Vivian Ziherl

Editorial: Trade Markings

In opening the book *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (2015), Aileen Moreton-Robinson leads with an epigraph: "The problem with white people is they think and believe that they own everything."[1] In terms of a critique of the seven-centuries-long rollout and contestation of European dispossessive power, this citation is the alpha and the omega. It is incredibly hard to add anything that isn't captured within its succinct analysis. Nevertheless, this special issue of *e-flux journal* goes to work amid the breadth of this statement—seeking greater insight into its truth and the counter-tactics therein through aesthetic study in particular.

The essays, dialogues, illustrations, and poetry in this issue are compiled in the context of Frontier Imaginaries, an art and research foundation established in Brisbane (Australia) and incorporated in Amsterdam (the Netherlands). It is specifically in this movement between the spatio/temporal compression of the settler colony on the one hand, and the predatory juridical mappings of merchant colonialism on the other, that the foundational relations of property—the endless toggle of propriety and expropriation—arise as a common denominator.

In practice, Frontier Imaginaries is a project that has found points of grounding in Brisbane, Jerusalem, New York, and Eindhoven, and it is in these oblique incidents that aesthetic study comes to the fore. The frontier, after all, offers a viewpoint that turns the European modern text on its side—revealing intricate and elided theaters of consequence that evade categorical reason.

In this work it is crucial to establish that the frontier is not a "border." That is to say, it is not a contractual seam between two legal entities that share mutual recognition. The frontier is rather the threshold at which such a contractual space can no longer exert its jurisdiction.

The easiest way to dramatize that threshold is through territorial metaphors hailing an outer limit to a locus of power, e.g., the image of a "wild west" beyond the grasp of metropolitan law, or the "final frontier" of outer space and/or tech innovation. The limits of such contractual space are convoluted, however; they roll together and exist multifariously. Contractual failure can occur through incommensurabilites in the terms of agreement itself, for example.

The primal scene of the European modern agreement is neatly summarized in Hugo Grotius's *Mare Liberum* (1609) as "trade supported by force of arms." Here the potential "freedom" of any such trade is radically qualified by the violence inherent within "force of arms." The greater title of the treatise that *Mare Liberum* is culled from— *De Iure Praedae Commentarius* (Commentary on the Law of Predation/Booty)—also calls out the need for a renewed vocabulary of standardized larceny, and cuts to the quick of Denise Ferreira da Silva's notion of the

European modern "Spirit of Possession," a riff on Hegel.[2]

As an advisor to the fifth edition of Frontier Imaginaries, Ferreira da Silva suggested the title "Trade Markings," which also gives its name to this special issue of *e-flux journal*. Trade Markings signals the internally incommensurable demands of proprietary modernity under "Natural Law": on the one hand the claim to trade marking as *legitimate opacity*, and on the other hand the enforceable *transparency* of frictionless exchange. This is the *vremden handel* or strange business of the Spirit of Possession.

This journal issue includes a large portion of artists's writing, starting with a return to Richard Bell's barnstorming 2003 declaration "Bell's Theorem: Aboriginal Art—It's a White Thing." A reflection on the boom in markets for Australian Aboriginal art since the 1980s, "Bell's Theorem" attacked the fundamental categories of colonial cultural value, resetting the terms of art history in Australia and more broadly. In a similarly rebellious spirit, Yazan Khalili's *I, The Artwork* turns the tradition of conceptual art towards the context of occupation with a "Deed of Ownership and Condition of Existence" that codifies BDS (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions) conditions into the very being of the artwork. In dialogue with lawyer and critic David Kim, Khalili discusses the implications of *I, The Artwork* with regards to fundamental categories of profit, ownership, obligation, and aesthetic effect.

Artists Rachel O'Reilly, Ho Rui An, and Wendelien van Oldenborgh consider genealogies of proprietization in Australian, Singaporean, and Dutch turns. Demonstrating the aesthetic crises at the heart of environmental and colonial urgencies, O'Reilly takes the 1800s British-Australian legal innovation of Torrens Title as a case in point of the compositional violence of the property form. Ho examines the subjective governance encoded in financialized statehood. His take addresses the speed-scape of the road, and its accidental cinemas of the dashcam. Whereas movement is the principle of Ho's study, van Oldenborgh focuses on distance, in an examination of a real-estate property in Amsterdam and its multiple lives as financial asset, office workplace, architectural heritage, and shelter to asylum seekers. Also moving through an analysis of filmmaking, van Oldenborgh pursues the "colonial-modern here-ness" and value structures of the modern city through the cinema of Alain Resnais, Glauber Rocha, and Pedro Costa.

Aileen Moreton-Robinson's "white possessive" casts a long shadow across this journal issue. Her essay included here, "Bodies that Matter on the Beach," reads the racialized body politics of Australian beach culture against the warrior stance of artist Vernon Ah Kee. Elizabeth A. Povinelli likewise contributes a meditation on the proposal of a frontier point of analysis with a searching critique of critiques, "Horizons and Frontiers, Late Liberal Territoriality, and Toxic Habitats *.*" Angela Mitropoulos also reads the frontier through her essay "Art of Life, Art of War: Movement, Un/Common Forms, and Infrastructure." Here Mitropoulos takes modern dance as a locus to examine ideals of movement inherent to proprietized relations, captured against the backdrop of emergent European fascism.

The issue closes with a fragment of poetry by artist and founder of R.I.S.E.: Radical Indigenous Survivance and Empowerment, Demian DinéYazhi'. Pressing his words forward against the reader, DinéYazhi' undercuts the dispossessive plane of the American imaginary with a text untethered from the possessive comma, and indeed from typographic punctuation altogether.

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1
The source of the remark is cited as "Dennis Benjamin Moreton, personal communications, April 10 2015." Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015), xi.

2
Ferreira da Silva, "Difference Without Separability," in *São Paulo Art Biennial, "Incerteza viva" (Living Uncertainty)* (2016).

Richard Bell

Bell's Theorem: Aboriginal Art— It's a White Thing!

Excerpt from the webpage artist Richard Bell's page
BELL'S THEOREM: ABORIGINAL ART - It's a white thing!,

found at
http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/great/art/bell.html

Introduction

This paper has been written to articulate some thoughts on this subject that may not yet be in the public domain. I am the primary source for most of the information gathered (often through personal experience or discussions with numerous people). I must say here that I am not an academic. Consequently, the style and tone of delivery will chop and change. It will be conversational, playful, serious, tongue in cheek, moralistic, tolerant, sermonistic and informative.

Aboriginal Art has become a product of the times. A commodity. The result of a concerted and sustained marketing strategy, albeit, one that has been loose and uncoordinated. There is no Aboriginal Art Industry. There is, however, an industry that caters for Aboriginal Art. The key players in that industry are not Aboriginal. They are mostly White people whose areas of expertise are in the fields of Anthropology and "Western Art". It will be shown here how key issues inter-relate to produce the phenomenon called Aboriginal Art and how those issues conspire to condemn it to non-Aboriginal control.

Western Art: Its effect

During the last century and a quarter Western Art has evolved into an elaborate, sophisticated and complex system. This system supplies venues (museums, galleries, etc), teaching facilities (art education institutions, drawing classes, etc) and referees (art critics) and offers huge rewards for the chosen few elite players in the game (including artists, curators, art critics, art dealers and even patrons). This arrangement is not dissimilar to modern spectator sports. It is also not unlike ancient religions – substitute Gods, sacrificial offerings, High Priests, etc.

Like some voracious ancient God, Western Art devours all offerings at will. Sometimes the digestion will be slow and painful. However, it is resilient and will inexorably continue on its pre-ordained path that is to analyse and pigeonhole everything.

Western Art is the product of Western Europeans and their colonial offspring. It imposes and perpetuates superiority over art produced in other parts of the World. For example, the African Masks copied by Picasso. Westerners drooled at Picasso's originality - to **copy** the African artists while simultaneously ignoring the genius of the Africans.

Any new "art movement" is, after the requisite hoopla and hype, **named** and given an **ISM**, that is duly attached to

the end of a noun, e.g.. "Modernism". This "nounism" doesn't transfer to non-Western art. Words like primitive, ethnographic, provincialist or folk-art suffice. Below the ISMs are "Schools". A noun followed by School. For example, the Heidelberg School.

Aboriginal Art is considered a "movement" and as yet has not graduated to ISM status by being "named. I shall do so now. I **name** Aboriginal Art **HIEROWISM**. It is the modern hieroglyphics. Also, there is always controversy (lotsa rows) so I think it's appropriate. So. How is it that an unqualified Black **can't** name an Art Movement?

Prior to the 20th Century, art produced by Westerners from former colonies was not considered to be up to the standard of art produced by resident Europeans. The North Americans demanded, and begrudgingly attained, parity with their European cousins. In fact the axis of power has actually shifted away from Paris to New York and their artists are at the forefront of Western Art today. Not so their Antipodean counterparts who struggle with what has been called **The Provincialism Problem** (Terry Smith in his 1974 article of the same name). This has produced a cultural cringe of massive proportions that requires artists from provincial outposts to be able to merely aspire to mediocrity.

Provincialism permeates most levels of Australian society. Consequently, it weighs heavily on the industry catering for the art of Aboriginal Australians and renders most of those involved in that industry unworthy of the roles **they** have given themselves. It is unwise to market Aboriginal Art from the Western Art aesthetic and *attach* an Aboriginal Spirituality (an exploitative tactic that suggests that the purchaser can **buy** some). Perhaps it would be wiser to market this form of art from a purely Western construct. Demand that it be seen for what it is – as being among the World's best examples of Abstract Expressionism. Ditch the pretence of spirituality that consigns the art to ethnography and its attendant "glass ceiling". Ditch the cultural cringe and insert the art at the level of the best in western art avoiding the provincialism trap.

Spirituality and Ethnocentricity

There is no doubt that attaching Spirituality during a sale of Aboriginal Art helps greatly in closing a deal. Western dissatisfaction with Christianity since the 1960s has sharpened focus in this area. However, important matters haven't been given due consideration. Matters such as:

The number of artists holding the knowledge is declining rapidly and the younger people are reluctant to take up the "Old Ways";

Given the above. A dying, soon dead, culture is being raked over;

The image of the "Noble Savage" (from whence comes the spirituality) implies a position of racial superiority (consciously or not);

It is not necessary to invoke spirituality when promoting artists as individuals. Who they are. Where they're from. What they know. What they've done. These things become crucial. Perhaps the curators of the early shows were in such a rush to show the works that they hid their unprofessional (and superior) behaviour behind the "collective CV";

That a proliferation of white **experts** is belittling the people who own the culture. For example, the **NAMED** white *expert* is far better known than the mostly **unnamed** Aboriginal artists from the famous **Papunya School** of painters;

That the lack of Aboriginal input into areas of concern is continually overlooked has created the feeling that the culture is being stolen, etc.

Other important issues arise out of the "Ethnographic" approach to Aboriginal Art. Anthropologists play a crucial role in the *interpretation* of Aboriginal Art. Their approach is, by definition, ethnographic and its classification system fits cosily into Ethnographic Art. Consider the classification of "Urban Aboriginal Art". This is the work of people descended from the original owners of the heavily populated areas of the continent. Through a brutal colonisation process much of the culture has disappeared. However, what has survived is important. **The Dreamtime** is the past, the present and the future. The Urban artists are still telling dreamtime stories, albeit, contemporary ones. The Dreamings (of the favoured "real Aborigines" from the least settled areas) actually pass deep into Urban territories. In short, the Dreamings cannot be complete without reciprocity between the supposed real Aboriginals of the North and the supposed Unreal or inauthentic Aboriginals of the South.

Many Urban artists have rejected the ethno-classification of Aboriginal Art to the extent they don't participate in Aboriginal shows. They see themselves as **artists** – not as *Aboriginal* artists.

The real problem arises out of the very nature of Western Art. Westerners need to sort and categorise everything in order to make sense of the World. That they do so in an ethnocentric manner is academic. The world of music is not dominated by Western Classical music - different styles stand alongside each other with extensive cross-fertilisation from different cultures. Not so in visual art.

The Art Centres

Aboriginal Art has foreshadowed the establishment of community art centres throughout remote areas. These centres assist by providing advice, marketing opportunities/strategies, art supplies and documentation. The contact person is the Art Advisor who is almost always White. These centres are run according to the community's needs and aspirations.

The Art Centre takes a one third commission of the (wholesale) price for the services it provides. It consigns work to a network of galleries throughout Australia and overseas at an agreed retail price. For example, the art centre values a work at $600 and its share is $200. The gallery takes a 40% commission for selling the work; therefore the retail price is $1000. Thus the artist receives $400 or 40% plus the applicable service provided by the art centre.

That scenario works well for artists operating on that level of income. If the artist is on a ten fold larger income, the level of costs incurred by the art centre may be the same, or comparable, yet the artists cut remains at 40%. Well below the 60% (minus costs) that other Australian artists receive. In any event, the amount of money an Aboriginal artist gets, rarely, if ever, stays in his/her pockets. Generally, it is shared among family and friends or their community.

The Government's continued financial support of the Art Centre movement ensures some level of Government control over the industry that caters for Aboriginal Art. Their considerable contribution makes it look good. They think it justifies their appropriation of Aboriginal imagery in advertising campaigns, etc. They think that they have bought our culture. Well, soorrreee. It never happened.

[…]

Continue reading at:
http://www.kooriweb.org/foley/great/art/bell.html

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"Bell's Theorem" appears via **The Koori History Website Project**.

Voices from the beach can be hard to hear. They can be snatched from the lips by the wind or drowned in the white noise of the waves. But there are beaches, too, on which voices are hard to hear because of the silence.
—Greg Denning, *Beach Crossings: Voyaging across Times, Cultures, and Self*

Aileen Moreton-Robinson

Bodies That Matter on the Beach

Beaches remain important places within Indigenous coastal peoples' territories, though the silence about our ownership is deafening. The coastline of the Australian continent was frequented for centuries by mariners and traders from Asia with whom some Indigenous groups established trade and familial relations.[1] The first verified contact by Dutch explorer Willem Janszoon was in March 1606; he chartered the west coast of Cape York Peninsula in northern Queensland. Over the next two centuries the charting of the Australian coastline was primarily undertaken by British explorers. Since 1788, the coastline of this continent has been colonized by British colonists and their descendants, who built the majority of Australia's capital cities near the sea. In 2010, it is where the largest proportion of the Australian population resides on the most prized real estate in the country. Living near the sea ensures that the beach continues to be a place of multiple encounters for residents and visitors. The beach marks the border between land and sea, between one nation and another, a place that stands as the common ground upon which collective national ownership, memory, and identity are on public display; a place of pleasure, leisure, and pride. Michael Taussig argues that the beach is a site of fantasy production, a playground where transgressions and pleasure occur. It is "the ultimate fantasy where nature and carnival blend as prehistory in the dialectical image of modernity."[2]

As an island continent, beaches are the visible terra manifestation of Australian borders, which operate simultaneously to include and exclude. In the twenty-first century, these borders may seem to be more permeable because of economic and cultural processes of globalization, but territorial sovereignty reigns supreme in Australia and Europe, evidenced by border patrols that serve to exclude those who are uninvited. Within Australia we are constantly reminded of the central role of possession in civilizing "others" and the association between war and borders, which is reinscribed through our treatment of asylum seekers who travel by boat attempting to land on our beaches. Australian federal governments have built mandatory detention centers fenced with razor wire and patrolled by guards to accommodate the "illegal boat people" who have been successful in landing on our beaches after escaping from war-torn countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan. In taking possession of their bodies and imprisoning them, the nation-state exercises its sovereignty in violation of several

Vernon Ah Kee, cantchant, 2007 (still). Three-channel video. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

human rights conventions that it has signed. This performative sovereign act of violence and disavowal has historical roots. Despite international law, the British invasion, in the form and arrival of the first naval boat people, produced invisible borders left in the wake of colonization that continues to deny Indigenous people our sovereign rights. Many authors have argued that within Australian popular culture the beach is a key site where racialized and gendered transgressions, fantasies, and desires are played out, but none have elucidated that these cultural practices reiteratively signify that the nation is a white possession.[3]

In this text I examine how white possession functions ontologically and performatively within Australian beach culture through the white male body. I draw on Judith Butler's idea of performativity in that a culturally determined and historically contingent act, which is internally discontinuous, is only real to the extent that it is repeated.[4] Raced and gendered norms of subjectivity are iterated in different ways through performative repetition

in specific historical and cultural contexts. National racial and sexual subjects are in this sense both doings and things done, but where I differ from Butler is that I argue that they are existentially and ontologically tied to patriarchal white sovereignty. Patriarchal white sovereignty is a regime of power that derives from the illegal act of possession and is most acutely manifested in the form of the Crown and the judiciary, but it is also evident in everyday cultural practices and spaces. As a means of controlling differently racialized populations enclosed within the borders of a given society, white subjects are disciplined, though to different degrees, to invest in the nation as their possession. As a regime of power, patriarchal white sovereignty capillaries the performative reiteration of white possession through white male bodies. In this way performativity functions as a disciplinary technique that enables the white male subject to be imbued with a sense of belonging and ownership produced by a possessive logic that presupposes cultural familiarity and commonality applied to social action. In this

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Vernon Ah Kee, acceptance, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

context I will examine how the beach is appropriated as a white possession through the performative reiteration of the white male body. I then discuss how Indigenous artist Vernon Ah Kee contests this performativity in his installation entitled *Cant Chant*.

Performing the Colonial Subject

Colonization is the historical process through which the performativity of the white male body and its relationship to the environment has been realized and defined, particularly in former British colonies such as Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States.[5] In staking possession to Indigenous lands, white male bodies were taking control and ownership of the environments they encountered by mapping land and naming places, which is an integral part of the colonizing process. One of the first possessive performances by the white male body occurred on the beach when Captain James Cook landed at a place he named Botany Bay on April 28, 1770. For some time his boat had been under surveillance by the Kamegal clan of Cooks River and Botany areas and the Gwegal clan at Kundull (Kurnell). At first the Kamegal and Gwegal clans thought the large boat was a big bird entering the bay, but as the boat approached they could see that the people onboard were similar but different to themselves.[6] When Cook and his men landed on the beach at Kundull, they were trespassing on Gwegal land and hence were challenged by two Gwegal warriors who threw spears at them while shouting out in their language "*Warra Warra Wai*," meaning "go away." Cook's crew retaliated by firing muskets and wounding one of the Gwegal warriors. The warriors retreated, leaving their

spears and shields behind on the ground. This encounter was never interpreted as an act of Indigenous sovereignty by Cook as he made his way up the eastern coast of Australia. Instead, he rescripted us as living in a state of nature with no knowledge of, or possession of, proprietary rights.[7]

Cook took possession of the Gwegal warriors' weapons and transported them back to Britain, where they are now on display in a museum housing the property of people from different countries accumulated through purchase, plunder, and theft. After eight days in Botany Bay, Cook and his crew sailed north up the coastline of Australia. Cook made good use of his telescope, surveying the Indigenous people on the beach as he sailed past their lands, noting in his diaries that we ranged in color from chocolate to soot. After several months of sailing northward, he eventually took possession of the entire eastern coast from the 38 degree latitude in the name of King George III after landing on the beach of an island he named "Possession," situated off the tip of Cape York Peninsula. The assumption of sovereignty was ceremoniously marked by firing guns and raising the British flag as the male crew bore witness. The performative act of possession enabled by patriarchal white sovereignty is constituted by violence and transgression, voyeurism, pleasure, and pride. These originary performative acts by the white male body would eventually become an integral part of Australian beach culture.

Some eight years after Cook, eleven British naval ships arrived in Botany Bay. Governor Phillip, as the embodiment of colonial power, planted a British flag in the sand, staking

a possessive claim to lands that belonged to the Eora and Gadigal nations. The invasion had begun and the lives of the people from the Kamegal and Gwegal clans were never the same as violence and smallpox took its toll. Over the next century, through containment, disease, and death, Indigenous people were displaced by colonists. In the white colonial imagination, we had become abject subjects; our lives and our bodies were physically erased from the beach.[8] Over the next century the only subjects who determined which bodies mattered on the beach were almost exclusively white males, embodying the possessive prerogative of patriarchal white sovereignty as a colonial norm.[9]

Despite the apparent promise of open access and use, public spaces are predicated upon an assumption of objectivity and rationality, which values but no longer explicitly marks or names whiteness or maleness. The beach, as a public space, continues to be controlled by white men, the embodiment of universal humanness and national identity. In the nineteenth century, the beach and its natural features were mostly of interest to white male visitors who were influenced by European Romanticism. The beauty of the beach appealed to observers, along with "its sublime features: those characteristics which stimulated an intensity of emotion and sensation [valuing] poetic mystery above intellectual clarity."[10] Perceived as such, the beach enabled the performance of a gendered white ontological experience where nature fed the soul and culture nurtured white men's sensibilities. The beach was also an intersubjective place where a man could socialize with family and friends or watch other beachgoers and indulge in the British custom of promenading along the shore. The beach was and remains a heteronormative white masculine space entailing performances of sexuality, wealth, voyeurism, class, and possession. However, these different attributes of white male performativity underwent a transformation with the introduction of surf bathing. In the nineteenth century, surf bathing was performed exclusively by white males, but it was not a predominant part of beach culture because the Police Act 1838 restricted swimming to the early hours of the morning and preferably on nonpopular beaches. The public display of the white male body was perceived to offend moral sensibilities current at the time. It was not until the early twentieth century that surf bathing became a part of modern beach culture, due in part to the shifting codes of Victorian morality and increased control of the sea and the surf.[11] Eugenics also played a part in the shift. "Whereas picnicking and promenading defined masculinity in terms of an emphasis on the respectability and moral authority of colonialism, surf bathing and lifesaving defined masculinity in terms of a strong, fit, well muscled and racially pure white body."[12] This representation of the white male body was in contrast to the perception of policymakers at the turn of the century, who facilitated the displacement of the Indigenous body from the beaches and lands onto reserves and missions. The Indigenous body was

represented as being terminal. The common phrase at the time to describe the containment and removal was as a benevolent act of "smoothing the dying pillow."[13]

Beach Lifesavers: Performing White Masculinity

By 1907, white middle-class men had formed the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia in response to the public representation of their surf bathing as being an "affront to decency."[14] They soon gained public approval by rationalizing their objectives as humanitarian and arguing that surf bathing was a disciplined organized sport involving military drills. Unlike lifeguards, who were paid for their services, surf lifesavers were volunteers who undertook training to protect people on the beach and were responsible for the safety and rescue of swimmers, surfers, and other water-sports participants. Regimentation, rigor, and dedication to the service of the nation produced fit and disciplined white male bodies. The media reported favorably on the suntanned white male bodies, representing them as the epitome of Australian manhood. Suntanning enhanced the aesthetic modalities of the white male body appropriating and domesticating the hypersexuality signified by black skin. Tanning simultaneously renders the presence of color as a temporary alteration that works to affirm the dominance of white masculinity and its ownership of the beach. The brownness of the white male body becomes "a detachable signifier, inessential to the subject, and hence acceptable" because it is not permanent.[15] As a detached signifier, it does not disrupt the "somatic luxury of white [male] subjects to roam and return to the tabula rasa of ideal whiteness where it is conveniently restored to its apex of privileges" as the embodiment of nation.[16] The surf lifesaver's discipline, strength, bravery, mateship, loyalty, and rigor embodied the attributes of white national identity, which were later ascribed to the body of the digger at ANZAC. The term "digger" is an appellation applied to Australian and New Zealand soldiers because of their trench-digging activities during the Gallipoli campaign, which required strong and fit bodies to undertake the hard work. The transference of the attributes of the surf lifesaver to the digger was not a coincidence. Many surf lifesavers volunteered for both world wars, and in some cases lifesaving clubs were closed because of the declining numbers of young men.[17]

The suntanned and hypermasculinized white body of the digger became inextricably tied to the birth of Australian nationalism within the white imaginary in the late twentieth century. This national identification with the performativity of invasion and taking possession of other peoples' lands embraces and legitimizes a tradition of patriarchal white sovereign violence embodied in the white male body on the beach in Australia and abroad. More than fifty thousand Australian soldiers volunteered to go to war in Europe to defend the sovereignty of the British Empire, an empire that was founded on the

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yourdutyistoaccept
truth

Vernon Ah Kee, acceptance, 2005. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

invasion and theft of Indigenous peoples lands. The first convoy of predominantly white male volunteers left Western Australia in November 1914, arriving on the beach at Gallipoli on April 25. Staking a possessive claim to the beach, Lieutenant General Sir William Birdwood, on April 29, 1915, decided to name the area ANZAC Cove in honor of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps who served at Gallipoli. Despite this possessive claim, the Turkish government did not agree to officially name the site ANZAC Cove for another seventy years, due in part as a gesture of goodwill and respect tied to the Australian government's funding package to maintain the site. At that fateful site, the Turkish army decimated the Australian and New Zealand armies and thousands of soldiers lost their lives. Though Gallipoli was a spectacular strategic blunder, Fiona Nicoll, in her excellent book *From Diggers to Drag Queens: Reconfiguring National Identity*,[18] explores how the body of the white male soldier was constructed as a metonym for the ANZAC spirit, which has increasingly divested the digger of its origins in values of militarism and racial supremacy. The digger's white male body signified egalitarianism, discipline, irreverence, bravery, endurance, and constitutional opposition to authority. As Nicoll argues, the diggers' hypermasculinized and idealized body in cultural representations was in contrast to the actual traumatized and disfigured white male bodies returning home.

Following the carnage of the Great War, the lifesaver was used as a signifier of national identity to endow the broken body of the digger with new life and new masculine virility. During the interwar period and up to the 1950s, media represented the white male body of the surf lifesaver as the embodiment of the ANZAC spirit and the nation. In 1923, the president of the Surf Life Saving Association stated in the *Daily Guardian* that "we shall rear a race of men finer than the Anzacs, whom the whole world admire[s]."[19] And in 1941, the commentary in a newsreel item shot at a Bondi Beach carnival stated that "mighty deeds spawn men of might. This is the crucible from which fighting material emerges volunteer lifesavers, volunteer fighters. The amateur surf clubs have an enlistment record second to none."[20] The embodied signification of the white surf lifesavers as nation is also demonstrated by their inclusion and performance in national events such as the opening of the Harbour Bridge in Sydney in 1932, the Australian sesquicentenary in 1938, Queen Elizabeth's visit in 1954, and the Melbourne Olympics in 1956. During the 1940s, photographer Max Dupain captured Australian beach culture in his representations of white male bodies in photographs that include the infamous *Sunbaker* (1937), *Surf Race Start* (1940), and *Surfs Up* (1940). Dupain's portraits of white male bodies performing in the service of the nation represented the beach as a white possession, a space of leisure, pleasure, and pride.

In the 1930s, surf lifesaving clubs were conferred with a legal proprietary right to the beaches by local councils, which officially gave them the power to control, police, and rescue beachgoers. Despite the official sanction of surf lifesavers' ownership of the beach, their proprietorship was challenged after World War II through the emergence of a new white masculinity in the form of the surfer. In public discourse, surfing was represented as a form of hedonistic leisure, evoking anxiety about the moral decay of young men and women. Surfing produced a competitive, individualized white form of masculinity that attracted more women onto the beach. This hedonistic form of leisure was in contrast to the volunteer surf

lifesavers who patrolled the beach and saved lives in the service of the nation. In the 1960s, surf lifesaving clubs attempted to restrict surfers' use of the beach by imposing taxes and restricting the use of surfboards to certain areas. Surfers responded by establishing "administrative associations to regulate, codify and legitimize what they now defined as a sport" in order to stake a possessive claim to the beach.[21] During the 1960s and 1970s, tension existed and violence occurred between these two forms of embodied white masculinity on the beach, usually over territory and sexual access to women as well as prowess in the water. Verbal abuse on the beach was common: surfers taunted lifesavers by calling them "seals" because of their regimented training, "dickheads" because their caps looked like the heads of condoms, and "budgie smugglers" because their swimming attire exhibited the outline of small male genitalia, particularly on cold days. Surf lifesavers responded to surfers by calling them "seaweed" because of their long, bleached, matted hair and their supposed inability to master the waves. These white heterosexual territorial wars abated to some degree when surfing was recognized nationally as a professional sport through organized professional tournaments that were covered by media and sponsored by corporations. Similarly, surf lifesaving became recognized as a professional sport predominantly through the "Iron Man" tournaments sponsored by corporations. The sexualized white male body of the suntanned surfer and the lifesaver was commodified to sell everything from Coca Cola to fashion and spawned a new genre of documentary surfing films and televised sport.

White male participation in surfing had begun in the 1930s, but but it did not begin to dominate the surfing scene until the 1960s. Booth argues that after the World War II mass consumer capitalism created the conditions by which leisure as a social practice became tied to individual lifestyles.[22] Surfing was and continues to be a native Hawaiian cultural practice introduced to the West by Duke Kahanamoku. Native Hawaiians' form of surfing was to flow with the waves, adhering to an ideal of soul surfing, which was part of their culture for more than fifteen hundred years.[23] Surfing was not considered to be a competitive practice, and when white Australian and South African surfers decided to invade the Native Hawaiian surfing beach of the North Shore of Oahu in the late 1970s, they were confronted by members of Hui 'O He'e Nalu, who asserted their sovereignty over the beach. For the Native Hawaiian surfers, the invasion of their beach by white surfers was a performative reiteration of the invasion by white American Marines supporting the white patriarchy that overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy in 1890. Native Hawaiian surfer resistance eventually earned the respect of the International Professional Surfing Organization, which conceded to a reduction in annual competitions at North Shore. Despite the assertion of Native Hawaiian sovereignty over the waves and the beaches, white Australian and South African surfers staked a possessive claim, colonizing surfing by riding the waves, "conquering," "attacking," and reducing them to stages on which to perform aggressive acts. This became the dominant form of professional surfing, whereby surfers represented their respective nations, embodying the violent attributes of patriarchal white sovereignty.

