro level but at the level of the subject. However, when I heard about Trayvon Martin and decided to also include him in my thinking I could not help to be a little disappointed at what appeared to be the limits of academic writing. I would neither claim that the validity of art historical writing lay in its instrumentality in the "real world" nor that I had the power to prevent the death of Martin.

To explore this notion of micro-activism and to expand on my discussion of opacity, I consider Adrian Margaret Smith Piper's *Imagine [Trayvon Martin]* (2013). Piper moved to Berlin in 2008 when she discovered her name on a US "suspicious travelers" list ("Adrian Piper, Imagine [Trayvon Martin], 2013", 2013). She constructed this work after the acquittal of George Zimmerman – whom she describes as a "Euroethnic vigilante neighbour" (A. Piper, n.d.). She connects Martin's death to a number of deaths of unarmed African American males as follows:

> Trayvon Martin was not the first or only victim of police state-sponsored violence against unarmed African Americans. Several more recent cases have received the attention of the international press. Others, both before and since, have gone unnoticed or have been forgotten. But Trayvon Martin's shooting death was the wake-up call for many of those Euroethnic Americans for whom Barack Obama's presidency was supposedly conclusive proof that American racism was a thing of the past.[23]

In the work, the now well-known image of Martin in a hoodie is faintly visible whereas the cross hairs of a target in red are much more prominent.[24]

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23 Piper, A. M. S. (2015, January 30). APRA Foundation Berlin: Adrian Piper's *Imagine [Trayvon Martin]* (2013), FREE [announcement archive]. Retrieved 31 January 2016, from http://www.e-artnow. org/announcement-archive/archive/2015/1/article/ACTION/10789/.

24 Martin was wearing a grey hoodie the night he died and it has become an important signifier for his death, sometimes in problematic ways. For instance, Fox News correspondent Gerardo Rivera said: "I am urging the parents of black and Latino youngsters, particularly, to not let their young children go out wearing hoodies. I think the hoodie is as much responsible for Trayvon Martin's death as

The former perhaps suggests both how figures like Martin can become faint memories for the public *and* how they stubbornly refuse to disappear. More strikingly, the work seems to turn the portrait (if you will) onto the viewer. That is, by seeing almost nothing the viewer becomes acutely aware of himself or herself looking. Once this happens, the possibility of the viewer to "imagine what it was like to be me [Martin]", as Piper writes on the bottom of the target in blue text, becomes more likely. Any of us could be caught in the cross hairs of the target. In this way, Martin becomes a subject rather than object. Images of Martin in a hoodie circulated through the internet, print journalism, and television with a speed that drains Martin's agency as a subject; Piper's work returns his right, but to opacity. Given that Martin is barely visible, Piper's work has even stronger connections to Glissant's concept of opacity than de Menezes's memorial does.

Piper's Martin work is free and available to all to download from her website. As she writes,

> As an antidote to further memory loss, I have been distributing this work free of charge and as widely as possible. It is available for free download as a high-resolution PNG file at adrianpiper.com/art/index.shtml, and can be printed out in a variety of sizes and formats. Please take one, or many, and pass it on.[25]

More so than democratizing as an act – which it arguably is – Piper participates in the same circuits through which Martin's image has been circulated. By doing so, though, she counteracts the effect of the hyper-circulation. Rather than render the image affectless, the work accrues affective power through its circulation – it is a power consolidated through the instantiation of an embodied connection between the viewer and the work and what it does (or does not) represent. This connection is the one before the viewer signifies Martin;

George Zimmerman was". While he is correct that the hoodie probably did have something to do with Martin's death what he unfortunately reinscribes with such a statement is that the victim is to blame or that by simply removing one's hoodie one's out of danger (Erik WEMPLE, 2012). Perhaps more problematic, is Rivera's colleague Bill O'Reilly's statements. He said that had Martin only been wearing a suit instead of looking like a "gangsta" he would not have been killed. He also makes the provocative point that race had nothing to do with Martin's death. Both the latter points are incredibly reductive (not to mention racist) and do not take into consideration the complex manner in which visual identification works (Eric WEMPLE, 2003). In any case, the hoodie has become an important signifier for the death of Martin. At one point there was even speculation that the Smithsonian Museum was thinking of acquiring Martin's hoodie for its collection (SULLIVAN, 2013; cf: GRINBERG, 2012).

25 PIPER, A. M. S. (2015), *op. cit.*, n. p.

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it again is that in-between in which meaning is held. Speed is often conflated with circulation; here we are slowed down.

Kehinde Wiley has explored the predicament of the black male in the United States. As critic Deborah Solomon writes, "Wiley began thinking about the stereotypes that shadow black men long before events in Ferguson, Mo." (SOLOMON, 2015). Solomon is referring to the death of 18-year-old African American Michael Brown, Jr., after an encounter with police officer Darren Wilson on 19 August 2014 in Ferguson, part of the Greater St. Louis area of the state of Missouri in the United States (see "Timeline", n.d.). Brown's death happened a little over a year after that of Martin. Wiley told Solomon in an interview: "I know how young black men are seen… They're boys, scared little boys oftentimes. I was one of them. I was completely afraid of the Los Angeles Police Department" (SOLOMON, 2015).

While he was an artist-in-residence at The Studio Museum in Harlem, New York City, in 2001–2, Wiley came across a crumpled piece of paper on a street near the museum that turned out to be a New York Police Department (NYPD) mug shot of a young "black" male (TSAI, 2015: 12). The mug shot did not become source material for his work, though, until several years after his residency ended when he began thinking of it in the context of Western portraiture, posing, and power, as he explains in an interview with Roy Hurt for National Public Radio:

> [...] I began thinking about this mug shot itself as portraiture in a very perverse sense, a type of marking, a recording of one's place in the world in time. And I began to start thinking about a lot of the portraiture that I had enjoyed from the eighteenth century and noticed the difference between the two: how one is positioned in a way that is totally outside their control, shutdown and relegated to those in power, whereas those in the other were positioning themselves in states of stately grace and self-possession.[26]

In 2006 he would finally do a portrait of the young man on the mug shot. Wiley's depiction of his subject's skin colour in *Mugshot Study* is lush and varied in tone (see p. 56).

His subject is almost beatific. Directly under his portrait he faintly painted the sequence of numbers and letters that made up his New York State ID (NYSID) Number.[27] The digits are largely washed out and thereby become un-

26 WILEY, P. Kehinde (2005, June 1). Interview with Roy Hurst [National Public Radio].

27 NYSID Number is "A unique identifier assigned to an individual by the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS)" ("NYSID NUMBER - Data Element - NY DCJS", n.d.).
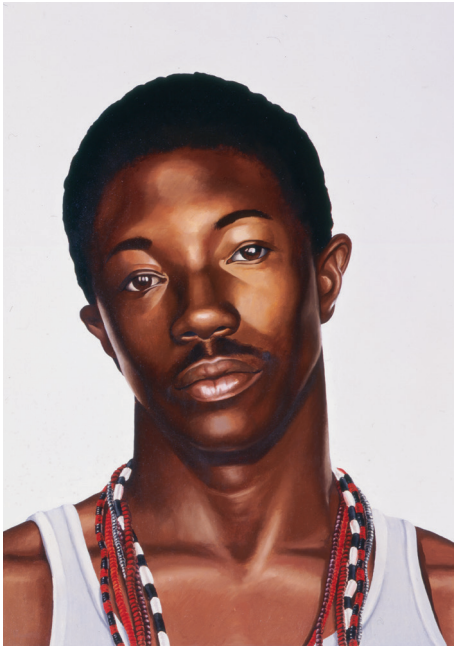
Kehinde Wiley, *Mugshot Study*, oil on canvas, 36 × 24 in. © Kehinde Wiley.

tethered signifiers. At the same time, Wiley's title for the work, *Mugshot Study*, subtly betrays the number's genealogy and specificity.

In this way, in Wiley's work the black male subject is *both* positioned in "states of stately grace and self-possession" (subject) and depicted as a criminal (object).[28] This tension keeps his depicted subject between or trans (across) identifications instead of polarized as only productive reimaginations. Not surprisingly, Wiley refers to these works as "anti-portrait paintings" (as quoted in LEWIS, 2005: 122). In her thorough review of the criticism of Wiley's work, curator Corrine Choi makes the astute point that his anti-portrait paintings are "an ironic cultural criticism by the artist when thought of in relation to the historical depiction of African American bodies and its reduction of them to stereotypes" (CHOI, 2015). I would extend her argument to write that Wiley's work, by functioning between signs rather than at either pole, is about the past, present, and the future.

Wiley's works, much like that of Piper's digital work, Goodrich's cartoon and Martin's memorial, function at the in-between of significations. In so doing they hold out for more ethical futures – without insisting they will in fact happen – as much as they refuse to deny the politics and tragedy of real-world events. Empowering viewers to embrace this affective position is in fact more powerful than delivering either sharp criticism or blithely offering potentially false promises of the future. Importantly, these works do not serve as mute mirrors but provide the possibility of instantiating embodied, embedded and

28 Even at the level of reception, Wiley notes in an interview with curator Christine Y. Kim (2003) that he does not feel that he must choose between a "black-people-in-the-street audience" and "a high-art audience". Obviously, Wiley said this to make a polemical point rather than to insinuate that the former could not be the latter. Put another way, he wants to engage the frequent museum visitor as much as someone who may have less knowledge of the history of art. (This interview is published in its full version in GOLDEN, 2002).

responsible subjects in the pluriverse of the cosmopolitical home – indeed, one in which the politics of cosmos, or world-making, neither is eschewed nor articulated as hopelessly fractured.

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The three Janez Janšas

Emma Brasó

In 2007 three men formerly known as Davide Grassi, Emil Hrvatin, and Žiga Kariž changed their names to Janez Janša, a name they appropriated from the leader of the right-wing Slovenian Democratic Party, and at the time Prime Minister of Slovenia. This was an officially-sanctioned name change, with the men issuing or reissuing all their legal documents – including marriage and birth certificates, identity cards, passports, driving licenses, and credit cards – to match their new denomination. At the same time, they started using their new name for all their private communications, asking family and friends to refer to them as Janez Janša, changing their email addresses, facebook accounts, etc. Yet this name change, as opposed to the ones that are carried out routinely around the world, is also a performance. Before adopting the new epithet, Grassi, Hvratin, and Kariž were already known in the Slovenian and international art scene for their independent projects in new media, theatre and performance, and visual arts, respectively.[1] Their planned action to simultaneously take on the very charged name of the leader of the conservative party – and Minister of Defence during the armed conflict that followed the Slovenian declaration of independence from Yugoslavia in the summer of 1991 – cannot be understood *only* as a personal decision and administrative act, but needs to be *also* appreciated as an artistic endeavour with some kind of aesthetic and political implications.

The documentary film *My Name is Janez Janša* – which was directed by Janez Janša and written by Janez Janša and Janez Janša in 2012 and is freely available online[2] – presents the name change as a performance imbued with the avant-garde maxim of bringing art and the "praxis of life" together (Bürger, 1984). The film includes images of some of the performative projects carried

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1 Since their name change, the three artists have continued with their independent careers in parallel to their joint projects.

2 *My Name is Janez Janša*, directed by Janez Janša (Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, 2012), accessed 18 August, 2015, https://vimeo.com/46937250.

out collaboratively by the three Janez Janšas after their name change, like *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav* (see image below) – a re-enactment of the 1968 OHO collective performance *Mount Triglav*[3] – or *Signature Event Context* – a direct reference to Jacques Derrida's essay on the linguistic function of the signature, which consisted of each of the three artists following a different route through the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin that, when viewed on the internet, spelled the name "Janez Janša". At the same time, the film *My Name is Janez Janša* presents first-hand testimonies of the artists' family members, and incorporates clips from the wedding of one of them, the private event chosen to publicly reveal their simultaneous renaming. As such, the name change is shown as an artistic piece with creative repercussions as well as a personal act affecting the everyday life of these three individuals.

Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša. *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav*, 2007. Photo: Gaja Repe. Courtesy Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana.

The overlap between what belongs to one's private condition and what is part of one's public function is problematic in the case of the three Janez Janšas in a variety of ways. For instance, it generates frustration in close friends who feel forced into an artistic project they never chose to participate in (such is

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3 In the original performance *Mount Triglav*, the three members of OHO stood on a ladder in a street of Ljubljana with a black cloth over their bodies and only their heads visible. This piece, which refers to the highest mountain in Slovenia and a symbol of national pride, was re-staged in 2004 by the also Slovenian collective IRWIN. The three Janez Janšas' re-enactment, this time on the mountain itself, is therefore not only a reference to the original performance, but also to the practice of repeating or recycling performances (Tomic, 2012).

the case, for example, of a guest to the ceremony who expressed his annoyance because he had agreed to come to a wedding, "not to a fucking performance")[4] as well as in professional contacts who might have invested energy in promoting a specific artist whose name, suddenly, is no longer discernible from the ones of two other artists.[5] At the same time, the collapse of the two spheres in the Janez Janša project can be read as challenging the art historical "life and work" paradigm, not because it attempts to separate one from the other, but because it makes them so indistinguishable that any attempt to meaningfully read the life through the work or vice versa becomes futile.

Having said that, would discovering the *intention* behind the name change help us to understand the political implications of the three Janez Janšas' project? The natural inclination to read actions in terms of their causality makes it particularly difficult to approach such a dramatic action as the Janez Janšas' name change without demanding an answer to the *why* question. Yet the artists have repeatedly avoided straightforward answers, alluding to "personal reasons" (Dolar, 2014: 51) and pointing back to the letter they sent to the politician Janez Janša shortly after joining his political party:

> For us, there are no boundaries between our work, our art, and our lives, and, in this respect, we believe we are no different from you. We live for what we create and, with your permission, we would like to quote here the words from the letter you sent us when we joined SDS: "The more we are, the faster we will reach our goal!"[6]

Is the name change, therefore, evidence of the success of the Slovenian Democratic Party's political strategies? Are the Janez Janšas' performances, as some critics have argued, "aestheticizing" the ideological values of the party's leader? (Grzinic, 2014). Taken at face value, the appropriation of the motto of the SDS to explain the intention of the name change has, in my opinion, limited use in the interpretation of the three Janez Janšas' projects. Although one's first impulse might be to simply disregard the quoted explanation as an ironic one, for several of the interpreters challenging the three Janez Janšas it is exact-

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4 Anecdote told by Janez Janša (lecture, University for the Creative Arts, Canterbury, 10 December, 2014).

5 On occasions, publications try to clarify to which of the three artists they are referring to by acknowledging their previous names (Jones and Heathfield, 2012: p.382).

6 Janša, J.; Janša, J.; Janša, J. (eds.) (2008), *Name Readymade*. Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, Museum of Modern Art. Accessed 13 March, 2017, pp. 8 and 9.

ly that resistance to clearly discuss their intentions that jeopardizes the political efficacy of the whole project. Such is the view, as I will explain in more detail, of their most ferocious critic, the theoretician and artist Marina Grzinic (2014: 75), who has described the three Janez Janšas as exemplary of the "postmodern fascist" character of much of today's contemporary art. But also – and using less dramatic terms – of the art critic Ana Vujanović (2012), for whom the lack of direct denunciation affects the project's capacity to intervene in the social context.

You are Janez Janša, too

One of the early sequences of the already mentioned film *My Name is Janez Janša* shows the Slovenian actor and TV presenter Dražen Dragojević – who functions as a sort of narrator throughout the tape – playing a youtube clip from Stanley Kubrick's movie *Spartacus* (1960). The extract belongs to the climactic moment in which the Roman general Crassus asks the slave-rebels to reveal which one of them is their leader, to which the hundreds of captives unanimously respond: "I am Spartacus". In the following thirty minutes, *My Name is Janez Janša* appears to be a visual essay on the problematic of names, with people from all over the world being asked about their name: whether they like it or not, whether it is the same as their identity, and then focusing on cases in which different people share the same name, or have decided to change their names. In the subsequent forty minutes, however, the film abandons its initial global investigation to focus on the particularities of the Janez Janša name change. This second part introduces unfamiliar audiences to the career of the politician Janez Janša – from his controversial arrest on charges of exposing military secrets in the late 1980s to his appointment as Prime Minister in 2004 and presidency of the European Union – and incorporates interviews with Slovenian citizens, journalists, and politicians, as well as with international thinkers and artists, on the practical and theoretical consequences of the appropriation of the politically-charged name.

In this way, the film juxtaposes the universal problematic of names and naming in testimonies from around the world, with the particularities of an event occurred in a relatively small country. This effort to interview people from distant parts and include their theoretical considerations and personal stories in the final cut – along with the use of a variety of languages throughout the film, and the fact that two of the three Janez Janšas were not even born in Slovenia – has the selling effect of turning what could have been a national artistic episode

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into something with a more ample appeal. The film makes a point of engaging with an imaginary spectator who does not need to be familiar with the politician Janez Janša in order to realise that by simultaneously changing their names, the three artists are disturbing certain established rules and world-wide conventions. If, on the one hand, the significance of the name change is context-specific, on another, the global appeal of the strategy guarantees its success beyond its immediate frame of reference. From a different perspective, what can be initially perceived as a weakening decision that makes each artist's works indistinguishable from those of the other two, is converted into a self-promoting strategy through the insertion of the name change into a more multipart debate about the normative values associated with names and naming.

