Gabriel N. Gee, Caroline Wiedmer (eds.)

MARITIME POETICS

From Coast to Hinterland

[transcript] Culture & Theory

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Maritime Poetics

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Foreword

This volume *Maritime Poetics: From Coast to Hinterland* began with a workshop organised by the TETI Group – Textures and Experiences of Trans-Industriality – in May 2018 at the independent art space Corner College, Zurich. The workshop accompanied an exhibition in two parts entitled *Hinterland: the eyes of the lighthouse; blood as a rover,* curated by Gabriel Gee and Anne-Laure Franchette. Many of the authors and artists contributing to the present collection of essays took part in the workshop, which opened grounds for further dialogues and collaborations on maritime representations and narrations, as they come to inform our present interconnected societies. The maritime in this volume is seen from the vantage points of the *present,* albeit a present constantly nurtured by past and historical ramifications; of *Europe,* although a European continent perpetually tied to global routes and faraway seas and lands; of *aesthetics,* yet an aesthetics that unfolds through different artistic voices and practices in a radiant interplay with the many ways of life that make our contemporary worlds: architecture, engineering, mathematics, politics, literature, botany, trade, military, environmental sciences, history, psychology…and poetry. And it looks at these maritime waves from the hinterland, far from the shore where nevertheless the whiff of the sea, once one starts looking for it, becomes a flagrant bouquet engulfing fields, mountains and streets alike.

The editors would like to thank all the contributors to the volume for their enthusiasm and commitment to this textual maritime project. We are also indebted to Dimitrina Sevova and Alain Roth, for the initial invitation to organise an exhibition at Corner College, Zurich and we thank Temperatio Stiftung for its support of the exhibitions in 2018. The research workshop which accompanied the exhibitions and this publication were made possible by the support of the Swiss National Science Foundation which promotes

scholarly research. We also thank Franklin University Switzerland for the platform they offered us to try out our ideas in the classroom and for their support of our research. We finally, and always, thank our families for reading and commenting on our work and for accompanying us on our many visits to port cities.

Introduction: maritime introspections

Gabriel N. Gee and Caroline Wiedmer

Janus, the two-headed God, looks out and looks in. Down the Palatine hill in Rome, next to the church of San Giorgio in Velabro, not far from where Romulus and Remus were said to have been found by the she-wolf, stands the Arch of Janus Quadrifrons. It was erected in the early fourth century under the reign of Constantine, at the northeastern tip of the Forum Boarium, the cattle market of ancient Rome. Sixteen metres high and twelve metres wide, with an archway on each of its four sides, this arch of Janus served as a monument and a gateway to the commercial centre of the Roman capital. The Forum Boarium dates back to the time of the Republic and is strategically located between the Palatine, Capitoline and Aventine hills, and the Tiber River. Janus, the God of passageways, of going in and out, was venerated in Rome from time immemorial. In the Forum Romanum, the temple of Janus geminus had been consecrated by Numa Pompilius, the second king of Rome, in the seventh century BCE. Its door remained open in times of war, and closed, if only very rarely, in times of peace. The God with two faces, one looking outwards, the other looking inwards, presided over the fortunes of a growing territorial and commercial empire. As it was required to channel increasing amounts of goods to feed the capital, the Portus Tiberinus, built under Servius Tullius in the sixth century next to the Forum Boarium, became congested. The seven hills are situated some twenty miles inland from the sea. In the first century BCE, the fortress at Ostia on the coast was further developed into a city. The need for a deep harbour port remained, and under the reign of Claudius digging eventually commenced.[1] The Portus,

1 Jason Urbanus, 'Rome's Imperial Port', *Archaeology* March/April 2015, accessed 2 June 2019, https://www.archaeology.org/issues/168-1503/features/2971-rome-portus-rise-of-empire#art_page6.

Rome's harbour, was developed just north of Ostia. Two gigantic moles were built into the sea to protect the inner basin. Trajan, in the second century CE, added an artificial hexagonal basin that could accommodate another two hundred vessels. A canal connected the port to the Tiber and to the inner city. In the Vatican, a sixteenth-century fresco depicts the imperial harbour from above, with its geometric complex of palaces and warehouses surrounding the hexagonal core and the spherical outreach onto the sea. The Portus was a strategic infrastructural feat, as well as a symbol of Roman might for all visitors. On an artificial island between the two moles, a lighthouse signalled the entrance to the harbour. Out, into the imperial routes and networks; in, to the hinterland and the million-strong inhabitants of its capital.

With the fall of Rome in the fifth-century the Portus was progressively abandoned. The figure of Janus, however, has remained a looming presence on European coastlines. The voyages launched in the fifteenth century to circumvent the African continent and cross the Atlantic Ocean in search of Indian markets metaphorically revived the divinity's double gaze. European port cities grew as privileged gateways to foreign wealth and inner splendour. No longer confined to coastal navigation, Spanish caravels and Dutch fluyt roamed the oceans in search of spices, gold and slaves. With the development of lens technology, the lighthouses that were built at the thresholds of port cities – from the seventy-six-metre lanterna di Genoa to the Gothic brick tower of Bremerhaven, from the Brandaris lighthouse perched on Tersehlling island in Friesland to the Bellem lighthouse at the mouth of the Tagus – have endorsed the role of Janus beaming in and out to safely bring sailors to and fro. Industrialisation in the nineteenth century furthered the European hold on global markets, as the lighthouse shone stronger than ever before, thanks to the adoption of the Fresnel lens.[2]

In the past fifty years, however, European port cities have experienced considerable changes to their morphologies and identities. The introduction of the standardised container in the 1960s contributed to the acceleration of global interconnectedness, while simultaneously introducing a caesura within port cities as container terminals were developed out of the urban

2 Theresa Levitt, *A short bright flash: Augustin Fresnel and the birth of the modern lighthouse* (New York, London: Norton, 2013).

core to accommodate new transportation vessels.[3] In Europe, the shift took place in parallel with the global decentralisation of major maritime industrial assets, bringing economic downturn and social hardship to many harbour cities. Nevertheless, these metamorphoses can also be seen as having opened a path to emancipation from a formerly narcissistic relation to the sea and the world beyond: European port cities could gain a capacity to see the Other within themselves, thereby potentially undermining the self-centred perspective that had nurtured colonial expansionism.[4] Artistic practices engaging with maritime heritage have been noteworthy for articulating such an alternate set of aspirations, and for creating a multipolar identity for the European port city of the twenty-first century. If the seventeenth and eighteenth-century seascapes could capture and represent so strikingly the changing networks of European trade and political outreach, the late twentieth century witnessed a diversification of aesthetic perspectives on ports and the sea, exploring a range of critical and poetic interventions through various media. The present collection of essays explores facets of this introspective turn.

Continental epiphanies: the inward gaze of Narcissus

European port cities developed long-distance networks in the ill-named 'Age of Discoveries'. From Lisbon and Cadiz, Amsterdam, London and Stockholm, vessels sailed to the Americas and the South China Sea. In parallel, the Renaissance saw the adoption of a new pictorial construction based on a mathematical system throughout Europe. The window onto the world, however, tended to serve as the projection of an inner vision, which commanded a powerful normative framing of the world. The encounter with the Other beyond the seas was thus largely undermined by a self-belief that could work

3 Martin Stopford, *Maritime economics* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 3d ed.; Marc Levinson, *The box: how the shipping container made the world smaller and the world economy bigger* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); Brian Hoyle, 'Global and local change on the port city waterfront', *Geographical Review* Vol. 90, no. 3 (July 2000), 395-417.

4 For a developed discussion of narcissism and the port city, see Gabriel N. Gee, 'Beyond Narcissus. The metamorphosis of port cities in the 20th century', in Gabriel N. Gee & Alison Vogelaar, *Changing Representations of Nature and the City: The 1960s-70s and their Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

against an understanding and appreciation of difference and dissimilar viewpoints. This infatuation was broken in the 1960s, in the opening of a 'Beyond Narcissus'.[5] The normative gaze of modernity came into question, as did the binary separation of nature and culture it had promoted.[6] In Ovid's tale of Narcissus, the boy who fell in love with his own reflection, there comes a moment, right before he drowns, when Narcissus realises his mistake. He sees suddenly that it is himself he has been looking at with adoring eyes. The cosmological crisis that engulfed Europe in the aftermath of World War II prompted an inward turn, a questioning of identity that implied a critical enquiry into national self-beliefs. The introspective gaze that emerged in European politics, philosophy and aesthetics at the turn of the 1960s was accompanied by a psychological retreat from the seas. For one thing, decolonialising movements shifted Europeans' gaze from overseas to their own shores, where generations of migration and exchange had been shaping increasingly hybrid societies. Secondly, if the standardisation of shipping containers begun in the 1960s obeyed the logic of maritime efficiency, it also shifted the attention of port cities away from the seas to the hinterlands. The gaze of Narcissus turned from the water below, and his own reflection, to the earth beneath his feet.[7]

Three sites command the iconological regime of this introspective Narcissus: the coast, the port city and the hinterland. Coasts have long been inhabited by humans; coastal communities were among the first human settlements, benefiting from a combination of fishing and shell picking in the sea, and silvan and agrarian cultivation on land.[8] In the twentieth century, human populations throughout the world have converged on coastal areas

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5 Gabriel N. Gee, 'Beyond Narcissus: the metamorphosis of the port city in the 20th century', in Gabriel N. Gee & Alison Vogelaar, *Changing Representations of Nature and the City: The 1960s-70s and their Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2019), 25-39.

6 Among major studies that have explored this rupture, see Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes: essai d'anthropologie symmétrique* (Paris: La découverte, 2006); Philippe Descola, *Par-delà nature et culture* (Paris: Gallimard, 2005).

7 Our attention to the inner territories was triggered by Paolo Perulli, who suggested considering an inversion of the Narcissus gaze at a TETI 2014 workshop on changing representations of nature and the city, and prompted a further reflection with artists on this inward-looking continental Narcissus.

8 John R. Gillis, *The Human Shore: Seacoasts in History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 33-35.

in unprecedented numbers.[9] The pleasures of a leisured life spent on the seaside had emerged already in the nineteenth century, alongside intensifying industrialisation. The beach, a desert unfavoured by our coastal ancestors, was discovered by increasingly urban societies looking for a connection to 'nature'. Gustave Courbet tipping his hat to the sea in *Le bord de mer* à *Palavas* (1854) emblematically captured this new sentiment. In the late twentieth century, access to the seaside was democratised. Where Courbet's painting portrays a solitary figure facing the mighty elements, the photographs in Martin Parr's book of photographs, *Life is a beach,* depict congested shorelines with bodies crammed next to one another in 'Vina del mar' and 'Cartagena, Chile' (2007), large-scale ice cream cones and tourist trucks on the sand in 'Mablethorpe' (2008), and everywhere the microcosms of home adapted to the outdoors: chairs, magazines, coolers, blinds, barbecues, musicians, even a television, all installed on the new frontier. The densification of coastal areas has also led to the erection of housing walls on many shores. Christine Nicolas' watercolour panorama *trait de c*ôte (2013), displays on film, in a 24.57-minute travelling sequence, the built-up façade of the French Mediterranean coast near Marseille. Such walls, seen from the sea, depict a layered inhabited depth on land. The series of photographs entitled *Bord de mer*, taken by Gabriele Basilico on the Northwestern French coast as part of a DATAR commission in 1984-85, show the strata of coastal occupation, from the waves breaking on the sand and the huts on the seaside to the roads following the coastal relief, the car parks and the residential districts stretching far into the land, as well as the cranes and industrial infrastructures that are as much part of the coastal landscape. The coast is a border, which is more than a mere line drawn into the sea but is also a layered assemblage of structures, functions and people oscillating on the shoreline.

Standing at the junction of the sea and the hinterland, the port city also serves as a gateway between the outside and the inside, between the world beyond and the world within. A city, particularly a port city, may be inclined to revel in its own scintillation. Hubert Damisch in *Skyline. La ville Narcisse* queried the possibility of an urban Narcissus: 'What of a Narcissus of the city? What would be his difference with a Narcissus of the meadows or the woods and sources? To which forms, to which modalities of narcissism, which are

9 See for instance statistics for inhabitation on the European coastlines: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics.

bound to influence his visions of the city, is the urban dweller reduced?'[10] The city, with and through the mediation of its inhabitants, can become engulfed in its own image. The port city, rooted in the sea rather than in the land, historically faced an expanse from which its identity and its desires were channelled and in which they were mirrored. With the estrangement of port terminals from core living areas in the 1960s and 70s, European harbour cities have re-centred on de-maritimised urban nuclei, connected to the sea through marinas and regenerated docklands. There, cultural institutions have come to occupy former warehouses and quays, from the Tate Liverpool (1988) to the Guggenheim in Bilbao (1997), while the erection of new cultural landmarks, such as the Elbphilarmonie in the HafenCity in Hamburg (2018) or the Mucem in Marseille (2013), attest to the growing importance of the cultural economy in the European harbour city. Simultaneously, the break with the imperial past brought on by the reorganisation of global maritime economics in this period opened a path towards self-enlightenment, as port cities were able to gain a better understanding of their own hybrid textures, manifest in the historical transnational circulation of people, habitus and networks. This opening paved the way for a critical reappraisal of the past, particularly regarding colonial legacies, as exemplified by such works as Fiona Tan's re-reading of the travels of Venetian merchant Marco Polo in the video installation *Disorient* (2009), which engages with the tensions inherent in global trading, or in the series of exhibits and events co-organised in Liverpool, Bristol and Hull by Keith Piper in 1992 entitled *Trophies of Empire*, which addresses the dark heritage of Colombus' first transatlantic voyage, whose quincentennial was celebrated that year.[11] Such critical aesthetic enquiries into the port city's maritime past and present could, through an inner turn, paradoxically liberate a maritime gaze blinded by its own desires. This revelation has been a characteristic of the development of European consciousness in the late twentieth century – albeit a contested one.