By the 1980s, the blonde-haired, barrel-chested, suntanned white male body sauntering in board shorts and thongs had become a new icon of beach culture, reflecting the hedonism of youth in the 1960s and 1970s in Australia. The hedonism of surfing carried with it sex, sun, and surf. This was captured in paintings by artists such as Brett Whiteley, whose reclining nudes and bikini-clad beauties on the beach reflected a theater of indolence. In the catalogue for the Art Gallery of New South Wales exhibition entitled "On the Beach: With Brett Whiteley and Fellow Australian Artists," it states that "it was not only the allure of these inherently erotic bodies [in] languid stupor that compelled Whiteley's fascination for this iconic aspect of Australian landscape; it was also the beautiful vistas of beach and seascapes which provided such fertile ground for his inspirational paintings and drawings."[24] As the embodiment of patriarchal white sovereignty, Whiteley, like the surfers and lifesavers, performatively exhibits the possession of white women's bodies on "their" beach. While white women are subject to the possessive white male gaze, their presence on the beach is tied to the heteronormativity of patriarchal white sovereignty. They can stake a possessive claim to the beach in ways in which Indigenous women cannot. As I have argued elsewhere, white women have access to power and privilege on the basis of their race through unequal gendered relations.[25]

After the economic downturn of the 1980s and a decade of multiculturalism and Indigenous rights claims, the militarized white male body of the digger as the embodiment of nation was returned to the beach within the national imaginary. Former prime minister John Howard strategically deployed the memory of Edward "Weary" Dunlop as the quintessential digger, who represented the core national values of mateship and egalitarianism.[26] Dunlop was a fearless and strong leader, a qualified surgeon who achieved sporting and military success.[27] Taken as a prisoner of war during World War II, he attended to his comrades, risking his own life by challenging his Japanese captors to provide medical provisions for the sick and wounded. He continued to campaign for the rights of soldiers after the war and was a committed humanitarian. Like Howard, former Labor Prime Minister Paul Keating also used the digger in nationalist rhetoric, but he did so in a different way. As Nicoll argues, Keating's eulogy to the "unknown" soldier "presented … a figure capable of drawing the diverse threads comprising contemporary Australian society together in tolerance."[28] In his attempt to reorient Australia's core values toward a postcolonial future, Keating performed the digger by walking the Kokoda Trail in the ex-colony of Papua New Guinea, relocating the

white male body in the Pacific and away from Europe. As the embodied representation of patriarchal white sovereignty, Keating was also signifying Australia's role as a former colonizing nation that served to displace and negate the ongoing colonization within the nation.

Following Keating's performance, John Howard visited the majority of overseas Australian war memorials, where his conveyance of respect was televised to the nation. In particular, he carried a diary belonging to a family member when he visited French battlefields, signifying to the nation that he too had been touched by war. Howard legitimated his authority as an Australian leader of the nation by vicariously linking himself to the digger tradition through his family's wartime contribution. He strategically deployed the digger nationalism connecting World War I to Timor and then Iraq to substantiate our involvement in war by frequently using the term "digger" in his speeches.[29] Howard was at ANZAC Cove, Gallipoli, when a contingent of Australian troops arrived in Muthanna Province, in southern Iraq, on April 25, 2005.[30] Howard's performative reiterations of digger nationalist subjectivity to justify Australia's deployment in Iraq, in the name of patriarchal white sovereignty, perpetuates the historical connection of the white male body to possession and war. Howard's militarization of Australian history through the digger rescripted nationalism and resulted in an unprecedented rise in attendance by predominately white youth at memorial services above the beach at ANZAC Cove during his time in office. The somber respect shown at the memorial service at ANZAC Cove performatively reiterates the relationship between the white male body, possession, and war in the defense of patriarchal white sovereignty signified by the place of encounter: the beach.

In Australia, on December 11, 2005, the beach once again became a place where transgression, violence, and white possession were on display. On that day at Cronulla Beach, approximately five thousand predominately white men rioted over the alleged bashing of a surf lifesaver by an Arabic-speaking youth. The racialized production of the "terrorist" as an internal and external threat to the nation after the 9/11 attacks and the bombings in Bali provides a context within which to understand the Cronulla protesters' rearticulation of white Australians' possessive claims on the beach as their sovereign ground.[31] This is most clearly signified by the pervasiveness of wearing and waving the Australian flag, explicit claims to white possession on T-shirts, inscribed on torsos with body paint, and written on placards waved before media cameras during the protest, such as "We Grew Here: You Flew Here," "We're full, fuck off," "Respect locals or piss off," and the sign written on the beach for the overhead cameras, "100% Aussie Pride." The white male body became the signifier of protest, embedding itself within the material body of the sand through the inscription of the slogan "100% Aussie Pride." These embodied significations construct whiteness as an inalienable property, the purity of which is always potentially at threat

from racialized others through contamination and dispossession.[32] At Cronulla, the white male body performatively repossessed the beach through anti-Arabic resentment, thus mimetically reproducing the racialized colonial violence enacted to dispossess Indigenous people.

In response to the events of 2005, one of Australia's leading Indigenous artists, Vernon Ah Kee of the Kuku Yalandji, Waanji, Yidinji, and Gugu Yimithirr peoples, challenged Australian popular culture, racism, and representations of Indigeneity in his exhibit at the Venice Biennale in 2009. The Cronulla riots provided a context for Ah Kee's art installation entitled *Can t Chant*, which offers its audience an Aboriginal man's rendering of the beach, drawing on, but in opposition to, its signification within popular culture as a site of everyday white male performativity and representations of "Australian-ness." Common ownership of the beach looms large in the Australian imagination, but as violent attacks on Cronulla Beach demonstrate, not everyone shares the same proprietary rights within that space. His work frames the beach as an important site for the defense and assumption of territorial sovereignty. It is the place where invaders have landed, and on Australia Day it is reenacted as the place where in 1788 Captain Arthur Phillip planted a flag in the name of some faraway sovereign to signify white possession.

Ah Kee plays with the idea that iconic beaches such as Bondi and Cronulla are white possessions, public spaces perceived within the white Australian imaginary as being urban and natural, civilized and primitive, spiritual and physical. He is acutely aware that the beach is a place where nature and culture become reconciled through the performativity of white male bodies such as lifesavers and surfers. Ah Kee undoes this reconciliation by disrupting the beach as a site of fantasy production where carnival and nature synergize as prehistory in the dialectical image of modernity. He challenges white possession of the beach by making visible the omnipresence of Indigenous sovereignty through the performativity of the Indigenous male body. In this way he brings forth the sovereign body of the Indigenous male into modernity, displacing the white male body on the beach.

The beach is Indigenous land and evokes different memories. As the viewer enters Ah Kee's installation, surfboards hang in the middle of the room, and painted Yadinji shields with markings on one side in red, yellow, and black, the colors of the Indigenous flag, signify our sovereignty and resistance. On the other side of the surfboards, the eyes of Aboriginal male warriors gaze silently at their audience, bearing witness to their uninvited presence. The gaze of Ah Kee's grandfather looks to the east, surveying the coastline in anticipation of invaders. The silent gaze is broken by the text on the walls:

Vernon Ah Kee, cantchant, 2007 (still). Three-channel video. Courtesy of the artist and Milani Gallery, Brisbane.

Ah Kee the sovereign warrior speaks his truth. We grew here you flew here, we are the first people, we have to tolerate you, we are not your other, you are dangerous people and your duty is to accept the truth for you will be constantly reminded of your wrong doing by our presence. Aboriginal people are not hybrids and will not comply with what you think you have made us become.

Moving out of the first room, the viewer enters another, where a video clip intermittently echoes the sounds of the land and water with the song "Stompin' Ground," sung by Warumpi, an Indigenous band. The song's message to its audience: if you want to know this country and if you want to change your ways, you need to go to the stomping ground for ceremonial business. Ah Kee performatively reiterates Indigenous sovereignty through the use of this song, which offers its white audience a way to belong to this country that is outside the logic of capital and patriarchal white sovereignty. Here Ah Kee also plays with irony because the "Stomp" was the surfers' dance made famous by Little Pattie, one of Australia's original

surfie-chick icons. And white Australian youths have continued to stomp all over the beach as shown in video clips for Australian rock bands such as INXS and Midnight Oil, in soap operas such as *Home and Away,* and in the movie *Puberty Blues*.[33] Ah Kee's juxtaposition of the Warumpi band's call to dance for the land and the white performative dancing on the land reiterates Indigenous Australia's challenge to white possessive performances and their grounding in patriarchal white sovereignty.

At the entrance to the second room, Ah Kee invites his audience to bear witness to a seeming anomaly: Aboriginal surfers at the beach. The video shows the Aboriginal surfers walking around the Gold Coast, surveying the beach before entering it with their shield surfboards. The surprised look of a white male gaze is captured on film. This surprise suggests that to the white male beachgoer, Aboriginal surfers are out of place; they are not white in need of a tan, they belong in the landscape in the middle of Australia, not on the beach. Ah Kee plays on this anomaly by taking his audience to the landscape away from the beach, where death is signified by two cemeteries. Suddenly guns are fired repeatedly at two white surfboards encased with barbed wire, one

hanging from a tree, the other tied to a rock. The barbed wire evokes the fencing off of the land against Indigenous sovereignty and the wire that was used in the trenches at Gallipoli, both signifying death and destruction. Here Ah Kee brings forth repressed memories of the violence of massacres, incarceration, and dispossession hidden in landscape that is far away from the beach. There is silence as the clip moves back to the beach, where memories of the violence inflicted on Aboriginal people are repressed by its iconic status within the Australian imagination. Suddenly a lone Indigenous surfer appears on his shield surfboard gracefully moving through the water, displaying his skill as he takes command of the waves. He is not out of place. He embodies the resilience of Indigenous sovereignty disrupting the iconography of the beach that represents all that is Australian within white popular culture. Like a stingray barb piercing the heart of white Australia, Ah Kee's masterful use of irony and anomaly reinserts the Indigenous male body at the beach, displacing the white male body as the embodiment of possession 239 years after Captain Cook's originary possessive performance.

Conclusion

The production of the beach as a white possession is both fantasy and reality within the Australian imagination and is tied to a beach culture encompassing pleasure, leisure, and national pride that developed during modernity through the embodied performance of white masculinity. As a border, the beach is constituted by epistemological, ontological, and axiological violence, whereby the nation's past and present treatment of Indigenous people becomes invisible and negated through performative acts of possession that ontologically and socially ground white male bodies. White possession becomes normalized and regulated within society through socially sanctioned embodied performative acts of Australian beach culture. The reiterative nature of these performances is required because within this borderland the omnipresence of Indigenous sovereignty ontologically disturbs patriarchal white sovereignty's possession and its originary violence. Ah Kee's work powerfully demonstrates the resilience of Indigenous sovereignty and its ability to disturb ontologically the performativity of white possession. Continuing the tradition of his ancestors, it is appropriate in the twenty-first century that the silence of the beach becomes the object of Vernon Ah Kee's sovereign artistic warrior-ship.

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Reprinted with permission from Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

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Gina: Black was not included in that idea.
Juanita: No, that was not the intention.[1]

In 2016, a potential film location offered me an intriguing combination of circumstances regarding the always-existing questions in filmmaking of the site, the set, and the dimensions of space and time. As a multilayered entity—at once an example of Dutch architectural heritage, a corporate asset, an office workplace, and a home to asylum-seekers in need of a roof and recognition—the Amsterdam office complex Tripolis presented a site through which to explore various levels of colonial-modern here-ness.[2]

This combination continues to echo as an abiding theme in my work. The following set of meditations considers some of its implications, both in my work filmed in Tripolis, *Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat* (2016), and in films by Alain Resnais, Glauber Rocha, and Pedro Costa. These thoughts are inspired by Denise Ferreira da Silva, in particular her essay "The Racial Event," in which she writes: "I move to abandon *temporal* thinking, which imposes and necessitates the presumption of *separability*, and move to read *back-then* and the *over-there* as constitutive of what happens *right-now* and *right-here* and *what is about to happen*."[3]

Wendelien van Oldenborgh

Asset as Set: Filmmaking in Relation to a Certain Realness of Site

Stills from Alain Resnais's 1963 movie Muriel ou le Temps d'un retour.

I want to consider reading the modern city as a site of colonial-capitalistic struggle and as a "racial event," using the film edit as a lens.[4] I see in filmmaking a possibility to work with the necessary collapse of time and space that Ferreira da Silva calls us to, pointing to what is real here and now by aiming to include all dimensions in cinematic language.

***

Three buildings make up Tripolis, which was designed by

There was a certain idea behind it,
but it was meant for the middle class.

Black was not included in that idea.
- No, that was not the intention.

Stills from Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat, 2016.

the Dutch structuralist architect Aldo van Eyck and his team in 1994. Van Eyck's respect for the human scale is a well-known characteristic of his architecture. In the 1950s, he and the group of architects called Team X distanced themselves from the large-scale architectural approach of the Conference Internationale d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM). As a large corporate project—providing office space of more than twenty-thousand square meters—Tripolis is therefore uncharacteristic of van Eyck's work. Nevertheless, its spatial organization carries his spirit of connection and conversation, and his goal of providing a personal experience of space.

In the spring of 2016, We Are Here, a group of people who had been refused official stay in the Netherlands but could neither return to their countries of departure nor go anywhere else, squatted Tripolis 200, one of the three buildings of the complex, for roughly three weeks.[5] Ironically, until two years earlier, this part of the complex had been occupied as the municipal office of South Amsterdam through which (accepted) citizens passed to register, get married, and pick up official documents.

The mirror image of Tripolis 200, a building named 300, was also nearly vacant when We Are Here moved in. However, a small number of people were living in a tiny part of Tripolis 300's newly renovated office spaces. BNP Paribas Investment Partners had moved out quite soon after investing in a grand renovation designed by Fokkema & Partners Architecten only a few years earlier.[6] The third building, Tripolis 100, was being rented by the European headquarters of Nikon, which had renovated its part of the complex in 2012 with the Amsterdam-based Japanese architect Moriko Kira.[7]

The few inhabitants in the vacant building 300 were living there on a contract with an anti-squat—or "vacancy-management"—agency. These agencies have

sprung up everywhere in the Netherlands and successfully protect empty property by offering low-rent space with a long set of conditions. Usually the contracts include: being present in the building for a significant part of the time, not having any children or pets, leaving quickly once the place has found a new, "proper" use, and watching out for trespassers.[8] About four people had set up bedrooms and kitchens in carpeted boardrooms, spread across six floors, with individual fridges in the main cafeteria space. When We Are Here entered the adjacent Tripolis 200, the anti-squat inhabitants lived up to their task and notified the authorities.

Considering its contemporary existence as a site of a squatting action by We Are Here, which points at some of the most urgent national and urban questions about housing and citizenship today, I wanted to cast Tripolis as a location for a film work. The unlikely combination of this event and the design in the tradition of van Eyck's socially concerned modernist architecture seemed enough reason to try.

After a failed appointment with a consultant from the real-estate agency Cushman and Wakefield, which was responsible for renting out the empty offices, my team and I met with a daily caretaker. The buildings' caretakers, who showed a heartfelt fondness for the labyrinthine complex, are employed by Facility Solutions, a firm based just outside Amsterdam. During the buildings' more prosperous times, Facility Solutions had also delivered janitorial services, but in times of vacancy, Facility Solutions was contracted by the larger property and asset management firm EPOC (European Property Operations Corporation), based in 's-Hertogenbosch, a city about eighty kilometers from Amsterdam. EPOC was responsible for repurposing the building complex in the service of its owner, the global insurance and equity firm AXA Investment Managers, which has its headquarters in Paris.[9]

EPOC's friendly location manager eventually persuaded an account manager from AXA's Amsterdam office to meet us. This administrator was not responsible for the building, but took on the task of speaking on behalf of AXA's clients. As it turned out, Tripolis was contained in the portfolio of a German branch of AXA. As such, the circles of management clearly radiated out from a local interest to a global investment level. The janitors and even the EPOC's location manager for Tripolis neatly navigated between an actual relationship with the architecture and its locality, and an abstract level of responsibility for the property of anonymous investors. They represented the gap between local urban experience and the global property investment boom, a phenomenon that is alienated from the play of light and space, corners and staircases. Toward considering the critical potential within this site, I have below compiled an imaginary montage of three classic and—in their own way—anti-colonial cinemas of time and place.

The Here-ness of El Dorado: Three Cinemas of Time and Place

1.

The first film is *Muriel ou le Temps d'un retour*, Alain Resnais's 1963 experimental melodrama about French life in the wake of the Algerian War.[10] A key scene opens with shots of houses and cityscapes. Broken and newly constructed. Daytime, nighttime. No specific order or temporal logic. After a sequence of close-ups in movement, with each protagonist glancing in one or another direction—suggesting signals between them—or upwards to the possible rain, they eventually arrive at the lit-up entrance to a modern apartment building.

—It looks newly built. Is that because of the war?
—A bombed city.
—Yes.
—There were many dead, executed. I don't remember the numbers: 200? 3000? I really don't remember.

Rapid consecutive shots show signs pointing to a cemetery, a monument to a fallen hero, street names relating to fighting, resistance, World War II, and colonial wars. The setting—the town of Boulogne-sur-Mer—is as much a character as any of the humans in *Muriel*. All its characters carry memories that haunt or taint the present. Throughout the film, the reconstructed cityscapes are

woven together with the obsessions, lies, and fears of a small postwar bourgeois group. Fragmentary cutting between images of modern housing projects and daily conversations eventually exposes secret habits and betrayals, but never explains the sequence of events or the exact passing of time. In this film, the collapsing of time that defines all film editing is made material: a concept we can grasp, chew on, understand. In the very materiality of the film, space collapses as well. Damaged super-8 shots from Algiers appear between the filmed scenes of destruction and reconstruction in a seaside town in Europe. Continuity and logic are playfully neglected in the combination of locations.

Muriel was released shortly after the end of the Algerian War of Independence. One of the characters, the young Bernard, has just returned from this war and brings guilt and trauma home with him. The promise that this town's new architecture in the alternating shots expresses is interlocked with the film's suggestion that, in the early 1960s, those same promising spaces were filled with the ghosts of wartime and colonial atrocity. Specters of violence and colonial repression had arisen in many European cities around that time: the effects of colonialism washing up on European shores via increasing migration from the former colonies to the metropoles. This process of return was also implied in European modern architecture. In particular, the urgently needed postwar housing projects in European cities were tightly entangled with city developments in North Africa, where French urban planners had already tested their innovative ideas.

The notes from the first International Congress on Urbanism in the Colonies in 1932 state: "It is through colonial urbanism that urbanism has penetrated into France."[11] At the 1953 CIAM meeting, where concerns for building "housing for the greater number" were defined in a Charter of Habitat that was specifically based on designs for Moroccan cities, the younger members of the congress, including Aldo van Eyck, went on to form the group Team X. In critical response to the charter, they prepared adjustments to it for the next CIAM meeting, which was supposed to take place in Algiers in 1955. The meeting did not happen there due to unrest that had

broken out. These CIAM meetings, not to mention cheap labor from the former colonies, had great influence on modern architecture developing in France, the UK, and the Netherlands. Today, many modernist projects in these European countries are inhabited by various communities from the formerly colonial territories.

Resnais's jumping edits in *Muriel* connect the conversations of the protagonists, who seem in constant movement, and the architecture in Boulogne-sur-Mer, which suffered from destruction during World War II and was in the process of being replaced by modern urbanism. This editing strategy contributes to a feeling of instability and the presence of unsettling traces. In the filmic reality, the imagined distant colony *over-there* collapses into the *here*. The presumed *back-then* of colonial time collapses into the *now*.[12]

2.

Whereas Resnais's *Muriel* was produced in the shadow of war "elsewhere," Glauber Rocha managed to realize his explicitly political allegory, *Terra em Transe* (1967), under Brazil's fully implemented repressive dictatorship. In the middle of the film, an upward shot of a television transmission tower is followed by an aerial shot of a modern villa. The two structures, indicating modernity and technological development, relate to the character of Fuentes, who represents the progressive bourgeoisie. He is the modern face of the ruling class in the fictional country of El Dorado. He is a dynamic entrepreneur who owns the country's most important factories and mines, controls the cultural industry, and animates high society with his capital. On a modernist rooftop in a misty landscape under the television tower, he leans back in his chair, smiles vainly, and talks to Paulo, the poet and main character of the film, about his power: "I import the best equipment ... I do great campaigns ... I had dinner at the embassy."

In voice-over narration, Paulo explains that Fuentes visits his ambassador friend at the embassy every day. They discuss tropical plants: "I imported some seeds, marvelous ... I've got some credit again from the National Bank."

But after Fuentes finds out that the ambassador has left the country and betrayed him on a promised deal, he addresses the camera and expresses disappointment: "What's the use of working? I want to develop this little country! I promote the arts, I perform acts of charity, I do useful things!"

Property, politics, plant seeds, and the arts are claimed in the same breath by the progressive entrepreneur at the heart of *Terra em Transe*. Made in the wake of Brazil's 1964 coup, the film meditates upon the "trance" of

neoliberal politics, as though a form of magic creates the figures of both a political "left" and "right." Populism was a strategy that both the left and right leaned on heavily at the time, and the film suggests that the desire to include the masses depends on the forces of the unconscious, the magical, and the trance that held the country in its grip. Within this framework, political leadership was legitimated through charisma rather than through effective programs of reform according to solid principles.[13] In the film's fictional time and place, both the left and right work with this force, as was the case in Brazil in the late 1960s. In today's political landscape, we feel the forces of the magical played upon more successfully by the new right, but the dilemmas of the left that the film displays are still recognizable.

The main motivation of the film's images is to express the artist and poet Paulo's guilt and inner conflict with respect to his alliances and political choices. Paulo is a channel through which these contradictions of politics and charisma are lived and expressed. Through Paulo, Rocha directly confesses his own conflicted position as an artist within a political and economic structure that he tries to move against. Brazilian cinema scholar Ismail Xavier suggests that

> the essential problem faced by Paulo is, in fact, the divorce between his poetry and his social engagement. His poems display an anachronistic eloquence and usually betray a pessimism that seems to undermine all of his gestures of political commitment. The verses bring melancholy, disgust, and a sense of decay.[14]

Whereas Resnais's *Muriel* works through questions of power and personal struggles via an experimental spatiotemporal edit, *Terra em Transe* draws its viewers into a direct relationship with the most concrete and architectural signs of modernity through a mixture of abstract, stylized scenes, at times with frenzied energy. Rocha creates an awareness of the mediated nature of reality by constantly reminding the viewer of the filmic mode of production. For example, the effect of estrangement is achieved when characters suddenly address the camera, or when a television item introducing the conservative leader becomes part of the story of the film.

Shifting among a cast of characters, including a right-wing demagogue, a left-wing political puppet, a tormented poet, and a progressive entrepreneur, Rocha maneuvers his viewers through scenes of political deliberation that are constantly swamped by affective and oneiric experiences. Rocha's frenzied aesthetics show an emotional response to the political, apparently inheriting the forces of the unconscious and the magical from colonial modernity.

Today those forces seem to reappear as inescapable figures of our contemporary neoliberal global malaise.

Stills from Glauber Rocha's 1967 movie Terra em Transe.
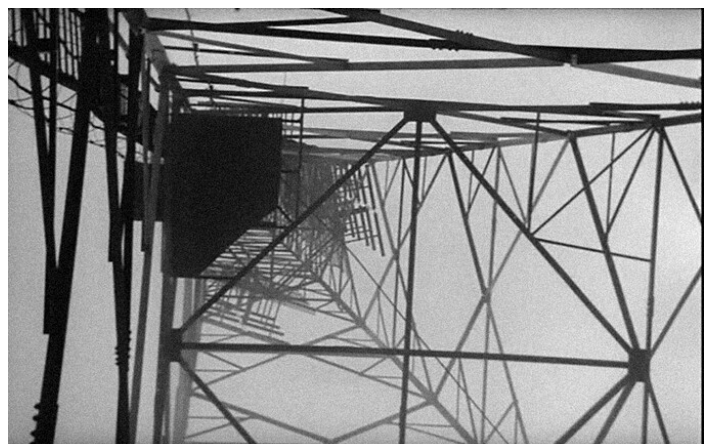
3.

In a central scene from our third film in this imaginary montage, *Colossal Youth* (2006) by Pedro Costa, an older man appears desolate in front of a stark white building complex. We only see his head. Walls with small, shuttered windows rise up behind him. Another man approaches, greets him, and introduces himself as the building administrator, mentioning that his previous occupation was as a locksmith. The older man, who is known by his nickname, Ventura, states that he is a retired laborer. They establish that they come from opposite sides of the island group Cape Verde. Having so far addressed each other in Cape Verdean Creole, the administrator, after a pause, looks at his watch and declares in Portuguese: "3pm, November 2001. Fourth floor on the right. The flat is full of light."

The white buildings are new flats in a government-planned housing settlement in Lisbon. For some inhabitants, the new buildings are meant to replace homes they had built for themselves in the informal neighborhood of Fontainhas, which was bulldozed around the time Pedro Costa filmed *Colossal Youth* in 2006. The film moves between the last spaces still standing in Fontainhas and the new building complex and its interiors.

Over the course of three films in nine years (1997–2006), Pedro Costa established a cinematic language that moves aesthetically between the inner and outer worlds of the people who live in marginalized and precarious circumstances in the city of Lisbon.[15] Through long takes and precise compositions with beautiful lighting, the protagonists appear in their own environments and with their own words. At times, these words have clearly been rehearsed, and are recited in a poetic way. In other scenes, words seem to be spoken spontaneously, with the camera just waiting for a conversation to unfold. In *Colossal Youth*, it is the character of Ventura, the elderly man from Cape Verde, who leads the experimental narrative.

Plot does not necessarily motivate the film's long single-take scenes (although some stories about the characters do unfold); rather, these scenes seem to be driven by the different spaces that the characters move between and reside in. Through Ventura's character we observe and live the dilemmas of habitation: "housing" as a grand social architectural gesture versus the "home" in informal developments. "It is simply too small," Ventura remarks of the three-bedroom apartment he is shown by the administrator. The administrator recites an endless list of the rules and regulations of inhabitation as he shows the new and bright-white flat.

Other characters reappear across Costa's films, like the central character Vanda Duarte from *In Vanda's Room* (2001). Over years of friendship and work with his real-life protagonists, Costa has created "screen subjects" whose lives can be experienced through a "cinema of poetry."[16]

The cinematic experience connects an audience to spaces constructed and affected by the dissonant organization of the colonial present—to spaces that speak of Ferreira da Silva's "racial event." In Costa's films, as in Resnais's (albeit with a very different approach), we feel the collapse of the imagined distance between *now* and a colonial *over-there* and *back-then*.

Stills from Pedro Costa's 2006 movie Colossal Youth.

The Squat as Site and Set

We are back in Tripolis, the van Eyck building where my shoot eventually took place.[17] In the now-completed film, over images of the empty spaces we hear a conversation about the lucrative business of anti-squatting agencies, about how the concept has become a Dutch export product and is disrupting formerly protective housing laws in the Netherlands. Slowly, the talk turns towards the 1970s, when squatting was still a possible political gesture

Still from Wendelien van Oldenborgh, Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat, 2016.

and tool. The cast, whose conversations make up the soundtrack of the film, consists of activists and squatters from different generations and different backgrounds, with different experiences of occupying spaces that were not officially granted to them. In small groups throughout the various rooms of the buildings, they discuss topics that concern them all. One room has a pencil drawing on the wall—an obvious leftover from the recent short-lived occupation—with the words "WE ARE HERE."

In one scene, the entire cast watches an archival movie from 1979 in which an elegant Surinamese woman talks about the housing situation she faced when she arrived in the Netherlands. She explains how she and others decided to squat the empty flats that were denied to members of her community because of racist housing policies. These flats were part of a huge new housing complex called the Bijlmer on the southeast side of Amsterdam, which boasted a modern way of living among spacious green common areas, with parking structures

and road systems.

Developed for the middle classes, the flats stayed empty because construction of the necessary daily infrastructure, like public transport and shops, was delayed. Corrupt landlords were getting state funding to rent small, dilapidated, and overcrowded boarding houses to the newly arriving Caribbean Dutch community, yet they were prevented from moving into the large, sunny, vacant flats in the Bijlmer. There was a set percentage of black people allowed to live in certain city areas, while others were totally off limits to people of color. And yet the rent for one of the large flats would equal—or even be less than—what the state was paying for a whole family to live in one room of a boarding house.

Squatting was a solution at the time. Through continuous action, the political point was made. In the archival movie screened at Tripolis, *Oema foe Sranan* (Women of Suriname, 1979), produced by Cineclub Vrijheids Films

(Cineclub Freedom Films), the titular woman laconically relates the story of her struggle for housing. But when she recalls a protest at city hall, her laughter is infectious: "When we got there we were told that the mayor was hospitable. But that was a strange hospitality," she says. "Instead of a welcome with wine and cognac, we were awaited by bulldogs!"

Although the history of squatting forms part of Amsterdam's proud image as the progressive center of the Netherlands, history usually omits the actions of this Caribbean Dutch group. At the time, they were supported by and collaborated with various other squatter movements, which were predominately white. But finding housing by squatting did not solve the problem of systematic exclusion and distancing, and in 2016 the action in Tripolis carried out by We Are Here was cut short. Squatting has been criminalized in the Netherlands since 2010, and the asset value of Tripolis, protected by the anti-squatting inhabitants, added to the tension.

When a site full of tension becomes a set for a film, it can disrupt the "proper" ordering of time and space. Tripolis exists as a prime example of a contemporary, complex confluence of site, territory, and legality: an office workplace, a home to asylum-seekers, and a corporate asset. Its value goes up as long as one of these is excluded—edited out. As much as a method for cancelling out, omitting, or excluding, filmic montage also provides an opportunity to structure and thereby question and affect the temporal thinking that supports those very exclusions.

X

1
Gina Lafour, student and activist, and Juanita Lalji, former member of the National Organization of Surinamese in the Netherlands (LOSON), in dialogue. From Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat* , 2016.

2
The term "colonial-modern" refers to the title of a book that was influential in thinking about this essay: *Colonial Modern: Aesthetics of the Past, Rebellions for the Future* , eds. Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali, and Marion von Osten (Black Dog, 2010).

3
Denise Ferreira da Silva, "The Racial Event or that Which Happens Without Time," in *The Two-Sided Lake: Scenarios, Storyboards and Sets from Liverpool Biennial 2016* (Liverpool University Press, 2017) *.*

4
The term "colonial-capitalistic" is introduced by Suely Rolnik in her inspiring text "The Spheres of Insurrection: Suggestions for Combating the Pimping of Life," *e-flux journal* 86, (November 2017) http://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/163107/the-spheres-of-insurrection-suggestions-for-combating-the-pimping-of-life/ . In addition, the way "'reading" is meant here is informed by Denise Ferreira da Silva and Valentina Desideri's concept of "poethical readings."

5
For We Are Here, see http://wijzijnhier.org/who-we-are/ . See also http://wijzijnhier.org/tijdslijn/squatting-and-the-undocumented-migrants-struggle-in-the-netherlands/ and http://wijzijnhier.org/2016/03/ .

6
See https://retaildesignblog.net/2014/02/15/bnp-paribas-office-by-fokkema-partners-architects-amsterdam-netherlands/ .

7
See http://www.morikokira.nl/en/projects/nikon-europe/ .

8
The anti-squat agency for Tripolis was De Zwerfkei, who pride themselves on having introduced anti-squatting thirty years ago. See http://www.zwerfkeibeheer.nl/antikraakwonen/tijdelijk_bew.html .

9
Since that time, EPOC has changed its name to Bright!, and in July 2017 AXA sold Tripolis to the New York-based "multinational private equity, alternative asset management and financial service group" Blackstone, for six million euros less than what they had paid for it in 2003. See http://www.vastgoedmarkt.nl/beleggingen/nieuws/2017/8/blackstone-koopt-kantoorcomplex-tripolis-101125040 (in Dutch). For Blackstone, see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Blackstone_Group .