"Jaz sem Janez Janša, Jaz sem Janez Janša, Jaz sem Janez Janša." The phrase is heard during the opening credits of the film *My Name is Janez Janša*. The words, repeated as a mantra, reappear as the soundtrack to many moments of the tape, producing thereby an inevitable equivalence between "I am" and "my name is". The film actually finishes with individual images of all of the participants and interviewees from around the world that have previously appeared on screen, looking at camera and pronouncing the words: "I am Janez Janša". Their individual frames are gradually multiplied until the whole screen is covered by a mosaic of talking faces and overlapping voices repeating "I am Janez Janša" (see p. 66). This final sequence allows for an activist understanding of the audience this documentary is imagining for itself. For, in a sense, could we not interpret *My Name is Janez Janša* as a direct call to action? The simultaneous assumption of the multiple Janez Janša identity connects the film's ending to its beginning, specifically to the described clip from *Spartacus* in which, by adopting their leader's name, the slave-rebels make it impossible for the Roman authorities to accurately identify the *original* Spartacus (this act of heroic rebelliousness ends, nevertheless, in the massacre of the whole group). Through a practical demonstration, *My Name is Janez Janša* invites its spectators (all of us) *to become* Janez Janša. This is a licit invitation – for according to the existing Slovenian laws, if the spectator is a national from that country, he or she can also change their name without restrictions[7] – as well as a metaphysical one – for *to be* Janez Janša, one does not need to officially change one's name, one only needs to *repeat* that you are Janez Janša too. So, reformulating the answer of the man possessed by demons, the spectators of this documentary could reply when asked to identify themselves: "My name is Janez Janša, for we are many".

7 For a comparative study on the accepted reasons, procedures, and costs for an official name change in numerous countries around the world see Kovačič, 2008.

Postcard for the film *My Name is Janez Janša*, directed by Janez Janša, 2012. Courtesy Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana. The text reads: "The more we are, the faster we will reach our goal."

Let me take this hypothesis a bit further: Janez Janša is not one person but many; an agent whose will is composed by those of a legion (of slave-rebels, of spectators, of artists). When an artist, her/his oeuvre cannot be confidently attributed to any single individual nor can his/her name be used to accurately identify the "original" Janez Janša.[8] A search on "Janez Janša" in, for example, the database *Art & Humanities Full Text* brings up a mix of unrelated results from art magazines and political journals. So, despite the name not exactly corresponding to any particular body, s/he is active, even functioning as an author, when exhibiting, performing, curating, and when, occasionally, s/he rules a country. If, as the saying goes, even three is a crowd, the interpretation of the actions and works of Janez Janša cannot rely on the problematic connexion between the art and the life (whose life?), but allows us to imagine artists as having *a certain agency* whose intention does not refer us back to any particular person, but to a multitude.

From the above it could be argued that the multiple identity Janez Janša has been constructed with the effect of obfuscating the correct identification of its referent; of destabilizing the bond between the name and its referent. This claim for which there is no factual evidence in terms of statements by the three artists, is nevertheless supported by the even more destabilizing possibility of an uncoordinated number of people using the alias Janez Janša, independently of whether they officially change their names or not.[9] The attempt

8 Actually, there was never an "original" Janez Janša, for, as the documentary explains, the politician is officially called Ivan Janša, but took on the first name Janez as it sounded more Slovenian.

9 That the administrative name change is not a requirement is proven by the fact that one of the three artists changed his name again in 2012 to the one he had been previously using, Žiga Kariž, but is still actively involved in the project.

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to turn a proper name into an "improper" one that disturbs the conventional relation between the signifier and the signified has been interpreted as a politically progressive action (Deseriis, 2012). In my view, though, even if the idea to multi-appropriate a name has undeniable subversive connotations, it only constitutes a framework that then needs to be translated into action by whoever decides to apply it. The judgement over intentions needs to be separated from the interpretation of what one is able to do in concrete situations, for intentions and agency belong to two different spheres of possibility. In that sense, I consider that the name change Janez Janša offers a good example of an *agency without intention* (artistic or otherwise), for when one becomes Janez Janša, one becomes an agent whose actions depend on one's position within a determined power structure, but whose agency is not predetermined by someone else's intentions (nor, to a great extent, by one's own). Following that, what the multitude does with the agency achieved by their new collective name is open to interpretation, and should not be referred back to the three Janez Janšas' unstated intentions.

That Janez

"I am Spartacus." "I am Spartacus." "I am Spartacus." While the case of the slave-rebels identifying themselves with the name of their leader is portrayed in the Hollywood movie as an unmistakable act of heroism against the oppressing Roman authorities, the self-identification with the politician Janez Janša is, inescapably, more problematic. As the following recollection by the Slovene dramaturg and theatre critic Blaž Lukan shows, the name Janez Janša is one with a contentious charge for Slovenians:

> In a completely private situation, addressing (the former) Emil as Janez – and not just any "Slovenian" Janez […] but rather precisely that Janez, i.e. Janez Janša, the Slovenian Prime Minister – has not come easily to the author of this essay, and I must admit that I actually avoided seeing this Janez Janša for a while. I will not discuss the most fundamental reasons for this here, but they are certainly connected to my relationship with the most prominent owner of this name.[10]

Although Lukan prefers not to go into detail about his unfavourable feelings for the politician, I find it necessary to give a brief account of the public

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10 Lukan, Blaž, "The Janez Janša Project", in Janša, Janez; Janša, Janez; Janša, Janez (eds.), *Name Readymade*. Ljubljana: Moderna Galerija, Museum of Modern Art, p. 13.

life of "that Janez" in order to understand what his name stands for in contemporary Slovenia. If in the previous section I reflected on the multiple identity Janez Janša from the perspective of what model of agency it presented to audiences as well as to other artists, I will now provide a more specific social and political reading of the appropriation of this particular name by the three artists.

Since the end of World War II and until its declaration of independence in the summer of 1991, Slovenia was one of the republics constituting the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). In its transition from a Balkan communist dictatorship to an independent democratic state and later to its inclusion in the European Union, Slovenia went through a series of radical ideological changes that different analysts (Rangelov, 2014; Rizman, 1999) have compared to the ones experienced by Janez Janša himself. A summary of Janez Janša's career may demonstrate how, in the early 1980s, Janša was an active member of the communist youth organization of Slovenia. Later, he became associated with the dissident weekly magazine *Mladina*, for which in 1988 he was preparing an important article about an intended plan to introduce martial law in Slovenia based on a leaked document from the Yugoslav People's Army. The exposé lead to his controversial arrest, from which he was released six months later, having become by then an important public figure. Following these events, he got involved in the founding of the Slovenian Democratic Union, one of the first opposition parties in the Republic, and in 1990 he became Minister of Defence in the government of the first multi-party coalition in Slovenia after the inaugural democratic elections of that year.

As Minister of Defence, Janša played an important role in the brief armed conflict that in the summer of 1991 ended with the independence of Slovenia from the SFRY. From 1994, Janša was in the opposition as leader of the Social Democratic Party of Slovenia (now called the Slovenian Democratic Party) and became Prime Minister of the country after the 2004 elections. One of the reasons that has been given for his success at the polls at that particular time is connected to the public disclosure of the case of the "erased" and the impassioned debate that followed it. After the independence from the SFRY in 1991, the Slovenian authorities had commanded all citizens to check in at the Registry of Permanent Residents of the new country. This included not only the ethnic Slovenes but also members of other minorities residing in Slovenia, like Italians, Hungarians, and migrants from other republics of the SFRY. However, as became publicly known in the early 2000s, up to 1% of the Slovenian citizens – mostly Serbs, Bosnians, and Roma – were unable or forbidden to register, immediately losing their legal status and all their rights (Rangelov, 2014: 106 and 112). From 2002, different courts and governmental initiatives tried not only to

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solve the situation of these people but to compensate them retroactively. Janša, leader of the opposition, criticized the centre-left government for these plans, which would allegedly cost vast amounts to the State, and proposed that the issue should be resolved through a referendum. According to the political scientist Iavor Rangelov (2014: 115), "the ensuing discussions in the parliament and media became infused with nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric [...] The heated debate over the 'erased' helped to galvanize nationalist sentiment and support for Janša", who ended up winning the following elections.

In this account of Janez Janša's public activities, I am not intending to produce a "faithful portrait" of the character but rather to emphasize those controversial episodes of his life that have turned his name into one with a contentious political charge. It is inevitable, therefore, to also mention the recent case of corruption in which Janša has been involved. Following his second term as Prime Minister from 2012 to 2013 – a period characterized by the same austerity measures that other European governments have imposed during the economic crisis – Janša was formally accused of taking bribes from the Finnish firm *Patria* in exchange for a military supply contract (BBC News, 2013). He was convicted in June 2013 and sentenced to two years in jail. In December 2014 he was released after his appeal claiming that the allegations against him were politically motivated was successful (Associated Press, 2014). Janez Janša's political journey – from young communist enthusiast, to victim of the regime, anti-militarist activist, war hero, nationalist Prime Minister, and politician charged with corruption – if not "emblematic" of the transformations in Slovenian during the period, makes him, indeed, a very problematic figure to identify with.

Effective over-identification?

Not surprisingly given the biography of Janez Janša, different researchers (Lukan, 2008; Jones, 2008) writing about the name change of the three artists have interpreted their action as a case of subversive affirmation, and more specifically, of over-identification. According to the curators and writers Inke Arns and Sylvia Sasse (2006: 445), subversive affirmation is "an artistic/political tactic that allows artists/activists to take part in certain social, political, or economic discourses and to affirm, appropriate, or consume them while simultaneously undermining them". As they explain, this type of "mimetic action" was firstly adopted and developed in the socialist countries of Eastern Europe, given the risk of producing straightforward critiques of reigning discourses under totalitarian regimes. For instance, from the 1980s onwards, the Slovenian collective

NSK (Neue Slowenische Kunst) and its associated music band Laibach (named after the German denomination of the Slovenian capital) developed a series of actions and performances that took on the external appearance of the ruling ideology. In their concerts, the members of Laibach would appear wearing military uniforms, violently destroy the props on the stage, and appropriate the nationalist rhetoric of the Serbian president Slobodan Milošević in their addresses to the audience. Yet, as the also Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek (2002) famously reasoned, Laibach is not a fascist music group, but one which is practicing subversive affirmation through over-identification. According to Žižek, by fully adopting the language and symbols of the ruling system rather than just ironically imitating them, Laibach is able to break through the cynical distance prescribed by contemporary ideologies. As he explains (Žižek, 1992: 49) the main threat for those in power is not direct criticism (which they are able to anticipate) but "the 'fanatic' who 'over-identifies' instead of keeping an adequate distance". In that sense, Laibach, as well as other agents practicing strategies of subversive affirmation, are interpreted as having the effect of un-veiling the understated concepts and values that support the ruling ideological system, and consequently menacing its effectiveness.

As mentioned, given the controversial political career of Janez Janša, the appropriation of his name by the three artists has been repeatedly framed as a case of over-identification. The interpretation is plausible if we take into account the "fanatic" reason the artists have given for their name change (the literal enactment of the SDS slogan "The more we are, the faster we will reach our goal"), and their familiarity with the practices of Laibach and the NSK. However, such is not the view of the Slovenian theoretician and artist Marina Grzinic (2014: 70), for whom the name change of the three artists aestheticizes the "necropolitical" practices of the Slovenian state. Grzinic emphatically presents the "ventriloquist three-headed 'Janez Janša' monster figure" (2014: 71) as an exemplary case of the "postmodern fascist" character of much of today's contemporary art. To prove her point, Grzinic links the expedition of new official documents by the three artists to the above discussed circumstance of the "erasure" of up to 1% of the Slovenian citizens from the Registry of Permanent Residents of Slovenia after its independence, producing a very questionable parallel between both supposedly "fascist" actions. Her arguments against the Janez Janša project are numerous; here, though, I will only refer to her refutation of the critical stance of the three artist's appropriative act, to which she denies the status of *efficient* over-identification.

Several times throughout her essay (a text which includes fourteen exclamation points over fifteen pages), Grzinic admonishes the three Janez Janšas

for not engaging in an open critique of the methods and ideology supporting Janez Janša's political power. She is aware, and acknowledges, that the name change could be understood under the working logic of over-identification, where the artist does not directly attack the ruling system but rather appropriates its ways. Yet, for Grzinic, "authentic" over-identification, as practiced by the music group Laibach, could only operate as such under the totalitarian regime of socialism. In her opinion, the three Janez Janšas, active in a different ideological context, cannot be understood as a successful political endeavour. In order to try and comprehend her perspective, let me quote her at length:

> It is important to understand that Laibach could only develop their over-identification as a genuinely new strategy in art under socialism. Why? Socialism functioned as a totalization of everyday politics imposed on every level of society that was paradoxically completely depoliticized. Therefore Laibach's over-identification functioned as genuine political art in the socialist postmodernism of 1980s former Yugoslavia, and presented a political totalization that stood in opposition to the overtly politicized communist party public discourse.[11]

If I read her correctly, Grzinic thinks that Laibach was successful because it introduced a political discourse into depoliticized social contexts, thereby revealing the contradiction between words and actions of the socialist regime. But regardless of whether this was the case, her opinion that over-identification can only function as such under socialism is in contradiction with what Žižek proposes in his article on Laibach, as well as with what Arns and Sasse argue in relation to subversive affirmation. Žižek, let us state, wrote about Laibach and NSK in the early 1990s, and stressed that it was the cynicism expected by contemporary ideologies (he even calls them "post-ideological") that Laibach was able to successfully undermine thanks to over-identification. For Arns and Sasse, on the other hand, subversive affirmation has been one of the most fruitful tactics in contemporary media and net activism in the West *since* the second half of the 1990s. Arns and Sasse's analysis of how a working method originally developed in various Eastern European socialist countries has been translated into neo-capitalist contexts is worth exploring a bit further.

11 Grzinic, M. (2014). "Southeastern Europe and the Question of Knowledge, Capital, and Power", in Grzinic, Marina; Tatlic, Sefik, *Necropolitics, Racialization, and Global Capitalism: Historicization of Biopolitics and Forensics of Politics, Art, and Life*. Lanham, MD and Plymouth: Lexington Books, p. 72.

In their essay, Arns and Sasse (2006: 444) group together a series of projects by artists and activists operating in Western Europe and the US for their use of "apparent affirmation of – and compliance with – the image, corporate identity and strategies of their opponents". According to these writers (and similarly to Žižek, yet in opposition to Grzinic), such tactics "hold a potential for resistance" due to the capacity of the dominant political and economic capitalist system to appropriate any negative message, making the artistic and activist strategy of critical distance inherently inefficient. Arns and Sasse focus on three artistic examples: Christoph Schlingensief's *Please Love Austria! First European Coalition Week* (2000), which consisted of a performance that mimicked the logic of the television programme *Big Brother* but applied to a group of asylum seekers; The Yes Men's impersonation of corporations' representatives at conferences, television programmes, and online; and Eva and Franco Mattes' (aka 0100101110101101.ORG) well-orchestrated campaign to rename Vienna's Karlplatz as Nikeplatz. In all such projects, the plausibility of what was being presented, and the fact that people believed in its veracity – even if just momentarily – was key to the effectiveness of the piece (Lambert-Beatty, 2009). What is more, what I believe this point allows is to state that for contemporary art projects to be examples of *politically effective* subversive affirmation they require confusion between the factual and the fictional at the level of the information provided, including in relation to the intentions of the artists. By that I do not mean that by not having a knowable intention an artist immediately acquires political efficacy, but that in the case of those projects that are mimicking the ways of their opponents, the intentions of the artists should not be immediately discernible; otherwise, their capacity to confuse, disturb or undermine will be inevitably diminished.

To summarize, the controversial political career of "the most prominent" Janez Janša on the one hand, and the lack of clearly stated motivations on the part of the three artists on the other, have influenced the interpretation of the name change not as a case of idolization nor of straightforward criticism, but of over-identification. However, for the main detractor of the project, Marina Grzinic, the three Janez Janšas are not an example of politically significant over-identification because their actions are not occurring under a totalitarian regime that precludes criticism. Indeed, the post-ideological, neo-capitalist system in which the three Janez Janšas operate allows criticisms. In fact, as Žižek as well as Arns and Sasse explain, this system is so well adjusted to all kinds of direct condemnations that it is able to predict and even take on any negative judgement. Under these circumstances, the only way to destabilize the reigning order is not to attack but to mimic its ways. In that sense, the three Janez

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Janšas' apparent fanatical alignment with the figure of Janez Janša can be interpreted as undermining the political credibility of "that Janez".

In my view, though, what has not been sufficiently emphasized in these readings is the relation between the unknown intentions of the three Janez Janšas and the effectiveness of the project. The confusion of factual and fictional in subversive affirmation demonstrates that some artistic projects require levels of uncertainty in order to best function politically. In the case of the three Janez Janšas, it is the construction of a multiple artistic identity with unclear intentions that allows them to produce a political position. Actually, what guarantees that their name change becomes a genuine case of over-identification and continuous subversive affirmation is their status as *agents without intention*. As a result, rather than "post-modern fascists", the three Janez Janšas are an example of how to create a multiple artistic identity whose political strength resides in the disruption of the causal relation between actions and intentions.

The intention of interpretation

As a short coda, let us consider the intentions of interpreters rather than artists. By interpreters, I mean those writing about art projects as well as those curators who are creating interpretations by way of public presentations. In the case of those art professionals (including me) that are directly interpreting artists confusing the factual with the fictional, the role played by their own intentions (including mine) becomes more evident. As I have so far maintained, the intentions of artists such as the three Janez Janšas are problematic to identify given their multiple identity. For that same reason, the agendas behind the people writing or organizing events with these artists become more easily identifiable, even when they go unacknowledged.