Narcissus, emancipated, looks inside himself; in true Janus fashion, he can see beyond and within, where corridors lead to the European hinterland.

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10 Hubert Damisch, *Skyline. La ville Narcisse* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2001). '*Qu'en serait-il d'un Narcisse des villes, dans sa difference d'avec le Narcisse des champs ou celui des bois et des sources? A quelles formes,* à *quelles modalités de narcissisme, qui n'iront pas sans retentir sur la vision qu'il peut avoir de la ville, le citadin est-il réduit?*'.

11 *Trophies of Empire* (Liverpool: Bluecoat and Liverpool John Moores University, 1994).

In economic geography, the hinterland designates a space within which a transportation terminal sells its services.[12] The natural hinterland is the area that is technically serviceable by the transportation terminal. The 'fundamental' hinterland describes the area within which access and proximity guarantee a monopolistic relation to the terminal, while the 'competitive' hinterland points to the areas where various terminal outreaches overlap. In Europe, different spheres of service structure commercial transportation networks, with major sea-land terminals in Hamburg, Antwerp, Rotterdam and le Havre commanding continental routes, and Athens, Algeciras, Lisbon, Varna, Dublin, Hull and Copenhagen-Malmo servicing interconnected regional hubs. In the opening sequence of Allan Sekula and Noel Burch's 2010 documentary *The Forgotten Space*, the camera floats in the mouth of the Meuse while the narrator evokes the land behind us, 'a greedy continent'. Global trade is a key force in the strategic organisation of current territorial infrastructure. Simultaneously, however, the logics of capitalistic production and consumption, as they have reached out further to the East with the fall of the Berlin wall, have been punctuated by an anxious reflection on their 'collateral' consequences in the planetary age. From the photographs of earthrise taken by the crew of the 1968 NASA Apollo 8 mission, to the emergence of the term 'anthropocene' in the first decade of the twentieth century to describe the impact of human activities on the planet, a question mark has grown over the world's insatiable search for surplus-value.[13] The metabolic processes whereby nature and materials are extracted, transformed and redistributed are handled on tectonic scales. The representation of these processes, their anticipation as well as their negation, constantly feeds back into the fabric of territories, altering their course and destination.[14] The internal gaze of Narcissus, overlooking the European arteries that connect the Atlantic to the Alps, the Mediterranean to the German woodlands, the North Sea to Central Europe, implies a localisation critique: the overlapping of boundaries and the fragmentation of scalar anchorage generates pressure on

12 Jean-Paul Rodrigue, *The Geography of Transport Systems* (New York: Routledge, 2017).

13 Heather Davis & Etienne Turpin, 'Art & death: lives between the fifth assessment and the sixth extinction', in *Art in the Anthropocene. Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies*, eds. Heather Davis & Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015), 3-30.

14 Nik Heynen, Maria Kaika, Eric Swyngedouw, eds., *In the Nature of Cities. Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006).

self-identities, urban, rural, regional, national, transnational. Poetic investigation combines a critical perspective necessary to identify the pressure points of the present, as they are rooted in historical determinations, with a lyrical imagination that can formulate novel collective forms of anchorage for the future. The iconology of this European hinterland, in correlation with expanding planetary navigations, will have to focus on the new hybrids of an anxious but enlightened self; the urbanised mountain,[15] the botanic building sites,[16] the rural industries;[17] a maritime poetics will consider, in particular, the juxtaposition of the continental land and the sea, or the land as sea with its currents, its winds, its routes, its islands, its regal companies and its pirates. This internal charting can guide the new mappings of the critical European soul.

Stories of metabolic pressure

Stories are crucial to these new mappings. From the ancient world and its enthralling myths to the age of discoveries and colonial quests; from the industrial awakening to the shockwaves of the murderous twentieth century, and into our own bourgeoning century of vast progress, unmoored elements, mass movements, viral threats, tumultuous political shifts and deep ensuing uncertainties, stories have served as conduits for the multiple changes that increased globalised connections and competition have brought to our societies. Port cities, which tend to function as a continent's canaries, have often sensed those transformations first. We can thus read the fundamental implications of their direct physical and symbolic involvement in world trade, their extraordinary geographic exposure to the elements, and their crucial function as a relay station of pressures that pulsate both out to sea and into the hinterlands, as changes in metabolic pressure, which often manifest as changes in narrative tensions.

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15 Christian Schmid, 'Travelling Warrior and Complete Urbanization in Switzerland. Landscape as lived space', in *Implosions / Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, ed. Neil Brenner (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), 90-102.

16 See Baustelle und Botanik, a TETI group project led by Anne-Laure Franchette and Gabriel N. Gee.

17 See for instance the research of the Dalvazza group in Switzerland, or workshops such as Whitechapel's June 2019 'The rural assembly: contemporary art and spaces of connection'.

At no time in history has narrative not been fundamental to culture; there has never been a culture in which competitive stories were not both anchors of stasis and drivers of transformation, constituting norms and imagining the new. As Anthony Amsterdam and Jerome Bruner put it, stories 'are deeply concerned with legitimacy, they are about threats to normatively valued states of affairs, and what it takes to overcome these threats'.[18] By exploring threats to the everyday, by imagining what might happen if norms were broken, stories also help us understand not only what is, but what could be; not only where we have been, but where we wish to go.[19] They help us imagine foreign continents on the scent of a spice, a silken touch, the glitter of gold, and the titillating notion of the savage; they re-structure societies around clattering trains and smoke-belching factories; they issue warnings of impending war, even as they send soldiers to the battlefield with glorious tales of what it means to be a hero; they project environmental dystopias that find their way into policy papers and international accords; they track deadly pandemics while tracing the social fracture lines left in their wake. There is no getting away from stories. To speak with Roland Barthes, 'narrative is international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself'.[20] But while the act of story-telling is universal and transhistorical, each individual story is embedded in its own time and place, and equipped with extraordinary sensors for drama, and change. Stories, like port cities, are so good at portraying and grappling with impending upheaval because one of their most elemental functions is to make and break norms, and to establish new equilibria. This is also why many cultural changes first show up in the urban tissue of port cities and then proceed to act as bulwarks to change in other realms.

Narrative is at once pre-generic and pan-generic; it animates all forms of expression: architecture, logistics, art, maps, images – both moving and still – objects, sounds and, yes, literature. And the stuff of narrative is broad. It stacks the elements of plot, time, reversal, crisis, place and human suffering in a myriad of forms: in fiction, fact, or myth; in photography and film; in

18 Anthony G. Amsterdam and Jerome Bruner, *Minding the Law* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 121.

19 Amsterdam and Bruner, *Minding the Law*, 124.

20 Roland Barthes, 'Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives', *Music, Image, Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 79.

song, urban design and other forms of expression. Stories can, for instance, animate the gossip we share with a neighbour, the graphs that show us the fate of humankind, buildings that soar into the skies, and government pronouncements on war and peace. Narratives also cling to objects: in this volume, we encounter plastic pellets and sand kernels, lenses and lighthouses, ships and a dead polar bear, all of which are saturated with their own stories, even as they forge new ones within this collection. In the port city, stories help pick apart the strands of the social, the economic, the spatial, the biological and the ecological to reveal their interconnectedness in the urban texture, and their function in the metabolic pressures that are continuously at work.[21]

Many of the stories we hear, and believe, and tell without thinking twice, are pre-structured by stock narratives – narratives that have been handed down through the ages and that pattern our thinking – and many of those narratives, in turn, are iterations of myths from ancient times. These stock stories hold archetypal characters and cultural truths, such as the idea of 'the soldier' that we associate with ideas of 'heroism', 'bravery' and 'sacrifice'. These notions are continuously tested and help determine our actions and shape our cultures. Janus, the two-headed god, and Narcissus, the love-besotted boy, looking inwards and outwards, and deep into a pool of water, are each part of a roster of such archetypal figures that get tailored, through the centuries, to what matters to a given culture, to a given time, and to a given place. In *Maritime Poetics,* Janus and Narcissus help to forge a corridor into the images, objects and stories offered up by the artists, curators and academics assembled here. Their work, and the stories about their work, coalesce around the sea, the shore, the coastal city and the hinterland, and give individual interpretations on how these sites are connected and why they matter to us today. The collection places particular emphasis on the European continent and its histories, as seen from the maritime front. The European conquering narrative that stretched its muscles out into faraway lands and seas from the time of the ill-named 'discoveries' of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries was superseded in the twentieth century by a shift in perspective under postcolonialism. On the one hand, this has led to an ontological uncertainty as its hitherto centred perception gave way to

21 Nik Heynen, Maria Kaika & Erik Swyngedouw, *In the Nature of Cities – Urban Political Ecology and The Politics of Urban Metabolism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 12.

mobile shifting grounds, and the margins moved inwards. On the other, it has opened new philosophical and political possibilities in Europe to rethink the world's narratives – and indeed those of the twenty-first century, and the planet's – at a time when globalised exchange is perceived as all-encompassing, enlightening in the cultural reorientation it fosters, and destructive in its adherence to the problematic logic of economic accumulation coupled with toxic, essentialist and introverted narratives.

The pertinence of critical approaches stemming from European lands and intellectual traditions has itself been the object of competing diagnoses. Walter Mignolo, in a series of de-colonialising reflections focussing on 'the dark side of Western modernity', calls for 'breaking the Western code' that has nurtured, since the Renaissance, a colonial matrix of power with tragic and sombre consequences for humans, nature and planet alike.[22] Assessment of the role of economic narratives is here crucial, akin to Marshall Berman's twentieth-century revisiting of Karl Marx's famous phrase, 'all that is solid melts into air',[23] pointing to the capitalist economic system's cycles of creative destruction, which Neil Brenner queried in the early twenty-first century through a series of collective investigations into current forms of 'implosions-explosions'.[24] The capacity of Western modernity to develop critical discourses parallel with the implementation of forms of blind materialism has been powerfully queried by Dipesh Chakrabarthy in a study significantly entitled 'Provincializing Europe'.[25] Here, the author aims to balance the usefulness of critical tools inherited from the European traditions dating back to the Enlightenment, with their bruising historicising perspective, which systematically brushes aside narratives and points of view that do not abide by its conventions; tellingly, Western thought is described by Chakrabarthy as both 'indispensable and inadequate'. Much here resides in the identification of the narratives at play in history, and their value and agency in the present. In his 2019 study *L'héritage des lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité*,

22 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011).

23 Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (London, New York: Verso, 1982).

24 Neil Brenner ed., *Implosions / Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Berlin: Jovis, 2014).

25 Dipesh Chakrabarthy, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000).

Antoine Lilti suggests that, while postcolonial critique in the second half of the twentieth century has been instrumental in unveiling the troubled legacies of European thought, attention to the inception of eighteenth-century philosophical, economic and political discourses reveals a much more nuanced picture than that of a complicit and generative matrix.[26] In particular, scrutiny of debates and discourses of the Enlightenment reveals an array of interrogations, uncertainties and critical investigations rather than a uniform doctrine, and as such can inform a decentralised interactionist cultural construction of the present.

Switzerland itself, home to many of the contributors to this volume, possessed no colonies; its past and present economic entanglements, developmental strategies, politics of neutrality and national narratives have therefore often flown below the radar of postcolonial scrutiny. With their postcolonial approach, Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi and Francesca Falk, editors of a 2012 volume entitled *Postkoloniale Schweiz: Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien*, offer an important scholarly corrective to the complex imbrications of cultural, economic and political practices that have shaped Swiss society and identities for over a century.[27] They have also shifted the perspective on colonialism and its legacies to the margins of empire, to Switzerland as one of the mediators and accomplices of colonialism, to use Shalini Randeria's terms in the introduction to the volume: to one of the nations that was centrally involved in connecting the actors of the colonial project, while the traces and consequences of this intermediary position remained largely shrouded or misunderstood for much of the last century.[28] By applying concepts from postcolonial theory, such as transnational entanglement, everyday racism and the spectacle of the exotic, to Swiss cultural practices, the volume lays bare these traces and provides the background to many of the contributions in our own volume.

26 Antoine Lilti, *L'héritage des lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité* (Paris: EHESS, Gallimard, 2019).

27 Patricia Purtschert, Barbara Lüthi, Francesca Falk, eds., *Die Postkoloniale Schweiz. Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012). See also Patricia Purtschert and Harald Fischer-Tinté, eds., *Colonial Switzerland: Rethinking Colonialism from the Margins* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

28 Shalini Randeria, 'Verflochtene Schweiz: Herausforderungen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien', in *Die Postkoloniale Schweiz. Formen und Folgen eines Kolonialismus ohne Kolonien* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2012), 10.