10
In a 1963 review in *Film Quarterly*, Susan Sontag wrote of Resnais's film: "It attempts to deal with substantive issues—war guilt over Algeria, the OAS, the racism of the colonies ... But it also attempts to project a purely abstract drama."

11
Tom Avermaete, "Nomadic Experts and Travelling Perspectives: Colonial Modernity and the Epistemological Shift in Modern Architectural Culture," in *Colonial Modern* .

12
For elaboration on this "back-then" and "over-there" as constant attempts to separate ourselves from colonial space and time, see Ferreira da Silva, "The Racial Event."

13
See Ismail Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment: Aesthetics and Politics in Modern Brazilian Cinema* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

14
Xavier, *Allegories of Underdevelopment* .

15
Pedro Costa's three main films about Fontainhas are *Ossos* (1997), *In Vanda's Room* (2000), and *Colossal Youth* (2006).

16
Pier Paolo Pasolini theorized cinema as a language system that is fundamentally irrational and related to memories and dreams. See The "Cinema of Poetry" in Pasolini, *Heretical Empiricism* (New Academia Publishing, 1972), 172–73.

17
Wendelien van Oldenborgh, *Prologue: Squat/Anti-Squat* , 2016, with Khadija Al'Morabid, Quinsy Gario, Hellen Felter, Roel Griffioen, Lucien Lafour, Gina Lafour, Juanita Lalji, André Reeder, University of Colour: Max de Ploeg and Tirza, Kees Visser.

One cannot understand hurt feelings in relation to a boxed quarter acre block … The effects of acts have to be understood in terms of the pervasiveness of the Dreaming.
— *Griffiths v. Northern Territory of Australia (No 3)*, 2016, FCA 900 (Timber Creek decision)
The unknown frontier today is depth.
—Geoscience Australia

Rachel O'Reilly

Dematerializations of the Land/Water Object

During normotic peaks of approval phases of settler-colony mining booms, "artist impressions" of mega-mine proposals are photoshopped up at unprecedented rates and scales. Weaponized images of dignified-looking but no longer collectively-bargaining laborers, exaggerated job figures, fetishized New Machines, and particularly pernicious laminations of corporate-sponsored settler household reproduction placehold new industry forms of extraction. The perversions of prospective accounting given for "environmental assets"—for example, soil and water—force a rereading of finance through colonial legacies that limit the imagination of mattering. Between the slave ship and the container ship, the story of Australia's particular mercantile-era contribution to the arsenal of global capital, in making the *concept* of land fully fungible, generates extra-aesthetic analytics by being retold.[1]

The Drama of Installation

I don't think I've ever seen something drawing such broad-ranging and significant conclusions on such a limited amount of information, and with no numerical modelling. I've never seen it.
—Professor Philip Pells, civil engineer, "Gasleak," ABC 4 Corners, 2009

The "unconventional" gas industry[2], pioneered in the United States and embraced following the first oil shock in 1973, was approved for mass install in Australia in 2009, just two years after the Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention.[3] In an existing special economic zone, liquefied natural gas plants and shipping infrastructure were set up through Gladstone Harbour, Queensland, the unceeded land and sea of Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang, Bailai, and Bunda peoples, and a key site in the Venn diagram of corporate power's relationship to Aboriginal and labor rights in Australia.[4] The "City that Waited" for late industrialization was once the capital of the fleeting North Colony of Australia, in 1847.[5] It fully industrialized only after the 1957 Comalco Act (now Rio

Image of reclaimed land, previously mangrove, and sub-contracted workers at Gladstone LNG development. Copyright: Bechtel.

Tinto) and the Aboriginal Protection Act were used to violently excise the wealth of eight thousand square kilometers of bauxite-rich West Cape land in North Queensland for the state's first alumina refinery.[6]

Before the first well was fracked west of Brisbane on some of the state's richest farming lands, mass fish kills, turtle casualties, and dugong deaths and diseases also affecting fisherman of Gladstone Harbour were connected both to flooding run-off and unprecedented dredging in 2011 near the Great Barrier Reef.[7] In 2013, it was revealed by a senior government whistleblower that when the industry was approved, the gas companies had been able to withhold an entire chapter from the initial Environmental Impact Statement on groundwater impacts.[8] Additionally, geo-engineering information on well function, geo-locative information on actual well locations, and any plan to dispose of the salty brine riddled with heavy metals, BTEX chemicals (naturally occurring), and radioactive traces in the industry's massive volumes of "produced water" were missing from the development proposal. The whistleblower grokked the drama of dematerialization at play in the approvals process precisely in its reduction of critical infrastructure planning to an anti-empirical "concept": "It was quite frightening that they would consider approving such a project without the basic information that a normal mining project would have been asked to submit, given that this was like 600

times the size of your standard large mine." [9] More than two decades prior, Halliburton had experimented with hydraulic fracturing plans for a very remotely imagined Australian field at the non-site of its American lab, with fictive soil. "They bonded together small slabs of coal and shale similar to Australian samples, drilled one-inch holes into the sample, then pressurised the holes and completed a 'hydro-frac' in miniature. 'These samples were difficult to prepare,'" they wrote in their report. When the company first fracked a coal seam gas well in Moura, Queensland for real, their exploration report stated: "During July 1977 the well was killed with 1% KCL solution and the tubing and packer were pulled from the well … and pumping commenced". As Keogh notes, the use of the word "kill" stands out "given potassium chloride (KCl) is the third and final drug administered in the lethal injection of humans on death row in the USA".[10]

The rollout in Australia has many similarities with the much more advanced "new economy" natural gas bubbles in the US, and many differences. Australian property owners uniformly own only the top four centimeters of their topsoil—nothing below, nothing more; the government retains mineral rights and gains income on licenses. There is no sovereign wealth fund, and much of the actual profits remain under-taxed and go offshore. Novelly, with the fracking industry, the corporate state exposed its own rural and increasingly urban settler
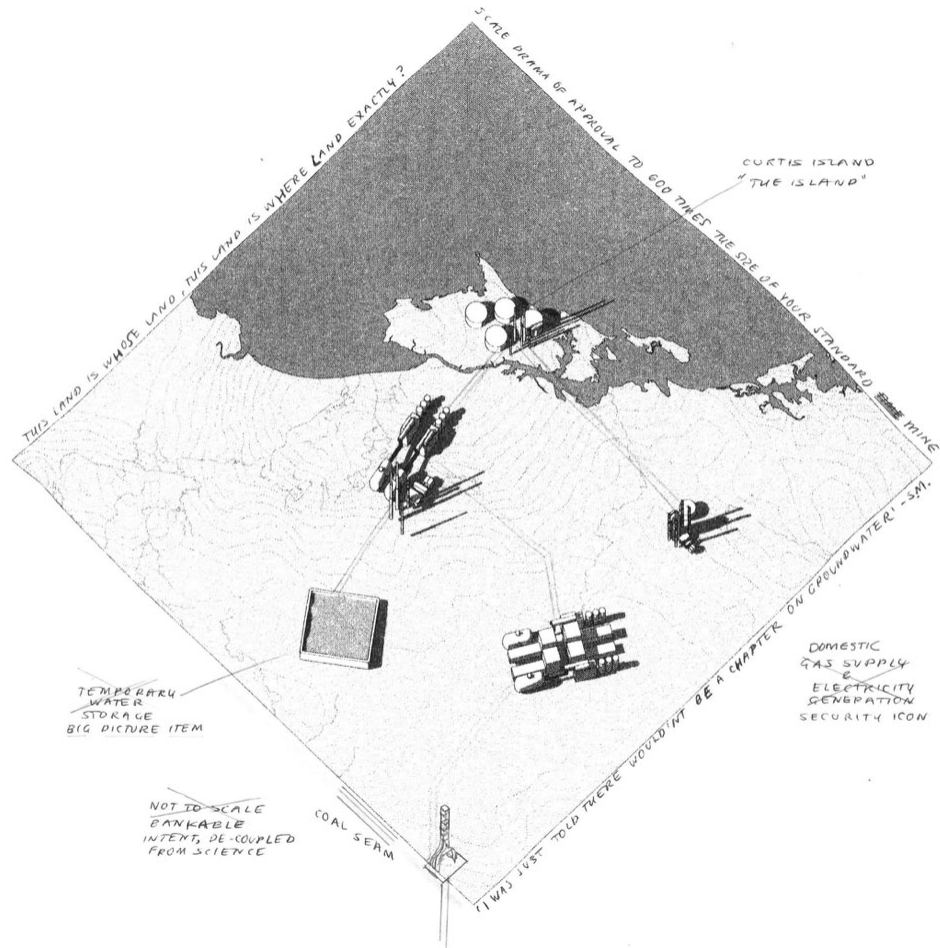
Rachel O'Reilly, with PALACE (Valle Medina and Benjamin Reynolds) and Rodrigo Hernandez, Mystical Engingeering from the series Gladstone, Post-pastoral (2016). Unique series risograph prints on paper, ink, pencil, 279mm x 315mm. Courtesy the artist.

constituencies to speculation on their own health and futures, through compensatory "coexistence" surface leasing arrangements, temporary high-salaried construction industry jobs, lucrative gag orders, and privatized infrastructure delivery, like rural roads, aimed at the social licensing of environmental injustice. In the most spatial sense, the industry has great difficulty conforming with existing class lines. The "coal seam gas invasion" created a unforeseen, militant protest movement of farmers, fisherman, sea changers, and retirees down the East Coast, who were later joined in some campaigns by already dispossessed traditional owners of unceded lands.

Here, under these shifts of late liberalism, there is a kind of trauma observable among settler-formatted citizenships needing to become grassroots materially literate in—because suddenly overexposed to—land-based accumulation processes "as if" they are occurring for the first time. In other words, people pushing up against stupidity and dust within a narrow slice of time on belonging tend to both *unravel from* and *double-down on* the real abstractions of *landed property*. In the state with

some of the weakest Native Title laws, which are incomparable to land rights, tens of thousands of gas wells are now scattered over an area notorious for its inter-clan resistances to land-fracturing frontier wars. The material drama of the newly licentious "coexistence" of mining companies on farming properties was neither lost upon nor greeted with much *schadenfreude* by Aboriginal leaders. Remarkably so, given that just decades prior, the mining lobby had allied with the pastoral industry in Western Australia in the wake of the 1992 Mabo Judgement—framed as a national threat to citizens' and farmers' back yards—to pressure Federal Labor to back down from their promise of national, "coexistent" Aboriginal land rights.[11] In the state with some of the weakest Native Title laws, tens of thousands of gas wells are scattered over an area notorious for its inter-clan resistance during the land-fracturing frontier wars.[12] Mining companies now have unlimited rights to extract from the largest underground artesian water basin system in one of the driest continents on earth, where hundreds of towns depend on groundwater. Less a lake than solid rock with water in pores between sand grains

28

and sandstone sheets, it took between one and two million years for it to percolate into its form, and connect to aboveground processes of rain, springs, streams, and bores.[13] The inconsistent appearance of Aboriginal geontologies[14] on the supplementary side of private property invasions speaks to the inherent double bookkeeping of settler justice projects.[15]
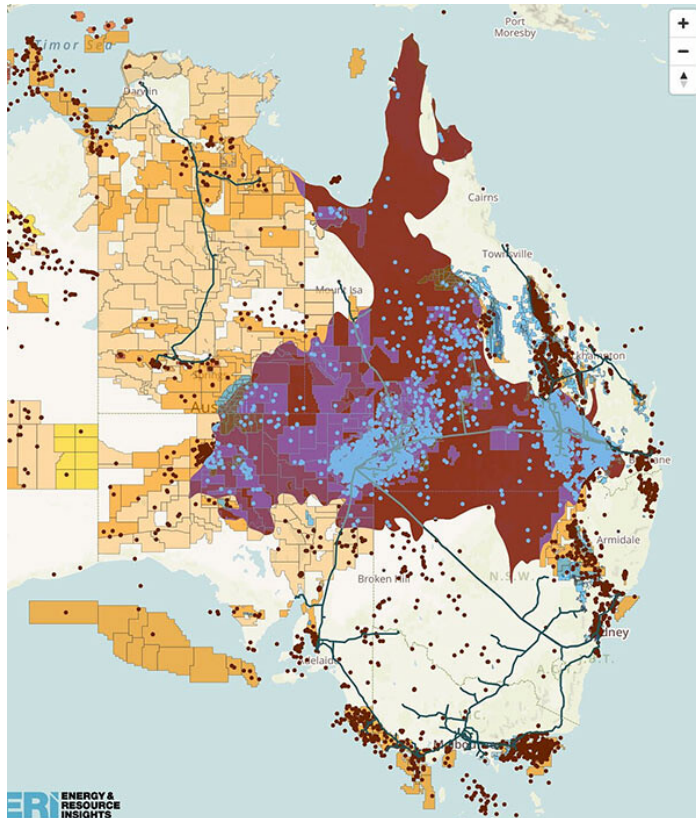
Energy & Resource Insights map of coal seam (fracking) mining wells and tenements, photoshopped by activist Jo Holden to include the Great Artesian Basin (in red).: 37.3 per cent of the Australian continent is covered by coal and gas titles and applications. 84.9 per cent of the Northern Territory and 61.4 per cent of South Australia is covered by mainly petroleum (shale gas) titles and applications.

Rereading Settler Dematerializations

Lucy Lippard and John Chandler's earliest 1968 speculations on dematerialization for an emergent contemporary art discourse were essentially accelerationist, inspired by the Ukrainian-American composer and theorist Joseph Schillinger. Schillinger's ontology of art timed eschatologically through five "zones" that he stated would increasingly replace each other: from biological stages of mimicry, to ritual-religious, to emotional artistic art qua art, and then rational-aesthetic empirical experimentation, before assuming the emergence of the manufacture, distribution, and consumption of a "perfect art product ... characterized by

a fusion of the art forms and materials," and, finally, a "disintegration of art" via "abstraction and the liberation of the idea."[16] Noteworthy is the setup of what Elizabeth Povinelli calls "the prior"[17] as a motor for settler-colonial self-reflexivity, or what Spivak would call the "culture-without-culture" of globalism, or what Denise Ferreira da Silva would notice projecting "affectibility"[18] onto inferior-framed non-West forms, while also staging the superficial overcoming of European heritages for a self-authorizing global contemporaneity. The American "dematerial" and conceptual era has been far less critically re-read in visual art than it has, for example, in contemporary poetry, in terms of overproductions and deconstructions of fractal legal freedoms.[19]

Travelling in Mexico, Smithson produced his *Yucatan Mirror Displacements (1–9)* as a series of color photographs published in *Artforum* to accompany his text "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan" (1969). He poeticized the mirror displacements as enacting the "sacrifice of matter," "cut[ting] into the earth, dematerializing it, and depositing blue sky patches on the ground." Photography works to "kill its object" so as to stage a "large scale sacrifice of matter." He drives into a "dedifferentiated landscape" and an Ancient Mayan god tells him to get rid of his guidebooks, saying, "You risk getting lost in the thickets, that is the only way to make art." The horizon is "constantly consumed through the windshield. The ride on a knife covered in solar blood ... The tranquil drive became a sacrifice of matter that led to a discontinuous state of being, a world of quiet delirium."[20] That Smithson's group was heavily promoted and financed by Virginia Dawn, heir of 3M (Minnesota Mining and Manufacturing), of course hardly escaped other land artists of this period. Patricia Johanson's prolific series of conceptual and biochemically functional garden drawings, which she later materialized one by one as large-scale, cyclical reclamation-landscapes, wholly outside of the museum network, includes a work antagonistically dedicated to Smithson, composed in the shamelessly biomorphic shape of a black butterfly, in which he could trap and kill native fauna. *The Garden of Sulphur and Tar (for Bob)* (1969) includes clear instructions: "This formal artificial garden should never be built."[21] Smithson derogatorily called Johanson "Miss Olmsted," after the landscape architect of Central Park.

Racial, patriarchal grammars of hypertrophied fantasies of "exit" in and through art tend to point to broader and deeper analytics of longer-phased nonlinear reorganizations of the property form, especially its changing material bases *.* Nineteen-seventies "dematerialization" was a story of finance, digitalizing networks, and intellectual property anxiety. Instead of just noting this reigning-in of commodification anxiety or "outsides" *for art*—as some kind of lineage that can authorize its progress[22]—peak conceptualism denoted even more so beyond this a time of economic expansion within unfamiliar "imbrications of materiality and law,"

where "law distend[ed] to protect materialities that are decreasingly singular, decreasingly fixed in space, and decreasingly distinct from the work of subjectivity."[23] Thus, in so-called dematerialization dramas, value is being "disembedded from its previously secure source in a specific materiality"—and what is put in motion is a struggle that is "waged across cultural and juridical realism over what will then resecure that value," or indeed, how it will be waged with/against *as insecure* in accelerating phases of *dis-regulation.*[24] Lippard's postscript to *Six Years* astutely grappled with the limiting mono-disciplinarity of her first thesis, lamenting that the work she tracked had not "broken down the real barriers between the art context and those external disciplines—social, scientific, and academic—from which it draws sustenance." She continues, aptly: "While it has become feasible for artists to deal with technical concepts in their own imaginations, rather than having to struggle with constructive techniques beyond their capacities and their financial means, interactions between mathematics and art, philosophy and art, literature and art, politics and art, are still at a very primitive level."[25] In Benjamin Buchloch, conceptualism pushed a postwar, often tautological aesthetic subject of administration-minus-labor towards institutional critique. Today, after an exceptional period of modernist surplus seems over, the corporate state enacts institutional critique on upward ranges of reproductions. In the conjuncture, we might attend to other lineages of the concept's riding of legal materialisms.

Fungibility Landings

To make land as easily transferable as stock would be one of the greatest economical improvements which could be bestowed upon the country.
—John Stuart Mill

If, in retrospect, we can see the extent to which American art has provided the mirror for the European aesthetic project to globalize into the contemporary, we can consider here quite vulgarly and fundamentally about the extent to which the dematerialization of land precedes and exceeds the so-called dematerialization of the art object. In British common law, inherited from feudalism, land was not yet a full-blown commodity. Since title was only ever leased from the crown, it was "relatively" inferred through possession and the absence of contesting claims. Legal exchanges of land under the deed system required a paper record of a "chain of title" of sixty continuous years, and ritualized performance for the purposes of socializing writ mnemonically into places. As Sarah Keenan notes, the system synched possession and use of a fragile commodity to a gentry who's performances of possessive

ownership, against the existence of squatting laws, were distinguished in a "category apart" from the more ephemerally framed labor of others who were assumed not to leave sufficiently "permanent marks" on land—for example, women, travellers, and servants.[26] A royal commission in Britain in 1857 aiming to free up urban land for bigger factories with capital from US slavery failed to convince aristocrats of the benefits of a stocks-and-bonds-inspired property system that they perceived could diminish the class relation and make land appear more fictional than real. A year later, in the context of the encouragement of a wool economy in the first "free settlement" of South Australia, a title-by-registration system was pitched by Robert Richard Torrens to the colony parliament.[27]

Amidst human corruptions, failing "land orders" (also a mercantile invention), and legal fees costlier than colony land itself …, R. R. Torrens argued that British land law was unsuitable for "playing out the game of life in this work-a-day part of the globe."[28] His *epochal* sleight of hand, having worked Empire's ports rather than being trained in its profession of law, was to advocate for a title registering system that idealized an abstract equivalence between existing British legal models of shipped property and landed property, and to abstract this concept of land as a full-blown commodity, separated from "prior relations of ownership, and to whatever degree possible, from particular and individualised characters or traits."[29]

The systems' key differing from feudal contract logics were its threefold principle of *mirror*, *curtain*, and *indemnity*. As in the manner of centrally registered shipped property, the mirror meant that the government's register reflected the interests invested in the property by the single titleholders. Through a tautological logic, no name that wasn't written on the title could hold their interests up to the land if they weren't already reflected in the centrally held registry identically. If some genuine interest in the land was not written in the register, the titled owner was legally entitled to ignore this. This reduction of possession to a cunning, binary recognition system was taken further in the concept of the curtain, which permits the titleholder not only to ignore other existent interests in land if they are not written in the registry, but to draw a metaphorical curtain across all prior interests that do not appear in the so-called mirror. The ingenuity of the curtain concept is that it "blocks particular realities from view," without saying they don't exist, just allowing the titleholder to legally pretend that they don't.[30] The insurance principle for the first time saw the Crown guaranteeing possession, and compensating for losses due to fraud, which, however, also diminished the possibility of other routes of legal contestation.

In response to the qualifying proviso in King William IV's 1836 Letters of Patent that "wherever possible" nothing in the increasingly autonomous settlement project should "affect the rights" of Aboriginal people "to the actual
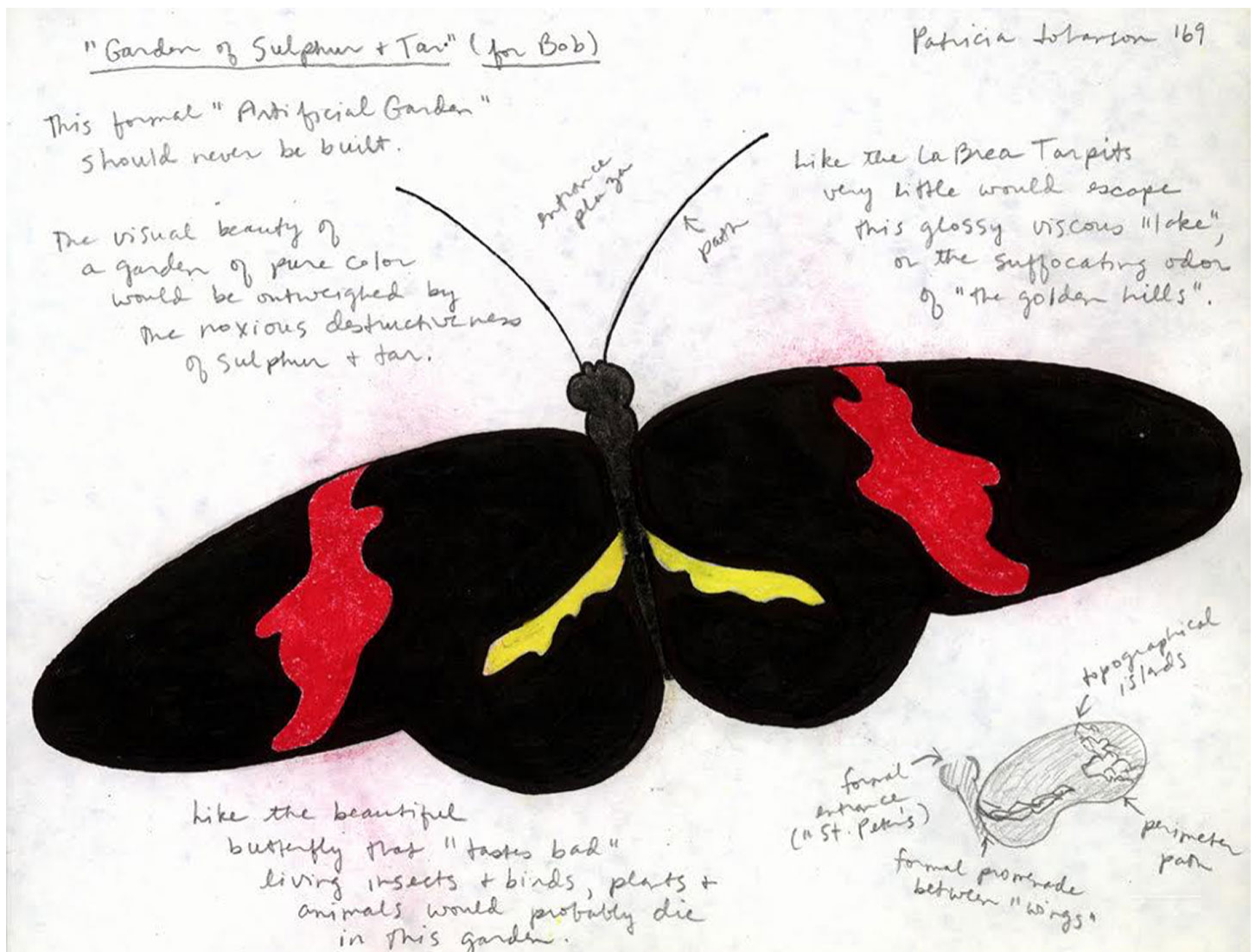
Patricia Johanson, Garden of Sulphur and Tar (for Bob), 1969. Drawing. Courtesy the artist.

occupation or enjoyment of their Land already occupied or enjoyed,"[31] Torrens stated that he suspected the founding of such rights, and proposed the first Aboriginal Protection agent, a role he would also play himself, as a concession. It is commonly understood that the legal establishment retroactively wrote the juridical fiction and doctrine of *terra nullius*—"unproductive land that belonged to nobody," developed by Grotius from the Roman concept of *res nullius*—into domestic rulings to enact a combing-over of the legitimacy of Australia's legal "settlement." But this legal fictionalization only starts to appear in writing after eighty years of colonization.[32] Here, the land registry systems' *outcrypting* of racialized first-nations occupations in the new property system, sutured to paternalistic "protection" measures, combined with the repeating "new beginnings" of "clean" indefeasible title experiences of settlers, in-forms the larger psychic securitization project of settler imagination in the relative absence otherwise of legitimate claims.

When the system finally boomeranged to the polity in 1925, British legal theorist Alain Pottage argued that Torrens's titling involved a fundamentally "new grammar of property," turning land into a thing that was essentially quite opposite to it.[33] It has been pathologically described as a "hospital" for propertied subjectivity: "It makes things better, cures invalidities," and "means the end of the need to look backwards for possible flaws."[34] Ruoff wrote as late as 1958 that "anterior defects of title are cured and thenceforth all investigations of the history of how the named owner came to be entitled is ruled out forever and all future transactions are carried out by simple forms and simple machinery."[35]

Torrens got on a boat and promoted his registry system directly to Western Canada, after which it quickly spread across the British Empire, to Hawaii, the Philippines, the Dominican Republic, Ireland, Israel, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, and a number of US states.[36] It is now the preferred land registration system of the IMF

Rachel O'Reilly with Pa.LaC.E (Valle Medina and Benjamin Reynolds), Drawing Rights, 2018. 17 ", HD Video, color, stereo. Editing: Sebastian Bodirsky; Sound: Tyler Friedman; Advisory: Roxley Foley, Sarah Keenan. Courtesy of the artist. Commissioned by Frontier Imaginaries and Van Abbemuseum.

since the mid 2000s, and is presently being used to dispossess peasants from customary title across Southeast Asia. Yet its main perceived advantages have seemed to be the wholesale efficiency by which it deals with the original rifting event of capitalization. After twenty-one US states initially tried it, only six still use it. Once the registry system is installed, it is noted to be not particularly good at knowing or keeping track of how the land is being used, the cumulative environmental impacts of development, or the changing uses of land. Many of its jurisdictions are described as having bijural property imaginaries.[37] This is not so much an ethical juridical nomenclature as a granting of anthropological explanation to investors, since the Torrens system was so powerful in its juridical re-realization that it cannot explain the remains of what *otherwise* is playing out as local rules of belonging and relating.

Contemporary There-Nows

Amidst dominating logics of extractivism, how is the curtain being managed now? Cultural managerialism tends to perform a displacement and a destruction (deconstruction) of noncompliant socialities by substituting the ethical for the political as the default engine for sociality within and through the neoliberal

machine. Literacy in the corporatization of materialities that reads others through *you* seems key. Since here where heritages of aesthetic and political autonomy hover around and next to the specificity and intractable complexity of indigenous self-determinations as landed struggles that are neither imitable nor propertizable, the juxtapolitical nuances of autonomy rise up as differentially enacted and endured modes and crafts of survivance. The genre here of engagement is not easily eventalizable nor display-controllable in the Kantian or Smithsonian sense, but rather, a questioning of intersubjective labors as practice and anti-managerial protocol.

Contemporary art was declared prematurely secure in Australia in 1973 just a year after the removal of the White Australia Policy, and less than a decade after Aboriginal voting enfranchisements without land rights. The first Sydney Biennale in 1973 stated its time as one of "democratic imperialism" and its art as delivering "great demand for certitude" in the straightforward flip from colonial modern to contemporary international relations.[38] Forty years later, crises in capitalism in the North revive many past crises during which the Aboriginal art of planetary survivance has fluctuated and been inflated philosophically, and ambivalently in and as scholarly and aesthetic value. Richard Bell explains in this issue that the Aboriginal art market has been around for a long time too,

while import-export eases of accumulation will always negotiate mirror-led spectatorships and prospectors. Aesthetic sociality beyond "curtain control" factors moves a more complex *otherwise* across many different urban, rural, and inter/intra-national idioms and registers that exist well beyond the display side economy of "truth to materials" in a sociologically divided cultural economy. This is because land has the dimension of a labor, maintenance, and surplus question that is answered banally in relation, and has rarely attracted the labor from the "properly" (propertied) Kantian cultural economy for a defending legibility.

The East Coast farmers and activists understand that they have been a sacrifice zone for the extraction industry; the struggle is for the most parts a done deal there, while it is often the women who redistribute water and help to mediate the threats of installations elsewhere. The precedence set by this has been that the gas licenses were given out with very limited government regulations of retaining what's pumped for domestic sales. Most of the gas is going overseas, creating false scarcity in the Australian market. Currently under the fiction of that gas shortage, the federal government is pressuring all Australian states to frack their gas—including in the Northern Territory, where after more than ten years of the paternalistic and neocolonial Emergency Response Intervention into Aboriginal homelands, the pending lifting of a moratorium on fracking promises to be violently repetitive and lithospherically new. Literacy in the historical carving and outcryption of mattering from one's own overly autonomous comportments here might go some properly messy and minor way towards historically intersubjectivizable, unmasterable grounds that are also very old.

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1
B. Bhandar, "Title by Registration: Instituting modern property law and creating racial value in the settler colony," *Journal of Law and Society* 42, no. 2 (June 2015); S. Keenan, "Smoke, Curtains and Mirrors: The Production of Race Through Time and Title Registration," *Law and Critique* 28, no. 1 (October 2016); R. Mawani, "Law, Settler Colonialism, and the Forgotten Space of Maritime Worlds," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 12 (2016): 107–31. For the significant Aboriginal critical race scholarship on white possession by the leading Aboriginal/Australian scholar, see Aileen Moreton-Robinson's piece in this issue.

2
See https://theconversation.com /explainer-coal-seam-gas-shale-g as-and-fracking-in-australia-2585 .

3
The "Northern Territory Emergency Response Intervention" in 2007 saw the Australian federal government send six hundred army troops into seventy-three Aboriginal communities, imposing government-appointed Community Business Managers and removing community decision-making structures. It also imposed racially profiled legislation that cut cash welfare benefits for Aboriginal people, allocating those funds instead through a cashless card. The intervention also forced Aboriginal groups (most of whose land is held as freehold under the NT Land Rights Act) to give the government long, rent-free leases of the land (five to forty years). This was different in Alice Springs town camps because they are governed by different legislation. Many of these policies continue today through the Stronger Futures Legislation and have been extended to affect remote communities and titled land in Western Australia and South Australia.