Such would also seem to be the view of Slavoj Žižek when in his account of the possible meaning of the performances by the Slovenian music band Laibach he turns his attention away from the intentions of the members of the group and onto the critics writing about them. As he explains:

> The first reaction of the enlightened Leftist critics was to conceive of Laibach as the ironic imitation of totalitarian rituals; however, their support of Laibach was always accompanied by an uneasy feeling: "What if they really mean it? What if they truly identify with the totalitarian ritual?" or, a more cunning version of it, transferring one's own doubt onto the other: "What if Laibach overestimates their

public? What if the public takes seriously what Laibach mockingly imitates, so that Laibach actually strengthens what it purports to undermine?"[12]

For Žižek (2002: 287), the critics ask questions of the group expecting answers, while failing to understand "that Laibach itself does not function as an answer but a question". I believe that Janez Janša, Janez Janša, and Janez Janša, in their capacity as agents without intention, are also an open question for the interpreter to address their own desires; desires and fears about the political figure of Janez Janša, about what his name represents in Slovenia and beyond, about the art world and the role of the artist, or, even, about one's own role in this art world.[13]

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12 Žižek, S. (2002). "Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?" (1993), in Hoptman, Laura; Pospiszyl, Tomáš, *Primary Documents: a Sourcebook for Eastern and Central European Art since the 1950s.* New York: The Museum of Modern Art, p. 287.

13 In a private conversation, one of the three Janez Janšas explained to me how interpreters had at first been confused about the intention of their name change, and how it took three years for a political reading of their actions as "over-identification" to crystalize. However, in preparation for their mid-career exhibition at the Moderna Galerija in Ljubljana – scheduled for late 2017 to coincide with the tenth anniversary of their name change – the three artists are considering actions that would contradict or question the validity of that political interpretation that now seems to deterministically frame everything they do.

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The global, the post-abyssal and the cosmopolitical: Casting a creative post-underdeveloped, post-peripheral, tropical eye

Renate Dohmen

The sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos posits that modern Western thinking is fundamentally exclusionary: it divides social reality into zones of visibility and invisibility that are separated by a metaphorical boundary he refers to as the "abyssal line". In the zone beyond this line lies the sphere of the "non-existent", a radical zone of exclusion where the reality of everything placed within its sphere "disappears", is declared irrelevant or incomprehensible, or both (SANTOS, 2007: 1). According to Santos, popular, plebeian, peasant and indigenous knowledges are located in this "zone of invisibility". They are contrasted with science, philosophy and theology, which are classed as acceptable knowledge, and are situated on "this" side of the line. (*ibid.*: 2).

Santos explains that there is a historical dimension to the abyssal division of spheres: the cartographically determined lines of demarcation that historically separated the Old from the New World and served as a marker for an ontological divide. As he explains, this is linked to a societal shift, which he characterises as the emergence of civil society when individuals in Europe entered the world of social contracts and left the "state of nature" behind, thus creating the sphere of the "other" now defined as the backward, colonial sphere of the New World (*ibid.*: 3). Modern society, as he points out, continues to be characterized by this "epistemological cartography" (*ibid.*: 4), which perpetuates the abyssal divide, and "the hegemonic eye" which is located in civil society "ceases to see and indeed declares as non-existent the state of nature" (*ibid.*: 3), converting the simultaneity of different modes of existence into non-contemporaneity: the world on the other side of the line becomes the "past" against which the "present" is defined. (*ibid.*: 3). In other words the literal cartographic lines of the past have now become "metaphorical global lines" that structure cultural and social interrelations, albeit now in a more nuanced way than mid-sixteenth century amity lines (*ibid.*: 3). He thus points out that the globalization of the pres-

ent day and the Western understanding of the world is far less "global" than generally acknowledged, and that the struggle for social justice therefore needs to address these epistemological structures (*ibid.*: 5).

This has implications for the phenomenon of the "global turn" in contemporary art which has been celebrated as a sea change that signals the end of post-colonial divisions and the arrival of a much greater inclusiveness in the arts. It has, for example, generated the meteoric rise of contemporary Chinese art with Hong Kong emerging as a major new centre of the art trade (Mosquera, 2011). Arguably, however, these shifts towards greater geographical diversification were mostly driven by changes in the art market rather than a desire for greater equality. The exhibition "The Global Contemporary. Art Worlds After 1989", held at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Karlsruhe from 17 September 2011 to 5 February 2012, which ambitiously attempted a survey of the current state of the global in contemporary art and declared self-reflexivity its modus operandi, for example, devoted a whole section of the exhibition to the influence of the art market. It also committed further space to market forces and to the biennialization of the art world, which drew attention yet again to overlaps between financial and art markets, concluding that art has been "transformed into a speculative commodity for the luxury goods industry" (Belting and Buddensieg, 2011). The show thus suggested that the increased public presence of "artists from cultures remote from the art world" is not due to an ideological rearticulation but to the forces of marketization of contemporary art in the wake of a globalizing economy (*ibidem*).

Whatever the reasons for this geographical expansion of contemporary art, it has undeniably granted artists of non-Western backgrounds greater visibility. The question, however, is whether these are cosmetic or structural changes. Santos, for example, relates that in the wake of the success of twentieth century political independence movements it seemed for a while as if the abyssal system was on the wane, as "this" side of the line was expanding and the "other" side diminishing. According to Santos, this trend, however, has since reversed, and the "other" side of the global line is now expanding (Santos, 2007: 5). This tallies with developments in the arts. The curator and critic Gerardo Mosquera, for example, notes the development of a new "English of Art", by which he means an evolving, hegemonic language of contemporary art. He concedes the need for such a language, as artists from different countries step onto the global platform and require shared codes to communicate with one another and their audiences. But this also misses an opportunity, as the fast-evolving language of contemporary art "consolidates established structures" and incorporates the authority of the histories, values, poetics, methodologies and codes

that constituted them" (Mosquera, 2011). What this means is that contemporary art has been hijacked by the centre and rejects aesthetic languages that do not operate on the basis of its centric codes, dismissing them as traditional, not current or below par.

The essayist and sociology professor Laymert Garcia dos Santos approaches this question from a Brazilian vantage point. He is hopeful that the greater presence of non-Western artists in the sphere of global art will in the long run subvert the supremacy of the Western model. But his "Brazilian" eye, which he describes as "post-underdeveloped, post-peripheral, and tropical" (dos Santos, 2009: 165), also zooms in on a visual field dismissed by the contemporary art world: the traditional cultures of indigenous peoples. He stresses that both modern and contemporary art in Brazil have a "non-relationship with ethnic art that was, and still is, being produced" (dos Santos, 2009: 165). As he points out, this is not just a Brazilian omission, but is symptomatic of the global field of art where such artistic productions are relegated to the realm of anthropology. He thinks the current celebration of an expanded sense of globality in contemporary art is misleading. For him the new art language which is fast becoming institutionalized only encompasses some minor adjustments to Euro-American parameters yet claims to be representative of global artistic production. And crucially he points out that this raises the bar yet higher for artistic practices that do not fit this mould.

On closer inspection, furthermore, the much-vaunted greater plurality of the global contemporary does not stand up well to scrutiny with regard to the inclusion that did occur. When the cultural critic Chin-Tao Wu correlated the birthplaces of artists showing in the nine Documentas between 1968 and 2007 with their places of residence when they exhibited in Kassel, her analysis revealed that while with Enwezor's Documenta 11 in 2002 the participation rate of artists born outside Euro-America increased from 10 to 40 per cent and remained at that level for the time period examined, between 2002 and 2007 some 60 per cent of these artists lived in North America or Europe. On the basis of this data Wu challenges the claim that the 2002 Documenta represents the "full emergence of the margin" (Wu, 2009: 6). She rather argues that the concentric and hierarchical structure of the art world remains fully intact and has only expanded into further global markets. Overall she concludes that all that has changed is that "'Western' has quietly been replaced by a new buzzword, 'global'" (*ibid.*: 7).

What this reveals is that the abyssal cartography in the arts is still firmly in place and has re-asserted itself though allowing a degree of flexibility, allowing a select group of artists transitioning from the "other" side into the realm of vis-

ibility. This underscores Santos's statement that the repressed diversities located in the beyond of the abyssal line still lack an epistemology, and that an epistemological change is essential if a shift towards the post-abyssal is to occur. In other words, a new thinking to counter epistemological "abyssality" is needed. But what does this mean in general, and for the visual arts in particular?

As Santos lays out, the challenge is to think from the "other" side, which he refers to as the metaphorical "global South", and to found a rebellious theory and practice that does not repeat and rehearse what already exists, but in crossing abyssal lines opens out new horizons. He characterizes this "Southern" epistemology as "inter-knowledge" that confronts the "mono-culture of modern science with the ecology of knowledges" characterised by a plurality of "heterogeneous knowledges" and the "inexhaustible diversity of world experience" (Santos, 2007: 11). A further key element of post-abyssality Santos outlines is the acknowledgement of the co-presence of the worlds placed on both sides of the "line" (*ibid.*: 11). For Santos this crucially involves a questioning of the subject-object divide and hence of familiar notions of subjectivity and objectivity, with an emphasis on the "inter-subjective" (*ibid.*: 14). He, furthermore, declares intercultural translation as a "characteristic post-abyssal feature" (*ibid.*: 16).

The challenge therefore is to forge an inter-cultural post-abyssal connectivity that not only translates between different languages but bridges the different conceptual worlds and symbolic universes they partake in. Santos acknowledges the difficulty of the task (*ibid.*: 18). He, for example, asks how a dialogue between Western and African philosophy might be envisaged, and how the issues of "incommensurability, incompatibility, and reciprocal intelligibility" (*ibid.*: 16) thrown up by such a project might be addressed. In other words he wonders what types of relationships are possible between different kinds of knowledges, and how this can be translated into concrete "knowledge-practices" that avoid slipping back into "soft" versions of imperialism and colonialism, that is, abyssal thinking (*ibid.*: 18).

The entry point of this discussion is Santos's statement that indigenous peoples are the "paradigmatic inhabitants of the other side of the line" (*ibid.*: 10) and that their emergence, politically and otherwise, plays a pivotal role in the furtherance of the post-abyssal (*ibid.*: 10). It also picks up from Santos's emphasis of co-presence and inter-being, and proposes an experimental co-presencing of visual practices representative of both sides of the divide: the work of the art-nomad international superstar Rirkrit Tiravanija, whose work has been associated with the aesthetic paradigm of relational aesthetics coined by the French curator Nicolas Bourriaud and seeks to create convivial encounters in the gallery (see p. 81); and the street art of Tamil housewives that has

ritual roots, a communal dimension, and interacts with a cosmos thought of as a dynamic of forces that need to be kept in balance (see image below); traditions that would normally be held apart. The following discussion hence explores what kind of dialogue might be had between these visual practices that might be representative of the radical epistemological reframing of inter-knowledge that the post-abyssal entails.

Rirkrit Tiravanija, *Just Smile and Don't Talk,* Kunsthalle Bielefeld, 11 July–10 October 2010 in Kunsthalle Bielefeld. The artist poses in the exhibition space with pots and 800 bowls ready for the opening when he himself will be cooking. Photo credit: Andreas Zobe.

A new design has just been drawn to replace the *kolam* drawn at sunrise. The morning's design is only partially erased and the ground is still wet from washing the ground prior to drawing the new design. Photo Credit: Renate Dohmen.

The discussion, furthermore, sees form and content as inherently related and suggests that engaging with contents of thought alone neglects the fact that the subject-object divide is integral to the abyssal cartography Santos posits for the modern world. It argues that the creation of "inter-knowledge" necessarily involves a reflection on the "how" of articulation, and seeks to at least somewhat differentiate the normative singularity of the authoritative authorial voice common for such discussions. It hence includes longer sections of other voices that cover some of the discussion's terrain than is the norm to make this point and gesture towards the issue of presentation. Here this discussion also draws inspiration from the Deleuze-Guattarean notion of indirect discourse and of the rhizomatic connectivity of heterogeneous elements they propose, that is the subversive power and logic of the "and" (See DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1999 [1980]: 80 and 25).

I

The chilly village streets lay embedded in dark silence. In the vague light of a distant lamp post, Priya prepares the ground outside her house for the drawing of the morning kolam. […] brings a half coconut shell filled with white powder which she keeps at hand just inside the door. With this powder she will draw an image on the street, the kolam. Facing the entrance of the house, she bends her back and takes a handful of powder. This is made to trickle down between her thumb and index finger into a grid of dots. With swift rhythmical hand movements, she draws a thin line which twists and turns around the dots. When the dots are joined properly, the end of the line meets its beginning. The symmetrical image shines brightly on the damp soil in front of the door. By drawing vertical lines and a couple of small geometrical forms on the step and threshold, Priya completes the act. As she stretches her back, she exchanges a few words with the neighbouring women who are yet working on their morning kolams. They are in a hurry to finish before the other daily responsibilities have to be attended to. […] she is confident that the gods and goddesses will accept today's small kolam as her offering and invitation to them. […] Priya believes that at the break of dawn, the goddess Mariyamman will walk the village streets. Satisfied with Priya's invitation, the goddess enters the house and gives divine blessings.[1]

1 LAINE, A. (2009). *In Conversation with the Kolam Practice. Auspiciousness and Artistic Experiences among Women in Tamil Nadu, South India*. PhD: Social Anthropology, University of Gothenburg, pp. 1-2.

II

In 2011 MoMA acquired an artwork by the artist Rirkrit Tiravanija, a so-called art nomad of the highest pedigree, renowned for cooking Thai food in gallery spaces around the globe. His cook-ins were inaugurated in 1992 at the 303 Gallery in Soho, New York. They have since been restaged repeatedly and recreated again at MoMA where a free vegetarian curry lunch was served every day and who purchased the piece. Because of fire regulations, however, the curry was – with the artist's blessing – prepared in one of the museum's kitchens and taken to the galleries. The piece was on display until February 2012.[2]

When the French critic Nicholas Bourriaud articulated the framework of relational aesthetics in the late 1990s he argued that established art critical modes were not fit to address the practices of contemporary artists at the time, whose work revolved around artist-audience collaborations and social scenarios often created in the gallery. The artist Rirkrit Tiravanija is generally seen as a major instigator for this venture by Bourriaud, and it is therefore not surprising that Tiravanija has been referred to as the "poster boy of relational aesthetics" (SPECTOR, 2009, n. p.). He made his name with his signature-style cooking and serving of *Pad Thai* in galleries around the globe and the serving of the food constituted the artwork.

III

Tiravanija (pronounced Teer-a-van-ee-ja) is Thai. He was born in Buenos Aires in 1961, son of a diplomat; he has lived in Thailand, Ethiopia and Canada. He went to the School of Art Institute of Chicago, and completed the Whitney Independent Studies Programme in New York in 1986. All this makes him something of a hybrid insider-outsider. Since 1989, his most characteristic – but not his only – artistic act of generosity has been to cook food in galleries – usually traditional Thai curried vegetables – and offer his food to his "viewers" for free. Usually he does this in architectural spaces (galleries and museums) that he fiddles with in some way.

Last June, in Untitled, (Still), Tiravanija stripped bare the first floor of New York's 303 Gallery, removing everything including window shades and doors, setting up what looked like a makeshift refugee kitchen in the large back room.

2 DOHMEN, Renate (2016). *Encounters beyond the Gallery. Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference?* London: I.B.Tauris, p. 40.

There, too, everything was taken away but the built-in reception desk. Tiravanija set up shop with an array of paper plates, plastic knives and forks, cooking pots, gas burners and tanks of cooking gas, cutting boards, sawhorse tables, a refrigerator, Tupperware, cardboard boxes, oils, spices, bags of rice, cans of food, vegetables, two round folding tables and some simple folding stools. He left Lisa Spellman, the owner of the gallery, in place at her desk amongst the leftovers, cooking smells and diners.[3]

Bourriaud claims a transformative societal effect for the kind of art he based *Relational Aesthetics* on. Drawing on Guattari's connection between the transformation of subjectivity and societal change, a cornerstone of the latter's ecosophy, Bourriaud contrasted this new convivial mode of art with "a passé avant-garde utopianism" (BOURRIAUD, 2002 [1998]: 44). For him the utopian radicalism and revolutionary hopes of the old avant-garde had now given way to everyday micro-utopias of the "community or neighbourhood committee type" (*ibid.*: 31) that allowed for "alternative forms of sociability, critical models and moments of constructed conviviality" (*ibid.*: 44) to be developed.

Relational aesthetics, which has been described as art's "public-oriented mix of performance, social sculpture, architecture, design, theory, theatre, and fun and games" (SALTZ, 2008: n. p.), has been of profound influence in the sphere of art. Jerry Saltz of *New York Magazine*, for instance, considers it to be "the most influential art strain to emerge in art since the early seventies" and acknowledges that it has "re-engineered art over the past fifteen years or so", which "can be seen in countless exhibitions" (*ibid.*: n. p.). It certainly propelled many artists to international stardom, such as, for example, Rirkrit Tiravanija. But it has also been fiercely critiqued, most influentially by Claire Bishop in her 2004 article *Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics*, where she draws attention to the lack of self-reflexivity of such work, and the fact that there is no acknowledgement of the larger contexts that impact on the reception of art. This unspoken assumption of art's autonomy has rightly been critiqued as an inherent contradiction of an art that claims to be relational yet seems to disavow life's social condition and its affect on art.