The panorama two decades into the twenty-first century appears complex. This volume aims to explore the complexity of globally interwoven narratives as they coalesce on European shores, as well as their maritime heritage, through the lenses of aesthetics and artistic practices. The particular nature of aesthetic thought, what the art historian Pierre Francastel has termed 'la pensée plastique',[29] offers, if used appropriately, a privileged channel through which to revisit, reposition, displace, translate, and rephrase the world. Therefore, each of the texts in this volume, placing particular emphasis on artists' voices, proposes representational strategies that link up politically and aesthetically with these planetary issues as perceived through their maritime corridors. In particular, by giving space to visual artists' voices and narratives, the collection explores the manner through which poetics, here more specifically anchored in the tradition of the visual arts, can contribute to the unpacking, but also, crucially, to the re-visualisation, and to the re-orchestration, of our interconnected stories.

From coast to hinterland

Maritime Poetics is structured in four parts, each featuring a critical analytical chapter followed by a series of artistic reflections stemming from individual practices, and offering up a distinct story about the work of each artist. The volume's narrative arc is spatial, beginning with the sea and how it interweaves with the port city in terms of urban transformation, commerce and ecosystems; then proceeding inwards into the hinterlands via intricate tributaries of commerce, mobilities, and dreams; before ending, submerged, in a return to the sound universe of the deep blue sea.

Part I of *Maritime Poetics*, entitled 'Work and leisure in the port city', focusses on the balance of work and leisure in relation to maritime economies and exchange. It assembles contributions that consider the cultural and political shifts in port cities that have occurred in the second half of the last century and continue to inform our present age. These writings unfold against the historical backdrop of urban, social and geographic dislocations of port terminals – Hamburg and Altona in the North, Naples and Genoa in the South – which have come under pressure from the massive re-organisa-

29 Pierre Francastel, *Sociologie de l'art* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970).

tion of global maritime economies. Along with these shifts, many traditional professions associated with the seaport, such as sailing and navigation, the loading and unloading of cargoes, their storage and distribution, came to an end or were deeply transformed. In terms of the urban fabric, this 'retreat of the sea' left numerous vacant spaces, both physically and mentally, that prompted regeneration strategies based on cultural economics related to trans-industrial changes in the late twentieth century. These, in turn, also affected the identities of waterfronts and city-centres, with the transformation of former commercial docks and buildings into condos and shopping malls. The contributions in this section explore the ambiguous nature of these transformations.

The opening chapter in this section, by Vanessa Hirsch, curator at the Altonaer Museum, traces the history of Altona, once an independent city, now a district of Hamburg, and its relationship to the Elbe river, which connects the city to the North Sea. As Europe's first free port, Altona holds the distinction of releasing its manufacturers from the yoke of a guild, thus enabling mass production of goods; moreover and perhaps most importantly, the status of free port guaranteed freedom of faith, a feature which always set it apart from Hamburg, its larger competitor only a few miles down the Elbe. Hirsch describes three distinct aspects of Altona through the lens of recent exhibitions at the Altonaer Museum that emblematise the institution's distinctive remit for the area between the North Sea and the hinterland, in particular that of northern Germany and the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein. She evokes the importance of the Elbe for the founding and development of Altona as a port city, before looking at a photographic history of stereotypic images of Northern Germany that derive from the artistic visions in nineteenth-century painting. Finally, Hirsch introduces the museum's interdisciplinary tour through 130 years of urban development and citizen movements.

Johanna Bruckner's piece, 'The future of work: scaffolds and agencies', takes us to the present day, to a brand-new multi-use redevelopment project in HafenCity in Hamburg, just a few miles down the road from Altona, to reflect on the effects of the redevelopment on workers and inhabitants alike within the framework of late capitalism. Her narrative focus is on the various forms the replacement of labour economy through automation might take, and on her artistic activism, which carves out politically organised scenarios of action. In films, performance scripts and writing, she investigates

the possibilities of the so-called robot tax – a tax to lessen the social costs of the replacement – or the impact of the Universal Basic Dividend, that would distribute to all citizens dividends sourced in a public trust from shares in companies. Her work not only serves as a support system to the workers of HafenCity, but also produces narratives in which she adapts the archetype of 'the worker' and the modernist space of the docks into story elements fit for the twenty-first century.

Genoa, with its intricate layers of history, stories, images and perspective, is the focus of Cora Piantoni's film, which she discusses in her piece entitled 'Genoa: the story of a port city and its hinterlands'. Interested primarily in radical movements of the 60s and 70s, Piantoni creates a palimpsest of stories she gathered about various social groupings that gave the city its special flavour: memories of the anti-fascist Radio GAP group that would hijack the airwaves in Genoa during commercials in the 70s to broadcast their own messages of protest, intersect with stories about the Campagnia Unica, an association that fought for worker's rights and essentially ran the port until it was privatised in the early 1990s; an encounter with the *Trallalero*, a group of performers of traditional regional songs, interacts with a glimpse into the Casa d'Albertis, the house of a former sea captain who assembled a cabinet of treasures brought back from his travels, including the statue of Genoa's most famous son, Columbus, looking out over the port.

Giuliano Sergio, an art historian, concludes this section with an essay entitled 'European seaport narratives: mirroring history in contemporary media', in which he trains our attention on the relationship of the ancient port city of Naples with forms of visual narration capable of resurrecting the city from ill-advised urban development. Specifically, Sergio recounts how the project of a multi-layered photographic narration of the city-scape commissioned in the 1980s was able to restore hope in a city whose urban fabric had been completely worn down, first by bombing during World War II, and then by a number of misguided real-estate deals in the post-war era that left the ancient core of the city hollowed out by the early 1980s. Together, the photographers and artists involved in the project not only constructed a new aesthetic, one that melded pictorial elements with documentary iconography and allowed for a more profound understanding of Naples as a port city but also proved the power of visual narrative to forge an artistic heritage of place.

The second section of *Maritime Poetics* is about commerce, the motor at the heart of all port cities whose routes have extended to gather products

from afar, from spices and tea to electronics and ready-to-wear garments, and to act as a relay station for transport into the continent. Transportation in parallel has searched inland for both offer and demand, from grain, cattle and fur to be exported, to consumption markets to be found and opened. With the advent of the standardised container, the movement from sea to land and vice versa has been extraordinarily smoothed, with considerable transformations in the practice of maritime commerce on sea (the huge container ships with small crews on board) and on land (the expansion of motorways for trucks, rail and canals). The growth of financial sector activities, and the crises that have engulfed them repeatedly since the 1970s, are also of relevance to the shaping of the merchant imaginaries of European port cities. In the arts, this commercial aspect has often been explored through its negative side, greedy exploitation and the rule of money at the expense of people and communities. The contributions to this section aim to explore the forms of such a critical aesthetic while considering the intrinsic historically commercial propensity of port cities.

The M/S Maritime Museum of Denmark in Elsinore is one of a string of European maritime museums dedicated to the representation of the trade and commerce that have formed the core of port cities over the centuries. Gabriel Gee's chapter, entitled 'Market stall: maritime commerce in the collections of European maritime museums', investigates how the representation of trade as the hinge between land and sea elucidates its transformative powers, for good and for ill, from the sixteenth century onwards. Reading a number of maritime museums, among them the Hellenic maritime museum in Athens, Gothenburg's history museum and the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, London, Gee shows how self and other, national identity and global reach interact differently from one location to the next, and how the narrative forms on offer in maritime museums – seascapes, maps, photographs, object, logs – shape our contemporary understanding of our discursive place in maritime economics, past and present.

If Gabriel Gee gives us an overview of collections typically held by maritime museums, the artist Cliona Harmey zooms in on one of the objects that made maritime history: the lighthouse, in particular the Fresnel lens. This lens, invented in the early 1820s, links both ancient and modern spaces and marks the transition to modern globalisation with corresponding systems of logistics and navigation. Her essay, 'From lighthouses to barcodes', tells the story of the Fresnel lens, its prototype in a lighthouse in Courdouan in

France in 1823, and a more advanced design installed in 1880 in the Poolberg lighthouse in Dublin against the backdrop of a significant increase in overseas trade. The lens, meanwhile, was symptomatic of a more pervasive urban transformation that mirrored the uptick in trade. It accompanied the modernisation of the city of Dublin with expanded retail and commercial spaces, and the building of banks and a railway station along with new technology that enabled ships to recognise the lighthouse according to its specific light sequence. Finally, it furnished at the time the blueprint for modern controlled spaces such as airports further inland, and in the future.

Each of the next two essays, 'The European tour', by photographer Gregory Collavini and 'Bottleneck pressure: Port Said', by artist Jürgen Baumann, takes us on a trip: Collavini invites us along on the Amerigo Vespucci, a large container ship en route from Hamburg by way of Rotterdam and Antwerp to Le Havre before the ship veers left to set course for China, leaving Collavini behind in France. The short six-day Hamburg to Antwerp stretch is one of the most heavily trafficked routes on the planet. Collavini's essay is not so much focussed on trade itself as on the people and the ship without which trade is unthinkable; a conceptual contemplation in word and image on the micro-society of people who choose to live their lives on a ship, and in an environment where time and space are measured in nautical miles, knots and seaports. Baumann, meanwhile, journeys from Cairo about one hundred miles through the Nile Delta to Port Said, which sits at the entrance to the Suez Canal on the Mediterranean side. His work reads like a postcard home sharing his impressions of the lush delta, the city of Port Said and the amazing sights of huge cargo ships lumbering through the desert on the canal. The piece mingles the purposefully nonchalant tone of a tourist's journal, on a day trip to one of many sites of interest in the world, with the heavily laden history of the canal, which opened in 1869. It represents a direct route from Asia to European maritime traffic, was the object of military dispute in Egypt's quest for independence and is thus highly symbolic of colonial conflicts and post-colonial emancipations.

The third part of *Maritime Poetics* revolves around the socio-environmental processes that occur at the intersection of sea and land. This part is entitled 'Metabolic pressure'. Essentially, it looks at the impact humans and objects have on land when they arrive on a given shore, and how that impact loops back to shape them in turn. It pays attention both to social and natural environments in port cities against the backdrop of a surge in environmen-

tal issues and awareness, and to a period that has witnessed dramatic and often tragic human migration. The place where sea meets land is imagined here as a zone of crisis in the sense of the Greek root *krinein*, to decide, and the later concept of *krisis*, a separation, distinction, judgement or interpretation. These latter definitions speak to what we typically do when we need to decide an action after being confronted with an unknown: we separate and distinguish it from what we already know, we judge its merits based on existing norms, and we interpret it in gestures of storytelling, hoping that by enveloping the new in an already established story it will become part of it. In other words, we help transfer the foreign object into our own cosmologies via a narrative. In that respect, the essays and interventions privilege a reflection on movements stemming from the sea and the shores to the land, cities and territories located inland.

Caroline Wiedmer opens this section with a chapter entitled 'Tarnished gold: border regimes from the Mediterranean to Switzerland', in which she follows the routes forged by refugees in the recent mass migration from countries in the Middle East and Africa into the European continent through the lens of *Eldorado*, a 2018 film by Swiss filmmaker Markus Imhoof. Her investigation revolves around the ongoing scramble to strengthen European border regimes and erect new ones in form of physical barriers, political agreements and accords to seal off the continent and to navigate responses dictated by national narratives to stem what many have considered a crisis in the sense of a turning point: a critical onslaught warranting extraordinary measures. She analyses *Eldorado* both as an informative background to this investigation, and as a text that represents a version of the hybrid genre of docu-narratives, which tries to grapple with the 'crisis' of migration by separating, interpreting and judging the evolving concepts of belonging and citizenship surrounding mobile lives as they interact with both past and present exigencies.

Monica Ursina Jäger's artistic research takes us to Singapore, a major gateway of global maritime economic networks founded as a British colonial outpost in the early nineteenth century. Jäger's work engages with the sand mining, sand trading and land reclamation that form the bedrock of the island-state. Her essay, 'Liquid territory', captures the malleability of a natural element that has been used to create new promontories and hinterlands; in fact, fully one-quarter of Singapore is built with imported sand, much of it from Cambodia, using global political and regulatory strategies that are

part of Singapore's national identity. In the process of becoming new land, meanwhile, the sand is drained of its original cultural heritage and geological specificity, as it is turned into a uniform aggregate to expand the political territory of the island nation in an alchemy that turns nature into nation.