4
Gladstone is also my hometown of four generations, and a key site of the artistic research for my *The Gas Imaginary.* See also Lindy Nolan, *Driving Disunity: The Business Council Against Aboriginal Community* (Spirit of Eureka, 2017); Lily Maire O'Neill, *A Tale of Two Agreements: Negotiating Aboriginal Land Access Agreements in Australia '*

s Natural Gas Industry , doctoral thesis (law), January 2016, University of Melbourne https:// minerva-access.unimelb.edu.au/h andle/11343/111978 .

5
Lorna McDonald, *Gladstone: The City that Waited* (Boolarong Press, 1988).

6
See https://www.sbs.com.au/ne ws/forced-aboriginal-removal-for given-not-forgotten .

7
Between 2010 and 2014, around 10.7 million cubic meters of dredge spoil was dumped within the UNESCO world heritage protected area of the Great Barrier Reef. Of this, 2.3 million cubic meters was dumped in disposal grounds located inside the Great Barrier Reef marine park. See http://www.gbrmpa.gov .au/managing-the-reef/how-the-r eefs-managed/Managing-multipl e-uses/ports-along-the-Great-Bar rier-Reef/expanding-knowledge-o f-dredging .

8
See https://www.journeyman.tv/f ilm_documents/5792/transcript/ .

9
Queensland Environmental Practice Reporter , Volume 22, Issue 93, 2016. https://silkstart.s3 .amazonaws.com/4599b1d2-a75 9-4cac-b357-b8799693f84a.pdf

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See L, Keogh. "'The First Four Wells: Unconventional Gas in Australia'". *M/C Journal,* (S.I.), v. 16, n. 2, mar. 2013. See http://jour nal.media-culture.org.au/index.ph p/mcjournal/article/view/617

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G. Foley, *Native Title is not Land Rights: An Alternative Indigenous Perspective* , 1999 (unpublished).

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Histories somewhat rhyme; the politics and ontology are not comparative. The Battle of One Tree Hill was an ambush-style blockade of low-casualty harassment, highly effective in making pastoralists surrender their sheep runs two and three times over, and also historically undervalued as "resistance" or "warfare" by Western military historians' cultural categories, which assumed aims of annihilation. See http://epress.lib. uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/m cs/article/view/4218/4491 .

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Anna Krien, "The Long Goodbye: Coal, Coral and Australia's Climate Deadlock," *Quarterly Essay* 66 (2017).

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E. Povinelli, *Geontologies*: *A Requ iem to Late Liberalism* (Duke University Press, 2016).

15
See http://indigenousrights.net.a u/land_rights/aboriginal_embass y,_1972 .

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L. Lippard and J. Chandler, "The Dematerialization of Art," *Art Inter national* , February 1968.

17
E. Povinelli, "The Governance of the Prior," *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* 13, no. 1 (2011): 13–30.

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D. F. da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race,* Borderlines Series, vol. 27, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007.

19
See https://www.poetryfoundatio n.org/harriet/2015/06/kenneth-g oldsmith-says-he-is-an-outlaw .

20
Robert Smithson, "Incidents of Mirror-Travel in the Yucatan," *Artforum* , September 1969.

21
Another text reads: "The visual beauty of a garden of pure colour would be outweighed by the noxious destructiveness of sulphur and tar. / Like the La Brea tarpits very little would escape this glossy viscous 'lake' or the suffocating odor of 'the golden hills.' / Like the beautiful butterfly that 'tastes bad' living insects and birds, plants and animals would probably die in this garden."

22
As in, for example, I. Graw, "Dedication replacing Appropration: Fascination, Subversion and Dispossession in Appropriation Art," in *Louise Lawler and Others* , eds. George Baker, Jack Bankowsky et al. (Hatje Cantz Publishers, 2004).

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K. Cohen, "The Painter of Dematerialization," *Journal of Visual Culture* , July 2016.

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I am pointing to Kris Cohen's rigor

on law, digitality, and the concept of a deeper colonial history and legacy of finance.

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Keenan, "Smoke, Curtains and Mirrors," drawing on K. Green, "Citizens and Squatters: Under the Surfaces of Land Law," in *Land Law: Themes and Perspectives* , eds. S. Bright and J. Dewar, (Oxford University Press, 1998): 229–56.

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Resina Mawani shows that a vast exchange of legal imagination takes place quite literally across and through the ocean at this time. R. Mawani, "Law, Settler Colonialism, and the Forgotten Space of Maritime Worlds."

28
R. R. Torrens, *The South Australian System of Conveyancing by Registration of Title, with Instructions for the Guidance of Parties dealing, illustrated by Copies of the Books and Forms in use in the Lands Titles Office* (1859), 4. Quoted in Bhandar, "Title by Registration," 254.

29
Torrens, *The South Australian System* , 127.

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Keenan, "Smoke, Curtains and Mirrors."

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A. Pottage, "The Originality of Registration," *Journal of Law and Society* , 2015. Quoted in Bhandar, "Title by Registration."

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"Smoke, Curtains and Mirrors,"
97.

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Ho Rui An

Crisis and Contingency at the Dashboard

A funny image recurs in the promotional videos for the rollout of Singapore's Smart Nation initiative. We see a man at the driver's seat of a car, but he's not driving. Yet the car moves, as does the steering wheel. Seen in profile, the driver's hands are resting by his sides almost too idly, as if to declare: "Look, no hands!" A countershot reveals the view from the dashboard, where familiar push-button controls have been supplemented by a digital interface stretching across the car's windshield, filling it with an array of maps, indicators, and fancy widgets.

If the image appears kitschy, perhaps it is because of how much the driverless car recalls the flying car, that retrofuturistic antique rightly consigned to the dustbin of lapsed utopias. The difference is that the driverless car, or Self-Driving Vehicle (SDV), is already a reality; it is the most valorized of the "100 million smart objects" that will together form a "national operating system" at the center of Singapore's Smart Nation program. "We are working to 'dashboard' the entire nation of Singapore," says Steve Leonard, executive deputy chairman of the state's technology arm.[1] Taking the internet of things not simply as a tool but as an *act* of statecraft, the program naturally finds in the digitally augmented dashboard of the SDV a synecdoche for the integrated urban dashboard of the Smart Nation.

This urban dashboard heralds what Shannon Mattern calls "the age of Dashboard Governance."[2] Originating in the multiscreen Bloomberg terminals tracking real-time market activity against current events and historical trends, the urban dashboard is the state appropriation of the techno-political form produced at the intersection of the datafication of capital and the capitalization of data. The key image here is a centralized, seemingly all-seeing platform with the power to aggregate, analyze, and visualize the data gathered from across the city's network of sensors, and from which "weak signals" pointing towards an emerging crisis or opportunity can be identified and acted upon.

While the urban dashboard's most populist, self-congratulatory manifestation is the nascent Smart Nation, its stakes are far better articulated by an earlier program developed by the city-state of Singapore, known as Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning (RAHS). First launched in 2004, RAHS is the civic adaptation of a data analysis and model-building system known as Total Information Awareness (TIA), which was first developed by the US military as a counterterrorism weapon. Extending the logic of TIA to all levels of governance, RAHS today is used by state workers to pool data and expertise from across departments to generate a changing set of "narratives" on the emerging issues of the day.

Given the notoriety of the US program, which was disbanded by the US Congress over privacy concerns only to be later reconstituted under the National Security Agency, the Singapore counterpart might immediately

Still from a promotional video for Singapore's Smart Nation initiative featuring a Self-Driving Vehicle (SDV).

recall the specters of mass surveillance and predictive policing. This concern with algorithmic authoritarianism is certainly warranted, but it is equally worth considering how the program might instead mark the very limit of that mode of governance. As Singapore's National Security Coordination Centre puts it:

> The RAHS system does not perform data mining. Data mining attempts to extract patterns automatically from databases, which can then be used to identify threats automatically against incoming data. Past efforts around the world have shown that fully automated early warning systems can result in high false alarm rates. The RAHS system is not an automated early warning system.[3]

If there is something we can take from RAHS, it is that, while the fantasy of total optimization that Mattern cautions against will always be present in any urban dashboard, the algorithm must never completely displace the analyst, for whom a place is reserved before the dashboard. Not quite the panopticon, the urban dashboard today is better described by the optical-motor schema of that comically idle driver sitting before the self-operating steering wheel.

The driver's overstated inactivity in the image only deflects the question of why the steering wheel is even needed in the first place. The joke is that the anachronism of the physical dashboard must remain as a check for the virtual dashboard. Its purpose is not just to buffer against accidents but, more crucially, to impress upon the body the principle of contingency performed by the virtual dashboard itself—the dashboard that manages accident as contingency. It is through the dashboard's mediation of this principle that the demand arises for a persistent observation/anticipation of the accident—not least the road accident, or that which is always on the horizon when we look out from the dashboard. The dashboard today therefore does not just organize data; it also produces a non-locus from which observation takes place, and from which pronouncements on "the economy" or "the nation" can be made. This site of negative occupation is itself unobservable insofar as it is outside the scene/screen, external even to contingency. It does, however, have a name: "crisis."

Screening Crisis

What does it mean to be "in the midst of crisis"? How can crisis, long assumed to be a historical event to which we bear witness, be also an enduring, transcendental condition from which our acts of witnessing commence? In her reading of the financial crisis of 2008, Janet Roitman

Still from a promotional video for Singapore's Smart Nation initiative.

argues that the contemporary discourse of crisis does not simply describe a state of social injury or breakdown, but more crucially turns crisis into a "blind spot" of observation itself:

> Crisis is claimed, but it remains a latency; it is never itself explained because it is necessarily further reduced to other elements, such as capitalism, economy, neoliberalism, finance, politics, culture, subjectivity. In that sense, crisis is not a condition to be observed (loss of meaning, alienation, faulty knowledge); it is an observation that produces meaning.[4]

Crisis, by this definition, does not mean widespread plunges in stock market values or mortgage defaults. These are merely observations of crisis, the existence of which is already affirmed by an externalized self-reference. In other words, crisis is not what appears before us on the dashboard, but what is already behind us and what brings us to the dashboard to begin with. Its intelligibility is only secured through what Niklas Luhmann calls a "second-order observation" that structures the undecidable effects of a world taken as already in crisis by having us observe the work of observation itself, that is, by observing others observe.[5] This submits the uncertainty of the world to the principle of contingency: that which reorients knowledge from questions of being to questions of what modes of observation can best allow us to approach this uncertainty (which itself is posited as beyond contingency). Put simply, in claiming crisis, or by taking our place before the dashboard, a scene is secured for us to test our abilities for witnessing.

Today, this scene is most likely a screen, filled with observations in the form of indices, signals, graphs, and endless newsfeeds. This is the screen that naturalizes the "risk society" described by the likes of Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck as definitive of modernity, where risk is understood as an unintended consequence of modernity

that would eventually strike back at its center.[6] This is the screen before which data analysts, hedge-fund managers, and state workers stationed at dashboards across the world await the signs of the crisis looming on the horizon—the crisis that is the "tragedy of the horizon."

The "tragedy" was invoked by Bank of England governor Mark Carney when he suggested in 2015 that the financialization of the energy industry meant that any attempt to halt fossil-fuel extraction in order to avert planetary catastrophe would immediately destabilize financial markets. As he puts it, "An abrupt resolution of the tragedy of horizons is in itself a financial stability risk."[7] Such is the condition that the financial crisis as scene/screen sets aside for assessment, measurement, visualization, and capitalization by first externalizing what is in fact its immanent origin—"risk." Understood by "risk society" theorists as an incommensurable excess of modernity, risk is in fact the source of its (financial) power. The financial derivative, in particular, demands this volatility insofar as what is valorized is the future itself, or what Elena Esposito calls "the difference between the present future and the future presents in the present, between what one can expect to happen tomorrow, today, and what will actually be achieved tomorrow, as a result of what one does today in order to prepare for it."[8]

Financialization cannot proceed without this temporization specific to its present, without this interval that makes pricing possible. The problem with financial modeling is not its inaccuracy, but that it operates at a different order of observation altogether, one where the observation of observations produces a self-referential system from which the world as we know it appears remote, even as the pillage of its earthly matter continues to be abetted by that system. It is this abstraction of the future as volatility that, as Esposito suggests, becomes the reference for the empty signifier of money, and that in effect transcendentalizes the aporia of the future. If we were to stay with Janet Roitman, we might say that it is crisis, to the extent that it is often invoked in relation to volatility, that becomes a "transcendental placeholder." And it serves as a placeholder because what it signifies is contingency itself, that which is supposed to enable us to think "otherwise." Yet, it is exactly this setting of the scene/screen of crisis as contingency that enframes this "otherwise" and provides a "self-authorizing ground" for some narratives to foreclose others.[9]

It is on this basis that Ben Bernanke, chairman of the US Federal Reserve, was able to declare amidst the meltdown of the banking system in 2008 that "we may not have an economy on Monday" if the comprehensive bailout was not passed by Congress.[10] For Bernanke, the real crisis (as event) is on the horizon, but its existence can never be demonstrated so long as it is posited as being outside the economy, as beyond the domain of contingency.[11] A non-economy—is that what we should call an economy where private markets are no longer financed through

public debt?

With each claim of crisis, figures for describing "the economy" are produced, adding to an archive that naturalizes some over others. A distinction is made between "the economy" and what is not the economy, such as the "black swan" event—Nassim Nicholas Taleb's infamous metaphor to describe rare, hard-to-predict events of great consequence that are rationalized only in hindsight; the metaphor has itself transformed into a catch-all signifier for contingency.[12] Otherwise, one can draw upon this archive to redistribute culpability to subjects figured as "foreign" and "bad," shot through a racialized imaginary. This was what happened with the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 crisis, during which the "Asian" and the "subprime" borrower were respectively cast by some crisis narratives as misbehaving capitalist subjects, while the complicity of the hegemonic Wall Street–US Treasury–IMF complex was diminished.[13]

Crisis produces a moment of witnessing where figuration comes into play. Yet what accompanies and delimits this potentially ethical moment is the necessity and urgency of critique and recovery. In crisis, we are left with no time, only the impetus for movement, for getting over crisis. In a mockery of the Marxian imperative to not just interpret the world but change it, change here is reduced to actionability, to the activation of buttons at our disposal. It is at this point that we formally reenter the dashboard, the space where observation and action converge. Here we find that the crisis imaginary might be best articulated through our experience of the road from the dashboard, where despite all the uncertainty lying in the horizon, the only certainty that must remain is that of moving on. The accident, if it happens, can only be experienced as interruption, or as "a bump on the road ... of a necessary drive to the end of history."[14]

A Return to the Road

If there is a feature that distinguishes Singapore's Smart Nation initiative from the more familiar smart cities being developed in many parts of the world, it is to be found in the signifier of the nation. While this shift in signifier from "city" to "nation" might arise from Singapore being at once a city-state and a nation, it also betrays the program's ideological underpinnings. After all, what else can be meant by the imposition of the "nation" upon the uneven and heterogeneous topography of a global city with a sizeable transient population, of which at least a million people have no access to citizenship? What does the Smart Nation mean for the workers, sourced largely from the region, whose lives are made vulnerable by transnational capitalism and for whom data is often missing, falsified, or withheld?

By closely examining the spatial logic of the city, we will find that underlying the techno-utopianism of the Smart

Nation is the anxious anticipation for a panacea that can tackle the multiple crises facing the global city amidst the resurfacing of globalization's discontents. Apart from ameliorating the problems of climate change, traffic congestion, and changing demographics that plague most urban areas, the Smart Nation promises to fundamentally transform and rejuvenate an economy that has come to a standstill in recent years.[15] It is in this context that we can approach the Smart Nation, much like the dashboard itself, as a framing device, applying its scene-making function to the global city defined by speed, mobility, and porosity. Unsurprisingly, the site that lends itself best to this transformation is the road—that which permits the movement required for capitalist circulation but also too often the site where accidents happen.

It's no exaggeration to say that the road gives rise to the very idea of the accident as we know it. By inventing the car, one invents the traffic accident, but also the industrialization of the accident, which, as Paul Virilio suggests, lends itself to a general administration of fear.[16] Yet, in this generalization of the accident, we also see a constant return to the accident on the road, the accident that happens to a *particular* vehicle, as part of a recathexis that reverses any kind of rupture from its structural basis, throwing it back onto the road, as it would seem. As Rosalind C. Morris, writing on the imaginary of the road in South Africa, argues, "Developmentalism and the technology which subtends it are threatened by accident, even though the concern with accident belies a sense that it is foreign to the machinery that would otherwise function smoothly and in perpetuity."[17] Like crisis, the road offers a ground for judgment that enables the distinction between accident and an inviolate condition of order.
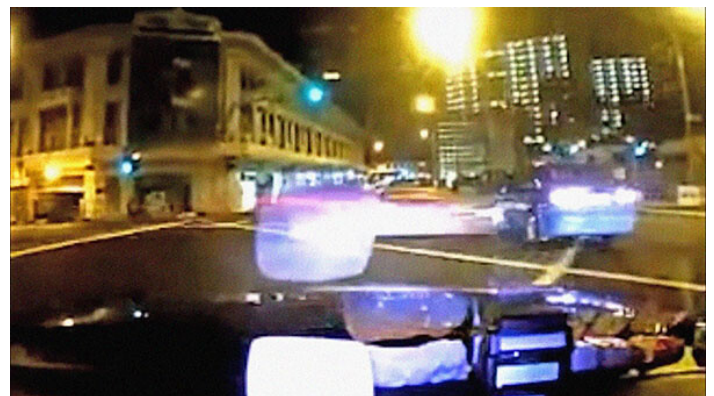
Still from dashcam footage of a crash between a Ferrari and a taxi in Singapore.

It is with this reckoning that we come to understand the significance of recent "crises" in Singapore happening around scenes of traffic or actual traffic accidents, and mostly involving the country's growing immigrant

population. The first took place in May 2012 in the aftermath of a horrific crash between a Ferrari and a taxi that killed both drivers. Footage of the accident, captured by the dashboard camera, or "dashcam," of a third vehicle, quickly circulated online and stirred the population when it was revealed that the sports car was driven by a financial investor from mainland China.[18] In November that same year, over a hundred immigrant bus drivers from mainland China held the country's first strike in over twenty years as they protested against wage disparity and poor living conditions. A year later, the country's first riot in forty years took place in Little India, a weekend spot for South Asian migrant workers, after an angry mob gathered around the scene of a motor accident that killed an Indian construction worker. Then there is the more banal reality of the city's increasingly visible urban strain felt in the once-unthinkable repeated breakdowns of the public rail system—catastrophic for a country that boasts of its clockwork efficiency.

Liberal critics blame the government's overreliance on immigration policy as a tool to sustain growth figures in a country facing the double threats of falling productivity and low birth rates. The more popular tendency, however, is to direct the anger towards the racialized migrant body, collapsing problems of class by framing these incidents through the "foreigner problem."[19] Outside observers may find it puzzling that this xenophobia has not escalated into a populist tide against the ruling government, but this is a peculiarity of a city that, at least since its establishment as a free port by the British East India Company, accumulates its wealth through the flow of foreign labor and capital.

This is why, where the popular crisis narrative displaces the frustration of the people onto the migrant body, the narrative produced by the state turns instead to the road, the space where things circulate and accidents would appear to happen naturally. The official inquiry into the Little India riot, for one, identifies the motor accident as the main cause of the riot, with nothing mentioned about the grievances of the migrant workers.[20] The problem, simply put, is on the road but never *of* it. The road itself, not least a road laid by migrant labor, must remain the unexamined ground upon which we begin our inquiry. In throwing the problem (back) onto the road, the road literally becomes the external holding site—the transcendental placeholder, if you will—for contingency. It becomes a figure for crisis itself.

In 2014, Little India, together with Geylang, another neighborhood with a high concentration of migrant workers, became one of a few areas in Singapore selected for the first phase of the Smart Nation Sensor Platform (SNSP). A key feature of the Smart Nation, the SNSP, when completed, will be an integrated national sensor network that makes "every lamppost a smart lamppost" where a variety of sensors monitoring everything from temperature, humidity, and water levels can be mounted.[21] Furthermore, augmenting the already extensive network of CCTV cameras will be a video analytics system designed to detect anomalies in crowd patterns and traffic movements.

Coming about a year after the Little India riot, the selection of the neighborhood as a test-bed for the platform marks the literal imposition of the Smart Nation upon the streets where the discontents of global capital spilled over. If framing the riot as (motor) accident secures a crisis imaginary through a return to the road, we start to see how the dashboard proposes itself as a solution to the crisis. This point was made by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong himself when he conceded that the authorities were caught "flat-footed" by the Little India riot, as there were "too few CCTV cameras." Instead, they had to rely on footage posted on social media, captured by civilians who, as Prime Minister Lee added, will in time become integrated into the SNSP as mobile sensors on the ground.[22]

Again, what should concern us here is not surveillance itself. The surveilling of migrant bodies here is merely a symptom of how the urban dashboard has become the means through which the state responds to the successive crises of capital without undermining the logic of capital itself. That is, insofar as crisis frames the very view from the dashboard with which we apprehend a world felled into abeyance by crisis. Capitalism is in crisis; something must be done. But so long as in claiming crisis, much like the laying of a road that appears to go on forever, we posit an a priori reference for judgment that is beyond the horizon, that in fact secures the horizon as an object of observation, our actions are limited to simply smoothing the asphalt.

As crisis frames the Smart Nation's urban dashboard, the latter turns the former into a material-semiotic operation, pegging motion to vision as it drives down the road and clears the dirt, reinscribing the geo-body of the nation as it does.[23] While in most parts of the world, the infrastructure of the city renders it a political exception to the rest of the country, in Singapore the Smart Nation recuperates the nation through an infrastructure of crisis.[24]

Dashboard Nation

From TIA to RAHS, smart cities to the Smart Nation, the increasing investment in urban dashboards across the world contests the now banal assertion that the state has withdrawn its authority in the face of the neoliberal turn. Indeed, if it is true that neoliberalism thrives on crisis, the expanded powers of the state afforded by the urban dashboard only serve to augment its role as a witness and responder to crisis. It might be more accurate to say then that the state, instead of retreating, is constantly reemerging, as it returns to set another scene of crisis—one from which it must then immediately pass on.

Not quite a camera obscura inverting reality, as Marx

Still from a promotional video for the Museum of the Future, launched by the Dubai Future Foundation and slated to open in 2019.

would have it, the ideologizing function of the state today is more like a dashcam hurtling past the crash towards the horizon where more accidents await. And unlike Marx's invocation of the camera obscura as metaphor, the dashcam in this formulation is literalized by the phenomenon of dashcam footage increasingly becoming a key optic through which the discontents of late-capitalist modernity become observable. Originally designed to watch for accidents that could happen to the vehicle it was fitted for (to be used as evidence for insurance claims), the dashcam today, with its relentless frontal gaze replicated across vehicles the world over, is the techno-biopolitical inscription of the perpetual vigilance performed by the state in a time of crisis.

Through the view from the dashcam, superstructure collapses onto infrastructure through what Michel Foucault calls a "neo-liberal art of government," where crisis is not disavowed but simultaneously affirmed and deferred: *we are always averting crisis, and always in the midst of it*.[25] The task of the state is to negotiate this contradiction between crisis as event and crisis as a condition of possibility, between admitting to the play of contingency ("We are at a crossroads") and foreclosing the field of possible actions ("Or we may not have an economy").[26] While the former is sometimes undertaken under the guise of democratization, whereby the state actively solicits the intelligence of the masses to fill its lack of knowledge, the latter immediately sets the limits to such an exercise. Here, the pronouncement of crisis, more often theorized as a sovereign performativity, forecloses upon itself, producing forms of agency (whether of the state or of the masses) that are ultimately circumscribed by the crisis imaginary that enabled the initial speech act.[27]

Is this how we can also approach the "performativity" of the dashboard? After all, the dashboard, as software, is built on code, which Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, among others, has pointed out as being a unique kind of language where writing, as executable command, allegedly does what it says.[28] And like crisis, code is both lived abstraction and abstracted reality. Crisis begets executive

speech acts that produce real effects on the economy, in turn creating an appearance of the instantiation of sovereign power, when in fact force does not emanate from an originary subject but arrives after passing through multiple agencies and layers of mediation. The same can be said of the "sovereignty" of the dashboard user who relies on complex processes of compilation to turn source code into executable command.

Consider the language of individual autonomy and civic engagement wrapped around the various urban dashboard projects supported by the Singapore state. For example, LIVE Singapore!, a collaboration between MIT's Senseable City Lab and the Singapore–MIT Alliance for Research and Technology that predates the Smart Nation, sold itself as an "open platform" for developers to build multiple applications that harness "the creative potential of citizens in extracting new value from real-time data."[29] Welcome to the "real-time city," or better, the "crisis city"—given that it is in crisis where the dashboard's ability to keep us "in touch" becomes crucial.[30] However, touch can also feel disabling for a user whose capacity to respond is largely limited to toggling, or moving an existing array of objects around. Developers are likewise limited by what data is made available by the state. That such projects, if fully realized, will bring conveniences to the public is beside the point; the bigger concern here is how the retooling of the nation-state through the urban dashboard demands a retheorization of the relationship between the nation-state and capital.

One popular interpretation sees in the rise of governance by dashboard the triumphant return of the state as a driver of technological innovation, of which the exemplar is not Singapore but Dubai. Since 2016, the state-run Dubai Future Foundation has been running the Dubai Futures Accelerators, an annual program that pairs government departments with selected companies and entrepreneurs to develop working prototypes or pilot programs that can address the most urgent challenges faced by the global city.

From the conscripting of vultures as trackers of illegal waste dumps to video analytics for counting cigarettes butts, from forecast-based financing to participatory budgeting, a consistent thematic emerges across these dashboard-related projects: the expression of state power not as law, but as something that *directly* contacts the city, touching it. Chun relates this to policing, or what she calls "every lawyer's dream of what law should be: automatically enabling and disabling certain actions, and functioning at the level of everyday practice."[31] But "policing" is too dramatic a term for a process I would rather call "testing." This is not just to avoid conjuring the too-often overplayed terrors of predictive policing, but also to reflect the probabilistic basis of such "test-bed urbanism."[32] The direct contact enabled by the dashboard is indexical, which is to say that it points us *elsewhere*, where something has happened even as it remains

uncertain what it is. Accordingly, we have to test to find out, but in testing, we also confirm uncertainty as the unquestioned horizon from which we begin *merely* managing the discontents of global capital.

Put bluntly, the point is to interpret and act on the world, *but never to change it*. The contemporary turn towards the "innovative state" thus cannot be taken plainly as some counter-hegemonic project to prove the state's ability to achieve the social optimization that neoliberals expect from the free market. Instead, in testing, experimenting, and reinventing itself, the state too often displaces existing functions of social redistribution through its new role of *reengineering* a defunct system requiring no more than an upgrade.[33]

For the state as "reengineer," crisis is both norm and exception. In figuring crisis as historical event, the state as reengineer is forced to act, to make decisions, yet in doing so, it also iterates the set of codes that maintains the "engine" through and into which the state performs its interventions. The state as reengineer, it follows, accounts for the enduring presence of the nation-state amidst the rapaciousness of capitalism's deterritorializations. In tending towards its impossible dream of universalization through the dissolution of territorial closure, it turns out that the capitalist machine, as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call it, still requires the particularism of the nation-state to ratify crisis—the event that summons "from the depths of its immanence" the reterritorializing force of the state to ward off the *absolute* limit of capitalism: total deterritorialization or schizophrenia.[34] Within this sequence, crisis, in being secured by the nation-state, in turn reconstitutes the nation-state as *residuum*—an internalized, *relative* limit to be overcome once globalization completes itself in an ever deferred future.[35]

Indeed, what is today's renewed Keynesianism (pushed to perversity in Japan with the implementation of negative interest rates) but a relegation of the state to the role of ad hoc and self-loathing crisis manager, following the neoliberal disintegration of the developmental state that drove much of East Asia into developed status?[36] In the same way that the dashboard's fantasy of totalizing the social demands the presence of the driver while mocking his redundancy, the nation-state today fills a supplemental space within the logic of capital where it is constantly under unprecedented threat of erasure, but from which it will, inevitably, reemerge.

Dash, Crash ... Dash?

We reassume our positions behind the dashboard—not just the dashboard as a formal construction, but the physical dashboard that incarnates us as "smart" national subjects. While still not quite settled in our idleness before the self-operating steering wheel, we are for once able to
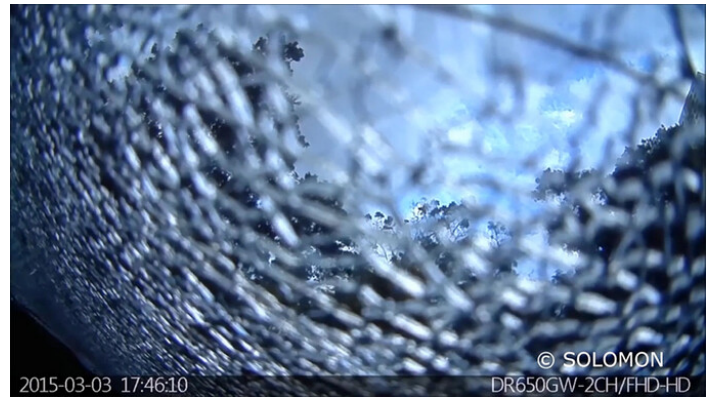
Still from dashcam footage of an accident in Singapore. The footage was posted on YouTube and circulated widely.

relish the experience of movement itself. In relieving us of the labor of movement, not least a movement that, in shuttling us between home and work, delivers us to labor, the SDV, at least until its novelty wears off, expresses the fantasy that underlies the road of capitalist modernity: "the blissful autonomization of movement per se."[37]

But any sense of euphoria must expire, for it takes only the ever growing archive of crash footage, captured by dashcams the world over, to return us to our all-too-precarious embodiment. In the past few years, the internet has become a vast disposal site for such images: a Ferrari crashing into a taxi, street lamps collapsing onto traffic, trucks swallowed by sinkholes, actual flying cars. Entire online communities have even been created to facilitate their circulation, testifying to the emergence, by accident, of a new cinema of the accident.[38]

This is a cinema inscribed by death, for sure, but also by survival. This is because without the fortunate vehicles that manage to both witness and escape the scene, there would be no footage. The footage that makes its way online is often anonymously attributed: the driver behind the dashcam is neither known nor seen. Yet their presence is still registered, often as a voice. In the shocking dashcam footage of the Ferrari–taxi crash in Singapore, it was the cry of relief made by the driver as he passed the scene, avoiding the fate of the taxi by mere seconds: "Lucky!" It is a cry that speaks to the time of contingency, where one emerges unharmed from the accident only because others did not. The accident has been redistributed to the margins of the frame, to the other disposable bodies by the side. Here, the general administration of fear that pervades the age of Dashboard Governance is intensified through a mass spectatorship of the accident, where in rewinding, replaying, and looping the crash, we reproduce for ourselves each time the sensation of surviving, of speeding past, into the ever receding horizon.