It has also been pointed out that the social spaces created by relational encounters in the gallery are misconstrued as zones of exemption from capitalism and hence are asserted as emancipatory sites, yet fully and lucratively participate in the capital driven art market (see KRAYNAK, 2010 [1998]: 271). In a

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3 HAINLEY, B. (1996). "Where are we going? And what are we doing? Rirkrit Tiravanija's Art of Living". *Artforum,* vol. 34, no. February, p. 84.

similar vein the immediacy of the "real" of the gallery space presented by relational art as an unconstructed space that allows for the dissolution of art into life has also attracted critical attention. As critics point out, what actually occurs is a dissolution of art into the very capitalist life that relational art is claiming to overcome. Furthermore, the quality of the interactivity solicited by relational art has also been critiqued and argued as self-congratulatory entertainment (Bishop, 2004: 79).

This discussion, however, approaches a critique of relational aesthetics from a different angle: the omission of Bourriaud's appropriation of Guattari's work, which it argues distorts Guattari's ideas and limits the potentiality of relational aesthetics. For Guattari what is at stake in the current world and its struggle for ecological equilibrium is the relationship between "subjectivity and its exteriority" (Guattari, 2000 [1989]: 27). Guattari, however, does not limit the milieu of human life to human sociality but crucially suggests a far more wide-ranging environs where the social is situated alongside the "animal, vegetable or Cosmic" (*ibid.*: 27). In his articulation of relational aesthetics, Bourriaud, however, separated the social from the non-human aspects of Guattari's ecological thought, a major omission that misrepresents Guattari and also misses out on the cosmopolitical dimension of Deleuze-Guattarean aesthetics that could have given relational aesthetics a truly radical and far-reaching, future-focussed orientation. On the other hand, it is maybe not surprising that Bourriaud did not take to the non-human aspects of Guattarean thought since this clashes with the abyssality of modern thought. Bourriaud's reduced appropriation of Guattari's ecological thought rather safeguards the abyssal line and places relational aesthetics squarely on the "right" side. But what if one were to bridge the divide and to re-appropriate relational aesthetics, and reframe its claimed conviviality in terms of the cosmopolitical?

Deleuze-Guattarean philosophy holds, as I would like to argue, great potential for a translative encounter of the world of Tiravanija and the street art of Tamil women that qualifies as a radical post-abyssal and cosmopolitical reframing of art's epistemologies. For one it repositions the subject in terms of an intersubjectivity grounded in the encounter with a collectivity that encompasses "elements, things, plants, animals, tools, people, powers, and fragments of all these" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1999 [1980]: 161), flows of intensity, and "their fluids, their fibers, their continuums and conjunction of affects, the wind, fine segmentation, microperceptions". For Deleuze-Guattari this understanding of the inter-subjective has "replaced the world of the subject", that is "becomings-animal, becoming molecular" have replaced "history, individual or general" (*ibid.*: 162). In other words, Deleuze-Guattari redefine subjectivity by relating it to the wider field of

force beyond the human sphere which this discussion argues to be suggestive for a post-abyssal bridging of the art worlds of Tiravanija and Tamil Nadu. This essay hence explores the kind of dialogue that might be had between the art of Tamil housewives and the work of the international art nomad Rirkrit Tiravanija on the basis of Deleuze-Guattarean aesthetics and what potentiality this may entail for developing a cosmopolitical perspective in the arts.

The drawing of threshold designs is an ancient, pan-Indian practice with disparate regional design styles. It constitutes a daily, domestic, female routine in which the whole community participates: the women draw the designs twice-daily and the community witnesses their presence, but also erases the drawings as part of the ebb and flow of everyday activities (see image below). The designs' creation and deletion are everyday motions that are perfunctorily performed. The Tamil version of the practice is referred to as *kolam*, and will form the basis for this discussion. Tamil designs traditionally are abstract compositions created by looping continuous lines around a structure of grids that determine the design (see p. 87). The women think of the practice as housework rather than art. It has communal and ritual dimensions, and is located on the "other", invisible side of Santos's abyssal line as a cultural practice: even though the designs are in public view on the streets of the Tamil Nadu, they have, as the cultural anthropologist Stephen Huyler noted, along with other female decorative arts of India, "received almost no recognition" (HUYLER, 1994: 10)

Tamil threshold designs are not considered precious and everyday activities are carried out without concern for preserving the designs. In fact they are drawn to be erased by the community's everyday activities. The photo shows a bicycle parked on a traditional Tamil loop design drawn around a grid of dots in front of a residential dwelling. Photo credit: Renate Dohmen.

and tend to be overlooked, certainly by travellers representative of cultures of "this" side of the line en route to tourist sites.

And even though there have been local revivals, and *kolam* competitions are now regularly held, for example in Chennai, in the larger scheme of global visual practice this street art has remained invisible. As I have argued elsewhere, this reflects colonial legacies and accusations of primitivity that were levelled against Indian culture during the colonial period and led to a distancing from practices that could not easily be appropriated as high art in the post-colonial era (DOHMEN, 2001). The neglect of the practice therefore demonstrates the difficulty of reconciling Western notions of art and originality with practices rooted in ritual traditions, that is, a world view that does not endorse the scientific perspective characteristic of abyssality: the designs rather are rooted in a world where matter is seen to be in continuous flux and needs to be kept in balance, with *kolam* participating in the daily balancing activities required for a happy life and community. The street designs, therefore, constitute but the everyday street version of the indoor expression of a female ritual practice called *nonpu*, where they are used in ritual to establish a pure space for the invoked deity to descend into.

Kolams for special occasions are larger than the ordinary everyday threshold designs. This image shows a large traditional loop design normally executed for festive occasions drawn for a *kolam* competition. Photo credit: Renate Dohmen.

IV

The kōlam is then the cosmos, the deity, and a receptacle for the deity, and the periphery of the kōlam delineates the outermost limits of the cosmos and the area

to the deity, the two being co-extensive. The outer lines form also a barrier which serves both to protect movement inwards toward the center made by untoward forces and outwards on the part of the deity who is confined within the demarcated space. It is then not only an apotropaic device; it is also a restraining device. Once the deity is brought into existence, there is to be no dissipation of the deity's power. The concatenation of interlocking, unbroken lines makes entry to the center difficult while it simultaneously binds and harnesses the power of the deity at the center from which it cannot escape.

The center of the kōlam is a power center, and in nōnpus, the task of the performer is to appropriate that power to herself.[4]

From an abyssal perspective this world view is representative of superstition, is considered irrational and "primitive". To redeem the practice it has, in the past, been reframed as a quaint folk art that used to be a full ritual practice but now has become merely decorative (See Steinmann, 1989). While the latter attribution allows it to emerge on the "other" side, bar its affective and conceptual dimensions, as a folk practice of low level of importance and relevance at best, it disavows the cultural and epistemological contexts of the practice that sustain it. If one wanted to recover these cultural conditions and reframe the practice accordingly, a further difficulty, however, will soon present itself: the language and conceptual tools available in the field of art history and cultural studies, for example, are informed by abyssality, and efforts to speak about the practice in non-pejorative terms that acknowledge the cultural frameworks it is informed by immediately subvert this intention: the methods and approaches of these disciplines are part of the epistemologies of the "Global North" and inevitably twist and warp any such effort. They exoticise or belittle the practice, and relegate it to the "other" side.

But can Deleuze-Guattarean philosophy, which conceptualises a world of force and becomings, offer a positive language to engage with the traditional Tamil world view the practice is rooted in, offering a constructive conceptual bridging of the abyssal divide? There certainly seem convergences. The Tamil world of energetic flux, for example, requires participation, and the drawing of the designs constitutes a re-establishing of order, of holding the forces of chaos at bay. An act which, given the changeable nature of the cosmos, needs to be repeated time and time again, and entails a constant interaction between order and flux and the rebalancing of relations. In a similar vein the

4 Baker Reynolds, H. (1978). *To Keep the Tali Strong: Women's Rituals in Tamilnad, India*. PhD: University of Wisconsin-Madison, pp. 250-251.

Deleuze-Guattarean notion of "bending the line" which establishes an "endurable zone in which to install ourselves" also needs to be perpetually redone, since the line is constantly "unfolding at crazy speeds" (DELEUZE, 1995 [1990]: 111). Furthermore, "folding the line" also implies a "living on the edge", and for Deleuze this line is "deadly, too violent and fast, carrying us into breathless regions. It destroys all" (*ibid.*: 111). This is again reminiscent of Tamil women who encounter the forces of chaos in their ritual activity. According to Baker Reynolds it is woman who "steps into the chaotic, dark world of death and learns its secrets", who declares, "We eat death" (BAKER REYNOLDS, 1978: 310), considering it woman's work. But more pertinent still is Deleuze-Guattarean aesthetics, which is grounded in the sphere of the non-human.

V

Not only does art not wait for human beings to begin, but we may ask if art ever appears among human beings, except under artificial and belated conditions.[5]

For Deleuze-Guattari it rather is a bird that takes aesthetic precedence.

VI

The brown stagemaker (*Scenopoeetes dentirostris*) lays down landmarks each morning by dropping leaves it picks from its tree, and then turning them upside down so the paler underside stands out against the dirt: inversion produces a matter of expression.
 The territory is not primary in relation to the qualitative mark; it is the mark that makes the territory. [...] Territorialization is an act of rhythm that has become expressive, or of milieu components that have become qualitative.[6]

As Deleuze and Guattari argue, this "inversion produces a matter of expression" (DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1999 [1980]: 315) and redefines expressiveness in terms of taking possession and of environmentality rather than human artistic activity. It constitutes a specific response to a terrain or geographical location that "is not reducible to the immediate effects of an impulse triggering an action"

5 DELEUZE, G.; GUATTARI, F. (1999 [1980]). *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* London: Athlone Press, p. 320; trans. Brian Massumi.
 6 *Ibidem*, p. 315.

(DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1999 [1980]: 317). Deleuze and Guattari furthermore refer to the territorial markings of the stagemaker as "readymades" and as *art brut*.

VII

> The artist: the first person to set out a boundary stone, or to make a mark. [...] territorial marks are readymades. And what is called art brut is not at all pathological or primitive; it is merely this constitution, this freeing, of matters of expression in the movement of territoriality: the base or ground of art. Take anything and make it a matter of expression. The stagemaker practices art brut. Artists are stage makers.[7]

Expression for Deleuze-Guattari is therefore not linked to an inner subjective core of experience; it is not an inside-out trajectory, or based on a consciousness model. It is rather defined as relational to an outside, an environs. This, however, has implications for the conception of the artist who is now cast in the image of the stagemaker: for Deleuze-Guattari the bird holds pride of place: "art is not the privilege of human beings" (*ibid.*: 316).

They also use the metaphor of the "house or framework" (DELEUZE and GUATTARI, 1994 [1991]: 179) in the creation of art. For them art "begins with the animal that carves out a territory and constructs a house", and it is through the "territory-house system" that pure sensory qualities of art emerge (*ibid.*: 183). They elaborate that "all that is needed to produce art is here: a house, some postures, colors, and songs – on condition that it all opens onto and launches itself on a mad vector as on a witch's broom, a line of the universe, or of deterritorialization" (*ibid.*: 184 and 85). They argue that the "house takes part in an entire becoming. It is life, the 'non-organic life of things'"(*ibid.*: 180).

Key here is the movement "from House to universe. From endosensation to exosensation", because the house not only isolates but "opens onto cosmic forces" (*ibid.*: 185). And they repeat that "if nature is like art, this is always because it combines these two living elements in every way: House and Universe, *Heimlich* and *Unheimlich*, territory and deterritorialization" (*ibid.*: 186). This statement again resonates powerfully with the practice of drawing threshold designs, as erasure is integral to the designs. *Kolams* furthermore are not drawn to be admired, to become part of an aesthetic canon, or point to the genius of their creators. They are erased to be redrawn. They performatively harmonize

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7 *Ibidem*, p. 316.

material substance, cosmic forces and the local community and are primarily affective rather than perceptual.

Deleuze-Guattari furthermore present the notion of the refrain as part of the interplay of territorialization and deterritorialization, which Deleuze-Guattari delineate and link in their aesthetics. They also connect their concept of the refrain to territoriality and the home, a further Tamil resonance. They hold that "home does not pre-exist" and that "it was necessary to draw a circle around that uncertain and fragile center, to organize a limited space" (*ibid.*: 311). This creates an interiority and an exteriority where the "forces of chaos are kept outside as much as possible" (*ibid.*: 311). Deleuze-Guattari further suggest that "sonorous or vocal components are very important" and refer to "a wall of sound, or at least a wall with some sonic bricks", such as when a "housewife sings to herself [...] as she marshals the antichaos forces of her work" (*ibid.*: 311). These propositions conjure up Baker Reynolds, who states that "in drawing a kolam woman becomes fashioner of the cosmos, for she calls into being the spatial and temporal dimensions of the world" (Baker Reynolds, 1978: 250). Furthermore, *kolams* are inwardly and outwardly protective as the "outer lines form also a barrier which serves both to protect movement inward toward the centre made by untoward forces and outwards on the part of the deity" (*ibid.*: 251). Tamil women who perform rites and draw *kolams* as part of their observances furthermore abandon their subjectivity and participate in a larger world of divine power, as the "drawing of kolams proceeds from a dissolution and assimilation of all forms back into the formless" (*ibid.*: 252).

The proposition therefore is that Deleuze-Guattarean philosophy, and in particular their aesthetics, offers an epistemological framework and therefore a language that allows for a post-abyssal reframing of the practice from a folk art considered to be in decline, or a popular visual practice that engages with quaint if not superstitious notions of the cosmos, deities and temporalities defined by astronomical markers, to a practice that can claim its place on "this" side of the abyssal line in the world of art "proper: it can co-equally take its place as a contemporary visual practice of value, thus articulating a cosmopolitical perspective in the arts".

Approached from such a perspective the practice now registers as an aesthetic mode of living that generates conviviality in an inclusive, environmental manner, and connects subjectivity with an exteriority comprising the social, the animal, vegetal and cosmic. Deleuze-Guattari's grounding of art in the sphere of the non-human arguably thus offers connectivities for engaging with the daily actions of Tamil housewives in a non-pejorative fashion that gives it visibility while acknowledging its difference. This translative bridging is argued to subvert

abyssality. It challenges the sphere of the global contemporary to acknowledge the contemporaneity of practices such as the drawing of *kolams.* It contends that a cosmopolitical remit makes a conceptual connectivity available, which allows for a bridging of spheres where the "other" becomes visible yet is not usurped or appropriated. Rather, a conversation can be had that challenges the present positioning of the so-called "primitive" to fine art. A cosmopolitical approach, furthermore, recovers a potentiality that Bourriaud's notion of relational aesthetics neglected: by drawing out non-human becomings it brings the full range of Guattari's conception of subjectivity to the fore and demonstrates the limitations of the conviviality in the gallery generated by Tiravanija's scenarios, suggesting their expansion towards a cosmopolitical communality.

It furthermore mitigates a notable disjuncture between Deleuze-Guattarean articulations of aesthetics grounded in the non-human and their championing of the bird, and the examples of visual art they draw on in their writing which are summarily produced by male, white, middle-class masters. A cosmopolitical reading thus extends the Deleuze-Guattarean reach into the cultural terrain of Tamil housewives and threshold designs. It allows the Tamil cultural context of the designs, their ritual performativity and the remit to balance substances and forces to register, and potentially paves the way to bring the design practice and its cultural contexts into a global conversation in the fields of the global contemporary. These implications of Deleuze-Guattarean non-human aesthetics have, however, so far not been developed in the visual field. Despite the art world's ethnographic and relational turn, despite post-modernism's and post-colonialism's momentous emphasis on alterity, despite the engaged interest in Deleuze-Guattari's work, the reception of their aesthetic thought has largely remained within the cultural terrain of Euro-American conceptions of art.

So what if Tamil designs be accorded a place in the "A list" of relational aesthetics? What if Bourriaud invited Tamil women into the Palais de Tokyo to perform their daily routines? Would Parisian art audiences understand the message? Would they know how to participate in this "show" and walk over the designs to erase them? Publicly acknowledging *kolams* as contemporary expressions of a culturally differenced post-abyssal aesthetics would certainly present a challenge, yet it is exactly this kind of work of imagination and re-conceptualization that is needed to generate a generous encounter between disparate spheres of art making that have for too long been situated on either side of the metaphorical abyssal line. The discussion thus sides with Jonathan Harris, who acknowledges that "including new voices from places other than those within the global art world's European and North American heartlands is harder to do than it may initially sound" (Harris, 2013: 440). Yet it holds that such

a conceptual repositioning is crucial if advances are to be made towards a post-abyssal inclusivity, as mere physical additions of non-Western artwork in the spaces of the global art market simply add exotic spice to existing modes of art practice without making a difference.