The next two pieces, 'They cleaned the beach before we arrived', by Anne-Laure Franchette, and 'Between the city and the deep sea: on the plastic nature of the Helsinki shoreline', by Tuula Närhinen, address ecological cycles at the sea's edge that manifest in detritus and flotsam such as seaweed, driftwood and plastic. Franchette describes a journey she made to the Greek Island of Amorgos, the easternmost island in the Cyclades. Patches of seaweed and driftwood on the beach as it awaited the tourist season moved her to learn more about the botanical and symbolic qualities of the local vegetation, and about what had happened to the trees on Amorgos, which had once been so numerous that the island's former name was Melania, the dark one. What she found in an interview with Vangelis Vassalos, a local plant expert, were tales of myth, ecology, sea-land cycles and mismanagement – stories about natural resources and their commodification that contour the cycle of nature and sea. Närhinen's reflection also considers drifting maritime creatures, albeit further down the evolutionary ladder. The location of Närhinen's studio, on a small island off the coast of Helsinki, allows her to study seashore ecology up close. She has been collecting flotsam composed of plastic waste, and her essay is a meditation on the origins and meaning of the plastic world that has engulfed our natural waters. The products of her intervention as an artist, both beautiful and terrifying, remind us that we have become both producers and onlookers in a cycle of human-made pollution that is out of control.

In the last story of this section, entitled 'No trophy', Michael Günzburger speaks of alchemy as well, but unlike Jäger does so by engaging with animal lives and human societies' relations to the animal world. His piece is a meditation on his practice involving the transformation of animals into art in a series of prints made of dead or sedated wild animals – a calf, a wolf, a brown bear, among many others – over a number of years. In his tale, which revolves specifically around the crowning achievement of the series, the printing of a polar bear, Günzburger takes up metaphysical questions of man's relationship to animals; an artist's responsibility to their art; the boundaries of what he was willing to do to procure a polar bear to fulfil a promise he once made; and the significance of representing a polar bear in

the first place. Polar bears, he writes, are pure fields of projection; metaphors really, and when you finally literalise the metaphor by touching the actual thing, it transforms the very modes of experience.

The last part of *Maritime Poetics* is entitled 'Dreamscapes'. It takes us into the what-ifs of past and present, showing us the side of port cities and seashores that breeds adventures and fantasies, vast imaginaries and cabinets of tangible and intangible treasures. In an age in which the scale of migration to and settlement of, coasts is unprecedented, 'Dreamscapes' aims to consider the potential of unconscious textures and imaginary realms in the seashores of the twenty-first century, despite the materialism brought to our societies by measurement and rationality. The capacity of aesthetics to explore the past, present and future dreamscapes of European borders and shores is seen here as a crucial step in the process of understanding, representing and positively shaping a multi-textured European identity.

Bryan Biggs' introductory chapter 'Haul away: The Mersey's cultural flow', is a cultural history of Liverpool, located on the banks of the Mersey River, a powerful stream that connects the city first to the Irish Sea and then to the Atlantic. In the 1960s Liverpool became famous for two cultural exports: the Beatles, who played what was known as *Merseybeat,* and a fiery young brand of poets that helped upset the staid world of British poetry in a collection entitled *The Mersey Sound* – two references to the river that captured the combination of grittiness and irreverence that flowed from Liverpool at the time. None of these, however, were the first to set forth from Liverpool: some thirty years earlier, the modernist author Malcolm Lowry had set sail from the Mersey as well, in his case to write books 'about a particular place *from another place*' (like James Joyce, who couldn't shake Dublin even during years of exile). The topography of Liverpool is a mythical site that would surface throughout Lowry's work. Historically, its location at the very edge of Europe marked it as fringe; come the 1970s, it was cut adrift from mainstream England after a long post-war slide, until the EU infused it with structural funding that rejuvenated the abandoned dockside buildings and resulted in the opening of the Merseyside Maritime Museum and the Tate Liverpool. Like Altona and Hamburg, Liverpool, too, had a more successful, more tightly structured sister city, Manchester, whose status as economic powerhouse rendered Liverpool a poor relation. And like Altona, it historically welcomed people from all over the world: refugees, merchants, seamen and slaves, who brought wealth and dreams to the city, which continues to

offer a bedrock of difference that allowed the imagination to flourish to this day.

David Jacques keeps us in Liverpool, interlacing voices from a 2010 installation piece that explored the encounter between maritime industrial waste and virtual imagery in the twenty-first century in his text 'North Canada-English Electric (2010)'. The medium at the heart of the installation and its extended questioning is stereoscopy, a visual device by which two drawings or photographs when viewed by both eyes suddenly seem to become three dimensional. As the artist scrutinises the reconfiguration of Liverpool's abandoned docklands, the site and the forces at play behind it stare back and reality becomes veiled behind a screen of smoke. In the next piece, 'A short journey (from Derry to Inishowen)', artist Conor McFeely engages place, time and materiality in a philosophical meditation that brings together the hinterland of memory and the tangible objects of the everyday. Ruminating on his responsibility as an artist to question the time and place he lives in, he takes a journey through Northern Ireland, from Derry to Inishoven on the Donegal Atlantic coast, to investigate the psychological and physical traces left on the urban and rural landscape over the last 200 years, during a period in which territorial markings in the region have been infused with complex partisan inscriptions.

The last two texts in the volume, the first by Dorota Lukianska entitled 'A letter to Henrietta', and the second by Ursula Biemann with the title 'Acoustic ocean', delve into the realm of fantasy to imagine our connections to the past, and to immerse us in the underwater world of ocean acoustics, respectively. Lukianska reflects on the letters she wrote to Henry, the Navigator, or Henrietta as she imagines him in female guise, King of Portugal, known for his patronage of long-distance maritime journeys in the mid-fifteenth century. In her letter, Henry is not the man he used to be. Rather, Lukianska points to some newfound qualities the former Portuguese ruler's lingering presence reveals to the interrogations of our twenty-first century. Biemann brings up the rear of the volume with an annotated video-script of a work that takes us underwater to experience the vast acoustic and semiotic ecospheres of the ocean, a sonic dimension first discovered by scientists establishing spy technologies in the mid-1940s. That technology, however, not only picked up on human communication relayed through the waters but also on low-frequency vocalisation by whales. Biemann here depicts an argonaut she sent to the edges of Northern Norway, equipped with a range of hydroponic sensing

technologies to connect with the narrations emanating from the non-human world and bring them into sync with a new understanding of an ecosystem under duress.

Part 1: Work and leisure in the port city

Altona: Between land and sea

Vanessa Hirsch

Vanessa Hirsch is a curator at Altonaer Museum, one of the largest regional museums in Germany. The museum presents the cultural-historical development of the Elbe region around Altona, Schleswig Holstein and the coastal areas of the North and Baltic Seas. The collection contains graphics, paintings, textiles, toys and cultural-historical objects from the fields of arts and crafts, shipping, life, and work in the countryside and in the city. The institution was founded in 1863 as a regional museum for the then independent city of Altona. Today, Altona is one of the seven boroughs of Hamburg. In the following piece, Vanessa Hirsch describes her curatorial work at the institution. She begins by outlining key aspects of Altona's history and its special relationship with the river and the regional hinterland, before moving on to discuss three recent exhibitions. All three exhibitions were multi-faceted projects, using works of art to gain insights into the historical past. Through these displays, Hirsch reflects on the agency of regional cultures in the global age and their capacity to nurture contemporary mythologies.

Altona was an independent city from 1664 to 1937, until it was merged with Hamburg. Today, Altona is one of Hamburg's seven districts. In 1664, Altona was given a town charter by the Danish crown to encourage growth as a port city and a site for commerce and manufacture. Geographically, the city of Altona was extremely close to Hamburg. As a port city, Hamburg had been a centre of trade and commerce in Northern Europe since the middle ages. The idea in 1664 was to create a competitor to Hamburg in its direct vicinity. The Danish crown hoped to increase taxes by stimulating trade in Altona. In 1664, the Danish ruled the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein. Altona was part of the duchy of Holstein. Hamburg and the region south of the Elbe did not belong to the Danish sphere of influence.

In order to encourage people to trade in Altona, the town chapter allowed things that were forbidden not only in Hamburg but in most other European cities as well. The port was made Northern Europe's first free port. Manufacturers of goods were not forced to join a guild, which made mass production, which was strictly forbidden in Hamburg, possible. Furthermore, and most importantly, freedom of faith was guaranteed. These unique conditions attracted immigration, especially by those who were not allowed to practice their faith in Hamburg: Jews, Calvinists, Catholics, Mennonites. Some, like the Sephardic Jews or Mennonites, were extremely well connected all over Europe and established prospering trading houses in Altona. During the last three centuries, however, Hamburg has always been the far more successful port city, relegating Altona to a mere borough. Nevertheless, Altona is very proud of its legacy as an open city that welcomes foreigners. Today, most of Altona's inhabitants describe themselves as being open-minded, as being a little bit different.

The River Elbe connects Hamburg and Altona with the North Sea, and its riverbanks were used for the ports of Hamburg and Altona. For centuries, the Elbe was perceived as a gateway to faraway regions all over the world. Historically, the river was used to connect the cities with their hinterland. Agricultural goods like vegetables, fruit or corn from regions like *Vierlande* or *Altes Land* reached the towns' markets by boat. In comparison, Altona's ties with its hinterland were always much closer than Hamburg's. The reasons are political: Hamburg has always been an independent city and the surrounding regions were subject to different rulers. Altona, by contrast, was part of the duchy of Holstein; from 1640 onwards, the Danish kings were dukes of Schleswig and Holstein. So, there was no political separation between the city and its hinterland: Altona was part of a region that also shared a cultural history.

Culturally, the duchies of Schleswig and Holstein are shaped by their closeness to the sea. The goods produced in the region were traded in Altona. In regional culture, the sea is understood as a promise. New and extremely fertile land can be gained by diking, agriculture can be exported as ports are close. On the other hand, the sea is a huge threat, as floods can destroy everything in a matter of hours. The sea brings wealth for seamen or fishermen; at the same time the profession is dangerous and ships can easily sink. Since the early nineteenth century, the sea has attracted tourists, still a source of wealth today. As for the maritime business, during the last decades,

there has been a decline in Schleswig-Holstein. Smaller ports along the coasts, engaged in the import/export business, have closed their doors, and fishing has been reduced continually. In contrast, Hamburg's port is doing quite well. Altona's commercial port closed during the 1980s, only a cruise terminal and small marinas remain.[1]

Altona's history is not the same as Hamburg's, which is why it is still worth telling. Altonaer Museum was founded in 1863 by local citizens and run privately until 1888. In 1901, a new regional museum was opened right in the prestigious centre of the town to educate the workers living in Altona about the cultural history of Schleswig-Holstein and the traditions of its pre-industrial society. We still maintain this mission, although we use a twenty-first-century perspective that deconstructs narratives about traditions and elitist views on society. In the following pages, I will describe how this influences my museum work. I will focus on three exhibitions that were mounted in the last decade. The first exhibition, titled *In flux. A panoramatic view on the river Elbe*, offered a multi-disciplinary view on Altona's relationship with the river Elbe; *Quiet peasants and sturdy fishermen? Northern Germany in photography* analysed Altonaer Museum's collection of historic photographs; *Better Living in Altona? City Development in the 20th and 21st Century* gave an overview of urban development in the district of Altona. These exhibitions have one aspect in common: contemporary art was an integral part in exhibitions that dealt with historical topics.

Exhibition *In flux. A panoramatic view on the river Elbe, 2006*

Altona's history has always been closely tied to the river. In 1536, a fisherman from Hamburg was in search of a new business and opened a small inn on the Elbe riverbank, right at the border that separated Hamburg from the duchy of Pinneberg; according to one local legend, Altona's name is an allusion to its location 'all to nah' or 'all too close', to Hamburg. A small pier was added and soon developed into a place for trade; it came to be known as the Altona

1 On Altona's history, see, among others, the following two books: Holmer Stahncke, *Altona. Geschichte einer Stadt* (Hamburg: Ellert & Richter Verlag, 2014), 9-11; Hans-Jörg Czech, Vanessa Hirsch, Franklin Kopitzsch eds., *350 Jahre Altona. Von der Verleihung der Stadtrechte bis zur Neuen Mitte (1664–2014)* (Hamburg and Dresden: Sandstein Verlag, 2015).

Fischmarkt and has been the centre of Altona ever since. Over the years, the riverbank developed into a harbour. In 1664, Altona was given a town charter and its residents started taking up long-distance trade. The town prospered and grew, especially during the eighteenth century.