There is, however, another view: the view from the

accident itself, or from within the vehicle that crashed. Footage captured from this vantage point is rare, and all the more unsettling when retrieved, especially when the fates of the bodies carried by the vehicle are unknown. This time, the crash has happened not to just anyone, but to the viewer. The shattered windshield suggests a body pulverized, or what happens when capitalist desire is pushed to its limit in the Freudian death drive, where finally the driver has been removed altogether. This is the decisive rupture of the scene/screen of crisis, or crisis as pure event. This is the "non-economy."

Yet, strangely, in this evacuation, an opening arises. The camera is still running; I am still looking on. Watching the footage, I take on a viewpoint that has been evacuated, yet is somehow still there. What is the ghostly subjectivity haunting this still vigilant gaze? The body, no longer moving, continues to take time, a time that can no longer be reduced to the time-code still running in the corner of the screen. Neither looking nor moving forward, the subject, perhaps ironically, recovers some kind of freedom in no longer being hostage to a time that is *timed*. Might this finally be a vision untethered from movement? Will we finally be able to pry open the frame for a new kind of witnessing? That is, to not just witness an "otherwise" but witness otherwise?

X

Ho Rui An is an artist and writer working in the intersections of contemporary art, cinema, performance, and theory. Working primarily across the mediums of lecture, essay, and film, he probes into the shifting relations between image and power, focusing on the ways by which images are produced, circulate, and disappear within contexts of globalism and governance. He has presented projects at the Gwangju Biennale (2018), Jakarta Biennale (2017), Sharjah Biennial (2017), Kochi-Muziris Biennale (2014), Haus de Kulturen der Welt, Berlin (2017), Jorge B. Vargas Museum and Filipiniana Research Center, Manila (2017), NTU Centre for Contemporary Art Singapore (2017), and Para Site, Hong Kong (2015). In 2018, he was a fellow of the DAAD Berliner Künstlerprogramm.

1
Adele Peters, "Singapore Plans To Become The World's First Smart Nation," *Fast Company*, January 22, 2015 https://www.fastcompany.com/3041192/singapore-plans-to-become-the-worlds-first-smart-nation .

2
Shannon Mattern, "Mission Control: A History of the Urban Dashboard," *Places Journal*, March 2015.

3
National Security Coordination Centre, Singapore, "Explaining the RAHS Programme," in *Thinking about the Future: Strategic Anticipation and RAHS* , eds. Edna Tan Hong Ngoh and Hoo Tiang Boon (Singapore: National Security Coordination Secretariat, 2008), 5.

4
Janet Roitman, *Anti-Crisis* (Duke University Press, 2014), 39.

5
As Luhmann suggests, "Everything becomes contingent whenever *what* is observed depends on *who* is being observed." See Niklas Luhmann, *Observations on Modernity* , trans. William Whobrey (Stanford University Press, 1998), 48.

6
See, for instance, Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Stanford University Press, 1991); and Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity* , trans. Mark Ritter (Sage, 1992).

7
The broader argument here is that the distant but ever encroaching horizon of ecological disaster falls outside the "traditional horizons" of most of our institutions, thus disincentivizing any corrective action until it is too late. As an example, Carney points out that the horizon for monetary policy typically lasts no more than a decade. See Carney, "Breaking the tragedy of the horizon—climate change and financial stability" (speech, Lloyd's, London, September 29, 2015).

8
Elena Eposito, *The Future of Futures: The Time of Money in Financing and Society* (Edward Elgar, 2011), 105.

9
While the scope of the present essay prevents me from describing the complexity of Roitman's historico-philosophical account of crisis, it bears mentioning that the elevation of crisis into a "transcendental placeholder" comes at the end of a historical process through which God, reason, and truth were successively displaced by a mode of observation taking place from within immanence, leaving us to assume a "negative occupation of the immanent world." Roitman, *Anti-Crisis*, 9, 69–70.

10
Quoted in Joe Nocera, "As Credit Crisis Spiraled, Alarm Led to Action," *New York Times*, October 1, 2008.

11
Roitman, *Anti-Crisis*, 83.

12
Nassim Nicholas Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable* (Random House, 2007). The turn of the black swan from singular event to enduring condition was made official at the 7th International Risk Assessment and Horizon Scanning Symposium held in Singapore, where the theme was "Black Swans and Black Elephants."

13
See Laura Hyun Yi Kang, "The Uses of Asianization: Figuring Crises, 1997–98 and 2007–?," *American Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (September 2012): 411–36.

14
Rosalind C. Morris, "Accidental Histories, Post-Historical Practice?: Re-reading *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance* in the Actuarial Age," *Anthropological Quarterly* 83, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 599.

15
For a recent assessment of Singapore's Smart Nation initiative, see Lily Kong and Orlando Woods, "The ideological alignment of smart urbanism in Singapore: Critical reflections on a political paradox," *Urban Studies* 55, no. 4 (2018): 679–701.

16
Paul Virilio, *The Original Accident*, trans. Julie Rose (Polity Press, 2007).

17
Morris, "Accidental Histories," 599.

18
I've explored in a previous text the perverse libidinal economy producing the reception of the dashcam footage of the Ferrari–taxi crash. See Ho Rui An, "An Accident: Two Views from the Dashboard," in *Concrete Island* , eds. Kenneth Tay and Luca Lum (NUS Museum, 2016), 60–69.

19
This seeming eclipsing of class in the racialization of the migrant might be partly the result of race, specifically the categories of CMIO (Chinese, Malay, Indian, Others) inherited from colonial policy, being the dominant biopolitical schema for governance in Singapore. For a detailed account of the development of Singapore's CMIO framework, see Michael D. Barr and Zlatko Skrbiš, *Constructing Singapore: Elitism, Ethnicity and the Nation-Building Project* (NIAS Press, 2008).

20
For a considered reading of the riot against labor conditions of migrant workers in Singapore, see Daniel P. S. Goh, "The Little India Riot and the Spatiality of Migrant Labor in Singapore," *Society & Space* , September 8, 2014.

21
Lee Hsien Loong, "National Day Rally 2017" (speech, Institute of Technical Education College Central, Singapore, August 20, 2017).

22
Lee, "National Day Rally 2017."

23
By "clearing the dirt," I mean to invoke the original referent of "dashboard": the wooden panel fixed at the front of the horse carriage to protect the rider against the dirt being "dashed up" by the horses' movements. I borrow "geo-body" from Thongchai Winichakul, who describes the production of national self-image as a process inextricably bound up with technologies of mapping. See Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

24
This is in line with Keller Easterling's work on the zone as a space of exception from which the state withdraws only to further increase its power.

Easterling cites Singapore to demonstrate how the city-state has become the model to negotiate this apparent contradiction. I would only add that what further complicates the case of Singapore is the implication of the "nation." See Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (Verso, 2014).

25
Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–79* , eds. Michel Senellart, trans. Graham Burchell (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 146–50.

26
The notion of Singapore being "at a crossroads" as it faces an uncertain future has been repeated by politicians in recent years to the point of it becoming a running joke. What's remarkable is how the "crossroads" that once served as a spatial metaphor to describe the city-state being at the intersection between East and West has today come to denote instead a temporal horizon where decisions have to be made before it's too late.

27
To this end, one might question if in Giorgio Agamben's influential theory of the sovereign performative as the power to decide the state of exception, his reading of the aporetic origin of state power reinstitutes crisis as its own "blind spot" by taking crisis as a condition postulated from the outset, rather than coming through some breakdown of representation. See Roitman, *Anti-Crisis*, 70.

28
Wendy Hui Kyong Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same: Habitual New Media* (MIT Press, 2016), 82.

29
See http://senseable.mit.edu/livesingapore/ .

30
Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same* , 74–76.

31
Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same* , 82.

32
For a reading of how uncertainty constitutes the epistemology of the test-bed city, see Orit Halpern, Jesse LeCavalier, Nerea Calvillo, and Wolfgang Pietsch, "Test-Bed

Urbanism," *Public Culture* 25, no. 2 (2013): 273–306.

33
My reading of the state worker as reengineer draws upon Stefano Harney's account of the post-Fordist turn of public administration in North America. See Stefano Harney, *State Work: Public Administration and Mass Intellectuality* (Duke University Press, 2002).

34
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* , trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 261.

35
I understand that in invoking Deleuze and Guattari, there is a risk of conflating the (postcolonial) nation-state with the state, or the *Urstaat*, as Deleuze and Guattari call it. But to the extent that the social democratic basis upon which most postcolonial nation-states were established has since been eroded, this subsumption of nation to state retains its critical force. I would further add that it would take much more for the interval between "nation" and "state" in the "nation-state" formulation to be foreclosed, but this is a subject for a separate essay. For critical accounts on this "depoliticization" of the nation-state, see Wang Hui, *The End of the Revolution: China and the Limits of Modernity* (Verso, 2009); and Chan Heng Chee, *Politics in an Administrative State: Where Has the Politics Gone?* (Department of Political Science, University of Singapore, 1975).

36
For a theoretical treatment of the "unsublatability" between capitalist development and the nation-state in the context of recessionary Japan, see Yukata Nagahara, " *Monsieur le Capital* and *Madame la Terre* Do Their Gh ost-Dance: Globalization and the Nation-State," in *Japan After Japan: Social and Cultural Life from the Recessionary 1990s to the Present* , eds. Tomiko Yoda and Harry Harootunian (Duke University Press, 2006), 299–330. This discussion is especially pertinent to the economies of East Asia, where the strong hand of the state credited for the region's decades of "miracle" growth has seen its role significantly reconfigured since the so-called Washington

Consensus.

37
Morris, "Accidental Histories," 603.

38
In Singapore, one such community, focusing on footage of traffic violations, is the Singapore Reckless Drivers Community on Facebook: https://www.facebook.com/sgreckless/ .

Angela Mitropoulos

Art of Life, Art of War: Movement, Un/Common Forms, and Infrastructure

When is a theory of movement not a theory of movement but of invariance? Versions of this question appear in a series of philosophical debates about the change that does not change. Henri Bergson focuses on the difference between quantitative and qualitative multiplicities, Gaston Bachelard on continuity and discontinuity, and Gilles Deleuze contends with the moving image of the cinematic apparatus. Another, obliquely related strand of debates involving Karl Marx, Rosa Luxemburg, Friedrich Hayek, and Antonio Gramsci raises questions of causal complexity and emergence, of spontaneity and organization, and whether repetition and reproduction are the same. Rather than rehearse these debates here, I thread them through two concepts: "the art of life" (Alfred North Whitehead) and "the art of war" (Antoine-Henri Jomini).

Instead of tracing theories of movement directly through political theory, I approach the question of movement in the history of modern dance, physics, and infrastructure. This essay focuses in particular on the legal controversy surrounding American dancer and writer Loie Fuller's *Serpentine Dance* (1891), and her vastly differing aesthetic (and political) claims from those of Hungarian-German (and National Socialist) choreographer Rudolf Laban. The *Serpentine Dance* dealt in the attractions and physics of turbulence and convulsion rather than the referential and metaphysical—an early, constituent modernism that arguably reached beyond the limits of modernism as a discrete object of aesthetic periodization. The 1890s to the 1930s was a time of great upheaval that encapsulates the dance and political contexts on either side of Fuller's *Serpentine Dance*. In that time, "movement" was posited as a changing object of emerging knowledge and disciplines, and theories of movement underwent enormous changes.

By most accounts, modern dance emerged between the 1890s and the early 1930s. So too did the modern physics of Einstein's theory of special relativity. In physics, Newtonian science and the classical science of objects gives way to quantum mechanics, the notational systems of analytical geometry, and the point-set topology of functionally invariant groups of transformations. In the development of mathematics: Riemannian manifolds and topology. Modern physics twists a spontaneous Platonism further away from a metaphysical dichotomy between ideal, eternal forms and the phenomenal flux by moving both into the functional ranges of algebraic notation.

In dance, there are multiple, conflicting trajectories that follow on from the abandonment of narrative (the hallmark of dance's modernity), and which correspond to different locations in the production of dance. In some cases, this extends to a refusal of dance as a succession of ideal figures that Deleuze hints at, but on which he did not elaborate. In others, it amounts to the retrieval of an Aristotelian substantialism as the condition of statements regarding dance theory's aesthetic object.

Gaspard-Félix Tournachon (Nadar), Loıe Fuller, c.1900. Gelatin Silver print. 240 x 180 mm (9 7/16 x 7 1/16 in.) Photo: Fine Art Museum of San Francisco collections.

At the same time, the rise of fascist movements and parties in the 1920s sharpens the stakes and implications of the longer period under consideration. If there are parallels to be drawn between then and now, it is not that nothing changes. To the contrary, the rise of fascism does not come out of thin air and was not inevitable. Moreover, it is possible to clarify the processes through which movements for change are recuperated into the change that does not change—or changes for the worse. This does not constitute an argument for pessimism or hope. Such framing trades on investments in the futurity of presumably ideal forms; rarely does it make explicit what those forms are. Instead, the following discussion suggests a theory about movement that, by implication, treats theorizing as a process of discerning the limits to movement and change.[1]

In focusing on dance, I reject the ways in which movement theory is so often grounded in a distinction between the representational politics of citizenship (and sovereignty)

and the physical movements of migration that, by convention, are not recognized as movements.[2] The approach to infrastructure offered here does not argue for the retrieval of a surface/depth or ideal/phenomenal distinction that would rescue the concept of classical properties grounded in legal and economic tenets of private property (but also those of race and nation as presumably unique, heritable properties or sex and gender as the condition of their reproduction). In such accounts, materiality and movement are the auxiliary to a metaphysical ascent to or descent from ideal, eternal forms, in which utility and nature are presented as a substance that preexists historically specific apparatuses of measure and appropriation as useful or natural.[3]

Buster Keaton in a promotional image for the movie The Camera Man (1928).

Art of Life 1: Movement and Invariance

In Deleuze's *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*, "accidents" appear twice. The first instance concerns the capacity of a body to respond to "accidents of the environment." The other he calls the "burlesque" (in English, "slapstick"), in which the succession of an image through the interlocking mechanisms of a "prodigious causal series" finishes by unraveling right before one's eyes, yielding the radical instant as a "critical moment of opposable situations."[4] In Aristotle's writings, accidents and spontaneity are treated as the ephemera that, through logical subtraction, substantiate an entity's property and class or are construed as those moments when an entity veers off or is thwarted from pursuing its teleological course. The analogue in Plato's work is the constant flux of the material world, against which a knowledge of eternal forms sits in purportedly metaphysical judgment. In a book about the cinematic apparatus, these "accidents" are the occasions on which Deleuze's attention turns, remarkably, to dance, burlesque, mime, and ballet. He does not set cinema aside. The examples he gives are the films of Charlie Chaplin and Buster Keaton, though both drew on the staged performances of the vaudeville and burlesque theater. Deleuze also suggests that while early cinema lapsed into rendering time as the succession of formal poses and ideal figures, "to an even greater degree [than in cinema], dance, ballet and mime were abandoning figures and poses to release values which were not posed, not measured, which related movement to any-instant-whatever."[5] This defection from the figural and the succession of poses was how, according to Deleuze, "art, ballet and mime became actions capable of responding to accidents of the environment; that is, to the distribution of the points of a space, or the moments of an event."[6] It raises a question not only about figuration, but

also prefiguration as a technique through which dispositions of the past and present are projected into an otherwise uncertain future.

In making his argument, Deleuze implicitly draws on Lucretian cosmology: "The fall of a body presupposes another one which attracts it, and expresses a change in the whole which encompasses them both."[7] Explicitly, Deleuze turns around Bergson's juxtaposition between duration and abstract time. The difference, in Bergson's view, is between, on the one hand, the discontinuous movement of "changes that are felt," where the percept of radical "movement ... is the accident of a moving body," and, on the other hand, continuous movement, or the "abstract motion which the mechanician studies and which is nothing, at bottom, but the common measure of concrete movements."[8] Deleuze rejects the metaphysics of Bergson's eventual call for spiritual renewal and Bachelard's phenomeno-technical dialectics. Instead, he points to the breakdown of an immanent causal series in "slapstick" and the responsiveness of the improvisational, afformative possibilities of dance.[9] Deleuze underlines both "slapstick" and improvisation as illustrations of a moving or "creative" instant that he focuses on in discussing the machinations of the cinematic apparatus. Still, Deleuze's enthusiasm for modern science tends to overshadow whatever brief but allusive reference he makes to topological invariance, but those limits are important to note. Briefly put, the relational scope of network topology does not, despite Deleuze's enthusiasm, quite budge the entelechy of point-set topology—the selective preservation of functions through continuous deformations identified by Emmy Noether in the 1920s[10] —unless new points are added or divisions are randomly introduced. Going beyond Deleuze's insights, this raises an additional question about how contemporary logistical or managerial approaches to movement (and infrastructure) involve the preservation of set pieces regardless of the shuffling of points.

Art of Life 2: Sensation and Substance

In the early 1930s, the dance critic John Martin gave a series of lectures at the New School in New York, in which he argued that modern dance had discovered "the actual substance of the dance, which it found to be movement."[11] More than two decades before this, in her book *Fifteen Years of a Dancer's Life*, the American dancer Loie Fuller wrote: "What is the dance? It is motion. / What is motion? The expression of a sensation."[12] Like Fuller, Martin's definition of dance as movement rejected dance's subordination to narrative. Yet the implications for Fuller's rejection of this established order, in the late nineteenth century but in the same city, were not the same as those greeting Martin in the 1930s. Fuller wrote her book in English in 1908 while living in Europe. Initially published in French as *Quinze ans de ma vie*, the work was then translated back into English and republished in 1913. The

overt aim of Martin's lectures was to establish dance as a discrete aesthetic object of dance criticism and theory. The lectures asserted, as the late dancer and professor Randy Martin once suggested, "a presumed autonomy for the aesthetic [of dance] in the realm of theory" so as to ground "without needing to name or situate, the authority of the theorist or critic."[13] Fuller's book, by contrast, is often characterized as a personal memoir of the dancer's years in Europe. This biographical perception persists even though Fuller was also a choreographer, wrote and theorized about dance, and on occasion did so in order to describe her "characteristic motions" or to argue that a dance was legally her own.[14] Martin's reviews in the *New York Times* could make a dancer's career. Fuller had departed New York for Europe in 1892, after a judge dismissed her claim of copyright infringement over the *Serpentine Dance* on the grounds that, as the judge put it, "the end sought for and accomplished was solely the devising of a series of graceful movements, combined with an attractive arrangement of drapery, lights, and shadows, telling no story, portraying no character, depicting no emotion." In the judge's view, "merely mechanical movements by which the effects are produced on the stage are not subjects of copyrights where they convey no ideas whose arrangement makes up a dramatic composition."[15] In other words, it could not be defined as property because it did not refer the physics of movement beyond itself, to a metaphysical account of movement that would connect it to concepts of legal personhood—or, authorship. Fuller did however patent the costume of the *Serpentine Dance* in the subsequent year, along with chemical compounds for luminescent fabric and gels for stage lighting—indeed, Martin described Fuller as an "electrical wizardess."[16] Fuller and Martin occupied different positions in the production and circulation of dance as an aesthetic property; namely, that of the observable dancer and the dance critic who is read. Still, the judge had not ruled on seeing Fuller perform in the courtroom or theater, but rather on the basis of Fuller's written description of the *Serpentine Dance* in court filings. (Possible modes of viewing performance would soon expand—indeed, Fuller would be involved in the making of at least three experimental films beginning in 1904.) Perhaps a great deal had changed between Fuller's death in 1928 and Martin's lectures in 1933. Perhaps not. It would not be until the mid-1970s that the gist of the 1892 *Fuller v. Bemis* case was set aside by incorporating a performative index of emotional expression as evident in movement and, by implication, the kinesthetic and proprioceptive into the repertoire and scope of United States copyright law.[17]

Yet while Martin followed Fuller in defining dance as movement (or motion), their understandings of movement radically differ. Only one renders dance (or movement) into a candidate for proprietary claims, specifically by adjudicating on a body's movement as the unbroken expression of a specific, intrinsic property. In that divergence it is possible to locate a shift between a concept of movement that, on the one hand, involves a relational, affective concept of movement as a body's expression of sensations in a world of fluctuating forces and, on the other, a tautological account of discrete bodies in which movement is characterized as the actualization of essence or "substance." The first suggests a universe of constant motion; the second treats movement as the unfolding of what a body always, in essence, was—and therefore not movement so much as the expression of an inherent tendency interior to a body that was there at the outset and needs no outside. The latter alludes to the terms of property ownership, in both legal and epistemological terms. As an understanding of movement it is teleological and non-relational, connecting the ostensible origin and ends of discrete bodies as a theory of unfolding but essentially unchanging properties over time—unless there are "accidents" or spontaneous events which generate, by that view, monsters, treachery, or more simply, something improper.

In this sense, the modernist impulse to see movement everywhere was circumscribed by a return to a classical concept of property that could, bluntly put, distinguish between movement and circulation and, at the same time, would discern an eternal form in the promiscuous profusion of movement and relation.[18] Writer and curator André Lepecki has recently argued that in 1933 Martin articulated, for the first time, a "strict ontological identification between uninterrupted movement and dance's being."[19] If we reintroduce Fuller back into this history of dance, it is possible to discern two very different understandings of "uninterrupted" movement. Martin's use of the term "actual substance" highlights his recourse to Aristotelian physics, in which the movement that bodies make (through time and space) is determined by the classes or forms to which they belong by dint of a common essence. The continuity of uninterrupted to which Martin refers is a qualitative consistency whose model is an unchanging body moving through space (Newtonian physics). Philosophically, this concept of motion draws on an Aristotelian metaphysics of movement as the auto-catalytics of bodies in possession of souls. By that account, a body can preserve its unique and inherent properties throughout movement and in a changing world. Its teleological course may be interrupted by "accidents" or chance, or the spontaneity that gives rise to monstrosities, but its movements are nevertheless conceived of as an underlying future that was always present as a substance and at its origin. Lepecki gives the example of a hiccupping dancer as a "betrayal" of continuous movement.[20] This idea of perpetual movement is based on a distinction between voluntary and involuntary motions (rather than that of "perpetual flux") that, according to Aristotle, distinguished between natural entities and artifacts. For Aristotle, artifacts (such as technological instruments and enslaved people) lack the capacity for self-movement; instruments (and slaves) were defined as such by not containing the principles of generation and motion within themselves.[21] In other

words, it is a theory of proper property ownership (including, in Aristotle's account, the ownership of other people who are, by their nature, deemed to be property).

By contrast, Fuller's understanding of constant motion recalls pre-Socratic philosophies.[22] But more so, her approach to movement is steeped in an epistemological shift between a classical, Aristotelian physics and the modern physics of special relativity, quantum mechanics, and the molecular sciences. Many of Fuller's earlier performances involved experimenting with interactions between chemical compounds and lighting. She "caused the light to dance," as one reviewer remarked.[23] It is not surprising therefore that in the catalog of early modern dance Fuller is most often associated with artifice and technology, the "goddess of light."[24] This is in stark contrast to many of her otherwise similarly experimental contemporaries, such as, say, Isadora Duncan with her renaissance of Ancient Greek naturalism or Rudolf Laban with his expressionism of presumably eternal forms, whose more or less explicit philosophical prompts were those of Aristotle and Plato respectively. Fuller's work explicitly parallels a shift in theories of physics, precipitated by the invention of apparatuses of observation, which had, as Fuller put it in her 1911 lecture on radium, discovered "something unseen and unseeable, something which had to do with those forces which hitherto had been looked upon as supernatural, inasmuch as our eyes were inadequate to see them." Elsewhere, she wrote that "the microscope revealed to me a world greater than the bible had told me about."[25] Pivotal to that epistemological move was the abandonment of the Aristotelian concept of "substance" that Martin's definition of dance would, in 1933, subtly retrieve. Without an Aristotelian understanding of substance it would be impossible to describe modern dance as a unique, aesthetic object and, simultaneously, link that epistemological understanding of property with its legal-economic significance for property rights claims. Fuller instead reaches for a theory of movement that is relational, experimental, and kinetic—and endeavors, but fails, to ensure a proprietary claim. Martin closes the aesthetic, teleological circle between being and becoming by declaring that modern dance is the actualization of a substance that was always inherent.

Fuller's expressionism instead amounts to a view of a prosthetisized body in motion existing in a universe of "wavering forces," a theory of movement where the object-oriented, naturalist differentiation between artifacts and natural entities no longer holds sway.[26] As she put it: movement is the "expression of a sensation." It is a theory of movement as affect: "the reverberation that the body receives," as when "matter responds to immaterial [and material] causes." For Fuller, "motion is the starting point of all effort at self-expression." But movement does not materialize from the interiority of a discrete body or descend from a transcendental idea so much as it indicates a capacity to "feel within ourselves" the "impulse

[of] an indefinable and wavering force," presupposing a multiplicity of bodies that are capable of imparting a force that is "indefinable but certain in its impact." She advised that "there ought to be another word for it [the dance]" but, still, "the human body should, despite conventional limitations, express all the sensations or emotions that it experiences." Embracing artifice, eschewing anthropology, she suggested that animals enjoyed far greater scope for movement and the expression of sensations than did the human body.[27]
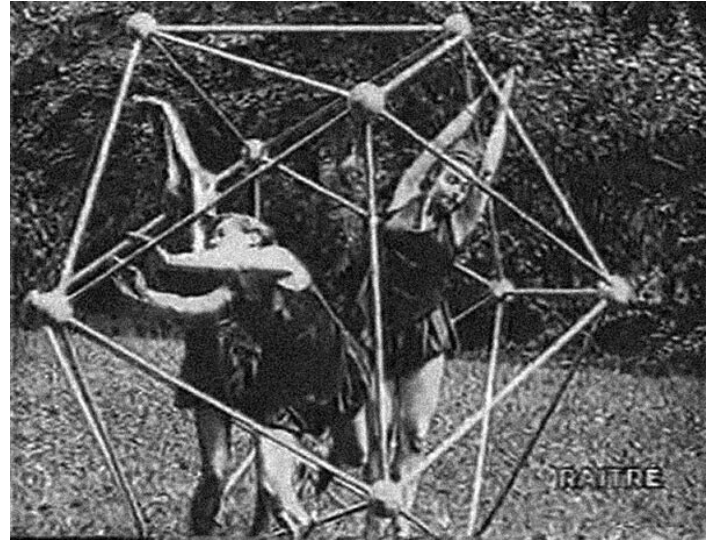
Film still from Laban: Movimento, 18'' min

Art of Life 3: Expression and Figure

To an even greater degree, dance, ballet and mime were abandoning figures and poses to release values which were not posed, not measured, which related movement to any-instant-whatever.
—Deleuze, *Cinema 1*

Fuller's performative body twisted, crumpled, and folded—topology in dance. While reviewers tended to describe her performances in figural or symbolic terms (as the fleeting appearance of, say, a flower or a flame), her own descriptions consistently eschewed representational references and expressionism in favor of characterizations of technique. Laban, in contrast to Fuller's tenuous connection with reviewers' metaphorical exchanges, overlaid the five regular polyhedra on massed dancers. The five polyhedra, otherwise known as "Platonic solids," are the cube, tetrahedron, octahedron, dodecahedron, and icosahedron—often associated with classical concepts of ideal perfection because of their absolute symmetries, in contrast to, say, the "pathological curves" of a Koch snowflake, one of the first fractals mathematically

described by Helge von Koch in 1904. If modern physics, mathematics, and modern dance emerged around the same time and in similar places, so too did self-described fascist movements and parties. This is not to suggest that they each followed the same trajectory or disposition, excepting where they did. Neither Fuller nor Laban were much concerned with narrative. Yet where Fuller abandoned narrative in order to experiment at the limits of movement and sensation, for Laban, narrative was less significant than staging a subliminal appeal for the restoration of presumably ideal forms. Fuller performed her last dance in 1927. Almost a year earlier, Laban began making his case for movement choirs as a way of unifying, through dance, "the white race." This was the same year the Hitler Youth was formed.[28] Suggestions that Laban was not an enthusiastic supporter of Nazism are implausible. Three years before Hitler was elected to power, Laban had already denounced the "incursion of racially foreign habits of movement into a rhythmically exhausted race."[29] In 1933, when Hitler was appointed chancellor, Laban dismissed all "non-Aryan" children from the State Opera's ballet school. Six months later, he directed that the entire school should be Aryanized.[30] (Notably, the German government itself waited until 1938 to issue orders to remove "non-Aryan" children from schools.)

Laban approached dance movements as a "living architecture," a vital prelude to the restoration of an idealized community through an emphasis on archetypes—the geometric essence or soul of the nation. His notational system broke movements down into discrete units—initially he called these "resonant points"—and recomposed those points into a syntax and grammatical formalism of dance movements.[31] Laban described the kinesphere in anthropometric terms, as the "space which can be reached by easily extended limbs." In practice, that meant overlaying the five polyhedra over every movement so as to define what constitutes an "acceptable movement," a eurhythmics. This would, according to Laban, better reflect "the true rhythms of the 'master' race." Charleston, swing, and jazz were out—this is what Laban meant by "bad rhythms." The "picture we have," he suggested of his approach, is that "the most natural movement for the white race, is roughly the sideward movement."[32] The purpose of Laban's movement choirs and dance notation was to retrieve an underlying, kinetic unity through the expressionism of ideal, Platonic forms—a unity that would function, in his words, as "a cultural stimulation, [a] new symbol of national Becoming."[33] According to Laban, meeting this achievement involved the identification of "the boundary between ... acceptable [rhythms] and what is not, between eurhythmy and kakorhythmy," that is, between presumably well-ordered rhythms and a bad cacophony.[34] Laban's theory of an underlying rhythm, or "ur-rhythm," was grounded in a distinction between a turbulent cacophony on one hand (which he defined as "those phenomena whose constituent subrhythms we cannot perceive as

being regular or symmetric, or flowing into each other in good proportions") and, on the other hand, the "good order in all forms" that, in his view, becomes perceptible "due to the resonance of specific nodal points of an infinite range of phenomena."[35] After leaving Germany for Sussex in the United Kingdom, Laban undertook studies of industrial efficiency, coming up with a series of corrective exercises for mostly female factory employees.[36] In doing so, he entered the world of Taylorism and the "scientific management" of efficiency in manufacturing, in which the concept of "mass movement" had, since the 1880s, been a question about managing large-scale, assembly-line processes, before it became associated with either choreography or political theory.