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(In)hospitable art. Artistic narratives in cosmopolitical aesthetics

Modesta Di Paola

In a good part of Western culture, hospitality has been an element of reflection for discussions centred on the "sense of humanity" (BOTTANI, 2009: 7). These have intersected, on the one hand, with many philosophical questions related to human identity, otherness, and transcendence, according to which the guest is not only different *from* us but is also something that resides *within* us (*ibidem*); on the other hand, they have been related to social and political attitudes governed by duty, debt, and responsibility. We find theoretical arguments about hospitality already in Greek philosophical reflection, from which we have received the basic notion of *xenía* – hospitality understood as a duty. Marcus Tullius Cicero claimed that those who wanted a good name among foreign nations should put much stock in hospitality.[1] Also, in Sophocles (*Antigone*) and in Aeschylus (*The Suppliants*), we can identify some of the moments in human culture when the reception of the foreigner is shown in terms of public rights and the ethics of welcoming. The semantic space of *xenía* is closely related to the sphere of *xénos*, understood as foreign and strange. The phrase *tà xénia* is understood as the gift of hospitality, while *he xenía* is the foreign land. Hospitality thus has a double connection with that which concerns the strange being and the foreign being, but even more with the duality friend/enemy, shown very clearly in the double variant in Latin of *hospes* and *hostis*. As a semantic consequence, the antimony of hospitality as defended in the Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian tradition – at least until the philosophy of law formulated by Kant and Hegel – has been reflected in ethical and legal behaviour that supports hospitality in its double aspect: the unconditional "gesture" of offering hospitality, and national and international laws that condition individuals and communities.

From the historical tradition, the French linguist Émile Benveniste, in the *Vocabulary of Indo-European Institutions* (1969), offers us an original definition

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[1] See "Rhetoric" of Marcus Tullius Cicero, in *De Officiis,* Liber Secundus, XVIII, 64.

of hospitality, understood as a ritual which consists of the exchange of gifts. Taking into account the etymology of the word "host" – host but also hostile – he claims that hospitality is based on the idea of linking two or more people through an obligation of compensation, while the gift always implies an obligation. Among the discursive lines that analyse Western hospitality as an ethical problem, we find the hermeneutic phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur, the transcendental phenomenology of Emmanuel Lévinas, and the deconstructionism of Jacques Derrida. In a line that is more clearly political, we find the concept of hospitality as an act of transgressing power formulated by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (2010), where hospitality is related to the concept of nomadism, going beyond simple linguistic and legal solidarity in favour of the transgression of national borders. Hospitality thus opens itself to movement and fluidity and identifies with people who are legally unclassifiable, with ethnic groups, and with the homeless. In this context, hospitality loses its connotation of moral virtue and becomes an essential part of the human being, an integral part of human development. These macro-topics, widely analysed by linguists, sociologists, and philosophers, also find various applications in the experience of everyday life and in the consequent poetics of the micro-narrative. For example, Jean Soldini speaks of "domestic micro-vagrancies" and claims that each small and new relationship must be treated as a "guest". In this sense, Soldini concerns himself with questions such as the foreigner, work, politics, bioethics, pain, and death in the context of everyday hospitality (SOLDINI, 2010). Hospitality has thus moved among different fields of analysis, also appearing in artistic narratives that are focused on the poetics of cultural and intercultural relationships. Hospitality as a performance of attitudes ranging from xenophilia (the pleasure of experiencing the other) to xenophobia (hostility towards the foreigner) has, in fact, been extremely prolific for the semantic and conceptual representations of artistic production. This approach allows us to reflect on the status of art as being, on the one hand, an agent of mediation between cultures and societies, and, on the other hand, as an experience that activates our perception of the other through sensorial and intellectual activity.

From a brief philosophical introduction about the concept of hospitality, I propose to trace some topics of contemporary artistic narratives that open themselves to transcultural dialogue in that place where – as is well shown by cosmopolitan aesthetics – contradictions and understandings are created. These topics are found, I will argue, in an interdisciplinary field which sees artistic investigation related to philosophy, literature, social sciences, and ecology, creating the basis for a new "cosmopolitical" aesthetic.

Hospitality and language

The formulation of an "ethics of linguistic hospitality" was born with Paul Ricoeur's book *On Translation* (2006). Here, the French philosopher describes hospitality as the human capacity to accept the word of the other, the pleasure of inhabiting the other's language but also of receiving the foreigner in our own homes. The paradigm of hospitality opens a reflection about the linguistic and ethical problems that emerge when facing a compromise between the plurality of cultures and the unity of humanity. Hence the requirement to respond to a series of questions that show the difficulty of creating an ethics that would govern linguistic hospitality. From which field should an ethics of recognition and acceptance start out? What does it mean to understand and accept the word of the other? What values are involved in the appropriation of the language of the other?

From a reflection on notions of "challenge" and "happiness", Ricoeur claims that the "ethical problem" of hospitality is revealed in the idea that communicating with the other is also to seek happiness. These concepts – which open hospitality to dualities such as challenge/happiness, impossibility/possibility, duty/pleasure – reveal the absence of a true empathy between people, but also the interest in laying the foundations of dialogue and spontaneous understanding between individuals. According to Ricoeur, the philosophical tendency that reaches towards "universal understanding" would erase the history of each language and "[the same universality] would turn all who are foreign to it into language's stateless persons, exiles who would have given up the search for the asylum afforded by a language of reception. In brief, errant nomads" (*ibid.*: 9-10). In the loss of the linguistic absolute, the translator finds his compensation – which is to say, his happiness – in opening himself definitively to difference and experiencing what Ricoeur calls "linguistic hospitality", where "the pleasure of dwelling in the other's language is balanced by the pleasure of receiving the foreign word at home, in one's own welcoming house" (*ibid.*: 10). Ricoeur confronts this paradigm when he claims that translation is an "ethical problem" that is revealed through the need to find a mediation between the unity of humanity and the pluralities of cultures.

A more thorough analysis concerning the problem of hospitality in relation to ethics and language is proposed by Jacques Derrida in his essay *Des Tours de Babel* (1985). Here, the starting point is Walter Benjamin's text "The task of the translator" (*Die Aufgabe des Übersetzers*), from which Derrida explains the double meaning of the word *aufgabe* as:

[...] the task (*Aufgabe*), the mission to which one is destined (always by other), the commitment, the duty, the debt, the responsibility. Already at stake is a law, an injunction for which the translator has to be responsible. He *must* also acquit himself, and of something that implies perhaps a fault, a fall, an error and perhaps a crime. The essay has as horizon, it will be seen, a "reconciliation". And all that in a discourse multiplying genealogical motifs and allusions – more or less than metaphorical – to the transmission of a family seed. The translator is indebted, he appears to himself as translator in a situation of debt; and his task is to *render*, to render that which must have been given. Among the words that correspond to Benjamin's title (*Aufgabe*, duty, mission, task, problem, that which is assigned, given to be done, given to render), there are, from the beginning, *Wiedergabe*, *Sinnwiedergabe*, restitution, restitution of meaning. How is such a restitution, or even such an acquaintance, to be understood? It is only to be restitution of meaning, and what of meaning in this domain?[2]

Derrida reminds us that the term *aufgeben* means both duty and to give. The element of duty or obligation corresponds to the attempt to overcome differences, to accommodate the other, to let him enter by means of translation. In *Monolingualism of the Other. Or the Prosthesis of Origin* (Derrida, 1998) Derrida also looks at the problem of the mother tongue as a metaphor for motherland or home, arguing that, although it belongs to one, it is not one's own: "Yes, I only have one language, yet it is not mine" (*ibid*: 2). These words reveal the metaphorical charge of language (monolingualism) as a dwelling, in that we dwell in it and it dwells in us: "I am monolingual. My monolingualism dwells, and I call it my dwelling: it feels like one to me, and I remain in it and inhabit it. It inhabits me" (*ibid*: 1).

Derrida puts forwards hospitality's ethical and political connotations above all in *De l'hospitalité* (1997). The starting point is the concept of hospitality formulated by Benveniste, brought to the complex philosophical domain and nurtured for its cultural, political, and economic associations. According to Derrida, to invite, to receive, and to give asylum are concepts related to language and other forms of communication between people and institutions. The French philosopher reminds us that the foreigner is, above all, foreign in respect of the legal language that formulates the obligation of hospitality, the right of asylum, the limits, norms, and codes of politics. The outsider thus has to ask for hospitality in a language that is not his own, but that is demanded by the owner of the house, the king, power, the nation, the state, the father,

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2 Derrida, J. (1985). "Des Tours de Babel", in Graham, F. Joseph (ed.), *Difference in Translation*. Cornell University Press, pp. 175-176.

etc. These are the first to impose a violence on the foreigner, that of translating him to another language. For Derrida, the problem of hospitality starts precisely with language and therefore with requesting that the foreigner understand and speak our language in order to be accepted. From this premise, the old concept of hospitality as a duty is lost among the pages of the Derridean essay which, in turn, describes contemporary dynamics ruled by norms and codes that have been institutionalised to protect national borders.

Derrida thus formulates his personal vision of hospitality as a gift that is offered without asking for anything in exchange, in contrast to the rules of law, covenant, and contract that are established between individuals. Hence the difference between legal hospitality (regulated politically) and absolute hospitality (as an ethical gesture). In that case, how have we interpreted this hiatus between ethics on the one hand and the law and politics of hospitality on the other?

Legal hospitality and absolute hospitality

In Emmanuel Lévinas's *Totality and Infinity* (1975), Derrida finds the most universal and unconditional representation of hospitality. Although the word hospitality is neither used frequently nor emphasised by Lévinas, according to Derrida this book is an "immense treatise of hospitality" (1999: 21) which unveils a clear manifestation of acceptance, welcoming, and receiving differences. The central point of Lévinas's ideas about the ethics of otherness is his poetics of the "face". The face, this first visual contact with the other, enters our world as a visitor and, in this way, imposes a responsibility onto us. This face that looks at us – as the face of the poor person, the orphan, the immigrant, and all the emblematic figures of otherness – imposes an ethical attitude onto us. Seeing the face makes possible the meeting with the other, and through the face the responsibility to help them is imposed. The act of welcoming implies a sense of responsibility that is configured as the "paradigm of care", which is to say the most plausible alternative to the "paradigm of rights" with which Western societies have established their politics concerning hospitality. The "paradigm of rights" represents the equivalent of the morality of duty, regulated by codes, laws, and norms that manage the relationship between individuals morally and legally. Lévinas contrasts the Law with "the ethics of care", which is to say the act of caring for the guest, the foreigner, the homeless.

From these arguments, Derrida claims that the "morality of law" has to be replaced by the "ethics of giving", for which friendship, justice, and human rights are defined in ethical terms, beyond any calculation, norm, or code.

However, is there a model of political hospitality that is capable of giving form to human beings living in harmony together? Derrida reflects at length about a politics that is able to reformulate the relationship between people, taking the host and the guest as emblematic figures. Tracing the ethical discourse, he finds an incurable tension between the "laws" of hospitality – which legally normalise the right to hospitality of foreigners who are identifiable, recognisable, provided with a name and thus responsible for the relationship between host and guest – and the "Law" of absolute and unconditional hospitality, in other words, given to a totally unknown individual. The French philosopher reflects on this on one very specific occasion. In 1996, the International Parliament of Writers organised in Strasbourg the first Congress of Cities of Asylum, whose participants included Rushdie, Bourdieu and Glissant. Derrida's speech, with the title *Cosmopolites de tous les pays, encore un effort !* (1997), dealt with the problem of hospitality in cosmopolitical terms and described the perennial question of 'open cities' (*ville franches*) or 'refuge cities' (*ville refuges*) as a possible way to influence the politics of states, proving the opportunity to consider a new concept of hospitality. Here, the creation of cities of asylum is considered as a new form of "giving place" and thus of letting individuals be free to decide forms of hospitality in a subjective way without intervention of a political nature in people's private lives.

Through these preliminary questions, Derrida raises other question: "the relationships between an ethics of hospitality (an ethic as hospitality) and the law or a politics of hospitality, for example, in the tradition of what Immanuel Kant calls the conditions of universal hospitality in cosmopolitical law" (DERRIDA, 1999: 19 and 20). Derrida's critical position towards Kant, the philosopher of cosmopolitical and universal hospitality, is based precisely on the configuration of legal dynamics in relation to the other. In *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795), Kant images a peace treaty that, inscribing itself in the disciplinary field of law, would prevent any conflict and thereby guarantee peace between peoples.

In the section of the essay dedicated to hospitality, "Third article: 'The law of world citizenship is to be united to conditions of universal hospitality'", Kant defines hospitality in the following words: "hospitality means the right of a visiting foreigner not to be treated as an enemy" (KANT, 2010: 11). This is not about a right through which the recently arrived can demand to be treated as a guest, but simply the right of the visitor, which helps all people: that of presenting oneself in a society as a potential member of that society. The permanent peace between states is shown, therefore, as the indispensable corollary of the conjunction of the principles of internal and external politics, in a way that distant regions can enter into peaceful relations, which, if they ulti-

mately become public and legal, would perhaps lead the human race to establish a "cosmopolitan constitution": "All men have this right by virtue of their common possession of the surface of the earth, where (because it is a finite sphere) they can't spread out for ever, and so must eventually tolerate each other's presence".[3] The right to visit is based on "free movement", understood as the movement necessary in order for the development of what Kant calls "expanded thought", which is to say the capacity to judge from the point of view of the other, teaching the imagination to visit other mental and physical spaces: "Inhospitality is thus opposed to the natural law" (*ibid.*: 12).

Teaching one's imagination how to visit

The debate about the meanings of hospitality has recently flourished thanks to social and political factors. Above all, because it is easy to imagine, as a result of the magnitude of the phenomenon of immigration from crisis zones to Europe. Here, contemporary analysis about hospitality has emphasised not only the importance of analysing the notion of "cultural pluralism" at a theoretical level but also of putting it in the context of contemporary social realities. The ethics of hospitality are not only a consequence imposed on local realities by globalisation and its effects, but also manifest in moments of transition and in transnational micro-connections. Gerard Delanty and Nikos Papastergiadis analyse the concept of cosmopolitanism from the interaction of the global and the local, identifying the role that the imagination plays in the formulation of an ethics and an aesthetics of hospitality. From the field of sociology, Delanty describes today's cosmopolitanism as the principle of opening to a world in which universal and individual solidarity are reconciled. Contemporary cosmopolitanism is inserted into the transnational republican order, determining itself as a post-universalist reality in which different values co-exist rather than a single global culture (DELANTY, 2006: 27). In what the author calls critical cosmopolitanism, the "cosmopolitan imagination" prospers in environments where it is possible to operate an opening in relations between oneself, others, and the world (*ibid.*: 27). For Delanty, this principal of opening is the funda-

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3 Between the middle of 1700 and the peace of Prussia, German literature and critical philosophy nurtured, together with national sentiment, the development of a strong cosmopolitan ideology which included a supranational humanity. This idea proposed a harmony between the cosmopolitan idea and that of the nation. Cf. MEINECKE, Friedrich (1930). *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*. Perugia, Venice: La Nuova Italia Editrice, vol. 1, pp. 21-36; trad. it. di A. Oberdorfer.

mental element of post-universalist cosmopolitanism, in which the local and the global come together in an attempt to reconcile universal solidarity and individual solidarity (*ibid.*: 34-35). It is thus about a cosmopolitanism in which tensions and conflicts (between global and local, universal and individual) are emphasised in cultural plurality.

Nikos Papastergiadis puts forward the possibility of a new cosmopolitanism based on small gestures in specific places. Observing a small community allows the discovery of connections of union and communion by means of good ethical conduct. The imagination plays a fundamental role in the understanding of cosmopolitanism as the possibility of developing the idea of the "aesthetic or cosmopolitan imaginary" (Papastergiadis, 2012). In his view, "aesthetics and politics are two forms of an underlying imaginary process" (*ibid.*: 227) in which art and artistic creation with their anti-global focus provide new possibilities for the shaping of a new aesthetic that replaces the centrist perspective in articulating an intercultural political agenda.

Often, but not always, it tends to associate the cosmopolitan ideal with attitudes and gestures that open up to the other – such as an ethics of hospitality that enriches the self – coming to propose this ideal as the basis for developing a new creative and pedagogic method. From Papastergiadis, the theorist Anne Harris claims that "arts education, with its focus on process and slowness and risk, may represent this anti-globalisation or anti-industrialisation of creativity" (Harris, 2014: 118). Hospitality is thus associated with the idea of creatively educating the cultures of the world through a critical cosmopolitanism. This ontological attitude shows the possibilities of an aesthetic, social, and artistic growth in the meeting with the other. In other words, creativity is the medium that would allow us to become cosmopolitans and, in this process between the self, the other, and the world, "*bring into being new beings*" (Hansen, 2014: 7).

Art, hospitality and cosmopolitical aesthetics

From these theoretical premises, artistic production shows itself to be particularly suitable for establishing the parameters of a possible – or impossible – ethics of hospitality in the visual arts. These parameters are made clear in various artistic works that have been developed from discourses about belonging and distance, re-writing and the manipulation of cultural codes, the difficulty of communicating in different social and cultural contexts, and the impossibility of a definitive and universal hospitality among peoples. Against this background, it is not surprising that today one of the subjects associated with hos-

pitality in the visual arts is related to the phenomenon of immigration towards Europe.

The free movement of people, immigration, and asylum are some of the priority areas of legislative politics in the European Union, for which, within community limits, freedom of movement is a fundamental right. The suppression of internal borders, however, does not equate to a correct regularisation of the extra-community borders, where management is attempted through the European Pact on Immigration and Asylum. Against illegal immigration, the EU has sections outside the borders, the so-called "hotspots", in which it seeks to improve the co-ordination of European aid in areas of great migratory pressure. There are hotspots in Malta, Sicily, Lampedusa, and the Canary Islands, key points in the geopolitics of the Mediterranean and zones in which the problems created by the immigration crisis are most clearly defined.