In 2006, the museum team decided to mount an exhibition about Altona. A short discussion revealed that the most important thing about Altona was its special relationship with the river. We therefore focused on the Elbe as our subject. We wanted to give a multidisciplinary, panorama-like view of the Elbe, yet focus exclusively on the part flowing through the district of Altona, as our institution is dedicated primarily to the history of Altona. The objective was to gain new insight into the history of the city by mixing disciplines, such as politics, economics, biology, as well as literature and the arts. The introductory section in the first room was called 'On the river'. Here, our visitors were given background information on the ships that are such an integral part of the scenery: trading vessels, their cargo bringing the world into town. Which types of ships were used over the centuries, what was typical cargo, where did it come from and who sailed the ships? A second room focused on the themes eminent 'Along the riverbanks': tourism and recreation. Tourists and locals alike enjoy the views, people take strolls, use the beaches, some even swim. A third room was dedicated to the world 'Under the river', focusing on eels as these are typical for the river ecology near Hamburg. Biological background information was mixed with cultural history, including regional fishing techniques, local recipes for eel-soups, interviews with fishermen.[2]

We chose an interdisciplinary perspective, mixing art history, political history, economic history and cultural history with biology. The objects on display were diverse, too: paintings, prints, photographs, ship models, porcelain, textiles, children's toys, taxidermy objects, as well as 100 litres of Elbe-water. To add another layer of meaning, we asked a group of students from the local art academy to contribute their perspective. Over the course of one year, they did their own research and developed artworks. In the end, we were able to show twenty works of art in a wide range of media: film, sound, installation works, paintings and drawings, and sculpture. For instance, a sound installation by Marte Kießling greeted the visitors by using tapes from

2 Baerbel Hedinger, ed., *Alles im Fluss. Ein Panorama der Elbe* (Hamburg: Altonaer Museum, 2006).

the Ship Greeting Station Welcome Point at Wedel-Willkommhoeft, which is a tourist destination on the riverbank. Karsten Wiesel's video work showed all the impressions of a person taking a boat ride from Altona's fish market to Willkommhoeft. Silke Silkeborg, Willem Mueller and Yoonjoo Cho depicted the landscape close to the Elbe in paintings and drawings. Almut Gryptra's work *Exzellentes strong hand mammut* uses worn working gloves found near the river to sculpt a dress onto her own body. All these student works were shown in various sections of the exhibition, their subject matter matched with the thematic sections in the exhibition. One installation work even went on public display outside of the museum. Paul Sochacki's *Loreley,* a neon sculpture, was erected in a public park famous for offering the best views of the river, and of the Port of Hamburg.

Fig. 1: Paul Sochacki, Loreley, 2006 © Historische Museen Hamburg, Altonaer Museum

The work alludes to the myth of Loreley, as described in the famous poem by Heinrich Heine. A beautiful young woman sits high on a rock near the river

Rhine, singing while combing her long blond hair. The skippers on the river get so fascinated by this sight that their ships founder on the nearby cliffs. Sochacki transferred the myth from one famous river to the other. His neon Loreley was meant to lure the seamen on the freighters passing by on their way to the Port of Hamburg. The artist's choice of material refers to the neon signage at St. Pauli and its famous nightclubs, traditionally places where sailors can spend their money. In the exhibition, a sailor's way of life and their traditions was one of our topics in the section 'On the river'. For the museum, the public sculpture was a great way to integrate a part of our exhibition into the everyday life of the Elbe. The sculpture was part of the park for ten years. It had to be dismantled in 2016 when the council needed the location to present other works of art. In general, the students' artworks worked very well. They commented on the historical topics with fresh eyes and an artistic perspective. To me, this was a perfect approach for our multi-disciplinary exhibition.[3]

Exhibition *Quiet peasants and sturdy fishermen? Northern Germany in photography, 2015*

This exhibition aimed to offer an insight into the Altonaer Museum's huge photographic collection. In order to document the regional culture of Northern Germany more than 100.000 photographs had been collected at Altonaer Museum, starting in 1901. Most of these pictures were taken between 1860 and 1950. They depict various local traditions, houses, ships, and tools used for typical crafts. We observe fishermen on their boats, farmers taking in the harvest, women spinning yarn, men and women wearing regional costumes.

To many viewers, these photographs seem to depict the most common stereotypes that come to mind when they hear the keyword 'Northern Germany'. Among the museums' collections, these photographs were not regarded as art. For internal classification, recording aspects such as where and when the picture was taken and the specifics of the local tradition it documented was deemed more important than noting the photographer's name. In total, the collection was meant to be used as a visual encyclopedia of local

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3 Dirck Möllmann, 'Laengsseits. Zeitgenoessische Kunst in der Elbe-Ausstellung', in: *Alles im Fluss. Ein Panorama der Elbe*, ed. Baerbel Hedinger (Hamburg: Altonaer Museum, 2006), 66-71.

culture. Yet, despite this seemingly prosaic use, a great part of the pictures was taken according to the standards of the Pictorialist movement in photography and therefore has a close connection to nineteenth-century painting. By exhibiting photographs and paintings together, we were able to prove that the source of the stereotypical image of Northern Germany as portrayed in the photographic collection of Altonaer museum is part of the aesthetics of nineteenth-century painting.

Fig. 2: Wilhelm Dreesen, At work, 1891 © Historische Museen Hamburg, Altonaer Museum

Yet can the same be true for today? Do the same stereotypes still influence our contemporary perception of the landscape and its inhabitants? Is there anything 'typically local' in the age of globalisation, where the same furniture is sold everywhere? What is a foreigner's view of Northern Germany? Is there a perspective for the future? We invited Polish photographer Agnieszka Rayss to do her own research on these questions by travelling through the region. During her stay, she created a series of photographs that analyse how museum collections construct reality and influence the perception of a region.

Fig. 3: Agnieszka Rayss, Untitled, 2014 © Agnieszka Rayss

Museums isolate objects from their original context. By combining these isolated artefacts, they create their own interpretation of their subject matter. Agnieszka Rayss adapted this museological method. Her series of photographs was exhibited together with the photographs from the museum's collections. Although her pictures have no direct relationship with these historical photographs, her view of Northern Germany is influenced by the past.

The photographer started her research in the storage rooms of various museums in Hamburg, those fascinating rooms where all objects not on display are arranged according to age, genre, material or size. In order to be preserved for centuries, the artefacts are wrapped in paper or hidden under textile coverings. Once they are stored, they will never again be used for their original purpose. We see the portrait of a male figure, whose surface is covered by a very thin fleece layer. There is another textile form, but with a carved horn protruding from it, there is an object wrapped in hessian cloth that is reminiscent of a coffin, a wooden box with a large label, wooden toy horses. Then, nature is visible: a potted plant, jars from a biological collection

containing plants and fish. Then we see a mural depicting trees and exotic birds, and, finally, a beach.

In total, Agnieszka Rayss's pictures summarise the way regional museums work by isolating their main topics. The most typical characteristics of a region are its past and present inhabitants. It is men who create typical artefacts ranging from the wooden box to the carved unicorn. Nature, as represented by biological objects, of course, is another defining aspect for a landscape, as certain plants or animals are typical for a region. Constructed reality, such as a mural depicting a landscape, influences our imagination. Finally, we see a beach at Timmendorfer Strand, the only 'direct' view of a piece of landscape in the series. It can be concluded that Agnieszka Rayss's way of seeing a landscape is influenced by the past. Her view is based on knowledge derived from dealing with various local museums. The present and, consequently, the future, are rooted in the past.

The various museums she approached during the course of her research are used as a knowledge base for her project. According to her, their collections seem to define what is typical for Northern Germany. The photographer adopted their construction of reality in order to transform that construction into her own imagery. She obviously did not want to comment directly on today's stereotypes – instead, she asked about the methodology of historical and museological work, and adopted it for her own camera work. Her images shape a museum-like collection with an artist's approach.[4]

Exhibition *Better Living in Altona. City Development in the 20th and 21st Century, 2018*

This exhibition gave an overview of the history of housing and city development in Altona. A historic tour presented the most important phases of the urban development of the past 130 years: the struggle against the housing shortage around 1890, the creation of healthy housing space for all in the 1920s and the 'co-ordinated' housing policy under National Socialism. After 1945, the vision of a green and car-friendly city was central; from 1965, the focus was on the creation of new centres on the city's outskirts. The urban

4 Vanessa Hirsch, ed., *Quiet Peasants and Sturdy Fishermen. Northern Germany in Photography* (Hamburg: Junius Verlag, 2015).

development of the 1970s, determined and executed by the citizens themselves, segued into the developments of today. During the last two decades, Hamburg's population has been growing steadily and more housing space is needed. For larger new construction projects, the 'mix of thirds' is the rule: one-third subsidised apartments, one-third rental apartments, one-third apartments for sale. Major development projects, for instance, the construction of new neighborhoods, such as 'Mitte Altona' from 2010 to 2018, are accompanied by extensive participatory processes for citizens. Yet, protests against some projects are very common. These protests, but also the participatory processes that are now an official part of urban development schemes, are a direct result of the 1970s when residents in Altona-Ottensen started to protest against development schemes presented by the authorities.

A special focus in the exhibition was put on citizen's movements of the 1960s and 1970s. In the late 1960s, the city planners were led by the ideals of 'urbanism through density' and a car-friendly city. High-rises were meant to offer cheap and comfortable living space on the city's outskirts. Special plans were made for one of Altona's most central quarters: Ottensen, with its Wilhelminian constructions, was supposed to undergo a large-scale reconstruction, necessitating the demolition of large parts.

Fig. 4: Asmus Henkel, Building site, 1982 © Asmus Henkel

An urban planning study presented in 1969, intended to turn Ottensen into the office town 'City-West'. The residents of Ottensen did not acquiesce to the large-scale renovation plans without a fight. They founded citizens' initiatives and demanded the renovation of the old buildings. The plans for 'City-West' were officially abandoned in 1973. Many residents modernised their houses and apartments autonomously and added bathrooms and central heating. Many artists lived in the area, attracted by low rents and huge spaces in abandoned factories. Over the years, former industrial sites were turned into residential buildings or used as offices. Yet the citizens continued to keep a critical eye on developments. They advocated protection of the historic buildings and demanded that more greenery be added to the neighborhood. Today, Ottensen is one of the most sought-after and pricey areas in Hamburg.[5]

One of the many artists living in Ottensen during the 1970s was Michael Bauch. He took part in the protests that were so typical for this era. In 2017, his installation *Mein Dorf Altona* (My village Altona, 1980) was offered to Altonaer Museum as a gift.

Fig. 5: Michael Bauch, Mein Dorf Altona (my village Altona), 1980 © Historische Museen Hamburg, Altonaer Museum

5 Holmer Stahncke, *Altona. Geschichte einer Stadt*, 334-339.

The artist had used relics of a building in central Ottensen to create a red gate. The object was a great addition to the museum's collection, as the motif alludes to Altona's coat of arms with its characteristic open gate. As part of the exhibition 'Better Living in Altona', Bauch's installation was used to illustrate Ottensen's citizen's movement and arts scene with a work by one of its participants. Visually, it worked very well near a historic photograph depicting the entrance gate to a much-debated building site.

Of course, there is a difference between Michael Bauch's installation and the works by Agnieszka Rayss or Paul Sochacki. *Mein Dorf Altona* (1980) is a work of art that is shown in a context where photographs, leaflets or newspaper articles from the same era are exhibited. The installation works as a strong visual signal next to objects that illustrate the way we would deal with historical source material. In a way, the installation summarises this content and offers an aesthetic approach. The latter works by Rayss and Sochacki were commissioned especially for specific exhibitions. The artists were asked for a contemporary perspective on historical topics, to comment on pictorial stereotypes as Agnieszka Rayss did, or to find a contemporary approach to the myth of the sailor. Strikingly contemporary in a context consisting of very old objects from the museum's collections, Agnieszka Rayss's pictures can be read as an invitation to museum visitors to think about their own present-day approach to the topic of the exhibition. One conclusion for the viewers could be that all imagery, past and present, is the result of constructions. Paul Sochacki's installation, on the other hand, transported an important fraction of the content of a complex interdisciplinary exhibition on the perception of the river Elbe right to the riverbank. Besides, it entered everyday life at a site where locals and tourists gather to take in the view and relax. Both commissions are an important curatorial tool to connect historical subject matter with the present. Many museum visitors find a spontaneous connection to these recent works of art. In the next step, they can find an intellectual connection with events or cultural phenomena that are long past. In a way, the artists paved the way for museum visitors, because their contemporary artistic projects have done just that – with striking visual results. In addition, these works offer an emotional approach to museum visitors by making the past relevant to today's viewers and visitors. And this is what a historical museum is supposed to do.

The future of work: scaffolds and agencies
Script for a game developed in dance scores

Johanna Bruckner

Johanna Bruckner is an artist whose work explores, through film installations, performative scripts, and writings, the tensions at the heart of urban and socio-political constructions within the framework of late capitalism. She uses performance and collaborative performative design as an organising principle for social practice, reflection, and new propositions. She has been producing a series of work in the HafenCity in Hamburg, Germany, in an urban area that was once a thriving commercial harbour zone, became abandoned when the container age took over, and is now being redeveloped as a flagship urban district mixing heritage with flexible economic models. The following reflection, which runs parallel to her performative scripts and films, investigates abstract and virtual micro-agencies engulfing the bodies of workers and inhabitants alike in the redeveloped district of the harbour city. In particular, Bruckner unveils the circumstances linking manual labour to macro-data and technological progress from the perspective of automation and the floating fluxes of algorithmic finance at the core of the twenty-first-century port city.

In my recent work, I discuss the transformation of former warehouse areas as vehicles for a new infrastructure and scope for social agencies. In the following text, I look at the HafenCity in Hamburg, a large-scale urban and waterfront redevelopment project characterised by a finance-driven deregulation of space. During the last decade, the area has emerged as a form of governance, in which liberal democratic structures are mimicked in the organisation of residential and public areas. For example, the emerging civic life of the former wasteland is increasingly dominated by data governance and smart homes: electronic money and virtual services in the form of invis-

ible cables and algorithmic instructions remodel the city into a dematerialised stream of desires, labour and play.