Where Laban was preoccupied with the expressionism of ideal forms (the polyhedra, the "white race"), by contrast, some years earlier Fuller's performances were a study in projective geometry, topology, gravitational forces, and the turbulent curve made possible by electrical lighting, chemical compounds, and the prostheses of bamboo and silk. Unlike Laban's association of Platonic solids and a mythic Ancient Greece with the presumably unique perfection of the "white race," Fuller's performance borrowed from the cultural traversals of global cities situated between points East and West: some of her technique, movements, and the use of fabrics were drawn from the skirt dancing of music hall, vaudeville, and—as Fuller and others suggested in varying accounts—the "Nautch dancing" (the colonialist term for Indian dance) that was part of the Orientalist repertoire of English theaters while Fuller was in London. Fuller herself had remarked that the costume she used in the *Serpentine Dance* was "an old Hindoo costume," given to her by a British officer who had served in India; on another occasion, she said that it was a costume that had been used in an Oriental production at London's Savoy Theater. The *Serpentine Dance* hinted at an exoticism, but was often read as sublimation in the chemical sense: a phase transition between a solid body and a gaseous apparition, without quite passing through a liquid state. If the *Serpentine Dance* emerged in the turbulence of transatlantic crossings and the ports of empire, its characterization as a rapid circuit from a fixed body to air would treat liquescence as an inclination or step toward the figural, a referential tendency toward the affirmation of ideal forms rather than delight in afformation. Indeed, for successive reviewers, Fuller's performance became little more than a metaphor or, as the French symbolist poet Mallarmé wrote in his review of the *Serpentine Dance*: a "becoming metaphorical," the "fragmentation [of the body] in a play of metaphorical forms."[37] It both confounded and dazzled its most famous reviewers precisely because of what they tended to read as a figural sublimation of any recognizable, "gyrating" sexuality or identifiable gender performance. Too queer to make sense, it would seem. For one reviewer, what distinguished the *Serpentine Dance* from the other acts at the Folies Bergère was that there were, to quote, "no

more contortions, no more hip swaying, no more circular pelvic movements; the chest stays rigid."[38] As Mallarmé wrote:

> The dancer is not a woman dancing, for these juxtaposed reasons: that she is not a woman, but a metaphor summing up one of the elementary aspects of our form: knife, goblet, flower, etc., and that she is not dancing, but suggesting through the miracle of bends and leaps a kind of corporeal writing.[39]

According to Camille Mauclair, Fuller's "performance [is] freed from all known aesthetic forms, uniting and destroying them together, and defying all qualification."[40] What might have been seen as a defiance of qualification was instead, oftentimes, treated as a metaphorical displacement, making it possible to attribute to the dance properties revealed by others. Much more could be said of such responses to women who danced and wrote as a demand for expression[41]—unlike Laban, or Isadora Duncan's renaissance of Ancient Greek dance and "Nature," Fuller's performance failed to adhere to the lexicon of self-possession that is the condition of contractual authority, and became, ultimately, the shimmering object of other people's aesthetic writing, from Mallarmé in the 1890s to, more recently, Jacques Rancière.[42] By and large, Rancière joins with Mallarmé in reading Fuller as the dematerialized symbol that eludes self-expression and, in so doing, becomes communicative of something by becoming another writer's muse. Though Fuller wrote at some length, Rancière cites a series of male reviewers writing about Fuller; nowhere does he cite Fuller.

Fuller did not, then, exist outside the circuits of production, including that of written texts. While she had become famous in Europe for performing the *Serpentine Dance*, her work in New York was routinely dependent on male managers and producers with whom she had contracted and, as was routine, according to which it was possible for them to sell or lease her on to other theaters. Fuller had taken to refusing to honor such transfers—her circulation between men, as it were—unless she had signed the contract herself. Her regard for the work of performance *as work* extended to describing her own circulation through various theaters, by way of a range of contracts, as "migrations of personality," movements which, she insisted, she should have a role in charting. In any case, it was one of these contractual disputes which led to her to bring a suit against the chorus girl Minnie Renwood Bemis, in what we now know of as the case of *Fuller v. Bemis* (1892). As others have pointed out, the *Fuller v. Bemis* case also illustrates the ways in which the proprietary claim over the performance of this dance—and, indeed, modern dance itself—was staked in the contested contractual margin between the properties of whiteness, women as property, and the unnamed working women of burlesque.[43] Fuller's contractual claim in New York was not only directed toward difficult negotiations with theater producers and the interchangeability that organizes competitive strata within discrete labor markets. It also sought, but failed to, as Anthea Kraut and others have argued, fully distance the *Serpentine Dance* from the sexualized, working bodies of the variety stage[44] while simultaneously trading in the exoticism that passes for novelty within the formal market. It involved, among other things, the bleaching of otherwise racial/gendered performance, so as to make a kind of circulation possible through systems of contractual authorship and proprietary arrangements.

Interval: "Art of War" and "Art of Life"

There are fewer, more emphatically mythic accounts of the link between the "art of life" and the "art of war" than those found in philosophical juxtapositions between Plato and Odysseus—in other words, fewer epic and aristocratic versions of the phenomenological dichotomy between ideally solid objects of life whose properties are known and enclosed, and seagoing circuits where the hero sets off from the noble home to war and tribulations and returns, eventually, to a proper homecoming of being known. In a series of lectures in the late 1920s, the English mathematician Alfred North Whitehead proposed that "the function of Reason amid the welter of our mental experiences, amid our intuitions, our emotions, our purposes, our decisions of emphasis" is to "promote the art of life."[45] Whitehead distinguished between two kinds of reasoning: Platonic and *Odyssean*. According to Whitehead, Plato's rationality is absolute, speculative, and "enthroned above the practical tasks of the world." *Odysseus*, by contrast, is a "pragmatic agent," whose decisions are determined by experiential and situational knowledge. Without the latter, Whitehead contends, there is no impetus to creativity, including in the techniques of reason. Whitehead does, however, offer a fleeting warning: "the bones of his [Odysseus'] companions are strewn on many a reef and many an isle."[46]

The Odysseus of Homer's epic is polytropic, a person of "many turns," who becomes lost and for ten years endures storms at sea after undertaking the war on Troy; he takes multiple forms, encounters monsters and temptation, returns initially unrecognizable, murders the rivals for his wife's affections, and finally regains his proper place at the head of the royal Ithacan household. Whitehead is not alone in ascribing to the mythical figure of Odysseus an iconic status in philosophy as the legend of a practical, seafaring reason juxtaposed with that derived from transcendental knowledge—one that, more or less explicitly, treats the well-defined, patrimonial property of the sovereign household (or *oikos*) as the normative condition of formal, categorical reason.
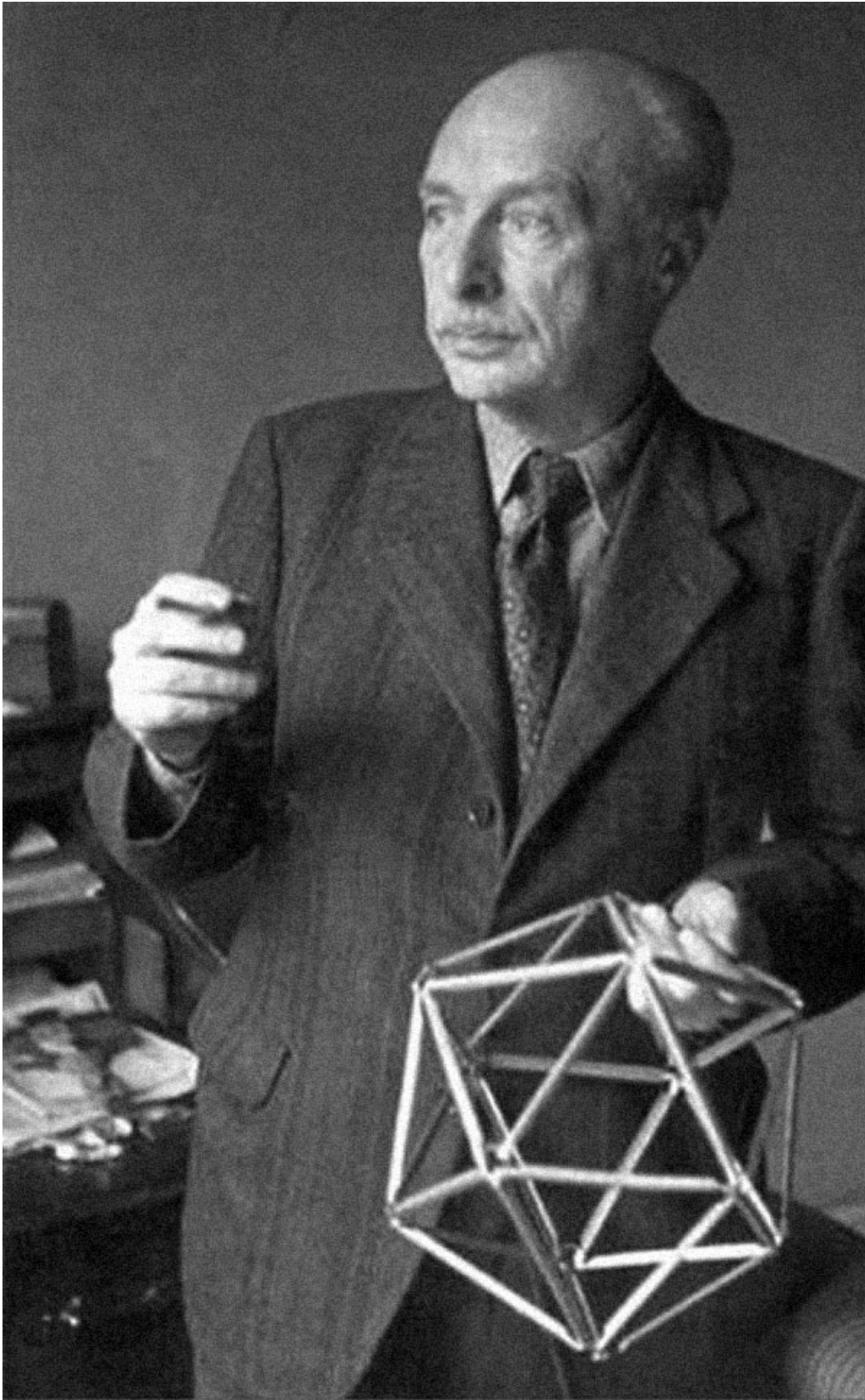
Photograph of Rudolf Laban at the Art of Movement Studio, Manchester, c1948. Photo: Roland Watkins, LC/A/1/3/30, Laban Archive, Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Adorno and Horkheimer describe Odysseus melancholically. For them, he is the exemplary *homo oeconomicus* characterized by self-mastery and (self-)sacrifice, the condition of a bourgeois aesthetics that is all ears but incapable of taking pleasure in beauty, the alienated "homesickness" of an Enlightenment rationality both set adrift from and destructive of normative foundations in a euphemistic nature.[47] If Whitehead was less scornful of Odysseus's adventurist entrepreneurialism than Adorno and Horkheimer, he nevertheless deals, albeit tacitly, in a similar structural analogy between the patrilineal genealogy of a well-ordered *oikonomia* and the coherent properties of classical, categorical reason by suggesting that "reason is the self-discipline of the originative element in history," without which "this element is anarchic."[48]

The *oikos* has long-furnished philosophers with a naturalized, patrimonial aesthetics of the selective preservation of heritable, unique properties. It links economic and legal norms of property ownership with the ostensibly certain, categorical knowledge of the properties of the material world that is otherwise in flux. Machiavelli's *Art of War* and *The Prince*, arguably a treatise on politics as entrepreneurial risk calculus, connects the presumably non-conflictual, but non-contractual and hierarchical, household with the overt violence of the battlefield.[49] More explicitly, Odysseus's route between the sovereign household and its restoration—which involves a series of destructive, risky oceanic encounters with accidents, strange monsters, gods and sirens, and, not least, wars—describes, as an epic odyssey whose protagonist is the aristocratic hero, the movement of capital from C to C' without which that path from sovereign *oikos* to its restoration would be a mere repetition or tautology without surplus. Put another way, the contract is asymmetrical and incomplete.[50] In the tortuous, accumulative circuit, the "art of life" resorts to the "art of war." Its methodology is that of a threshold Platonism or entrepreneurial phenomenology that takes a perilous, dialectical detour through the exotic, oceanic flux of the physical world before returning to reclaim its purportedly proper, sovereign and eternal form.

Art of War 1: Infrastructure and Criticality

There is no concept of infrastructure available to a classical Platonism—excepting that derived from the cosmology of the container that contains amorphous matter, or that which furnishes the geometric scaffolding or "parts-whole" reassembly of forms, as a concept of the medial between discrete entities rather than the stuff.[51] In the early twentieth century, "infrastructure" goes from being a minor, technical term in French civil engineering, enters the vocabulary of English-speaking governments and institutions, and, along with its subsequent spread, elaborates a theory of warfare that is also a theory of

governance, physics, and organization. In its initially speculative, military aesthetic, the concept of infrastructure involves the setup and apprehensions of "slapstick," involving a theory of proximate (rather than final or transcendental) causes whose emblematic demonstrative in the history of infrastructure (and in warfare) is the collapsing series of falling dominoes. Put differently, it involves the criticality that obtains in chains of causes (or "supply chains") which proceed from contingent base points. Along with its incorporation of the relational, the introjection of the "accidental" and arbitrary offsets in the procedural course of reasoning implies a remarkable distance from the classical understanding of the properties of things, within which movements are thought of as teleologically constrained to becoming what something was always, essentially, from the outset.

When a fluent vocabulary of infrastructure does emerge in the mid-twentieth century, it does so at the edge of a classical, renaissance Platonism, and one which verges on the apologia for dictatorship in the eighth book of *The Republic*. There, Plato rails against people moving freely beyond their proper place, including: the "devotee of equality," whom he describes as "a manifold," "containing within himself the greatest number of patterns of constitutions and qualities," an excess of freedom that culminates in an unrestricted "liberty … [where] the purchased slaves, male and female, are no less free than the owners who paid for them."[52] Invoking a Platonist dread, this concept of infrastructure's criticality—movement beyond proper bounds—inverts the Lucretian *clinamen* into the imagination of disaster. It becomes, then, a speculative aesthetics of a potentially lucrative, motivating catastrophe whose objective is the restoration of a hierarchically ordered, unchanging universe.

The term "infrastructure" did not enter the English language until the course of intergovernmental discussions over the construction tender for the shipping port in Tangier, Morocco, in 1922. The next year, Tangier was declared an "international zone" under the joint, colonial administration of France, Britain, and Spain. Before this, "infrastructure" was an inconspicuous, technical term used by French-speaking engineers, referring to railway tracks and signaling but, notably, not to train stations. Even so, it remained an obscure term until some time after the close of the Second World War, and did not assume its present significance until after the wars in Southeast Asia in the mid-twentieth century. In 1950, the UK's minister for defense defined infrastructure as "the material backing to enable the higher command to function and forces to be deployed," and was greeted in Parliament with accusations of using an esoteric, foreign language.[53] By the late 1950s, however, the term becomes pivotal to transatlantic understandings of warfare—especially so in the theory of "falling dominoes." It involved a shift in theories of force and what it is that matters in the course of a war where there are no
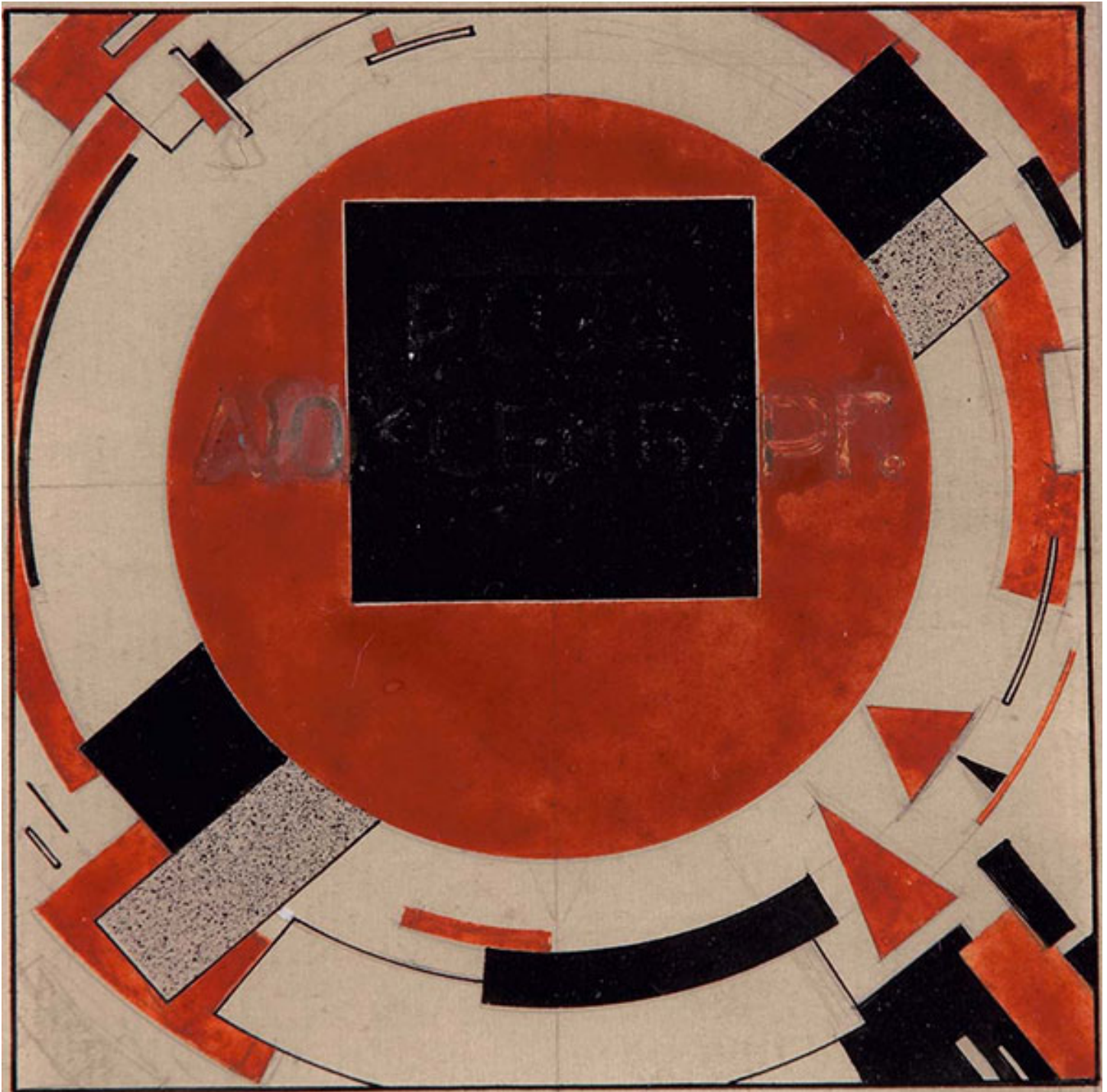
El Lissitzky, Drawing for a Project Commemorating Rosa Luxemburg, 1919-20. Gouache, ink, and pencil on paper. 10 x 10,1 cm. Costakis Collection.

boundaries. Among the more famous proponents of "the art of war"—an older term for operational theories of warfare—were Antoine-Henri Jomini, Henry Lloyd, and George Gray, who had served as Britain's colonial administrator in South Africa, New Zealand, and Australia.

It might be noted here that the association of infrastructure with utility or welfare, its conceptualization in the humanities and social sciences, is far more recent than its history in engineering and military theory. From the late 1970s, the social sciences begin to grapple with a question about the physics of movement—the movements of populations beyond regular forms, beyond borders. It is on that basis that infrastructural concepts begin to make their way into government policy and statistical models as a metrics of uncertainty and risk, or *précarité*, if you prefer.[54] In national security, the concept of critical infrastructure is a way of modeling what happens when

parts of a network break down or fail, of determining which points are essential to the functioning and preservation of a system. This involves speculations on the continuity of a system (such as the "continuous transmission of power") and, at the same time, it links theories of warfare to welfare policy as a question set in the matrices of insurable and uninsurable ways of living, disaster management, and so on. But it nevertheless begins as a theory of warfare.

Art of War 2: Geopolitical "Slapstick"

In a 1954 press conference at the close of the war in Korea, then-US President Eisenhower famously set out the theory of the falling dominoes. "You have a row of dominoes set up," he said, "you knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly. So you could have a beginning of a disintegration that would have the most profound influences."[55] Eisenhower's illustrated warning on the contagious influence of communism was not the first time that an argument for a just and necessary war would be pressed upon an audience through tropes of fragile interdependence, proximity, and inevitable collapse—the combined thematics, in short, of criticality and infrastructure. Stanley Hornbeck, President Roosevelt's chief adviser for Far Eastern Affairs in the State Department, had previously described geopolitics as the delicate, interwoven lines of a textile: "Disturb this fabric at any point," he warned, "and you produce disturbances throughout its entirety."[56] The theory of falling dominoes and its embedded descriptions of a fragile interdependence had already been at the center of US foreign policy for almost half a century.[57] The domino metaphor already shaped understandings of containment and sequential collapse during WWII, when it was invoked by President Truman and his advisers in an effort to justify US military action in Greece, Iran, and Turkey, as in US opposition to Azerbaijani independence in 1946. It was used to bolster the case for US support for the coup in Guatemala in 1954, and would go on to shape US military thinking about Latin America. In Eisenhower's speech, the argument ran as follows: if South Vietnam were lost to "the Communists," the rest of Southeast Asia would inevitably follow. Eisenhower's predecessor, Truman, had gone to war in South Korea under the flag of falling dominoes. In 1950, as the US and its allies went to war in Korea so as to reassert the post-WWII carve-up of Southeast Asia at the thirty-eighth parallel, then-US Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson had argued that "the fall of Indochina will undoubtedly lead to the fall of the other mainland States of Southeast Asia." Decades later, in the 1980s, President Reagan conjured up the theory of falling dominoes to argue for military and paramilitary intervention in Latin America, insisting that "unless Congress at least doubled military aid to Salvador [to defeat the communists], then Mexico could ultimately be affected and Soviet-supported governments would then be on the doorstep of the United

States."[58]

The imaginary of proximate, modular pieces of extended imperial possession teetering on the brink of system-wide collapse was, however, by no means restricted to the US. The British commissioner-general in Southeast Asia, Malcolm MacDonald, had similarly argued in late 1950 that "If Indochina holds, all holds."[59] The Soviet Union also had its own version of the domino theory, which it called upon to warrant military intervention against the uprising in Hungary in 1956. As then-First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Nikita Khrushchev had insisted: "If the counter-revolutionaries [in Hungary] did succeed and NATO took root in the midst of Socialist countries, it would pose a serious threat to Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Rumania, not to mention the Soviet Union itself."[60] Thus war in Indochina as elsewhere was as much about the fabric of Cold War geopolitical blocs as it was concerned with the neocolonial reconfiguration of postwar international maps, as with French efforts to regain control over its pre-WWII empire against anti-colonial insurgencies in Vietnam—a war that would run and run from 1946 to 1975. A discarded draft for a speech by Truman in 1947 warns of "a chain of events the consequences of which are still unfathomable."[61]

The theory of falling dominoes is a theory of inevitable, sequential occurrences that, unlike the "chain of accidents," conceives the initial event—the knocking over of the first piece—as cryptic; but, like the "chain of accidents," the theory of falling dominoes posits the space-time of the base event as undefined and arbitrary, the world it alludes to one of proximate interdependencies and causes. Instead of the game-theoretic presentation of strategic choices that assigns an immanent, interactive role to players within a game, there is instead one extrinsic, causal instance or event that knocks over a piece, any piece. The geopolitical theory of falling dominoes is a theory of the effect of collapse on contiguous pieces, the depiction of chain-reaction or "chain-of-accidents" concepts and models borrowed from industrial processes (assembly lines and associated concepts of error, failure, and accident) and nuclear physics (chain reaction), inductive logic and mathematical physics. It serves as a vivid depiction of sequential, mechanical collision and causation involving the contiguity of modular objects, one where the initial node is no longer a node within a game of strategic choices but an event that can be explained as either intentional or non-intentional. The first node is nevertheless construed as kinetically, inevitability determinative of the endgame by dint of an interdependence brought about by physical proximity, arrangement, and mechanical laws. The attribution and explanation of motive powers thereby shifts from the intrinsic properties of a thing to the mechanical impacts upon proximate things, from the deductive form of the syllogism to reasoning by induction, since the "domino show" implicitly serves as an

experimental proof of the base step in inductive logic (if a fixed but arbitrary domino falls, then so on). Contemporary supply-chain logistics elaborates on this initial shift in understandings of movement, connection, and causality through the addition of one or more Cartesian coordinates and therefore introduces complexity in risk profiling, along with the topological restraint of preserving functions through continuous movement and transmission. But this theory of circulation and movement did not emerge recently or even in the twentieth-century.

Art of War 3: Moving Armies and Continuous Transmission

In his 1838 book *Precis de l'Art de la Guerre* (*The Art of War*), Jomini says that "after war began to be waged without camps," the science and art of military logistics took shape through official publications concerned with the detail, ensemble, and dispositions of military force.[62] By contrast, in Carl von Clausewitz's view, "marches, camps, … cantonments," and questions concerning the "maintenance of the military force" are not the decisive elements of warfare but instead subservient branches of the military and the state. Military infrastructure serves the sovereign will but is not to be confused with its extension, which is instead represented on the battlefield, according to Clausewitz, by the ordered hierarchical ranks of officers. According to Clausewitz's magnum opus, war is neither physics ("the mechanical arts"), nor the fine arts, but a clash of wills.[63] Jomini is instead the chief exponent of a logistical or operational theory of war, "the art of moving armies" and "making war on the map."[64] Where Clausewitz is concerned with the chain of command, Jomini ponders an elaborate chain of causes. One favors doctrine, the other standards. Jomini emphasizes a complex chain of causes rather than the singular, almost divine-like cause that floats outside and above the field of battle. This makes it possible to stretch one's theory of causation to include the presumably irregular or uncommon, the accidental, nonlinear, chaotic, inessential, or intransitive in ways that the predicable course of reasoning in Clausewitz cannot. It ushers in a nascent version of complexity alongside a military theory in which infrastructure rather than political will is seen as decisive to the conduct, facility, and, not least, the very meaning of warfare. And crucially, it yields a theory of indefinite war against an indistinct enemy which is, as it happens, the condition and meaning of "frontier wars which never ended" and the war beyond borders.

Jominian warfare begins from contingent base points, from the very thing that Clausewitz sought to eliminate as accidental or inessential to the course of reasoning scientifically and philosophically about warfare. Clausewitz's army is debilitated by the loss of the queen, unable to continue after the loss of the king. Indeed, in Clausewitz's theory of war there is no war where there are

no kings—this, as it happens, is the point of Clausewitz's famous (often poorly paraphrased) dictum that war is the continuation of politics by other means. What counts as decisive in Jomini's war is not a sovereign or a voluntarist concept of decision but the effective transmission of force upon points. Accomplishing "operational complexity" (the capacity for the destruction of infrastructure), previously defined as "going behind enemy lines," figures as more decisive to the course of war than capturing the sovereign. Jomini's vocabulary hinges on a discussion of "positions" and "dispositions."

Unlike Clausewitz's contest of wills, Jomini's theory combines elements—notably, that of the Napoleonic-Newtownian mass, Henry Lloyd's *lignes d'operations*, and Dietrich von Bülow's geometry—to conceptualize a *logistikon* that (unlike any of these) can be disconnected from the agency of the state because its functional significance lay in its capacity to link (programmable) operations with regulation or code, and in a way that emphasized Sadi Carnot's preoccupation with the thermodynamic calculus of a continuous transmission of power. Jomini's contribution is not in the concept of *lignes d'operations*, which remained close to that of Lloyd and Bülow. It is rather in the treatment of zones and lines of operations as a dynamics of forces reliant upon critical points that, unlike the Clausewitzian theater of war, are not synonymous with the command center. That which is crucial to the continuous transmission of power, or conversely, that whose destruction makes that transfer discontinuous, is the concept of criticality as it is more or less understood today. Where Carnot's experiments in thermodynamics were concerned with deriving abstract formulations of optimal performance from the workings of machines (waterwheels, the steam engine), so Jomini strove to elaborate a theory of (decisive) criticality and infrastructure. A Clausewitzian wins the war by destroying the enemy's will as embodied in the capacity for strategic decisions. A Jominian wins the war through the effective application of force at "decisive points." Queried as to what constituted a "decisive point," Jomini's replied: "It could be a road junction, a river crossing, a mountain pass, a supply base, or an open flank of the enemy army itself."[65]

Art of War 4: Class and Complexity

Lenin regarded Clausewitz as "one of the greatest writers on the history of war, whose thinking was stimulated by Hegel."[66] But it is Gramsci who takes up the concepts of "war of position" and "war of maneuver" in the context of his criticisms of Rosa Luxemburg's 1906 pamphlet "The Mass Strike, the Political Party, and the Trade Unions"—referred to by Gramsci as "one of the most significant documents theorizing the war of maneuver in relation to political science."[67] The terminology since attributed to Gramsci comes from Jomini's *Art of War.* It is there that "the system of positions" is distinguished from the "pivots of maneuver" or "pivots of operation."[68] For

David Egan, "acknowledgment of Gramsci's influence on revolutionary theory cannot itself be based on the novelty of these concepts" and, further to this, "it is the modern war of maneuver … which is associated with complexity."[69] There are implications for how the debates between Lenin, Luxemburg, and Gramsci are approached, not least because of Gramsci's argument that the "war of position" (the attainment of national-popular hegemony) is best suited to the conduct of class struggles in developed capitalist countries.