From this perspective, I propose to analyse some specific cases of artistic production carried out in Sicily, centre of the Mediterranean, port of entry for those who come from beyond European limits to reach Europe and fulfil the dream of a more human life. Here, art born in areas of tension as a result of immigration, nomadism and contemporary exile, tends to reflect on hospitality, reception, and acceptance as conceptual points governed by ethical dynamics and political norms. In 2016, an annual event of artistic experiments, called HotSpot, was organised in the spaces of Dimora OZ (Operative Zone), a permanent laboratory of visual, performance, and multimedia art driven by artists resident in Palermo (Sicily). Conceived as a kind of art factory, Dimora OZ is designed as a project of cultural placemaking in which contemporary subjects are tackled through a relational methodology. From the meanings related to the word "hotspot", artists put together their own visions from different conceptual perspectives. The word "hotspot" has different geopolitical, ecological, geographical, and biological declinations that determine the degree of sustainability of a society and also the signs of an environmental collapse. The hotspot is: 1) a centre organised for the detention and identification of immigrants; 2) a place that provides network services through an internet service provider; 3) a portion of DNA where mutations are more often concentrated; 4) areas of high volcanic activity in relation to their surroundings; 5) a critical point in biodiversity that, as analysed by the environmental scientist Norman Myers, faces serious threats.

These different meanings offer multiple critical perspectives about the problems opened by the phenomenon of immigration, but also about the environmental consequences that these migratory movements bring with them, whether at the local or the transnational level. Thus, in the work by Daniele Di Luca, *Poro* (2016), the idea of hotspot is extended to the dimension of bio-

diversity and explores the connections that nature establishes with life (*bios*). In the work *Zingaro, Ecological Hotspot (lat. 38.087251, long.12.804901)* by the artist Fabio R. Lattuca, the relationship between human beings and the environment in their processes of conservation and destruction is analysed from the idea of the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess, according to which humankind is not the only referent of the destiny that concerns nature and ecology but rather a co-participant. Hence the subject of immigration is constituted as an important opportunity for reconsidering the epistemology and ethics of human relations in the reconfiguration of the extended environment of ecology, including the natural and connecting it to the social and the cultural.

Andrea Kantos - *This is not a Stand/Understand, support It!*, Andrea Kantos, 2016 video 10 min text (with collaboration of Yousif Latif Jaralla).

Andrea Kantos's work *This is not a Stand/Understand, support It!* (2016), made in collaboration with the artist of Iraqi origin Yousif Latif Jaralla, formulates the concept of hospitality rather as an act of transgression close to the description given by Deleuze and Guattari in relation to nomadism. Hospitality opens itself to movement and fluidity, and identifies with people who are legally unclassifiable. In this context, hospitality loses its connotation of moral virtue and becomes an essential part of the human being, an integral part of human "becoming". This installation represents the ambiguity between support (action and object) and raising awareness of the geopolitical narrative. The terms "stand/understand represent" the no-places through which immigrants arrive in Europe – that is to say, the sea, the lands, and the means provided by criminal organisations. The metaphor of trafficking is shown through a video which shows a hand drawing the word "SOS" in the water and a panel with notepaper. The only thing that remains of these experience is, in fact, a

word that fades in the middle of the sea and a hard copy with the co-ordinates of the distances between the centre of the Mediterranean and the edges of its shores: on one side Tunisia, one of the places from which the unregistered migrants embark to seek their dreams of peace and prosperity; and on another side, Lebanon, a country that suffers the trauma of war and where terrorism affects not only the population in its right to life, liberty, and security but also Nature itself, devastated and treated without any respect. Thus, the ecological debt generated by wars and terrorism is incalculable.

Sergio Barbàra, *The great Hug (Photograph of the site-specific installation for Scala dei Turchi White Wall)*. Photographic print on forex 50 × 70 cm, 2016.

In a more clearly critical line are the works *Permesso di soggiorno messo in vendita al costo della tratta pagata* by Mr. Richichi and *The great Hug* by Sergio Barbàra, both from 2016. In the first of these, the residency permit of an immigrant who arrived in Italy clandestinely by sea and paying €700 to organised crime, was put up for sale at the same price as the immigrant paid to reach Italian shores. The money obtained from the sale was returned to the permit holder as redress for the unjust treatment received. *The great Hug* was created on the basis of the White Wall homes in the locality of Scala dei Turchi in the south of Sicily, a place characterised by its biodiversity and nonetheless placed constantly at risk by building abuses. Hug, a giant anthropomorphic construction six metres high and made out of rags donated by members of the Palermo immigrant community, looks towards the shores of Africa and Lampedusa. The rags make up the giant, a symbol of a Europe that is indifferent and at the same time a metaphor of the invitation to welcome other cultures.

The macro-subjects related to hospitality thus find multiple applications in the experience of ordinary life and in the consequent poetics of the micro-narratives of everyday hospitality. *Bet_Lehem o della Ri-nascita* is community-specific project carried out by Gandolfo G. David in 2016. In Aramaic, "*Bet_Lehem*" means "house of bread", for which the installation shows the archetype of the house, of the home where people find protection and nutrition. The concept of rebirth is thus connected to participation around the meaning of welcoming and receiving other cultures. The house of bread, made with tiles of bread kneaded by the migrants of a Palermo refugee centre, represents the final phase of a long process of meetings and workshops that have metaphorically defined the point of contact between the cultural narratives and the politics of the Mediterranean. David claims that "the project develops and makes a theme out of birth (place of origin) and rebirth (place of social and cultural integration)". In this sense, the word *Betlemme* represents not only the place where one is born, but also the place of rebirth through the ethic of hospitality as the basis of universal fraternity.

An example of how local hospitality and the vernacular can have a cosmopolitan dimension is another work by Gandolfo G. David, *A spera* (The monstrance), from 2015. The artist explores the related subjects of immigration through collective memory in the representation of natural spaces and architectural environments in the history of Sicily. The installation forms part of a cycle of works whose main subject is research on the symbols that remain in the local culture and which nonetheless reflect, by affinities, the symbols of other cultures. In this project, the refugee camp of the village of Salemi becomes a device to show problems related to the process of "legal hospitality" and "hospitality as a paradigm of giving". David's transnational project traces contemporary conditions of conviviality by means of a specific place and the community in which it is being configured. In one meeting, the village women work the bread, symbol of "welcoming into one's own home", while, in another figurative meeting, the migrants receive this gift, creating a great mandala that unites West and East. In a performance that represents the metaphor of conviviality, the local, with its traditions and rituals, is united to the culture of the other, creating an aesthetic of difference that does not exclude but which is strengthened by means of the visual aesthetic of hospitality. The union of symbols of both cultures creates something new and unique. The drawing takes figurations of Islamic matrices, shaping the ritual of dinner in a syncretic dimension around mankind and its cultures.

The importance of inclusion and hospitality returns in David's project *We are here / Nous sommes ici* (see p. 107), a site-specific intervention on the Roi

Gandolfo Gabriele David, *We are here / Nous sommes ici* (site-specific installation supported by MUCEM of Marseille), 2017.

Renè tower, inside Fort Saint Jean, the defensive structure of ancient Marseille.[4] It featured an installation made up of 66 flags, each ten metres high (three metres of fabric and seven metres of pole), intentionally placed on the roof of the tower in a way that made them visible both from land and from sea. Flags, always responsible for representing identity, are here given a reconsideration. Using the high-visibility technical fabrics that we have come to recognise in the chronicles of tragedies related to immigration, David creates a kind "beacon of hospitality", characterised by the strong presence of the colour orange. According to the artist, "the installation remodelled the experience of a common object (the flag, always a seal of national identity) bringing it into an aesthetic and ethical sublimation, addressing not only those who come from the sea, but specifically wanting to make the local community aware of the values of hospitality".[5] Along with the installation, David – who is accustomed to working directly with immigrant communities – also made one hundred small orange flags that functioned like fragments of the work. These signed and numbered flags have been distributed during his workshops with different groups in their phases of inclusion in French society. The participants use fabric donated by the artist, making their personal contributions on them, together with their testimonies, so that they become the symbolic expression of reception and hospitality.

Thanks to these examples of committed art, between the local and the global, between the ethics of hospitality and access rights, interest in land and

4 We are here / Nous sommes ici. MUCEM, Marseille (May 26, September 4, 2017).
5 See "Interview with Gandolfo Gabriele David" by Modesta Di Paola, published in online magazine *Interartive.org*: http://interartive.org/2017/05/david/.

the defence of the environment, we have specific cases that lead us to formulate a new aesthetic creation: cosmopolitical aesthetics thus describe not only the political and cultural dynamics that link individuals and social groups together, but also the bio-geo-physical planetary conditions that, not coincidentally, seem to coexist on a global scale with the humanitarian crises and the many geopolitical conflicts. In this new territory – postmodern and posthuman – characterised by structural inequalities and by the regimes of deterritorialisation and controlled mobility (physical and natural borders that are militarised, as in the case of the Mediterranean Sea), our societies operate according to an economic logic that is based on the deluded confidence in the infinite availability of natural resources, ignoring the planet's real ecological limits. Understanding the multiple implications that these conditions entail for the field of relations between the human being and non-human entities remains the fundamental problem in the human and natural sciences, and determines new possibilities of contemporary artistic and cultural production within a new cosmopolitical consciousness.

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Placing life at the centre: towards a more-than-human cosmopolitics

Christian Alonso

Introduction

> To be an artisan and no longer an artist, creator, or founder, is the only way to become cosmic, to leave the milieus and the earth behind. The invocation to the Cosmos does not at all operate as a metaphor; on the contrary, the operation is an effective one, from the moment the artist connects a material with forces of consistency or consolidation.[1]

Ce and Kina are members of Quimera Rosa, self-defined as a laboratory for experimentation at the intersection of identity, gender, sexuality and technology through performance and bio-art practices. On occasion of the residency at Barcelona-based art centre Hangar they have been unfolding the research project *TransPlant* in the frame of the programme *Prototyp_ome* from March 2017 onwards. Conceived as a co-laboratory cluster comprised by Hangar (Barcelona), Barcelona Biomedical Research Park (PRBB), DiYBioBarcelona Faboratory (Barcelona) and Pechblenda (Calafou, Anoia), the open residencies programme under the name of *Prototype_ome* aims at re-visiting and rethinking co-design and co-developing processes, tools and technologies for biological exploration focussing on low-cost diagnoses for health co-management. It stands for experimentation in the field of artistic creation with open-source technology engaged in health prevention, treatment and diagnosis from a feminist, Do it Yourself (DIY) and Do it with others (DIWO) perspective. The main objective of the programme as stated in the public call is twofold: on the one hand it is aimed at obtaining easy-to-use replicable, and understandable prototypes involving both grassroots collectives and citizens in their development. On the other hand, it is intended to contribute to the critical mass of existing processes

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1 Deleuze, Gilles; Guattari, Félix (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, p. 345; Bian Massumi, trans.

and tools in the field of biological research by rethinking and re-designing them according to needs of the artists, users, makers and scientists, fostering knowledge transfer and empowerment within the collective involved.[2]

The project *TransPlant* by Quimera Rosa is inscribed in the specific theme on *tools and techniques*, oriented towards the reproduction of low-cost tests and the implementation of a human papillomavirus (HPV) mobile laboratory. These guidelines give shape to the research process entitled *TransPlant: my disease is an artistic creation*, a branch of the general project *TransPlant: green is the new red* that seeks to articulate multiple processes of transition towards becoming plant - cyborg - machine through biohacking tactics. Transplant had an earlier unfolding in the context of the exhibition "Entropy" and on the occasion of the Bandits-Mages gatherings at the Transpalette Art Center in Bourges, where former member of Quimera Rosa Yan, got an RFID chip implanted into this body and decided to change his name to Kina, a way of signalling the transition started. This session also included a tattoo with chlorophyll ink on Kina's body depicting an *Elysia Clorothica*, a green sea slug that is capable of performing photosynthesis using solar energy via chloroplasts from its algal food.

TransPlant has evolved ever since towards the development of photodymanic therapy to treat *Condyloma acuminata* or genital warts caused by human papylloma virus of certain subtypes within the 150 types known.[3] The point of departure of their research-based artistic project is a situated one: the nomadism as methodological, embodied and embedded practice of resistance from the side of the two members of Quimera Rosa,[4] the lack of medical coverage to treat Kina's HPV, and the search for a chlorophyll derivative to treat condyloma. These ingredients intertwine with the transversal question of medical assistance and drug access: Photodynamic therapy (PDT) is not an alternative medicine practice. On the contrary, it is being investigated by mainstream medicine in public health institutions such as Hospital Clínic (Barcelona) and only used in private health centres to treat HPV. As an addition, the required gel for PDT is patented, and costs five euros if one is a legal European resident enjoying public medical coverage, being 200 euros otherwise. At this point, the goal of TransPlant is to replicate this treatment in order to make it accessible through experimentation, and the publication of the

process and the results. It is in this sense that the project defines itself as feminist: to replicate an affordable therapy for people excluded from medical public health systems to treat a widely spread sexually transmitted virus, to foster a research, experimentation and dissemination network on DIY-DIWO therapies, and the empowerment of classified bodies targeted as both abject and disposable.[5]

Thinking about how this ethical-aesthetical-political, situated and embodied practice counteracts mechanisms of production of sexualized, naturalized otherness by undermining dualisms that justify hierarchical systems of dominance and building instead human and non-human sustainable assemblages, it seems pertinent to bring the notion of cosmopolitism into the foreground, asking how useful it may be today, what problems it may resolve and what problems it may bring. As we feel the chained and multifaceted effects of climate change, resource depletion, raising inequalities, and the diverse political and cultural crises that distinguish our societies, it becomes imperative to address these problems not in an isolated way but as relational, urging us to imagining and inhabiting forms of *being together otherwise*.

Given the different challenges we face in a moment when it is easier to think about the end of the world than the end of capitalism, the notion of cosmopolitics as the tool invested in the task of thinking mutual coexistence developed by contemporary thinkers may cast light in this respect. In this essay I will first present a general outline of historical roots of cosmopolitism as divergent from current accounts of cosmopolitics, this later seen as a fundamental tactic of estrangement when building more-than-human world based on co-dependency and reciprocity. I then move on to a reflection on the role of vital materialism and feminist posthuman thought in fostering new attachments and care for absent and excluded participants in a deeply stratified world through the politics of location. Finally, I will conclude by arguing how in my view *TransPlant* can be considered an expression of what I call more-than-human cosmopolitics.

From cosmopolitism to cosmopolitics

Since its first formulation in the sixth century BC by Diogenes the Cynic, the concept of cosmopolitism, (from the Greek 'kosmos' and 'politês' or "cit-

5 https://www.gridspinoza.net/researchers/quimera-rosa

izen of the world" as opposed to the preeminent idea of City-State or Greek community) has evolved and expanded to include very diverse perspectives that may encompass a sense of belonging to a global community. Beyond their nuances, one could argue that cosmopolitism has been traditionally understood as the belief that claims that human beings considered as a whole, regardless of their religion or nationality, conform a single community that is governed by a shared morality. Subjects who belong to this community are called *comsopolitans*. Together with the Cynical school, the foundations of the philosophical tradition of cosmopolitan thought must be found in the Stoics, who developed this notion departing from the idea of concentric circles (subject, family, citizens, humanity) recognized by affinity or the sense of belonging (oikeiôsis). It is Immanuel Kant, however, who lay the ground through the concept of the cosmopolitical law ('ius cosmopoliticum'), based on the principle of universal hospitality, which had to be extended towards the surface of the earth, understood as shared heritage, to ensure the common good.[6]

While modern philosophy has configured a conception of cosmopolitism around the notion of "world" or "earth" understanding humans as the only members of this "big community", contemporary thinkers on the cosmopolitan predicament extend this sense of belonging to the entities that inhabit a "cosmos" or the "universe", subverting moral universalism for the politics of common world and decidedly linking *being cosmopolitan* with *being ethical*. This shift could be considered as a response to the consequences of war, the burden of colonialism, and social and economic inequalities engendered by Western colonialism. These showed that it is not enough to be part of this community, but one has to undertake commitments for active citizenship to be exercised. Furthermore, the current destructive forces of events encourage us, as Claire Colebrook notes, to think not-globally, for it is precisely that all-encompassing thought that precludes a form of thinking on the consequences of globalism:

> The usual figures of the bounded earth, the ideally-self-balancing cosmos, the interconnectedness of this great organic home of "ours" are modes of narrative self-enclosure that have shielded us from confronting the forces of the present [...] there can be no encompassing global thought, for insofar as we think we are fragmented by various locales, figures, lexicons, disciplines and desire, but we

6 This was first developed by Immanuel Kant in his essay *To Perpetual Peace: a Philosophical Sketch* (German: *Zum ewigen Frieden. Ein Philosophischer Entwurf*, 1795).

nevertheless are caught up in a globe of action where no intent or prediction will be enough to secure or predict the outcome of any action.[7]

Against a static notion of cosmopolitism understood as a vehicle of tolerance that presupposes a common good, contemporary thinkers use the term "cosmopolitics", recognizing politics (politikus) as the diverse ways of building a common world that is perpetually in constant constitution. This approach does not limit its scope to human beings but encompasses every living entity in its planetary dimension. Politics is understood here as "the building of the cosmos in which everyone lives, the progressive composition of the common world", as argued by Bruno Latour (2007: 813). And here the important word is *composition*, understood as the very act of making the world we want to compose, including the question of the entities we want to build it with.