Let me here briefly analyse these transformations from a labour perspective. During the final third of the twentieth century, work moved away from the Fordist ethos of production and toward global networks of information and finance, and the realms of desire. The subsequent economic reorganisation of work valued the intellectual, cognitive worker through the semiotic production of meaning, and the workplace became flexible, no longer confined to the factory. Stimulated by the dissolution of labour, life, and leisure, neoliberal victories over aesthetic value led to the valorisation of desire as semiotics.

Going hand in hand with this transformation, the work on construction sites is increasingly regulated by computational technologies, such as software applications, electronic devices that are worn on workers bodies, real-time tracking systems, as well as robotic machines, which increasingly control and automate the working processes. The partial automation of the work also applies to construction processes in Hamburg's HafenCity. In responding to the area's urban renewal one must not only consider the reorganisation of work in the areas of cognitive value production. One must also consider that the workforce is mainly composed of temporary workers from Eastern and Southeastern Europe, and thus, the implications of the automation of labour are played out on a geopolitical level, which will be briefly discussed later in the script below.

So, what are the possible agencies**,** on both a micro- and macro scale**,** inherent in the agonisms that the partial automation brings about? What can we learn from the confrontations among the ubiquitous processes of dematerialisation, the digital fabrication of civic and urban life, and the deregulation of dwellings and built space? What are the methods that reveal dematerialisation to be a bodily, material, organisational practice?

In my work, I usually work with a few performers over several weeks in temporary social settings within which the group develops dance scores that aim to impact the deregulated working structures. These performances take the form of possible collective agencies in dialogue with non-governmental organisations and other representative stakeholders, both on-site and in an international context. Methodologically, the research for my practical work is discussed and dance scores are developed, with the participating performers in the temporary performative settings on-site, which, in turn, feed back into my writing, continuously accompanying my practical work. To be more

specific, the dance scores are developed by the performers on-site, inspired by the experiences and aesthetics of the urban transformations and this research. This interaction between the dancers, the environment and myself is to be conceived as a living, mutating organism, as an ecology of multiple perspectives, which give the emerging choreography its form and aesthetics. The movement emerges not into the proposed setting but out of the dynamic specificity *of the situation*. The bodies in my performances (that later make up my video installations and exhibition settings) act as allegories for forces of materialisation proposing infrastructures of social encounters beyond class barriers and exclusive contexts. These are, for example, an online archive, in which the workforce may share, distribute and collect information on the changes of working structures regarding the process of automation or technology-driven displacement or violence, as briefly mentioned above.

In the following, let me, as an example, briefly demonstrate the reorganisation of construction labour through automation, as a way to carve out politically organised scenarios of action. These are linked to the current developments in finance, labour and logistics in HafenCity, as well as algorithmic infrastructures of leisure (such as smart homes, in which Google and other companies' design apps that interact with you around themes they can track on your social media profiles or consumption behaviour, to entertain you, fulfil your desires, and help you imagine your future; or other sharing technologies that aim at enhancing your life by turning it into a continuous comfort zone).

The substitution of human labour with automated technologies is challenging European welfare systems, generating complex debates about the policies that should be adopted to regulate this process. According to recent discussions between politicians and representatives of other positions, such as unions and activist organisations in Europe, either robots or the companies using them should pay a tax to lessen the social costs arising from an automation's displacement effect. This 'robot tax', some argue, should be used to finance a universal basic income.

According to economist Robert Seamnans, 'the robot tax ends up being a tax borne primarily by the manufacturing sector, and not by other sectors of the economy that will likely invest heavily in automation, including autonomous vehicles in trucking and transport, smart conveyor belts in warehouses, electronic checkouts in retail, etc.' However, the transformations in the former warehouse areas, in particular, are a testing ground for the practical and

theoretical implementation of the robot tax, as well as for discussions of the problems it may cause.

This script for a performed role-playing game (from which I present only a small excerpt here) is not just about the idea of a tax on robots that may indeed be introduced in the future, but also about the social and political impact of displacing a large physical labour force and replacing it with automation. Could a game aimed at rehearsing our solidarity skills respond to the automation of the labour force in the former warehouse territories of Hamburg by suggesting solutions to the problematic displacement scenarios? This game unfolds in such a way that the dancing bodies each stand for a certain figure (which could be, for example, an organisation, a political representative, or a local voice) through which they interact via the dance scores and their voice. In between the movement, they speak the text, from which an excerpt is printed above. It is not a game, which is conceived of winners and losers, as is often expected. Rather, the concept of the game is relevant for me because codes of conduct between the individual positions can be tested and negotiated (which here happens through the structures of movement).

So this game offers us the opportunity to play around with other infrastructure models brought about as a result of automation, and to consider in particular questions relating to the ambiguities of taxing robots. Ethical principles for the development and deployment of robots and artificial intelligence are to be identified and discussed.

Fig. 1: Johanna Bruckner, local labour union, production still

To calculate the robot tax, a worker's last annual income may be used as a reference salary, with income tax and social security charges equivalent to those paid by the worker being subtracted. However, in the case of employment conditions in Hamburg's HafenCity, most of the payments are made by businesses operating under corrupt, deregulated conditions, and thus can hardly be used as reference values for any future operation. The workers in Hamburg's HafenCity receive different incomes for the same work depending on their employer. Most of them work without an employment contract, or work as freelance construction site workers, without knowledge of this fact. Moreover, as most of the jobs that might be created in HafenCity in the future may specifically be taken over by robots, there would be no previous human income to act as a reference salary for tax calculation purposes, as the majority of workers labour without contracts, missing any form of payment regulation. Another complication, especially in the building industry, is that robots may be integrated into other machines so that the boundaries become ever more fluid between automated and non-automated labour.

Fig. 2: Johanna Bruckner, global/international labour union, production still

The alternative to a robot tax, according to the Greek economist/former Greek minister of finance, Yannis Varoufakis, is a Universal Basic Dividend (UBD). A public trust created from shares in all major corporations operating in HafenCity would generate an income stream to be paid out to all citizens. Effectively, society would become a shareholder in every corporation,

and the dividends would be distributed evenly amongst all citizens. Insofar as automation would increase productivity and corporate profitability, the whole of society would begin to share in the benefits. Indeed, as higher profits and their automatic redistribution via the UBD boosted incomes, more funds would become available for the welfare state. Coupled with stronger labour rights and a decent living wage, the ideal of shared prosperity would receive a new lease on life.

In this context, it is essential for the local workforce that this public trust be coordinated by an international network of labourers through a critically decentralised strategy to again avoid the concentration of capital and power in the hands of a few, and the accumulation of capital in a certain territory.

Fig. 3: Johanna Bruckner, a few performers with members of another Hamburg labour global/international labour union, production still

HafenCity is an area characterised by unstable labour relations and working conditions, labour corruption and military-level surveillance, as is known from conversations with labour representatives from the unions IG BAU and Hochtief. Moreover, state and global actors camouflage and obscure one another. For example, governmental control over labour, along with its last hopes of regulation, will disappear when the state loses control over income from goods and their taxation. To whom will taxes be paid if there is no longer a clear division between state and non-state actors? Whose remit will taxation and tax control be?

Fig. 4: Johanna Bruckner, figure against military state surveillance, production still

Increasingly, the technological 'smart tools' and software systems used by companies, such as CISCO operating in the HafenCity, are produced as a result of military tests and/or for military purposes. The idea of a synergy between taxation and the UBI (Universal Basic Income) based on military resources, thus, is not an option in this scenario.
Again, the local workers' union:

In light of recent developments in the sphere of automation, the labour force is likely not only to be confronted with different sorts of work but also with far fewer jobs. More than fifty per cent of existing jobs in the harbour area are vulnerable to automation by means of the 'smart' technologies that are now commonplace and that govern our social interactions. These jobs

are in transport, warehousing, and the remnants of the retail sector. If these predictions are accurate, the existence of a stable middle class seems to be a prerequisite for a liberal democracy.

With the reorganisation of the labour market, the migrant workforce from the Southeast no longer has a place in this scenario because a great part of the labour is uncontracted, and the workers lack social rights. A robot tax destroys these jobs and establishes an invisible multitude of labouring subjects with lost and marginal perspectives, abandoned along with their families to the trade in humans. As an alternative, could the common public trust create new jobs for the former temporary labour force?

As the role of the state, and indeed its influence, vanish in response to these developments and the current transformations in the areas of labour and property, we, the performers, members of IG BAU and initiators of this game-based thinking structure, now call for stronger regulation of the new post-industrial residential urban zones!

The bodies perform in relation to each other, creating a bodily language that temporarily stays autonomous. The bodies' movements are beyond the range and scope of HafenCity's surveillance mechanisms, as they interrupt and disrupt the algorithmic streams of data and finance through the emerging bodily constellations; as they perform as a self-determined, self-composed durational social endeavour, rehearsing the relational accountabilities. Communal knowledge is created through horizontal exchange and learning, and different experiences in the investigation of labour/automation are discussed and put forward.

The organisational practice proposed in my work is simultaneously a general support structure and a yet to be generated data resource available to those who need it. It collates information shared by workers about conditions on-site and is updated with information based on local and situational experiences. Technology has the potential to link agencies worldwide, but it may involve politicising co-ordination and envisaging a future in which education, labour and data have to be considered more closely interrelated. These practices, which we refer to as scaffolding – and micro-agencies – are to be elaborated upon.

Genoa: the story of a port city and its hinterland

Cora Piantoni

The work of Cora Piantoni explores the period before the Fall of the Berlin Wall and the political upheaval at the end of the Cold War. Her practice involves interviews with participants originally involved in historical processes, as well as re-enactments from the past through moving images engaging with socio-political situations. In the following discussion, Piantoni takes seafaring as a starting point to reflect on interconnected maritime stories. Seafaring brings together a variety of viewpoints, experiences and connections among different worlds. Seafarers brought back to port cities stories, objects, and ideas from their passages across the seas. Navigation with its imaginative and speculative potential has long generated myths and legends. In reflecting on storytelling at the heart of the port city, the artist draws from its use of imagination, construction and reinvention in the recollection of historical events. In 2015, Piantoni spent half a year in Genoa. Here, she recalls the people and the stories that she encountered in the Northern Italian port city.

Many historical layers interact in Genoa, a city of treasures and stories. The port as a connection to far-away worlds supports the development of resistance and alternative thinking, in building communities and solidarity with groups at the edge of society, with environments and places in need. I arrived in Genoa early in 2015, to live there for six months, supported by a grant from the city of Zurich. The studio I lived in is in the middle of the old town, close to the port. My family comes from a small village between Bergamo and the Swiss border and I had wanted to live in Italy for ages, to see Europe from an Italian perspective. The port city of Genoa became my temporary home, a city with a history, different communities, archives and stories of resistance to relate to.

Genoa stretches along the coast, a narrow strip between sea and mountains, and sea and hinterland. Genoa's relation to other port cities along the Mediterranean is stronger than to the countryside behind it. From the late Middle Ages, Genoa's fleet was the main contender in the transporting and trading of goods across the Mediterranean sea. The exchange of goods, people, and languages was more intense across the sea than on land, towards Liguria and Italy.

In the early spring, I met Jeff Quigliotti who lives in the countryside, in the Genovese hinterland close to Arquata Scriva. Quigliotti is a historian and farmer who belongs to Valli Unite (united valleys), a cooperative for regional agriculture. He writes texts and participates in discussions, focusing in particular on the protests that took place in June 1960 in Genoa. I was interested in radical movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the Brigate Rosse (Red Brigades) and the struggle against fascist structures in Italy, which were similar to those that occurred in postwar Germany. We discussed my first ideas and Quigliotti suggested I look into an antifascist group from Genoa named Radio GAP. Radio GAP was a small group of former partisans, made up of workers at the port, as well as an animal conservationist, Mario Rossi. He describes the activities of the group: 'We were called "Tupamaros of Bisagno Valley". During the famous night excursions, we went across the mountains from one valley to the next. We could move through the mountains with our eyes closed. We wanted to adopt a few things from the partisans, such as how to find our way through the mountains. However, our mission was to be an urban guerrilla movement.'

During World War II, the hinterland with its steep hills and thick forests was a perfect hideout for the partisans. They fought against Italian fascism and the occupation by the German regime. The antifascist resistance continued into the 1960s and 1970s. Quigliotti and many others I met in the following months, explained to me how important the 'demonstration of the striped shirts' on 30 June 1960 was as an act of resistance and solidarity amongst different parts of society. The unions, the Italian communist party PCI, the students, the dockworkers and a big part of Genoa's population demonstrated against the congress of the neofascist party MSI that was to be held in Genoa.

I had made several films on resistance movements before 1989 in Eastern Europe and the city's united resistance against fascism impressed me. In April 1970, almost ten years after June 1960, Radio GAP started their opera-

tions. Mario Rossi, the initiator of Radio GAP, explains: 'We were broadcasting for the first time because of the planned rally of the fascist Almirante. We asked the Genovese to take to the streets to block this insult. The protest went on for several hours and Almirante's rally had to be cancelled. There were riots and even a dead person. Antifascism was militant.'