While it is the case that the "war of maneuver" includes an assumption of causal complexity, it is not, however, my view that "war of position" and "war of maneuver" correspond to "premodern" and modern stages in capitalist development. To the contrary, Jomini's approach is a theory of warfare in frontier and colonial circumstances; its understanding of causal complexity emerges from the scattering or nonexistence of well-defined, bounded principalities which give rise to something like a Westphalian system. "Clausewitz' text lacked the deconstructive analysis of frontiers that the Jominian literature offered," as John Darwin suggests.[70] The "modernism" of Jomini's approach does not reflect the pinnacle of a linear, stadial history but, instead, is indicative of a shifting threshold between periphery and center—much like fascism in the 1920s brings an eliminative, colonial violence into early-twentieth-century Europe.[71] At the same time, Gramsci elaborates on Lenin's definition of spontaneity as the absence of a cogent political will (or sovereignty), which both understand as indicative of a higher level of development. For Gramsci, spontaneity is the absence of organization and characteristic of the "history of the subaltern classes," whom he saw as lacking a conscious sense of linear time, liable to fall upon tradition and for this reason understood as a force that can be appealed to through an affirmative recourse to Sorelian nationalist myth.[72] By contrast, Luxemburg's argument concerns the attribution of causal priority and the simplification of complexity that arises from a dichotomy between spontaneity and organization—some sixty years before the publication of Hayek's "Theory of Complex Phenomena."[73]

The immediate target of Luxemburg's criticism is what she described as an "abstract, unhistorical method of observation" that treats "the mass strike [as] a purely technical means of struggle, which can be 'decided' at pleasure and strictly according to conscience, or 'forbidden' … according to decision."[74] Put simply, the tactics or methods of struggle are not the instruments of political will as they are from a Clausewitzian perspective. As Luxemburg puts it, "the element of spontaneity" plays a role, not because struggles are less advanced, but because there is present in every instance of struggle a complex range of "factors [that] react upon one another in such a way that no single act can be arranged and resolved as if it were a mathematical problem."[75]

But if much of this reflects a Jominian understanding of complex, material causality, it is notable that where Hayek's theory of spontaneous order differs from Luxemburg's is also where her concept of revolution diverges from Jomini's preoccupation with the continuous transmission of power. Hayek followed in the steps of Adam Smith and Francis Hutcheson in arguing that political regulation infringed on the teleological unfolding of the foundational and natural laws of the *oikos* (the presumably analogous and statistically aggregated households, landed estates, and companies in the wealth of nations). Hayekian "price signals" are meant to furnish a providential, prudential guide for the managerial heads of the household—Smith's "invisible hand." In this, Smith and Hayek elaborate on from the Medieval Scholastics' understanding of economics as *oikonomia*. But if, in *The Accumulation of Capital*, Luxemburg insisted that the circuit of capital (the extended reproduction of total social capital) was a necessarily open system, her characterization of revolution is remarkable. "The revolution," she says, "is not a maneuver of the proletariat in an open field, but a fight in the midst of the incessant, crashing, displacing, and crumbling of the social foundation." To which she adds that "the element of spontaneity plays such a pre-dominant part, not because the Russian proletariat are 'uneducated,' but because revolutions do not allow anyone to play the schoolmaster with them."[76]

Implicit in Luxemburg's approach is a sense for the divergence between the classical logic of properties and that of algebraic functions that arguably reflects her training as a mathematician. What I take from Luxemburg's insights is that the "creative instant" may indeed be radically open but it is not cut adrift from conflicts over foundations. Still, as such, it also suggests an opening in the seemingly tautological circuit that, in law and economics, legitimates property claims but, at the same time, therefore also marks a contested threshold of appropriation that may (or may not) restore the foundation of property rights. That is, it involves an apparatus of exploitation (that is also a method of observation, experiment, and measure) in which utility is not the underlying, primordial substance that indicates a metaphysical concept of life (one that obscures the abstract encoding of this or that "way of life"). Rather, it involves a historically specific process of appropriation, the entry or switching points of "socially recognized standards of measure" that selectively foster ways of living, and whose logistical move from contingent base points in both colonial and frontier circumstances is called forth by the relative absence of well-defined, bounded categories that otherwise presumably ground the categorical steps of the common forms of *oikonomia*.[77]
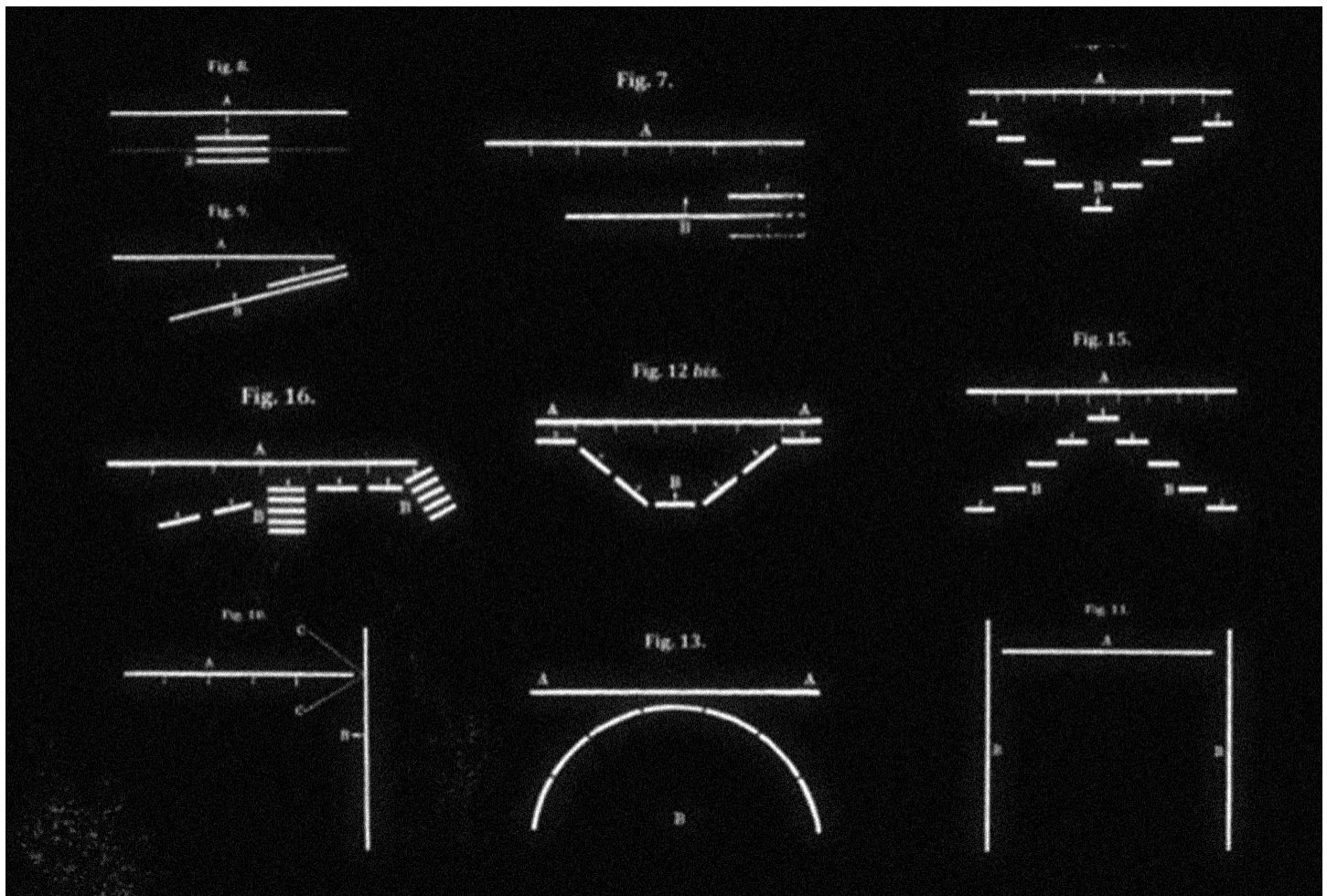
Diagrams from Baron Antoine-Henri De Jomini's book The Art of War (1854).

By Way of a Conclusion

Throughout this discussion, a mutually reinforcing distinction has been drawn between the logic of property and that of appropriation. There is in other words a distinction made between the categorical logic that obtains in and rationalizes economic and legal concepts of property rights by resorting to ostensibly well-founded yet metaphysical premises without sure foundation, and on the other hand the relational, contingent, complex, pragmatic, and nonlinear logic of infrastructure that is capable of integrating estimates of uncertainty and stochastic movements in frontier circumstances. Theories of the change that does not change are the hinge between property and appropriation—a reminder, then, that there is nothing inevitable about the circuit of capital, nothing assured about the movement from C to C'.

Along those lines, I have not treated movement or the *infra* as the phenomenal prelude to an inevitable, theatrical reassembly of Platonist geometric forms—the architecture or *arche* of the political, whose ends are those of the idealized Athenian square (the fraternal politics of squares or the Arendtian *polis*), or the

triangulation (transcendence of social and class conflicts) that characterizes "third position" and "Third Way" politics.[78]

I have lingered on a question of reproducible patterns, the *infra* or weave, and on that which distinguishes movement from circulation, or the radical (or "creative") instant from commercial novelty, so as to underline the "taking" or appropriation through which movement and relation are pressed into appreciable, exchangeable form as commodities in circulation—in other words, the ways in which "movement and relation … take form," or not.[79] In doing so, and unlike Bachelard, or Deleuze in *Cinema*, I treat the "creative instant" far more ambivalently, if nevertheless as suggestive of an indeterminate outcome, far closer to the circumstances of the "war machine" and axiomatic described in Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, far more attentive to the "assemblage of many properties" that, according to Marx, constitutes the commodity as a common unit in the measure of wealth.[80] But where, following Hegel, many Marxists might draw a distinction between the ideal form of capital and a phenomenology of capitalist societies which more or less closely approximated to the ideal form, Luxemburg insisted that repetition and (capitalist) reproduction were

not the same. For her, the circuit of capital implied, necessarily, an open if cramped system—in her terms, the circuit involved the extended reproduction of total social capital, one that presupposed a frontier of exploitation and colonial warfare.[81] This is a crucial insight which, among other things, breaks with the hold of concepts of fatal necessity—not by offering a speculative alternative whose imagination as an "alternative" purports a false transcendence, but by highlighting the workings of a mechanism of selection or a "radical instant" that is historically specific, and whose outcomes are not given in advance.

X

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The following text is the transcript of a conversation from November 21, 2017, in which the impossible legality of an artwork— I, The Artwork by the Palestinian artist Yazan Khalili—takes lawyer and critic David Kim and scholars Elizabeth A. Povinelli, Jonathan Beller, and Vivian Ziherl through the clauses of contemporary personhood, inhumanity, and non-humanness. The conversation begins with an appraisal of the work's legal attributes.

David Kim: The work is titled *I, The Artwork*. It's hanging here in this space. It consists of a large framed photographic print, 120 centimeters by 79.2 centimeters. The photographic image is of a deed of ownership, the text of which I'll address in a moment, hung on the wall just above a couch in the lower-right quadrant of the photograph. It is—and these are Yazan's words, not mine—a rather unassuming image, a rather plain image. Now, the deed of ownership is not strictly a deed—it's a contract to be signed by the artist and the owner or collector. It consists of recitals, which are a kind of preamble, and three parts. The first part of the text defines the artwork, its physical properties and dimensions, the frame and the glass, and of what they ought to be made. The second part describes the broad requirements of the artwork's exhibition and surroundings—more on that in a moment—and the third part reiterates that the agreement is binding.

Let me read just a bit from the contract so you can develop a finer-grained sense of the language and content. Here is an excerpt from the recitals, a part of the contract that is not typically understood as binding by the courts, but that is nonetheless a moment for the parties to declare their intentions in making the agreement:

> Whereas *I, The Artwork* has been produced by the artist Yazan Khalili, *I, The Artwork*'s character and individuality is expressed by the following conditions. The following conditions and rules apply irrevocably, worldwide, without any time limit, as they are defining elements of its existence and nature; therefore to avoid misunderstandings it is stated that any violation of these conditions shall be seen as a direct violation of *I, The Artwork* itself, and its meaning and individuality, in their entirety.

It goes on, but this begins to give you a sense of the text. Let me also read briefly from another section. This is the first section of part two, the title of which is "Conditions of *I, The Artwork*'s Exhibition and Surrounding."

> Provision 1: *I, The Artwork* shall not be owned by any institution, private entity, or other legal body that is funded and financed, co-owned, or in any other way
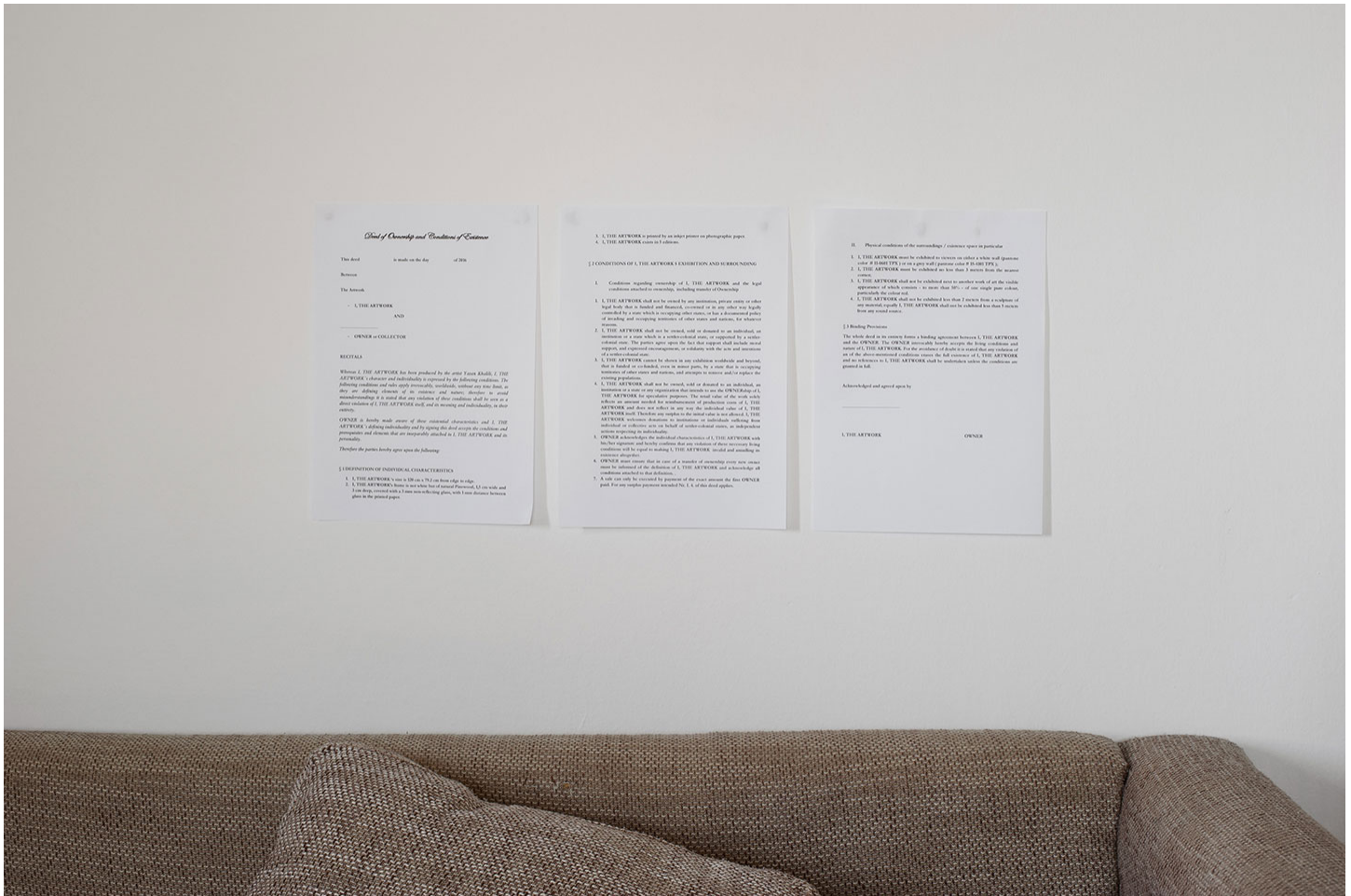
Yazan Khalili, I, The Artwork, 2016. Framed photographic print 120 x 79.2cm. Yazan Khalili, in collaboration with Martin Hellercommissioned by Riwaq Biennial, with support of Mophradat

legally controlled by a state which is occupying other states, or has a documented policy of invading and occupying territories of other states and nations for whatever reasons.

The subsequent provisions in this section make similar stipulations around institutions or states that may be settler-colonial states or institutions that are funded or co-funded by states that are occupying territories of other states and nations. We'll return to all of that content—I know the language is a bit dense—but let's keep it in mind.

A few contextual comments and then we'll move to a conversation with Yaz. There are several means by which any artist might control the circumstances of the ownership and exhibition and donation and collection of his, her, or their work. One means by which the life of an artwork is controlled is copyright law—that's perhaps the most familiar example. Such law is largely irrelevant in this context, so we'll set it aside for a moment.

The second legal means by which an artwork might be protected is contract. This is simply an agreement between two parties. Within a wide latitude, those parties can embed some set of conditions in the agreement, and the counterparty must observe those conditions or be found in breach of the contract. It bears stating here that, by and large, a contract can exist only between human individuals. This contract is explicitly articulated in the voice of the artwork, which immediately raises a question about the legal validity of the entire text.

The third means is moral rights, which, broadly stated, entitle an artist to prevent distortion, mutilation, or other modification of a work. The scope of these protections varies among jurisdictions in Western Europe and the United States. One important point here is that moral rights typically extend only until the death of the artist, and so they are subject to limitation.

With all of that said, one final comment about the ambivalent critical potentials of contract as a form. On the one hand, a contract establishes a narrow but important formal equality between the parties to the contract. The

law recognizes those two parties as in possession of legal rights with respect to the contract. The law recognizes those two parties as capable of making promises to one another and holding one another to the fulfillment of those promises.

On the other hand, this formal equality is quite bounded. Contract law doesn't typically touch all of the background conditions that would allocate bargaining power between the two parties. And one might also think that a contract is an important mechanism to support some set of property rights that are reifying or appropriative. So, we've gone over a bit of the law, we've talked a bit about contract. With all of that said, why don't we move into a conversation with Yaz.

Yaz, what specific motivations led you to make this work and write this deed that appears in the photograph? Why were you so concerned to attempt to control the circumstances under which your work is owned, exhibited, collected, and so on?

Yazan Khalili: When I began working on *I, The Artwork*, I think it was also at a time when I began working with galleries outside of the Arab world, which were open to a bigger world than Arab collectors. In one case, a collector wanted to collect a work of mine on behalf of an Israeli museum. The work, which explored a theme I might describe as "regarding the pain of oneself" (a play on the title of Susan Sontag's text *Regarding the Pain of Others*), was about how I, as a Palestinian, look at images of atrocities. The request to collect the work led to certain questions: What happens to a political work once it is offered on the market? Can you question that? Can you keep control over that? But also, how can you make sure that your work isn't sold to a collector who ends up donating it to an institution with which you don't agree politically? Once the work is sold, it has a life of its own.

In the end, very much—I would say all—Palestinian work, and work that comes from places of conflict, is deeply embedded in politics. Even if it doesn't speak about politics directly, it is a political work due to the situation in which it is created. Even if it's the most abstract work, I would say, it holds all kinds of political weight. So, my question is: Can the artwork itself boycott the institution? Can the work be taken seriously? Does it need me, the artist, to speak on its behalf, or can it speak in a very clear way itself—in the most didactic way possible? There's this moment when they tell you not to do didactic works, and then you say, maybe it has to be as didactic as possible to question this kind of politics. It comes from the circumstances: the growth of the art market at some point, and my becoming connected to some aspects of this art market. What kind of contract should there be? Should there be a contract at all? Should you play with this contract to produce something with which you can speak

to the art market?

DK: That's very helpful context. Generally, your interest in this question of control grows out of a broad engagement with the art market. Specifically, you are concerned with the case of, for example, a museum or institution in Israel. What might be the important motivations for such an institution to collect and show your work? What value accrues to those institutions and collectors? What ethos is expressed in the decision to show or collect your work? Perhaps we can say a bit more on that.

YK: I would say that in this very intense situation in Palestine, the role that cultural institutions play is very problematic and not very clear. When you speak about BDS [the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement against Israel], or the boycotting of state-funded cultural institutions in Israel, the boycott is a very essential step to take in the Palestinian context. But then there's always this issue that when Israeli cultural institutions try to somehow take work that speaks against the occupation and the status quo and put it in their exhibition space, it whitewashes the occupation. Whatever your politics, the institutions will still show your work, which somehow banalizes the work. You are speaking against the occupation, but then the occupation itself brings in the work and puts it in its institutions. How do you relate, how do you speak politics through it? How can the artwork continue to speak politics?

Such a situation actually recently happened with five Arab artists—Akram Zaatari, Walid Raad, Bouchra Khalili, Yto Barrada, and Zineb Sedira—at the Mediterranean Biennale in Sakhnin, Israel. The artists' work was brought from the FRAC collection in France to the Mediterranean Biennale without their consent. The work by Akram Zaatari that they wanted to exhibit is about the Israeli bombing of Lebanon in 2006. The Mediterranean Biennale brought this work from a collection in France to show it in Israel, as if the work were speaking about a different context or geography. What happens to the work in these situations? What happens to the work once it's bought by a collection or collector?

DK: Let's talk further about the form of the artwork. We've talked about the substance of the document and the kinds of claims that it's making. And you've shared with us that it was your explicit intention to make the text didactic. Why make a photographic print? Why frame it? Why hang it in this way? Why not leave it merely as a contract printed on paper? Talk to us a bit about those formal decisions, and the way in which they modulate your relationship to the work and what it's expressing in the world.

YK: When I began developing this work, I was working with Tirdad Zolghadr and Dr. Martin Heller—he was the lawyer who wrote the contract. As you were saying, at the
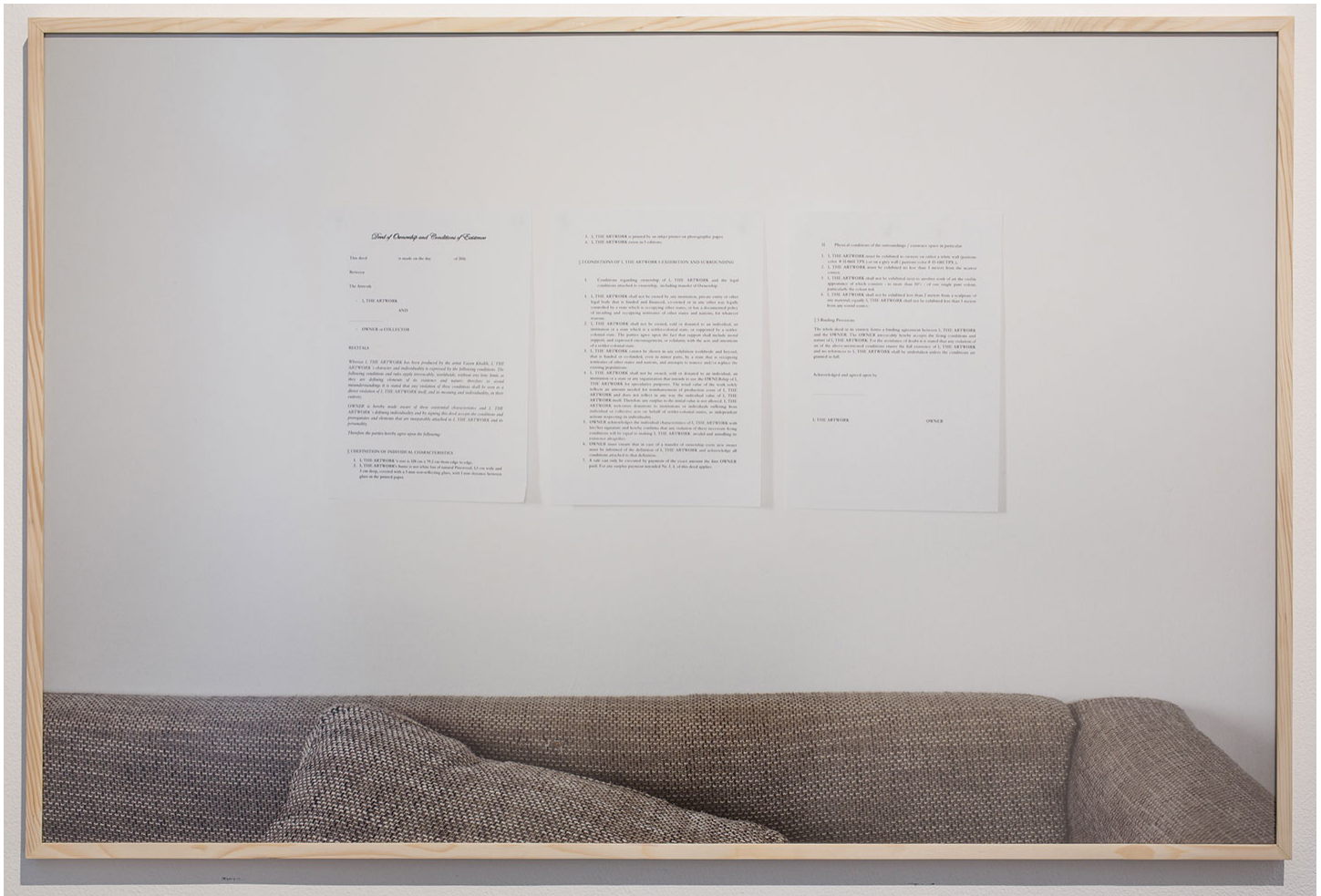
Yazan Khalili, I, The Artwork, 2016. Photographic print 120 x 79.2cm. Installation shot at Lawrie Shabibi gallery, Dubai, 2017. Yazan Khalili, in collaboration with Martin Heller. Commissioned by Riwaq Biennial, with support of Mophradat.

beginning the contract is in the voice of the artwork. The artwork speaks through it. So, in a way, it's an illegal contract, because the artwork is not allowed to speak legally. And therefore it's a contract that cannot be used in a court of law. You cannot defend the contract, simply because it's the artwork that speaks through it. So that's one level. The other level is that this is not the contract. It's a photo of it. It's a photograph of three A4s on a wall, and therefore it's not the contract, it's a representation of the contract. It's a reflection. And this photo becomes in itself an artwork. As an artist who makes image-based works, I didn't want to end up with three pages on a wall. What I wanted to do was actually work with the image of these three pages on a wall. This creates distance from the contract, while at the same time making it an artwork that speaks, that has language. It becomes more didactic than if it were a contract.

DK: I'll share this recollection in the event that it sparks any further reflections. In a conversation before this one, you mentioned that, practically, the fact that this is a print makes it all the more difficult to change the language of

the contract. It enforces a certain separateness between you and the work as soon as the work is created. In order to change the text, you would have to edit the text, reprint the photograph, construct a new frame, and so on. From the beginning, then, there is a relationship to the object that is rather different than if the artwork were, say, merely the printouts of the contractual text.

YK: Yes. Taking this photo and saying "this is the photo I'm going to use of the artwork" ended my relationship to it as an artist. At that moment it really became a separate artwork, free from any further intervention on my part. And it's not only a photo on a white wall. I didn't intend that. There is this couch below. The couch also makes it harder to put just any three papers on a wall and take a photo of them. When I took the photo, I didn't intend to create this extra element, except aesthetically. But then it became a definitive element in the photograph. It makes the moment clear. It ends it there. It disconnects me from the work.

DK: It seems like this separateness is an important condition of the strength with which the artwork can
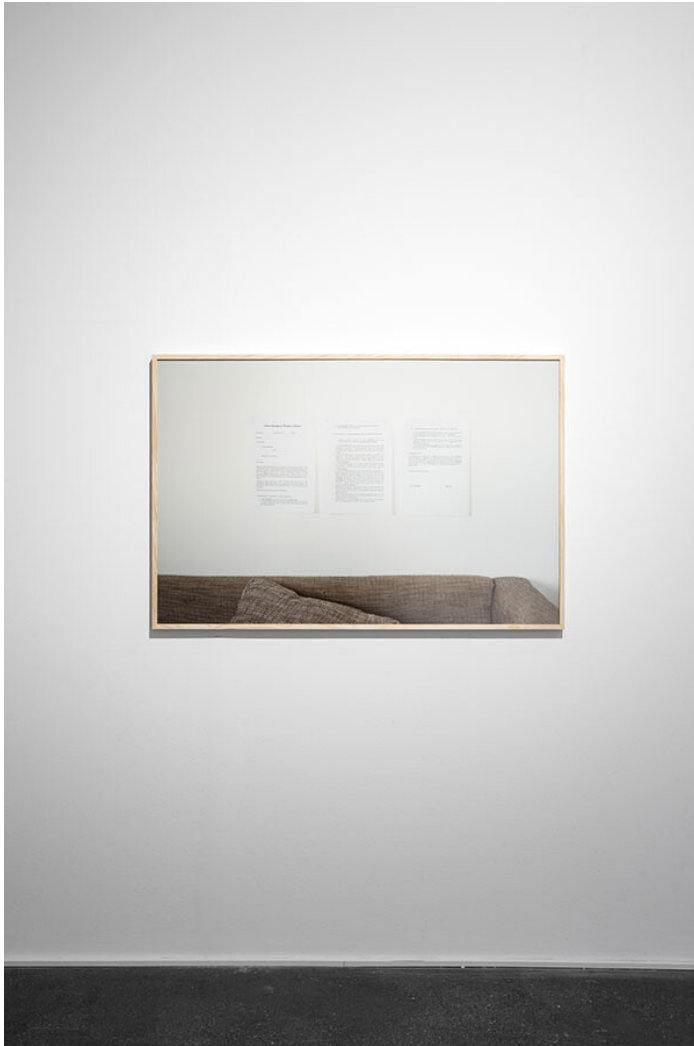
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Yazan Khalili, I, The Artwork, 2016. Framed photographic print 120 x 79.2cm. Installation shot at Lawrie Shabibi gallery, Dubai, 2017. Yazan Khalili in collaboration with Martin Heller. Commissioned by Riwaq Biennial with support of Mophradat.

speak. The contract as a form serves to focus our attention. Even if it is, in this instance, a legally unenforceable agreement, it is a center of gravity, of attention. The more separate the contract is from you, the more one's attention attaches to the document and its voice. The object qualities of the artwork serve to distinguish, mark off, the contract, such that it is less readily experienced as an extension of you, the artist. In this sense, it seems that the distinctness of the voice of the artwork depends on the fact of its object-ness.

YK: I agree. The artwork demands that when you look at it, in any exhibition context, you see whether it's fulfilling its exhibition instructions or production instructions or political instructions, or not.

Elizabeth Povinelli: Vivian [Ziherl] described this work to me when we were in Palestine. I think it was the first time

I had heard about it, and it is such a rich, political way of thinking about art and colonial resistance. Just hearing you describe the fuller context of it is amazing.

I want to start my input into the dialogue by situating what I understand to be the deep politics behind and within the artwork. Here I'm thinking: How do you make the artwork a person within a contractual logic, and then use that contractual object to extend *personhood* to the artwork, and then use the *form* of the contract against colonial capitalism—and, in the context of Palestine, settler-colonialism?

There's also this expansion of rights beyond the *human*, and not merely into the animal, right? There are attempts at legally making the higher apes persons, in various national contexts and international legal regimes. But there are also attempts to recognize Gaia or Mother Earth as having all the rights that we usually assign to the person. There's a new suit underway in the US to declare the Colorado River a person, and here the environmental groups and lawyers are piggybacking on the corporation, and saying: If a corporation can be a person, then why can't a river be a person? In that case the personhood of the river is radically opened. A person is defined in some relation to its skin, and the integrity of its skin. And that gets opened in all sorts of ways, psychic ways. One of the interesting claims about the Colorado River suit is that it doesn't say where the Colorado River is, because in the future the Colorado River will be somewhere it's not, because of climate change. It's just one of many examples asking: How do we use contractual law, human rights law, not merely to play with the extension outside of the human, but to use contractual law, human rights, moral rights, as a political means to work against colonial capitalism, extractive capitalism, racialized extractive capitalism, etc.?

I put all that out there to bring what you are doing, Yazan, into discussion with what Jonathan [Beller] was presenting in his earlier work, which is where the skin scrapes the cheese grater. That's my metaphor when I think about it, it's just very painful and icky—that is, the way in which capital and racialized colonialism is continually readjusting. As Jonathan said, how do we outthink a form of capital value that is counting on us to try to outthink it, because this gives it something it can expand into?