Contrary to the notion of a naturalized-given, pre-existing "common good world", the world is here seen as "something we will have to build, tooth and nail together" (Latour, 2014: 450-462). Against the politics-as-usual that stands for a politics of divergent visions of a given factual world, with its given agents and systems, this neo-materialist approach enables a politics of world-making, that is, it is preoccupied with the dynamics and processes of how this world is being brought into existence (assembled and enacted). The operability of the use of the term cosmo*politics* as a combination of "cosmos" as the element that prevents reducing politics to a question of transaction within the limits of what counts to be human, and "politics" as the activity engaged in the task of exploring the articulation of divergent worlds, it is explained by Latour as follows:

> The presence of cosmos in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of politics to mean the give-and-take in an exclusive human club. The presence of politics in cosmopolitics resists the tendency of cosmos to mean a finite list of entities that must be taken into account. Cosmos protects against the premature closure of politics, and politics against the premature closure of cosmos.[8]

Philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers, who first proposed the term "cosmopolitics", provides a specific meaning of the term as a compound of *cosmos*, as an operator of "putting into equality" as opposed to "putting into equiva-

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7 Colebrook, Claire (2014). *Death of the Posthuman*. Ann Arbor: Open Humanities Press, p. 63.
8 Latour, Bruno (2004). "Whose Cosmos, Which Cosmopolitics? Comments on the Peace Terms of Ulrich Beck". *Common Knowledge,* vol. 10, no. 3, p. 454.

lence", and *politics*, in relation to a political ecology considered as a politization of affirmative knowledge-related issues or practices concerning things and our gatherings among things. This approach rejects at least three aspects on which Kantian transcendent cosmopolitism is grounded: in the first place, the understanding of cosmopolitism as a vehicle of tolerance and as an all-encompassing universalist project; in the second place, the reductionism of the cosmos as a simple transfer between human entities, and in the third place, the existence of an already-given "good common world".

Far from understanding the cosmos as a "world in which citizens of antiquity asserted themselves everywhere on their home ground or to an Earth finally united, in which everyone is a citizen" (Stengers, 2005: 994), Stengers argues for a cosmopolitics as the tool to build a world from a situated location where practitioners operate. Stengers expands upon these questions in her *Cosmopolitical Proposal*, where she encourages us to slow down reasoning, questioning authority and generality associated with theory and knowledge, inviting us to generate a space for hesitation where notions of "good" and "common" could be analysed and resignified. The author warns us: the term "political" that asserts the *Cosmopolitical proposal* is not aimed at allowing a cosmos or a good "common world" to exist, but divergently to "slow down the construction of this common world, to create a space of hesitation regarding what it means to say "good" (*ibid.*: 995).

The attitude of the cosmopolitical proposal is inspired in the figuration of the idiot as conceived by Gilles Deleuze. Finding its roots in Ancient Greece and defined as the person who didn't speak Greek language and was thus excluded from the civilized community, the idiot is described by Stengers as someone:

> who resists the consensual way in which the situation is presented and in which emergencies mobilize thought or action [...] not because the presentation would be false or because emergencies are believed to be lies, but because "there is something more important".[9]

In his incapability to both discuss the situation and distinguish what is more important, the idiot becomes a presence that generates an interstice by bringing the question: *what I am busy doing?* This attitude slows others down by interrupting the authority of the sense of possession of meaning:

9 Stengers, I. (2005). "The Cosmopolitical Proposal", in Latour, Bruno and Weibel, Peter (eds.), *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*. Cambridge, Massachussets: MIT Press, p. 994.

When it is a matter of the world, of the issues, threats and problems whose repercussions appear to be global, it is "our" knowledge, the facts produced by "our" technical equipment but also the judgments associated with "our" practices that are primarily in charge. Good will and "respect for others" are not enough to remove this difference, and denying it in the name of an "equal before the law" of all people of the earth will not prevent subsequent condemnation of the fanatic blindness or selfishness of those who refuse to acknowledge that they cannot escape "planetary issues".[10]

Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari's notion of rhizome as the understanding of thought as both creative and dynamic activity, and political ecology as an eco-ethological assemblage, Stengers suggests recovering the *potentia* of animism to challenge "capitalist sorcery" by acknowledging non-human agency and decolonizing knowledge, in a long-term project that transforms the "living together" to the "becoming together". For Stengers, the term cosmos, far from seeing it as a "particular cosmos, or world, as a particular tradition may conceive it", is a virtual space formed by the "the unknown constituted by these multiple, divergent worlds, and to the articulations of which they could eventually be capable" (Stengers, 2005: 995). In this sense, cosmopolitics, understood as a question of matter and intention, operates as the activity for the virtual becoming actual.

As an operator of equality (*mise en égalité*) that is opposed to equivalence (*mise en equivalence*), the cosmopolitical proposal is about creating or "imbuing political voices with the feeling that they do not master the situation they discuss, that the political arena is peopled with shadows of that which does not have a political voice, cannot have or does not want to have one". Its idiocy is given by its incapability of providing a good definition or the procedures to achieve a "good common world", but also because it is not pursuing consent as a goal: "adding a cosmopolitical dimension to the problems that we consider from a political angle does not lead to answers everyone should finally accept". The cosmopolitical proposal raises the question of the way the interstice created by the murmur of the idiot "can be heard collectively in the assemblage created around a political issue" (*ibid.*: 996).

The proposal thus proceeds "in presence of" absent entities who do not have, cannot have or do not want to have a political voice. This is aimed at seizing the impact of our choices upon others, "the victims of our decisions".

10 *Ibidem*, p. 995.

Stengers gives two examples of this thought "in the presence of". The first one is provided by the now politicized issue of animal experimentation, and more specifically by "the difficult cases where the refusal of experimentation and a legitimate cause – the struggle against an epidemic, for instance, are balanced against each other". But far from focussing on the predictable reaction consisting of "creat(ing) value scales for 'measuring' both human interests and the suffering inflicted on each type of animal", what interests Stengers is the cosmic mechanism that unveils how the "grand narratives on the rationality defined against sentimentality and the necessities of a method" are part of the rites to protect researchers from themselves". By accounting for these protective manoeuvres forcing researchers to decide "in the presence of", the cosmopolitical proposal then results to a form of "self-regulation" having the advantage of presenting the *self* as an *issue*: "what would the researcher decide 'on his/her own' if 'he/she' were actively shed of the kinds of protection current decisions seem to need?" (*ibid.*: 996-997).

The second example she brings is the one of magic, referred to by Stengers as the practice being carried out not only by surviving "genuine" witches but by contemporary activists, which she calls the "neo-pagan witches". The art of these pagan witches cultivated in the political domain is considered by Stengers to be an *art of convocation*, since the rituals appeal to a presence that is not intended to answer to what should be done (a prophetic revelation) but to "catalyse a regime of thought and feeling that bestows the power to become a cause for thinking, on that around which there is gathering [...] a presence which transforms each protagonist's relations with his or her own knowledge, hopes, fears and memories, and allows the whole to generate what each one would have been unable to produce separately" (*ibid.*: 1002). This art of convocation as an act of empowerment, action and resistance is an expression of what Stengers calls the *ecology of practices*. This is seen as analogous to the practical challenge of political ecology: "enlarging 'politics' not only to 'things' but maybe also to what would artfully enable us to gather around 'things'".[11]

The question is, of course, an ethical one. Or as Stengers likes to put it, "ethos, the way of behaving peculiar to a being, and oikos, the habitat of that being and the way in which that habitat satisfies or opposes the demands associated with the ethos, or affords opportunities for an original

[11] I took this quotation from an earlier version of the *Cosmopolitical Proposal* by Isabelle Stengers that can be found in the on-line site: https://balkanexpresss.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/stengers-the-cosmopolitcal-proposal.pdf (page 13. Checked: June 4, 2017, p. 13).

ethos to risk itself". The ethos is thus "not contingent on its environment, its oikos; it will always belong to the being that proves capable of it. It cannot be transformed in any predictable way by transforming the environment". What provides the cosmopolitical proposal is then an articulation between the necessities of the research itself and its consequences for its victims, "a cosmic event". In other words, it brings a cartography or "diagnoses of our etho-ecological stable acceptance of economic war as framing our common fate" (*ibid.*: 997-998).

Non-human, inhuman, post-human

In this section I will discuss how the tradition of feminist vital-materialist philosophy as a post-dualistic model of political ecology and as a relational form of making and undoing politics is useful when trying to imagine how to live and institute together otherwise. This model of thought engages in the dismantling of nature-culture binary oppositions and the connection of nature, culture, machines, humans and non-humans through a variety of approaches. This can take the form of networks, assemblages, entanglements, nature-cultures or more-than human compositions of worlds, these being always created by different agents and processes. In this sense, concepts such as "distributed agency" (Bennett, 2011) and process-oriented relational ontologies (Braidotti, 2006) are fundamental references. Acknowledging all the important nuances of the different models of thought, we could argue that what they have in common (and what explains the relationality of their ethical-political projects) is their interest towards the situatedness of the knowledge, the historicity of the body, the intersectionality of the forms of oppression, and the question of care and affects. This heritage is of paramount importance for the cosmopolitical task when exploring unexpected possibilities for the recomposition of communities and ethical forms of belonging.

Let us retrieve the force of the Deleuzian figure of the idiot towards humanist fundamental beliefs, exploring the opportunities it may bring for the forging of sustainable relationships with otherness. We suggest seeing this as a prior requirement for ethical action and the political responsibility of contemporaneous subjects. The proposal consists of understanding that meaning is not added, but rather made or produced. As philosopher Pere Saborit puts it, "meaning will not be an offering to man by the world, or a gift by man to the world giving it consistency, but rather the result of introducing arbitrary determinations in the richness of what exists, and putting the ones into rela-

tion with the others" (SABORIT, 1997: 13). The idea is to be at the level of the wonder of living, but not only as a provisional or transitory moment, but as a permanent state of idiocy which refuses to integrate phenomena into a single explanatory network, totalising, of shared wisdom, as the ultimate mission of individuals, in an irreversible process of the acquisition of knowledge.

The incorporation of a cosmopolitical dimension to the problems that we consider may be understood as a condition when envisioning any political horizon invested in imagining forms of living together otherwise. The technologically-mediated context we find ourselves in is establishing new great meta-narratives: the capitalist economies as a historical form of progress, biological essentialism and the return of religion. In this new and fluidic 'global arena' – characterised by structural injustice, war and the regimes of deterritorialization and controlled mobility – political economy, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, arises as a sort of *abstract fear* that spreads all over, leaving little margin for alternative approaches (BRAIDOTTI, 2010: 289). The systemic crisis we are witnessing, however, should invite us not so much to take shelter in the rhetoric of lament, but rather to explore the conditions of possibility, working not "against the times", but rather testing propositions *in spite of the times*. This vision implies, as Rosi Braidotti puts it, an exercise that operates not according to "a belligerent mode of oppositional consciousness" but becomes "a humble and empowering gesture of co-construction of sustainable futures" (BRAIDOTTI, 2005: 270).

The last proposition would consist then of "living well deceived", experimenting with new ethical relationships as a new way of producing forms of resistance. To do this, it is necessary to subvert the postmodern nihilist spirit (which emerges as a reaction to understanding the death of God as a decisive event which marks a before and an after, forming a subject of spiritual sadness) in a *desire for life*, a desire for change, movement and transformation. And it is here that *affirmative ethics*, as a philosophy of vital focus directed to the future, provides us with very valuable tools to navigate present-day conditions imposed by advanced capitalism.

The starting point of *affirmative ethics* is recovery of the criticism by Foucault and Deleuze of the view of the subject in Western humanist philosophy, according to which it was essential to inscribe according to the effects of *truth* and *power* of their actions over others, instead of basing their moral intentionality on the cognitive universalism of rational individualism. The basic proposal of affirmative ethics is to advocate in favour of *relational ethics* as a habitual practice more than the essentialist and Universalist moral of the subject. This pragmatic approach defines ethics as the *affirmative modes of relationships*,

and good ethics as that which promulgates the *forms of development proper to qualification* (Braidotti, 2010: 291).

For qualification we understand the creation of alternative relationships which are not found tied to the present ("here and now") in the form of negation, nor restricted to the limits of what is human, but depend on the capacity of *becoming the other* in the frame of a transforming, long-term project. In short, *affirmative ethics* is articulated in a triple theoretical and action scheme: standing up for radical ethics of transformation, process-ontology, and the linking of subjectivity with affirmative otherness, that is to say, linked to the capacity of becoming woman, gay and transsexual, capacity to become native or racialized, and the capacity to become animal and become earth. But not through the logic of recognition of the sameness (as empathy would operate), rather by understanding *reciprocity as creation* (*ibid.*: 292).

Going beyond thanatopolitics and biopolitics, *affirmative ethics* advocates for the generating powers of *zoe* as the force that flows across all species, understanding *affective forces* as a driving impulse which are captured in material relationships in the form of positive passions. These would constitute a network of interconnection with the other. As Rosi Braidotti says, "A vitalist concept of Life understood as *zoe*, or generating force, has here a notable importance which emphasises that the Life in which I live is not mine, nor does it bear my name, but it is a generating force for development, for individuation and differentiation. What is denied by means of negative passions is therefore the power of life itself, with dynamic force, as a vital flow of connections and of change" (*ibid.*: 301).

The adequate ethical question would be, then, what would guarantee sustainability of the subject in its relationship with the sexualized, racialized and naturalized other, fostering a *life-centred egalitarianism* which replaces the logic of recognition with the notion of co-dependence between species and the moral philosophy of rights for an ethics of sustainability? It is in this sense that affirmative ethics offers an eco-philosophy of multiple belongings and the adscription of subjects constituted in multiplicity, which is deployed on the basis of a political imperative which assumes that "we are all in this together", that we all share the same planet, but recognises that we are not all the same. This resonates with Stenger's cosmopolitics as an operator of equality that is opposed to equivalence. For Braidotti, however, the cosmopolitical dimension arises with the affinity with *zoe* as the last act of the critique of dominant subject positions through the return of the animal, or earth life in all its potency: "the breakdown of species distinction (human/non-human) and the explosion of zoe-power, therefore, shifts the grounds of the problem of the breakdown of

categories of individuation (gender and sexuality; ethnicity and race). This introduces the issue of becoming into a planetary or worldwide dimension, the earth being not one element among others, but rather that which brings them all together" (Braidotti, 2006: 97).

The possibilities for the creation of new forms of resistance, transformations and sustainable futures will thus emerge inasmuch as we understand life not as an estimate, but as a project; not organised around need but around *desire*, understood as an ontological force of becoming, which encourages us to go on living. A project in which the nomadic subject – not unitary, hybrid, impure, process-oriented and denaturalized – generates new systems of affinities, kinship systems and relationships with otherness in a perpetual process of change, fighting the negativity of the present misery with affirmation, and always linking its unfolding on the basis of an awareness of the asymmetrical power relations and structural inequalities, in the sense in which Nietzsche suggested that it is not the human who is born from freedom, but rather freedom is obtained from the awareness of man's own limitations.

Artisan becoming cosmic

The complexity of *TransPlant* is given by the many, simultaneous transpositions, transitions and translations in the field of subjectivity they implement through their ethical-political-aesthetical practice. Driven by a deep concern for the material conditions of our time, *TransPlant* invites us to rethink how we come together and what hold us apart. It does so by articulating a relational model of post-human cosmopolitics engaged in the development of sustainable ethics based on a notion of life-centred egalitarianism and triggering multiple becomings with sexualized, racialized and naturalized otherness.

The transdisciplinary research-based project operates as a plant - human - animal - machine hybridisation through different processes of becoming. The development of the trans-identity project is based on interaction between different axes that, through different bio-hacking practices, aims at generating changes of subjectivity while developing sustainable ethics, undermining narratives that present the body as a universality, transcendent subject of reason, building instead human - non-human assemblages. These axis, or tentacles, as the artists like to call them, have been so far: implantation of an RFID chip storing the trans-identity process; external translation of the process by chlorophyll tattoos; hybridization of human blood with chlorophyll by a regular protocol of intravenous injections; medical self-experimentation on condylo-

mata acuminata cells through photodynamic therapy and, finally, the creation of public open-source data of the experiments.[12]

RFID chip attachement. Video projection – Installation "TransPlant #1". Transpalette Art Center, Bourges, France. November 2016. Picture taken by Amar Belma Belmabrouk.

The main idea of *TransPlant* is thus one of *transition*. Transition from human to other living forms, exodus from entrepreneurial, liberal, autonomous narrative of the subject to the becoming cosmic-imperceptible as a way to acknowledge co-dependency. As such, their point of departure resonates with Braidotti's nomadic subject – as a non unitary, hybrid, impure, process-oriented and denaturalized subject – that generates new systems of affinities, kinship systems and relationships with otherness. This is the nomadic subject in its posthuman condition in a technologically-mediated society (Braidotti, 2015). Within this context, the body is being built as a material, multi-stratified entity located at the intersection of a variety of biological, genetic social and cultural codes. Braidotti encourages us to realize how technological and scientific advancements of our biotechnological societies have dismantled human - non-human categorical distinctions in at least three senses: the market value of animals and all living entities with the only aim of profit, genetic engineering practices and the circulation of cellular matter among different species, and the timid attempts of inclusion of animals within the logic of human rights (Braidotti, 2006: 105). These mutual contaminations and crossings that define

12 I would like to thank Ce and Kina for the insightful conversation we held on June 3rd, 2017 at Hangar research centre that touched upon these questions.