The name of the group Radio GAP Gruppi d'Azione Partigiana (groups of partisans' action) referred to the history of the partisans and at the same time used a contemporary medium of communication: television. Radio GAP brought the information directly to the public, into their living rooms. After the news, during the advertisements, their messages interrupted the programme. They chose a strategy of propaganda similar to an artistic action, a communication guerrilla, as in the Situationist movement happening at the same time in Paris.

Giuseppe Battaglia, another member of Radio GAP, recalls: 'It was absolutely new to us. We could enter people's houses very fast and without reading a long text first. And we entered all the houses, even the houses of those who didn't want us. This is similar to what RAI [Italian State Television] does with advertising. We broadcast through the radio and cut into the television program of RAI. We interrupted television programming and inserted our message. It had quite a lot of power and a wide distribution because we were reaching the whole city.'

'The importance of Radio GAP', Rossi continued, 'was that we did something and explained our actions ourselves. We pointed out that there was a resistance movement and there existed another reality with other information. If you simultaneously enter the houses of thousands of people, it isn't easy to manipulate that information. What we did had a violent aspect. People wanted to watch the news or a show with singing. But instead, we were broadcasting our message. People had to turn us off. It was a kind of violence, but this violence was necessary.'

At the end of my stay in Genoa, I made a film about the interferences of Radio GAP.

Fig. 1: Cora Piantoni, Radio GAP, The Interferences, film still, 2016

But before that, I had encountered other groups and their stories, many of which explore the harbour and its history, and together have helped to shape Genoa's identity as a port city. Following my interest in workers' communities and workers' solidarity, I met with members of the dockworkers' union, Compagnia Unica (the only company). In 1340, the dock workers or *camalli* (carriers) founded Compagnia dei Caravana (cargo company), which existed for more than 500 years. Until 1946, the different organisations of the port fought individually for workers' rights with strikes, until they merged to form Compagnia Unica. Before it was partly privatized in 1992, Compagnia Unica ran the whole port, employing workers to load and unload the ships, but also taking responsibility for social issues and acting like a family to its members. The sought-after job of carrier and its symbol, the hook, *il gancio*, was passed down from father to son. Massimo Nicora, member of Compagnia Unica and president of Circolo Luigi Rum, told me not only about the mythical solidarity and responsibility within the community of workers but also about the joy their job at the port gave them: 'The objective is to create something and to know how to maintain it. Every day, we have to invent and change. In 37 years, I have never done the same job twice. We are making the rules on how to work.' In the vicinity of Compagnia Unica's buildings, a wooden walkway leads to the city's symbol, the lighthouse, *La Lanterna*. A group of young architects and urbanists takes care of the museum and the park next to it, making them accessible to visitors. One of the architects is the son of the lighthouse guard; his family lives in the lighthouse. Dedicating their time and energy to keeping it open to the public is one of the many examples of the community's ethos of responsibility for, and relationship with, a singular place in Genoa.

On my walks from the port to the upper parts of the city, I sometimes found hidden green spaces and parks. I met different groups looking after formerly run-down parks. They cleaned them up, built structures, organised events and attracted people with markets, concerts and dinners at Giardini di Plastica (gardens of plastic).

Fig. 2: Cora Piantoni, group portrait at Giardini di Plastica

There is a mixed crowd of theatre enthusiasts and families at Giardini Luzzati and there are students of the faculty of architecture who created a community garden on the university's premises: Liberi Giardini di Babilonia (free gardens of Babylon), in their own words 'a mental and material space to be filled, shared, transformed, and moulded' by the neighbourhood's inhabitants, the students and whoever wanted to join spontaneously with their own story and contribution.

Gardens embody a material heritage of urban planning in Genoa. The city is also filled with memories and an intangible heritage, such as the Trallalero. This is another community, which doesn't work with the environment, but with an immaterial treasure: the voice. Trallalero is an oral tradition stemming from the Trattoria, the bar where the dockworkers used to go for a drink after work. Gathered around a table, they sang in Genovese, the dialect-language, about the worlds brought via the trade routes, from Portugal to faraway shores, mixing in tongues. At Piazza Lucoli, in the heart of Genoa's old town, I would stand in front of Bar Lucoli to listen to the syllables and harmonies coming out of the open windows on the first floor. One day, I climbed the narrow stairs to a room with many chairs along the wall. A group was standing around a table in the middle, looking at each other attentively: elderly men, a few younger musicians and one woman with a deep voice were

singing together a cappella. They were a polyphonic choir, but their voices imitated instruments. A charming old lady welcomed me and explained the different voices: tenor, baritone and contralto, accompanied by several basses and a singer whose voice imitates the guitar. The singers of the three main voices rotated after every song. Sometimes the younger woman joined in. They later moved on to the street, but in this room with the low ceiling, the sound of the Trallalero voice orchestra was much stronger and closer to the original tradition of the dockworkers. Outside on the street, the sounds and syllables of Genovese mingled with the sounds of people doing their Saturday afternoon shopping.

Fig. 3: Cora Piantoni, view from Castello d'Albertis with the statue of Christopher Columbus as a boy

Before leaving Genoa, I climbed up the stairs to the park of Casa d'Albertis, the house of former captain Alberto Albertis, who travelled to distant worlds and cultures and brought all kinds of treasures back home: from branches to stones, from ceramics to masks, from furniture to images. He re-arranged objects and memories into a *Wunderkammer* of sorts, inventing new countries and atmospheres. And between the Alhambra-like dining room with

colourful tiles on the walls and the cave with fabric and oriental smoke in the air, there is the captain's cabin, brought from the ship to land, with portholes overlooking the city. An ethnology museum adds a more scientific approach to the very personal and subjective collection of the captain.

And together with a statue of young Columbus who was born in Genoa, I looked down from the captain's terrace to the sea, with the industrial port and the lighthouse on the right, and the city with its zig-zag of houses stretching towards the left. Container ships and ferries to the islands were coming in before leaving for the open sea.

European seaport narratives: mirroring history in contemporary media

Giuliano Sergio

Giuliano Sergio is an art historian and curator. His research explores the connections among Italian neo-avant-gardes, as well as contemporary photographic practices, and the changing conception and role of artistic heritage and landscape in Italy. In the following text, Sergio takes as a starting point a seminal programme of photographic commissioning in Naples in the late twentieth century that launched an enquiry into the changing fabric and image of the iconic Southern Italian port city. From there, the reflection moves into a discussion of the role that aesthetic representations can play in the present, as they engage with mutating coastal and hinterland landscapes, and seascapes. In addition, Sergio presents an exhibition by Claire Tenu, a video by Lorenzo Casali and Micol Roubini, and a work by Domenico Antonio Mancini.

Introduction

Port cities provide a privileged entry point for the exploration of our contemporary narratives, significantly capturing the major phenomenon of de-industrialisation. We have lost the screen of modernity, now we find the histories, the traditions and the large traces of modern ruins. We are rediscovering old cities, whose powers are charming and poetic. This charm is also the cause of two powerful new phenomena: tourism and gentrification. I am from Venice, perhaps the most beautiful port city in the world. The industrialisation of the last century was the main cause of its present gradual sinking. Today, nearly all the heavy industry is gone. While the erosion of the lagoon seems under control, Venice itself is sinking under the feet of tourists. How do we narrate these phenomena, avoiding the stereotype of

the city's beauty and escaping the magnetism of its decadence? Is a port city able to offer us a new image of itself? Are we able to recognise a new vision for its present and future? Investigating the relation between ancient port cities, modernity and its demise, I will take you to the other coast of Italy, to the southwest, to the city of Naples. In the early 1980s, people were aware that the traditional image of the city had been completely worn down by post-war reconstruction.

In Naples, everything started with the best of intentions: after the bombing of the Second World War, the municipality was looking for a solution to redevelop the city. In the 1940s and 1950s, architects and city administrators worked for years on three different urban plans. Real estate developers were able to manipulate the new regulations so that after two decades, building speculation had devoured all urban spaces in the historic centre, changing the image of Naples forever. Faced with this urban disaster, in 1981 the architectural historian Cesare De Seta decided to call upon a new generation of photographers and asked them to search for a new interpretation of Naples. The project, curated by De Seta, was commissioned by the tourist office of the city and appeared in several editions until 1985; it was probably the first photographic project promoted by a public institution to produce a critical representation of urban transformations in a postmodern Europe. For the first time, photographers were called upon to explain the city and its transformations without restrictions. Italian photographers such as Luigi Ghirri, Mario Cresci and Guido Guidi, Marialba Russo, Mimmo Jodice, and Gabriele Basilico, but also international photographers like Joan Fontcuberta, Lee Friedlander, Josef Koudelka, Charles Traub, and many others, were invited as intellectuals and artists to engage with the city, with complete freedom to construct their vision. Today, a series of catalogues of those photographic missions offers a precise idea of the extraordinary quality and novelty of the project.

Fig. 1: Luigi Ghirri, Napoli '81, Sette fotografi per una nuova immagine

Fig. 2: Gabriele Basilico, Napoli '82, Città sul mare con porto

Friedlander's sequence of 1982 is a striking example of its potency, alternating his unmistakable shots of street furniture with crowds of swimmers invading beaches. The year before Ghirri's icons had captured the magnificent decadence of the Archaeological Museum, a neoclassical theatre where the silhouettes of colourful visitors dialogue with the white classical sculptures in soft light. Jodice proposed a series of contemplative images, rereading the city in black and white through references to metaphysical and surrealist imagery. It was also via this Neapolitan mission that Gabriele Basilico engaged with the theme of the coastal city, which he pursued in France two

years later with *Bord de Mer,* created for the famous DATAR commission.[1] The American Charles Traub narrated the popular areas of the waterfront in a pop reading revealing the brash and vital dimension of the Neapolitan summer. Quite to the contrary, the refined black and white photographs of the Dutch Paul den Hollander captured the aristocratic roots of the city with views and quotes from the pictorial tradition as well as architectural compositions. Guido Guidi tried his first systematic guide explorations in Naples. The Neapolitan images are therefore the result of a moment of passage in search of the Romagna photographer, in which the use of the wide angle recalls the imagery of Eugene Atget.

The project does not only narrate the historical centre of the city. Antonia Mulas' series takes us to Secondigliano, in the popular districts of the Vele, to residential complexes born in the 70s out of a failed social utopia that the photographer describes in a poetic and merciless documentary register, recalling Walker Evans. Many other photographers such as Marialba Russo, Joan Fontcuberta, Josef Koudelka, Arnaud Class, and Vincenzo Castella worked with them in Naples.[2] Photographers were changing their mode of narration, avoiding both traditional reportage and cityscape representation. In many cases, they were integrating painterly strategies of narration. In particular, they were looking for images capable of reassembling historic layers in a visual composition where urban contradictions could be expressed in a new way. These fundamental changes in rediscovering the possibility of a late modernity in images would accompany photographers for years to come.

The multiplicity of visions called upon to collaborate in the representation of the Mezzogiorno capital was not due to the vastness of the territory to be documented, but to the idea that different languages would take on different aspects, offering a complex vision of the city. At the same time, the port city offers a variety of layers that make it a most complex and rich subject to represent. Thanks to its tourist, military, and mercantile role, the port city is a meeting point for different cultures, a filter and a bastion, a place in

1 Gabriele Basilico, *Bord de mer: mission photographique de la DATAR 1984-85* (Art&d'Udine, 1992).

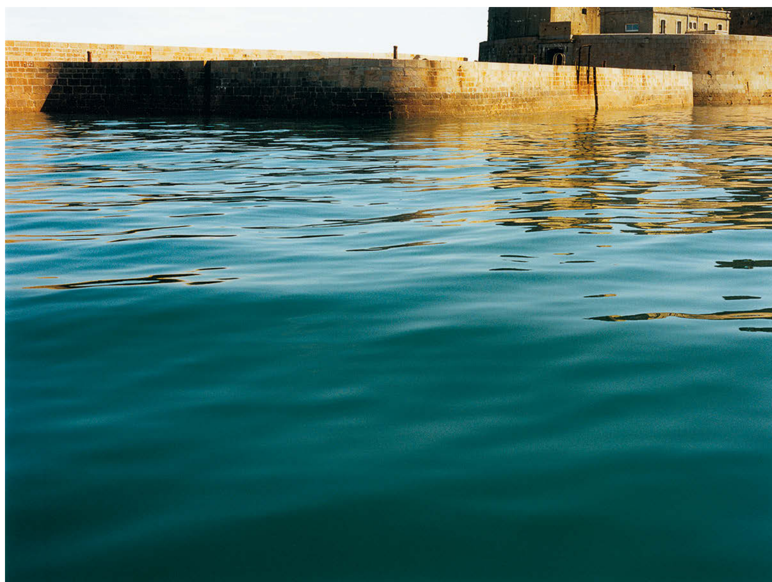
2 *Napoli '81. Sette fotografi per una nuova immagine* (Milan: Electa, 1981); *Napoli '82. Città sul mare con porto,* Electa 1982; *Napoli '83. Napoli d'inverno* (Milan: Electa, 1983); *Napoli '84. Fasti barocchi* (Milan: Electa, 1984); *Napoli '85. Cartoline da Napoli* (Milan: Electa, 1985).

continuous transformation. Naples, with its Greek origins, offered itself as an inexhaustible model to the invited photographers.