In Bolivia, and also in Australia, a lot of folks have said that attributing human rights to nature—whether intentionally or ironically, whether through some backdoor deal or not—provided a means by which mining could proceed legally. For all of its celebratory good, this was intended to be a means of securing who could alienate that landscape. Yazan, in your case, it was really interesting when you talked about how the artwork is not the contract per se.

One could imagine that the artwork becomes a historical record, an archive, of a mimesis that existed in one time

period but no longer does. The contract that is mimetic to the art piece is no longer so. And we see this all the time. People have contracts with museums. People have contracts with universities. They say: I am going to give my art to you. We have the famous case of that big Philadelphia museum [the Barnes Foundation]. [Artists say of their artwork,] I'm going to give it to you in perpetuity. And then over time, people say, well, okay, that was a long time. And so they change the contract. One of the interesting things about Yazan's artwork is that even though it might become a historical record, versus an actual mimetic relation to the contract that exists, it always speaks what it intended to do.

I was hoping that Jonathan could discuss how this might fit into his earlier work on media, and mediatization, and capital, but also then open the conversation more broadly to the way that capital *wants* us to open these new gaps to commoditize. Yazan, how do we think into the future when they've already fucked us over?

Jonathan Beller: Well, there may not be any ultimate victories, but there certainly are wars of maneuver. It's quite possible that the photograph will be copied and displayed in an Israeli museum, or in a colonial state, in order to demonstrate precisely what you're trying to call into question: how liberal these colonial sovereign states are, and how they really are more human than everyone else. That's entirely a possibility, however, the work as I understand it is an attempt to create an image of a contract that moves like an image, but nonetheless contains the semiotic potential of a contract to call into question the ethos of doing just that, and also thematize the aesthetic domain as a space of struggle. And that, I think, is super important because it does foreground and open up a possibility of expression. And maybe we can just beat power one or two cycles in advance.

I was trying to think about a way in which those successes could be more cumulative than they have been in the past. I mean, revolutionary struggles, maybe they've all lost, but they've given us something too, right? The world would be a lot worse if people didn't struggle, that's clear. And, the reason I'm suggesting that we use cryptocurrencies in a different way and create financial tools for activists, radicals, and artists is that it might be possible to accumulate spaces of non-extractive economic cooperation, which could then be extended because they're more convivial. It would be nicer to work in those spaces than to be exploited. And that possibility might not be recuperated in the next cycle of exploitation. Because the difference between representational contracts and what's sometimes called a "smart contract" in the blockchain parlance, is that the smart contract has to execute the way it is written computationally, and it's cryptographically secure, so it really can't do anything other than what it's programmed to do.

Vivian Ziherl: Something that I find profound about your

work, Yazan, having spent a certain amount of time looking at Palestinian art in doing research for the 2016 "Jerusalem Show," was to realize that what you've produced is a *militant* image. This helps to periodize the systems of governance that are being inhabited. If one thinks of the 1970s in terms of a Palestinian militant image, one thinks of images of weapons and flags: as a representation of militant power regarding a struggle over nationhood. What *I, The Artwork* depicts is the apparently mundane image of a legal contract captured within a domestic setting And part of what Yazan's work enables is to grasp that: oh, wow, okay, there's been a real transfer in the nature of power, in that the most militant image a Palestinian artist can produce at this point in time is a contract that governs the purchase terms of an image, rather than an oppositional image in itself.

EP: Yazan, the militant statement in the artwork is that the artwork refuses to be incorporated into the settler-capitalist regime. But it seems to me that the power of the work, and I might be wrong, is that it doesn't really care about the actual contract behind it—I mean it does care and it doesn't care.

YK: I guess one thing about this work is that it doesn't have the other contract. It somehow also refuses it. I imagine one of its best scenarios would be that an Israeli museum collects it, or an Australian museum. This would expose a certain kind of contradiction in the institution itself. You could say that it's like I'm trying to think of artworks that are made specifically for Israeli institutions and collectors. It has this militant act, but at the same time, it's not a closed work; it's open for interpretation. Does Israel consider itself a settler-colonial state? If not, they can buy the work. But then, as a viewer you will go there and say *oh, really*? It brings up these contradictions, if Israeli institutions buy into the trap.

EP: It does seem for me that the power is in its mimesis—that is, the collapse of the artwork as a person contractually—but also in the deeper trap, which is that when the settler state tries to do a runaround on it, tries to treat the artwork as separate from the contract, then it finds itself with a bomb in its hands.

JB: Well, the contract seems to say that there can't be art in a settler-colonial state. It's a violation of its being, of its integrity as art, and I think that's a very powerful indictment of all art institutions in settler-colonial states. I'd like to know if you would be interested in working with programmable money. I think you could do some amazing art projects with programmable money, which would then accrue to certain spectators but be inaccessible to other spectators, for example. It would allow a kind of collective ownership of the artwork, which would expand as it was disseminated in the way that you wanted it to be disseminated, and could not be disseminated in other ways.

DK: There is a contract—of a sort—inside the work. There might well also be a contract that accompanies the work, perhaps containing identical terms. I agree that the work, as you suggest, is a statement about the difficulty of art existing under a certain set of political, economic, or structural conditions. But we can also detect the fragility of the subjecthood of the work, which has little to do with the larger circumstances.

For example, the artwork declares and then proceeds to define itself: "My size is 120 by 79.2." That condition is more or less certain, if you produce the print. "The artwork's frame is not white but of natural pinewood, 1.5 centimeters wide and 3 centimeters deep, covered with a 3-milimeter non-reflecting glass." I'm sure that not every curator with whom you've worked has in fact hung the work in that way. And then the contract within the artwork sets out other conditions—for example, where the work may be hung in relation to other works. Through the form of a contract, the work defines and asserts itself, but the subjecthood upon which that definition depends is radically contingent on some set of basic physical characteristics, which are hard to secure, even in the most felicitous of exhibition conditions.

EP: I think that's one of the reasons that the Colorado River case popped up when I was thinking through this. What I think is happening here, both semiologically and in the future genealogically as these other forms of gapping start happening, is a double gapping—and then it's gaps on gaps on gaps, or distantiation—and the thingy-ness of the thing becomes a site of a real political struggle. Where is it? Who is it? What is it? Why is it here versus there? Who—if we're going to say it's there—who is going to put the effort into maintaining its there-ness?

Because you could be a person here, and you're a person there, and I'm a person, but some effort has to be continually sucked from somewhere and put somewhere else to keep it in place, to keep it a "natural" pinewood frame, a body that's somewhat secured, a territory that can resist this occupation or not. And thus it's a political demand that if you want to keep this thing in place, then you have to put the effort in. Rather than simply the gap itself, it's the call to maintain the gap.

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Elizabeth A. Povinelli

Horizons and Frontiers, Late Liberal Territoriality, and Toxic Habitats

Two imaginaries of space have played a crucial role in the emergence of liberalism and its diasporic imperial and colonial forms, and have grounded its disavowal of its own ongoing violence. On the one hand is the horizon and on the other is the frontier. These two spatial imaginaries have provided the conditions in which liberalism—in both its emergent form and its contemporary late form—has dodged accusations that its truth is best understood from a long history and ongoing set of violent extractions, abandonments, and erasures of other forms of existence, and have enabled liberalism to deny what it must eventually accept as its own violence. The horizon and the frontier: these two topological fantasies anchor the supposed world-historical difference between liberal governance, as a putative normative orientation and specific rule of law, and all other past and possible future forms of relationality. Let us tackle first the horizon as a *sine qua non* of liberalism's toxic inhabitation.

Ah, the horizon; Jürgen Habermas captures the hold it has on liberal reason: "Horizons are open, and they shift; we enter into them and they in turn move with us."[1] They might be historical horizons within one community, or the translational possibilities between two or more—both are where the truth of liberalism lies.[2] There are facts, as Habermas says, and there are norms. And it is in the norms, or in the measure between the facts and the norms, that liberalism claims its world-historical exception from other state forms of violence. But tell that to those who are subject to liberal facticity. They will respond that this ever receding vista of liberal norm is the liberal fact—indeed fact after fact shows no such norm exists in fact. Instead of a norm, the horizon is the deployment of a spatial imaginary to bracket all forms of violence as the result of the unintended, accidental, and unfortunate unfolding of liberalism's own dialectic. The use of portraits of indigenous peoples and black and brown bodies as mental and social savages that has justified the appropriation of lives, the extermination of bodies, and the destruction of lands: liberal apologies finally uttered in statements that describe these violent representations and actions as aberrations of its own ideals. The vicious absorption of entire worlds into the logics of liberal capitalism: the apology that it should have been done more gently and with more cultural and social sensitivity. Or as Christina Sharpe suggests, the liberal horizon is in fact the wake where African men, women, and children struggle to find possibility in the impossible after-space of the transatlantic slave trade, in which liberal capital claimed to be traveling toward a new ideal man.[3]

In *Economies of Abandonment*, I described these worlds of existence that are forced to find their way in forsaken and disavowed liberal space between fact and norm as inhabitants of the brackets of late liberalism.[4] For them the "accidents" and "exceptions" define liberalism when the horizon is withdrawn. For them the problem is not that they are not allowed to reach the norm but that there is no actual norm. Instead, the ideal-norm is what allows

liberalism to act with impunity in the present, what allows liberalism to believe that its acts of violence are justifiable or unintentionally unjust. The cunning of recognition is one mode in which this maneuver unfolds.[5] After decades of anti-colonial and radical social critique ripped apart the justificatory surface of liberalism's claim to be sacking worlds in order to extend civilization, liberal recognition apologized and proclaimed its desire to hear and find worthy the massive crowds of existence that it had previously interned in the exception. And like neoliberal economics, liberalism shifted the burden of the care of the self away from itself and onto those it has already harmed, in a doublespeak that imposed a double bind onto the legally enunciative possibilities of others. *Just tell us your cultural and social values. Just don't tell us anything that will actually threaten the "skeleton of principle which gives the body of our law its shape and internal consistency."*[6] This doublespeak double bind of recognition—this revised horizon of the Human—marks all others as *having been let in*. This mark genders and racializes the bodies of all excluded from the horizon of whiteness, a point Franz Fanon made long ago, and which has been more recently discussed by Denise Ferreira da Silva.[7]

In short, the horizon is not the End of a certain Man but a mechanism by which a specific violent history of some men is kept from ever landing. Even the Man doesn't actually want to arrive in the land the horizon hopes for. If he lands he will be no different than any other form of existence. Worse, he thinks, he will be worse off without this simmering distinction he once had but has now lost. Others will not lose this fantasy, because it was never theirs. How quickly then do we see any announcement of an actual End of History excitedly announced to have been a mirage?[8] The Spirit lives on, violently unfolding its own inner horizon temporally and spatially. Let us hitch a ride with Elon Musk to Mars my friends, to Mars. There we can once again disavow the toxic destruction of existence far away on a long-forgotten earth. And here we catch a glimpse of how the horizon can be easily transformed into a frontier. Thus it is not surprising to find liberal political theory speaking equally of justice, law, science, and social difference as both horizon and frontier. Both are the *toward-which* the spirit of a certain kind of man soars, powered by fear of the toxicity he has produced and left behind in so many sacked worlds.[9] And thus we come to the frontier and its dynamics.

The frontier has, of course, a specific linguistic and social etiology, dating from the fifteenth-century French word of the same spelling, referring to the place where two countries meet, the abutting edges of sovereign lands. Later the frontier would be absorbed into Anglo diasporic discourse and law as the contested space between civilized and uncivilized natures and cultures. Thus the frontier moved, in discourse, from a space between two sovereign powers to the space between civilization's sovereignty and the terror of barbarity. It is where the
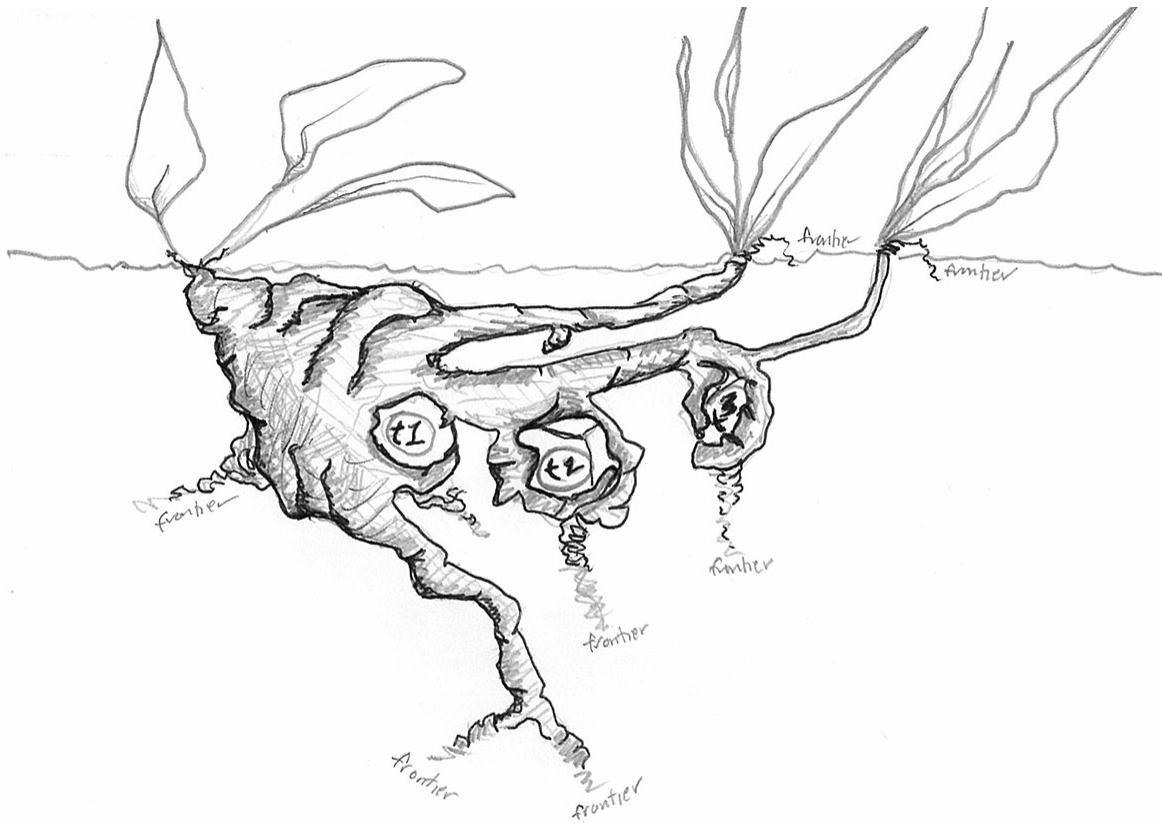
sovereignty of civilization might be upended by other nonsocial imaginaries. No matter Foucault's partition in the modes of governance (sovereignty on the one side and discipline and biopolitics on the other)—it matters little what form liberal governance takes when it peers over the horizon of the colonial frontier. Nor does it matter whether we use Schmitt's marking of 1492 as the date when the *nomos* of the world emerged as Europe used various flags to territorialize the earth, or whether we insist that it was only with the globalization of neoliberal capitalism that this global *nomos* settled in. In all of these cases, what matters for those on the other side of liberalism's claim that it acts violently only when civilization is at stake, or only when it is mistaken in its understanding of the cultural and social qualities that exist on the other side of the frontier, is that a power is seeking to advance an ever larger territoriality of rule.

It is the view from the other side that first critiques the sovereign, his sovereign powers, and its ancient theorists—Jean Bodin, Hugo Grotius, and Thomas Hobbes. And it is from spaces such as Critical Indigenous Theory that a demand for an exit route from more modern theorists, such as Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, can be imagined. Western political theory has used sovereignty figures to create the frontier in discourses of law and discovery, of war and expansion, of empire and its liberation that in turn transform space into a contest

between the rulers or a contestation between the ruled and the unruly. In both frontiers the physics of this megalomaniacal vision of sovereign expanse across a frontier is Newtonian. It is the physics of bodies at rest or motion, of opposing forces, of equal and opposite reactions. But between rulers the frontier should be a border where reactions should end, where the politics of peace should reign. Once the war has been won, the frontier secured, the politics of sovereign peace keeps all bodies in their proper place. All bodies that oppose internal rule are the disruptors of peace, terrorists. Thus terrorists can come from anywhere, from the middle, the edges, from nowhere. They create strange interior frontiers—the slum and the ghetto, the internet and the whistle-blower—because the frontier emerges whenever borders are punctured or perforated, are not secured or recognized.

Even a secure border between rulers is a notional frontier not only because, no matter how precise the demarcation, some material space must hold the demarcating difference between here and there and between them and us, but also because a border and frontier are effects and affects of a specific political theology—a belief that absorbed the realm of the divine into the function of the lawful border. A worldwide territorial order had a heavenly seal, a spirit of justice with its own centers, peripheries, and frontiers. Thus Haiti could be within France, and yet

where the application of the rights of man were concerned, it was a frontier. The British could massacre and mourn those who were in the Americas and Australia before it arrived with its right to create a sovereign order over a lawless expanse. And the Monroe Doctrine allowed the US to declare frontier spheres within spheres within spheres of its own domination. The sovereign law decides what is border and what is frontier, when one becomes the other, when the energies accumulating in the space where two bodies are pressing against each other should be bracketed or liberated so once again opposing forces and reactions can be set in motion. There is no left or right to this model. There is only this position against that—your space and time against mine.

Many theorists have struggled to describe the space on the other side of the frontier—whether internal or external, whether spaces emerging in the wake and the brackets of recognition—as containing within them something other than an immanent sovereignty. How finally to think power and space without frontiers and horizons? Perhaps the most widely embraced answer has been to think with Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome. After all the rhizome, in form and dynamic, as Deleuze and Guattari argued, is a decentered network analytically exploring space as a method of unfolding itself: "Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions ... the rhizome is made only of lines: lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature."[10] Karen Barad sees the rhizome as allowing a quantum understanding of political and ethical rule.[11] The rhizomatic frontier is organic, mechanic, and quantum—a hunk of ginger and swarming ants; the internet; the "now you see it and now you don't" nature of Schrödinger's cat. The root can be broken, the nest scattered, data routes closed, objects disturbed by quantum logics. But each will start again—the root now has two separate surfaces through which it can reconstitute and expand itself; the ants set off in search of new crevices; the hacker opens portals; the cat grins. The rhizome does not mind the lattice because it provides a condition for spatially unfolding. Put anything in its way and the rhizome simply alters its shape. It absorbs its surroundings and becomes something else without remorse. It is not cruel but it is without guilt or shame. The rhizome is not what it is but the multiplicity of its potential becomings. The frontier is merely the nature of its own self-unfolding. Some believe that this becoming makes the rhizomatic frontier a space of radical motion. In stark contrast to the sovereign and its frontier, the motion of the rhizome is "an acentered, nonhierarchical, nonsignifying system without a General and without an organizing memory or central automaton, defined solely by a circulation of states."[12]

But perhaps we should not rush too quickly past the amnesia of the rhizome—the fact that it doesn't remember where it started or where it is going. It just goes. This thing, this motion without memory or remorse, can suffocate what it encounters as systematically as the sovereign at the frontier—even other rhizomatic forms, motions, and dynamics. What in the concept of the rhizome keeps us from thinking of settler colonialism as rhizomatic? In 1492 a Protestant rhizome, cleaved from a fibrous unfolding Christian European bulb, floated to the Americas and began the process of its own reterritorializing. This settler rhizome happily threw off its previous form and declared its new becoming, a liberation from anything past, a new Jerusalem, a mode of sociality that was relentlessly everywhere and anywhere, and without remorse. It dug in and changed the nature of the ecology. Like invasive ants it took advantage of scraps of food offered or left behind. Newtonian physics did not phase it. Every event of opposition provided an opportunity for a swarming. It surrounded what impeded it and declared the new form to be of its own making. What in the rhizome makes it one side or another in the endless game of espionage and counterespionage, insurgency and counterinsurgency? Nothing; it has no sides in the sense of a sovereign border. Hackers happily hitch a ride on mom and pop businesses, international corporations, or state agencies. The US National Security Agency turns to hackers to hack a terrorist's phone. The frontier is wherever an opportunity for movement is afforded.

Edouard Glissant long ago noted as much, distinguishing between forms of rhizomatic rooting. It is not rooting per se that presents the problem, but totalitarian rootings and the overdetermined conditions of nomadism:

> Take, for example, circular nomadism: each time a portion of the territory is exhausted, the group moves around. Its function is to ensure the survival of the group by means of this circularity. This is the nomadism practiced by populations that move from one part of the forest to another, by the Arawak communities who navigated from island to island in the Caribbean, by hired laborers in their pilgrimage from farm to farm, by circus people in their peregrinations from village to village, all of whom are driven by some specific need to move, in which daring or aggression play no part. Circular nomadism is a not-intolerant form of an impossible settlement.[13]

But "the Huns, for example, or the Conquistadors" perfected an "invading nomadism" whose goal was to "conquer lands by exterminating their occupants."[14] As if they were the advanced runners of a spreading plague from which they believe themselves to be immune, "conquerors are the moving, transient root of their people."[15] These followers would root down into the charred landscape, claiming it as property, fencing and commodifying it in a new form of conquest—the conquest of private cultivation.
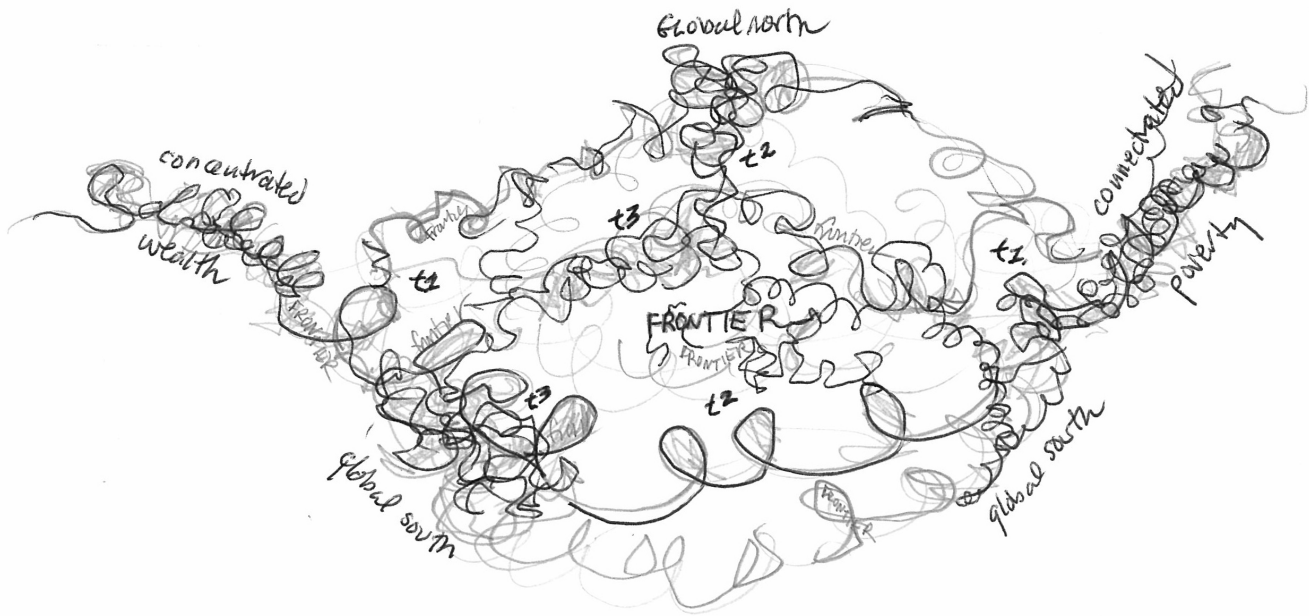
Of course the conquerors were not immune. As Glissant's fellow Martiniquean, Aimé Césaire, wrote, the virus would soon turn and consume them, but not before much else of the world had been lost: "Each time a head is cut off or an eye put out in Vietnam and in France they accept the fact, each time a little girl is raped and in France they accept the fact, each time a Madagascan is tortured and in France they accept the fact, civilization acquires another dead weight, a universal regression takes place, a gangrene sets in, a center of infection begins to spread" and the poison seeps "into the veins of Europe" such that "slowly but surely, the continent proceeds toward *savagery*."[16] This savagery began and continues against forms of existence that are thrown over the other side of the frontier, thrown overboard as the privileged steam toward the horizon. These are overwhelming brown and black bodies, the subaltern and the indigenous, interned in the brackets of recognition. Thus it is not the sovereign or the rhizome that matter but the mode and purpose of the movement, the presuppositions about how forms of existence are related to each other, are fashioned from within each other. The goal is to not become a state in the face of an invading state. It is to not grab an anthropologist to act as your diplomat across ontological and cultural borders. Indeed, diplomats create state-effects—they create the state they claim to be speaking on behalf of in global meetings. Pierre Clastres registered an ongoing refusal on the part of his interlocutors among the Guayaki in Paraguay to not become a state simply as a reaction to

being confronted by a colonizing one.[17] Contemporary critical theorists like Audra Simpson, Glen Coulthard, and Aileen Moreton-Robinson have amplified a formation of human and nonhuman belonging that refuses the frontier options—to be a sovereign state against other sovereign states or to be the unruly frontier of a sovereign expansion.[18]

Across all of these works the question it is not Newtonian or quantum physics, nor the confrontation between two equal or unequal forces, nor the unrooted movement of infelicitous unfoldings (nor of militant fidelity to specific movements or confrontations). The question is how routes and worlds and how extimate existences are enhanced or sacked by forms and imaginaries of movement. How does this thickened space come to force other regions to conform to its way of existing? What kinds of trailings, seedings, separations, and connections are left along the way as entire infrastructures pull stuff back and forth? How compacted is the material? What embankments are formed in the process? Where does the stuff of these embankments come from? What indentations are left behind? Europe did not predate the history of its multifaceted and violent dispossession of other modes of existence. Europe was not a value that spread or failed to spread its message globally. As W. E. B. Du Bois and Frantz Fanon argued, Europe, and by extension the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina,

etc., built itself from externalizing its expansion into and onto the bodies of others. It ate up and shat out others elsewhere than it claimed to be. The Congo was not in the Congo but in the shiny streets of Brussels; Congolese spirits haunt the streets of Europe, built as it is from their lands, bodies, and worlds. As Aileen Moreton-Robertson points to in her reading of Critical Indigenous Theory against Critical Race Theory and Whiteness Studies, the modality by which race was used to exterminate and dispossess actual native peoples provided one condition for another modality in which different black and brown people were dispossessed of their bodies to labor for others. Thus a differential but shared relationship exists between the extractive machinery of Western privilege and the epistemologies and ontologies that legitimate this privilege. And it is within these spaces that a refusal to be either horizon or frontier continues.

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All drawings by the author.

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Quoted in Fred Reinhard Dallmayr, *Small Wonder: Global Power and Its Discontents* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 185.

2
Jürgen Habermas, *Between Fact and Norm* (MIT Press, 1996).

3
Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Duke University Press, 2016). Edouard Glissant famously described this wake as consisting of three abysses that Africans faced as they entered the hull of the slave ship: the abyss of the belly of the boat itself, the abyss of the seas where many were cast overboard, and the abyss of memory as their traditions receded under the viciousness of removal. See Glissant, *The Poetics of Relation*, trans. Betsy White (University of Michigan Press, 1997).

4
Elizabeth A. Povinelli. *Economies of Abandonment* (Duke University Press, 2011).

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Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *The Cunning of Recognition* (Duke University Press, 2002).

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Mabo v. Queensland (No. 2), (1992).

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Denise Ferreira da Silva, *Toward a Global Idea of Race* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

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Elizabeth A. Povinelli, "After the Last Man: Images and Ethics of Becoming Otherwise," *e-flux journal* 35 (May 2012) http://www.e-flux.com/journal/35/68380/after-the-last-man-images-and-ethics-of-becoming-otherwise/ .

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Martha Nussbaum, *Frontiers of Justice: Disability, Nationality, Species Membership* (Belknap Press, 2007).

10
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* , trans. Brian Massumi (University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 8.

11
Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Half Way: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007).

12
Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* , 19.

13
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 12.

14
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 12.

15
Glissant, *Poetics of Relation*, 14.

16
Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* , trans. Joan Pinkham (Monthly Review Press, 1972), 35–36.

17
Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: Essays in Political Anthropology* , trans. Robert Hurley (Zone Books, 1989).

18
Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty,* (University of Minnesota Press, 2015).

Sometimes my hair is black fire sweeping through an
infected landscape polluted by the rotting
corpses of white supremacists I imagine I am one of my
ancestors overlooking Tséyi´ watching all
the corn fields ablaze and then someone hits the
fastforward button and then I'm suddenly
standing on the washington side of the columbia river
gorge watching a forest fire light up the sky
in the black womb of nite

I stop to blink my eyes and realize I'm actually sitting on
the opposite side of a computer screen
watching it documented in a .gif image and the swell of
devastation rolls over me like a musical
score and it is at this moment I am reminded that my DNA
predates the concept of a bitmap
image this is the way settler colonial trauma settles into
the body of the colonized we
unconsciously re-live the genocides and brutalities
inflicted against our ancestors the shame the
rape the beatings the enslavement the white bodies with
their killing machines and unholy
structures of torture and discipline the distrust the disease
the disgust the deceit the miseducation
and immoral fixations the flamboyant uniforms

my ancestors will not let me forget this and every
american flag is a warning sign even the one my
grandfather was given as a Code Talker

Demian DinéYazhi'

An Infected Sunset
(Excerpt)

Untitled (Thrift Store Still Life), 2016. Part of a series of still life photographs assembled by the artist in thrift stores around the United States. These still life scenes are designed by the artist that respond to the secondhand objects sold in these shops, and through their engagement, the artist recontextualizes these objects and concocts momentary disruptive and subversive reflection for the passerby.

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Demian DinéYazhi´ (born 1983) is an Indigenous Diné (Navajo) transdisciplinary artist born to the clans Naasht'ézhí Tábąąhá (Zuni Clan Water's Edge) & Tódích'íí'nii (Bitter Water). Growing up in the colonized border town of Gallup, New Mexico, the evolution of DinéYazhi´s work has been influenced by his ancestral ties to traditional Diné culture and ceremony, matrilineal upbringing, the sacredness of land, and the importance of intergenerational knowledge. Through research, mining community archives, and social collaboration and activism, DinéYazhi´ highlights the intersections of Radical Indigenous Queer Feminist identity and political ideology while challenging the white noise of the contemporary art movement. DinéYazhi´ is the founder of the artist/activist initiative, R.I.S.E.: Radical Indigenous Survivance & Empowerment, which is dedicated to the education,

perseverance, & evolution of Indigenous art & culture. DinéYazhi´ also serves as co-editor of the zine *Locusts: A Post-Queer Nation Zine*. They are the recipient of the Henry Art Museum's Brink Award 2017 and will have a solo exhibition opening at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA in March 2018.