First chlorophyll tattoo. Transplant: Performance #1 "Devenir chienne pour devenir plant". Transpalette Art Center, Bourges, France. November 2016. Picture taken by Maria F. Dolores.

our era constitute fertile terrain to build new alliances.

TransPlant acts out these alliances by incorporating a post-anthropocentric vision of the world that does not presupposes the existence of any passive nature / life and a consciousness that should be only human, and by exploring generative intersubjective relations with plants, rejecting principles of profit, greed, productivity and instrumentalization. The idea is not to experiment with plants but with themselves: the alliance with the productive forces of life in its inhuman aspects is oriented towards the critique of dominant subject positions, that is, the return of animal or earth life in all its potency. Becoming animal - plant is thus the key process. This has nothing to do with metaphors of animality nor does it operate as an analogy, but entails the transformation of the ontological foundations of embodiment: "The process of becoming a cyborg is, above all, an animal process, despite the displeasure of the transhumanist dreams on human enhancement and fusion with technology. I am a dog. Or rather, a [female] dog".[13]

Quimera Rosa's plant-human-machine hybridization recalls Donna Haraway's FemaleMale and OncoMouse artifactual chimeras. These two figurations conceived by Haraway as modest witnesses of the Scientific Revolution (the FemaleMan©) and of commodified transnational feminism of the biotechnical war on cancer (OncoMouse TM) are figures in secular technoscientific salvation stories full of promise. The intertwining of feminism and technoscience from the field of art is aimed at generating difference: "in the wombs of technoscience, as well as of postfetal science studies, chimeras of humans and non-humans, machines and organisms, subjects and objects, are the obligatory passage points, the embodiments and articulations, through which

13 Original translation from spanish language, where gramatical gender is applied to both non-human and human animals. Available at: http://paroledequeer.blogspot.com.es/2017/03/quimera-rosa_6.html (Checked: July 20, 2017).

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Skin book. Chlorophyll tattoo on microbial cellulose. Picture taken by Quimera Rosa.

travellers must pass to get much of anywhere in the world. The chip, gene, bomb, fetus, seed, brain, ecosystem, and database are the wormholes that dump contemporary travellers out into contemporary worlds" (Haraway, 1997: 43). TransPlant engages in current debates about the Anthropocene from a perspective that is not based on human exceptionalism and methodological individualism, but that addresses the world and its inhabitants as the product of cyborg processes, sympoiesis or becoming-with in "multispecies muddles" (Haraway, 2016: 32).

This impetus is given by an acknowledgment of the nature-culture continuum that resonates in turn with Deleuze and Guattari's geophilosophy, developed upon the basis of monistic tradition of living matter and the plane of radical immanence. This approach manages to account for the world without falling into determinism because, for Deleuze and Guattari, matter is *life itself*:

> [...] man and nature are not like two opposite terms confronting each other, not even in the sense of bipolar opposites within a relationship of causation, ideation, or expression (cause and effect, subject and object, etc.); rather, they are one and the same essential reality, the producer-product.[14]

14 Deleuze, G.; Guattari, F. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, pp. 4-5.

Quimera Rosa's proposal consists of folding this nature-culture continuum in our psyche by means of contaminations, transpositions and transplants as technologies aimed at disorganizing and dismantling the integrity of the unitary subject, in order to become cosmic as a precondition to making the world (cosmo-politics). This is being achieved, to borrow Deleuze's use, by the mobilization of the figuration of the becoming-imperceptible process, the immanent end of becoming, its cosmic formula par excellence:

> Becoming everybody/everything (tout le monde) is to world (jaire monde), to make a world (jaire un monde). By process of elimination, one is no longer anything more than an abstract line, or a piece in a puzzle that is itself abstract. It is by conjugating, by continuing with other lines, other pieces, that one makes a world that can overlay the firstone, like a transparency. Animal elegance, the camouflage fish, the clandestine: this fish is crisscrossed by abstract lines that resemble nothing, that do not even follow its organic divisions; but thus disorganized, disarticulated, becoming-everybody/everything, making the world a becoming, is to world, to make a world or worlds, in other words, to find one's proximities and zones of indiscernibility.[15]

In Deleuze and Guattari's thought, the cosmos is an abstract machine, and each world is an assemblage effectuating it: "we thus leave behind the assemblages to enter the age of the Machine, the immense mechanosphere, the plane of cosmicization of forces to be harnessed (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987: 343). For the philosophers, art contributes to counteracting "depopulation of the people" by making a cosmic people, and deterritorialization by making a cosmic earth: the artisan-artist as a vector of cosmos that carries them off "opens up to the Cosmos in order to harness forces in a 'work' (without which the opening onto the Cosmos would only be a reverie incapable of enlarging the limits of the earth)" (*ibid.*: 337). But far from operating as a metaphor, the invocation to the Cosmos "is an effective one, from the moment the artist connects a material with forces of consistency or consolidation (*ibid.*: 345).

For Deleuze and Guattari, nature is similarly an immense Abstract Machine, "abstract yet real and individual; its pieces are the various assemblages and individuals, each of which groups together an infinity of particles entering into an infinity of more or less interconnected relations". (*ibid.*: 254). From this perspective, the notion of the environment will only be the negotiations

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15 Deleuze, G.; Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, p. 280; Bian Massumi, trans.
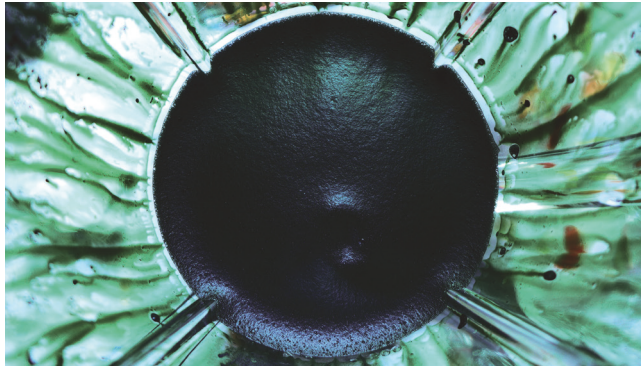
Chlorophyll tattoo ink. Picture taken by Quimera Rosa.

of dynamic adjustments between human and non-human elements, influencing one-another. Quimera Rosa explores nature-culture-machine, feedback loops through a close cartography of how these three dimensions are being produced, advancing a generative proposal of what life is capable of, in other words, understanding life as an *emergent potentiality* rather than actuality, since "life is not reducible to what has actually been produced, to the world as it has unfolded; for life, when thought properly, is a power or potential to create (and not the creation of some proper or destined end) as Claire Colebrook claims" (Colebrook, 2004: 4).

The insistence on the inhuman as the unthought, the accidental and the unthinking and the porosity of the subject brought by the cosmopolitical dimension is aimed at exploring the full potential of thinking. That is why Deleuze places technology at the heart of philosophy and life: "human life does have a power or potential to think, but we can only understand this power, not when life unfolds from itself, but when this power encounters other powers. Only when the human brain confronts what is not itself can it be pushed to the maximum [...] only when the human encounters the inhuman will we know what the human body can do, and only when life opens itself up to violence, destruction, death and zero intensity will we be able to discern just what counts as 'a' single life – its precarious distance and emergence from all its potentials not to be" (Colebrook, 2006: 4).

Conclusion

TransPlant operates as a model of more-than human cosmopolitics insofar as the ethical-political-aesthetical collective practice they enact brings tools to

engage us in the task of undertaking such a posthuman cosmopolitical endeavour, a de-humanizing, ethical force. They become cosmic by means of a post-anthropocentric trans-identity process as modelling tactic of the not-One, generating an ethical territory and an affective community that is not bound to a common soil nor operates as a citizen holder of human rights, but as a virtual cosmos that has always been there. The utopian dimension is not brought by the "denouncing (of) this world in the name of an ideal [...] but [in the very proposal of] an interpretation that indicates how a transformation could take place that leaves no one unaffected" (Stengers, 2015: 7). This practice is located at the intersection of the artisan, the alchemist, and the activist, drawing from disciplines such as arts, philosophy, biology, ecology, physics, botany, medicine, caring, nursing, pharmacology and electronics. It inhabits a variety of transversal entanglements among the practices that we customarily refer to as art, thinking, and politics. They manage to elaborate other ways of knowing-doing through feeling-thinking processes invested in hacking dualistic anthropocentric violence and becoming imperceptible by merging with the environment (oikos).

As a model of *art-as-cosmopolitics, TransPlant* can be thus seen as a collective negotiation of *how to be together otherwise*. Art-as-cosmopolitics engages thus in the ongoing task of imagining, embodying and inhabiting a vision of the world that moves beyond what we consider thinkable today. The notion of political collectivity here extends further than the colloquial understanding of society, as it entangles the human and non-human, organic and non-organic, masculine-feminine, mind-body, reason-emotion, sick body-healthy body, modelling an artistic alternative that is simultaneously social and ecological. Both social and environmental crises we inhabit urge us to address the cosmopolitical endeavour. As Claire Colebrook states, "climate change calls for the most cosmopolitical of responses: the taking hold of the world's resources away from nation states and local polities for the sake of the viability of ongoing life" (Colebrook, 2014: 114). But such an imperative would be in the name of the sustaining of human life as already politicized and organized. If we are to think differently, as Colebrook suggests,

> [...] it may be in a cosmic and inhuman mode, asking [...] what the elements of this earth are, what force they bear, how we are composed in relation to those forces [...] perhaps something other than a discursive politics among communicating individuals needs to open up to forces that are not our own, to consider the elemental and inhuman, so that it might be possible to think what life may be worthy of living on. Such an approach would require a thought of the cos-

mos – of life and its durations – that would be destructive of the polity, that would not return all elements and forces into what they mean for "us".[16]

As we have argued in this essay, the precondition for thinking of a more-than-human cosmopolitical way is the assertion of the radical immanence of the subject as the starting point that allows for the envisioning of a web of situated accountability and a new ethical system. Quimera Rosa's craftwork can be thus seen as one of magic that, as argued by Stengers, acts out as a power of convocation, insofar as it appeals to a presence that is not intended to deliver a prophetic revelation but to "catalyse a regime of thought and feeling that bestows the power to become a cause for thinking, on that around which there is gathering [...] a presence which transforms each protagonist's relations with his or her own knowledge, hopes, fears and memories, and allows the whole to generate what each one would have been unable to produce separately" (STENGERS, 2005: 1002). What is convocated is, precisely, the very material act of thinking the plane of radical immanence through vitalistic ethics and alternative modes of desire, something as creative as the act of magic. Magic, according to Stengers, is itself an art of radical immanence, but "immanence is precisely what has to be artfully created, the usual regime of thinking, being that of transcendence that authorizes a standpoint on a judgement".[17]

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16 COLEBROOK, C. (2014). *Death of the Posthuman*, *op. cit.*, pp. 114-115.

17 Source: https://balkanexpresss.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/stengersthe-cosmopolitcal-proposal.pdf (Checked: June 4th, 2017, p. 13).

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Lecturers' biographies

Anna Maria Guasch is a full-time Professor of History of Contemporary Art at the University of Barcelona, having taught at the University of Seville (1979-1983) and the Complutense University of Madrid (1983-1986). She is director of the online magazine *Revista de Estudios Culturales y Arte Contemporáneo.* From 1994 up to the present her research and teaching have been centered on the analysis of the creative processes of the international art of the second half of the twentieth century, with publications such as: *El arte del siglo xx en sus exposiciones* (1997), *Los manifiestos del arte posmoderno. Textos de exposiciones 1980-1995* (Madrid, 2000), *El arte último del siglo xx. Del posminimalismo a lo multicultural* (Madrid, 2000, with seven editions), *Arte y archivo, 1920-2010. Genealogías, tipologías y discontinuidades* (Akal/Arte Contemporáneo, Madrid, 2011), *Critical Cartography on arte and visuality in the Global Age* (Cambridge Scholars, 2014) and *El arte en la era de lo global, 1989-2015* (Alianza Forma, Madrid, 2016). In the theoretical and critical field, she has edited books such as *La crítica de Arte: Historia, Teoría y praxis* (Barcelona, 2003), *La crítica dialogada: entrevistas de arte y pensamiento* (Murcia, 2006), *Arte y globalización* (Bogotá, 2004), *Learning from the Bilbao Guggenheim* co-edited with Joseba Zulaika (Reno, Nevada, 2005), and translated into the Castilian *Aprendiendo del Guggenheim Bilbao* (Madrid, 2007).

Alpesh Kantilal Patel is Associate Professor of Contemporary Art at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami. His art historical scholarship, criticism and curating reflects his queer, anti-racist, and transnational approach to contemporary art. He is the author of *Productive failure: writing queer transnational South Asian art histories* (Manchester University Press, 2017) and a contributor to numerous scholarly volumes and peer-reviewed journals. His research has been supported by grants and fellowships from the National Endowment of Humanities, Arts Council England, Fulbright Foundation, and Cranbrook Academy of Art. A frequent contributor to artforum.com, he also writes for *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *frieze*, and hyperallergic. com. A curator of exhibitions in both the US and Europe, he is the editor of four exhibition catalogues. Dr. Patel received his PhD in Art History & Visual Studies from the University of Manchester and a BA in History of Art with distinction from Yale University.

Renate Dohemen is a lecturer in Art History at the Open University. She is editor and co-author of *Art and Empire: British India* (MUP & The Open University, 2018). Her previous book *Encounters beyond the Gallery: Relational Aesthetics and Cultural Difference* (I.B. Tauris, 2016) draws on Deleuze-Guattarean aesthetics to examine issues of contemporary art, aesthetics, anthropology and the global. She is currently working on a book-length study of nineteenth-century exhibition culture in British India, and has published on cosmopolitanism, nineteenth-century women's memory cultures and contemporary women's street art in India. Her work explores transcultural perspectives in contemporary and colonial visuality and is interested in post-human epistemologies, the cosmopolitical and ecologies of knowledge.

Emma Brasó is an art historian and curator. Currently, she works as Cultural Programme Curator at the University for the Creative Arts in the UK, in charge of programming the Herbert Read Gallery (Canterbury) and the Zandra Rhodes Gallery (Rochester). In this position, she has developed projects with artists, writers and designers, and collaborated with institutions like the Serpentine Galleries, Turner Contemporary, the Whitstable Biennale, and the Canterbury Cathedral. Previously, Brasó acted as Visual Arts Advisor at the Spanish Ministry of Culture, and was involved in negotiations to transform an abandoned tobacco factory in Madrid into the cultural centre La Tabacalera. She holds a BA in Art History (Universidad Autónoma de Madrid –"special mention" in the Spanish National Awards for best academic records) and an MA in Curatorial Studies (Columbia University, New York – with the support of a scholarship from "la Caixa" Foundation). Her current PhD research at Royal College of Art, London, analyses the intersection of fiction and authorship in art practices from the 1980s until today.

Modesta Di Paola holds a European PhD in Art History, Theory and Criticism from the University of Barcelona (Spain, 2015) and another PhD in European Cultural Studies Internationally/Europäische Kulturstudien from the University of Palermo (Italy, 2016). She was a visiting scholar at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT, Cambridge, Boston) and awarded a fellowship from the Mellow Foundation to participate in the seminar "The Problem of Translation" at the Department of Comparative Literature of New York University (NYU). She is the author of the book *L'arte che traduce. La traduzione visuale nell'opera di Antoni Muntadas* (Mimesis, Milan, 2017) and co-editor of the book *Nous Somme Ici. We are here* (Glifo Edizioni, Palermo, 2017; translated in Italian, French and English), supported by the Polo Museale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea of Palermo (Italy) and the MuCEM of Marseille (France). She have published many articles on critical theories that use cultural translation, linguistic hospitality, and ethics of relation in artistic production. In 2008, she co-founded the on-line magazine *Interartive*.

Christian Alonso is a predoctoral researcher and teacher at the Department of Art History of the University of Barcelona, where he is developing his PhD thesis on the relations of artistic practice and ecology in the period of anthropogenic climate change. He is a writer, researcher and curator. His interests focus on the role of aesthetics, theory and historiography in the analysis of the intersections between critical art, visual culture, activism and education when addressing the environment. Christian has been coordinator of the four editions of the experimental programme on curatorial studies *On Mediation* (2013-2017), curator of *Eulalia Valldosera: Plastic Mantra* (Loop City Screen, Oleoteca La Chinata, 2017), *Machinic Recompositions* (Can Felipa, 2017) and coordinator of the exhibitions *Javier Peñafiel: Agencia en Porvenir* (Arts Santa Mònica, 2017), *Enésima Intempestiva* (àngels barcelona – Espai 2, 2016), *Tedium Vitae* (ADN Platform, 2015) and *Barcelona Inspira* (Cercle Artístic Sant Lluc, 2014). http://caosmosis.net/.

Cosmopolitics and Biopolitics seeks to trace cosmopolitical aesthetics understood not only as the union of art, science, and the right to survive, but also as the prism through which artistic practices are developed around questions connected to transculturality, migration, nomadism, post-gender subjectivities, social and natural sustainability, and new digital technologies. This book's authors fashion a narrative that moves in the territory of "inbetweenness", between hospitality and hostility, between welcoming and conflict, between languages and intermediate languages, science, and survival in a world that is "common" more than global.

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