This historical shift in constructing cityscape narratives is particularly important because it supersedes the division between subjective artistic research in photography and its professional aesthetic as a technical and popular medium of communication. Reconsidering a utilitarian aesthetic in photography is fundamental to revealing the power of contemporary media. Nowadays, contemporary artists have completely integrated different aesthetics of communication, including painterly aesthetic. The combination of different elements offers an extremely wide range of possibilities in assembling public and private memories, a way of considering history as a visual and aesthetic issue. From this perspective, images produce not only information and documents for a deeper understanding of city ports, but also of the artistic heritage of the place.

La ville que nous voyons

Fig. 3: Claire Tenu, Point de vue du noyé, Cherbourg, 2012, tirage argentique couleur, 123x166,8 cm



A striking example of this strategy applied to a port city context is articulated by French artist and photographer Claire Tenu in her series *La ville que nous voyons* ('The city that we see'), 2013, demonstrating the potential of an aesthetic that blurs boundaries between the documentary and pictorial genres.

During a period of study at the Academy of Fine Arts in Paris, Tenu was invited by the Art centre Le Point du Jour to teach art classes in Cherbourg, a French port city on the English Channel. She started in 2010 and decided to consider her teaching experience as an artistic project: it was an occasion to discover the complexity of the town, starting from the common sense of the place. She asked her pupils which parts of the city they would like to see represented, contracting an obligation towards them. This engaged Tenu in a particular form of commission, in which the imaginary of the city's inhabitants with their grounded spatial references was added to her discovery and experience of the city. The connection to the school added a crucial component that structured her artistic approach to working in and for a city. She referred to the injunction of the art historian Giulio Carlo Argan, who stressed that 'the relation between the artists and the social world must be in the school', and that 'all schools must educate as to how to build the city as a sensible form of civilization'. Tenu further shared the art historian's warning: 'in our system urban planning is a non-compulsory complementary course in universities of architecture. The problem of urban unity, of the city as an evolving historical organism, is deliberately left aside because society is not meant to have a history.'[3] During her work in Cherbourg, Tenu's effort went in the direction suggested by Argan: following the wishes of her pupils, she 'discovered' the monument of Napoleon in the seafront square de la Republique; the iconographic traces of the military history of the city – from the First Empire to the Second World War – as a strategic French bastion built in the Channel. Following her cultural sensibility, she discovered the paths of the cliff the painter Jean François Millet walked in his youth – he was a native of a village nearby, on the coast – to reach Cherbourg. Claire discovered Cherbourg's iconography on another occasion. At the time she was staying in the city, its museum was closed for restoration and the director asked her to work on the pieces in the collection that were not being exhib-

3 Giulio Carlo Argan, 'Urbanistica: spazio e ambiente', in *Metro: international magazine of contemporary art*, no. 16-17 (1970), 10-25, quoted in Claire Tenu, *La ville que nous voyons* (Cherbourg: Le Point du Jour, 2013), 16.

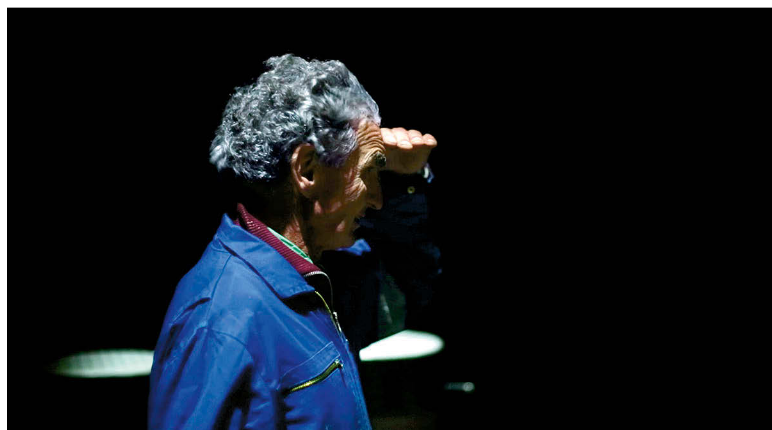
ited; many aspects of the visual history of the city emerged like a weave of different threads. She decided to organise an exhibition presenting her photographic work in the city together with other documents, such as historical postcards, drawings, engravings, and architectural plans from the museum's collection.[4] In her project, the educational and didactical aspects melt with the aesthetics: 'My proposition is voluntarily unfinished: addressed to the sensation and to the spirit of the viewers […] What I'm presenting is a concrete illusion to share with.' The experience of the town is an illusion or a hallucination that allowed the photographer to cross between its history and our capacity of comprehension and imagination, to produce connections between images that offer subjective itineraries through the social memories held by architectural and urban space, nature and landscape. Tenu's Cherbourg project *La ville que nous voyons* is a poetic and subjective experience of the contemporary reality of the northern French city, depicting its economic hardship in the late twentieth century, and the loss of its strategic importance within the history of urban representation. The artist reveals the visual history of Cherbourg to its inhabitants through a visual iconographic maze, thereby proposing a possible redefinition of the city's image.

Watna

The port is not only a meeting point of people and stories. As a filter, it offers an interpenetration between territories. On the one hand, it opens to the vast surface of the sea, where all routes are possible, on the other, it allows access to the structures of rivers and canals that cross the hinterland, especially in northern Europe. It is precisely this area, crossed by slow and endless navigations, that is explored by Lorenzo Casali and Micol Roubini in *Watna*.

4 Jean François Chevrier, 'Une Chambre d 'échos', in Claire Tenu, *La ville que nous voyons,* 121-125.

Fig. 4: Lorenzo Casali, Micol Roubini, Watna, still from video, 2018
© casali+roubini



Watna is the name of an old barge and the title of a video made by the two Italian artists. It is a project about the perception of time and space; a meticulous scanning of the variations of the central European landscape observed through the slow, steady and restless navigation pace of a cargo boat. The film portrays the lives of the two sailors, the Van Laak brothers, and their daily routine on the barge Watna, a workplace and home to its owners, as well as a means of transport. Launched in 1964, the vessel embodies an era now belonging to the past since small family businesses are increasingly supplanted by mighty navigation firms. *Watna* builds a continuous transition between social investigation and the experience of the landscape. The clues to the depths in which the video drags the viewer appear from the beginning: in a short initial interview one of the two boatmen recounts the responsibility of being captain when his brother is missing, and the difficulty of falling asleep ruminating about the next day's navigations. The video becomes a metaphor for human existence, for its precarious progress, an enquiry into the experience of the world, about our ability to represent ourselves in it,and to cross it. Thanks to audiovisual editing, the naive confession of the sailor extends to a question about the experience of reality and translates into an interrogation that combines knowledge and ethics, highlighting the horizon within which experience must be governed. *Watna* offers an opening between the micro-story and its socio-political projection, showing its implications, the

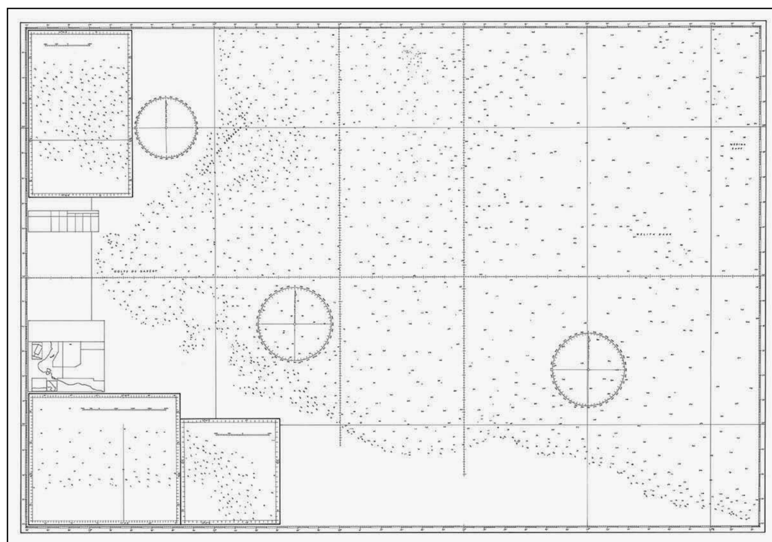
reverberations in an audiovisual texture that summarise months of shooting in two days of travel. The montage of sound and image expands the concept of landscape, transforming it into a phenomenological experience, a hypnotic and dreamlike opening that thins the boundaries between consciousness and the world. The authors do not give in to a surreal narration. The dreamlike plan is hidden by technical virtuosity; it emerges from the blurring, the mechanical evocations, from the overlapping of spaces and times. The video creates an indistinct territory where subjective experience finds the most paradoxical and objective documentation in an audiovisual recording. In this fusion of the internal and the external, common gender distinctions merge into a counterpuntal narrative. The landscape becomes a literary genre that develops the captain's initial story in visual and sound lability, a mobile, fluid, reflected narration: thanks to the alternate montage of open and close up views, everything is brought to the scale of the landscape. Cabin, hold and landscape are united in a single dimension. Radio newscasts, commercial songs, radio communications with the harbour authorities are the continuous background noise, together with the vibration of the engine that accompanies the crossing of canals and rivers, which carries men and things on their journey. A sailor eats while the ground flows vertically from the window; the barge rises in the system of locks, which will allow it to connect different port cities by channels. The big city is announced: bridges and factories appear on the horizon, chimneys and port structures open to welcome the boat. The red hold opens with its abstract cargo. That lunar load that has crossed the territory thanks to the care of the skinny cargo crew becomes an enigmatic metaphor: *Watna* talks about the disappearance of private experience and the historical use of landscape.

Avviso ai naviganti

As we see in these two examples, the revealing of a new aesthetic that mixes pictorial and documentary iconographies brings new possibilities of representing historical events, and in escaping rhetorical imagery and political distortions. This aesthetic geography made of atmospheres, of sounds and visual associations, of perceptions and memory, is in contrast to a symbolic geography designed by manmade maps designed to navigate the world. To conclude the discussion, I would like to mention in this vein the work of

Domenico Antonio Mancini, which appropriates and inflects cartographic codes to force them in a direction that allows the viewer to discover a different narrative dimension. The artist, refusing any subjective narration of history, wants to narrate the contemporary tragedy of immigration using our common tools of navigation. Starting with the idea of the Mediterranean Sea as an ancient network between civilisations and port cities as access points of cultural and economic landscapes, Mancini's *Avviso ai naviganti* ('Notice to the Navigators'), 2013 is a work that uses nautical charts and statistical data to build a visual representation of contemporary clashes, realizing a minimalist homage to the helplessness of victims of contemporary geopolitical struggles.

Fig. 5: Domenico Antonio Mancini, Avviso ai Naviganti # 18 (da Capo d'Africa a Misurata), 2016, ink on paper, 92x135,5 cm © Galleria Lia Rumma, Milano – Napoli



The artist studied the flow of immigration in the Mediterranean Sea in the early twenty-first-century. He copied by hand different nautical charts representing the coastline from Turkey to the Canary Islands. In the execution of the work – in the absolute lack of a creative and subjective sign – the artist makes an expiatory and revealing gesture. The long and meticulous execution by hand 'loads' the image with meaning, revealing the absurd claims of

a digital representation that has lost any capacity for historical, social, and political orientation, and provides no insights into its description of territories that are no longer habitable and shareable. Mancini's analogue copy articulates a paradoxical method of trying once more to distinguish the true from the false, to ask ourselves about the meaning of those signs that seem to have an inexorable clarity. Manual skill adds an intention, subtracting the medium from its existence as an anonymous and innocent digital simulacrum. In his charts, Mancini eliminates all graphic information about the earth, routes, and about the ports where normal ships are directed. The maritime space distinguishes itself from the land only by numbers, the digits indicating the depth of the sea. Between them, we can see some red numbers. These numbers usually indicate danger – functioning as a notice to the navigators about areas where the shallowness reveals rocks and shoals. Here, instead, they indicate the information at the artist's disposal regarding the accidents of refugees' vessels, coordinates of shipwrecks, and the number of victims. Mancini's work completely reverses the functional aesthetic of nautical charts with the removal of geographic and political notation. The void chosen by the artist in place of the conventional sign of history allows us to hear more loudly the immigrants' drama in our forgetful everyday life.

These three works underline how the connection between the territory and its representation is always political because it implicitly defines concepts such as access, boundary, and territory. This connection offers a narrative that affects our emotional and mental experience of the places and the way we want to live in them and plan them. Claire Tenu envelops us in a political and historical representation of the port of Cherbourg that oscillates between the Napoleonic glories and the poignant indeterminacy of our post-industrial present. In *Watna* geography becomes a space of memory: now that small rivers transporting companies are disappearing, this minor history opens its doors to poetry and we can collect the signs of an old experience of the hinterland. In the nautical charts of Mancini any division between land and sea disappears, the only geographical indication that describes the coastline is the tragic desire for the European hinterland, that desire for a landing that does not find a seaport to welcome it; the port then emerges with all the symbolic power of its geography. It reveals itself as a place of appropriation and belonging, its political function shows deep roots that intertwine history with politics and open the possibility to design a new idea of community.

Part 2: Commerce

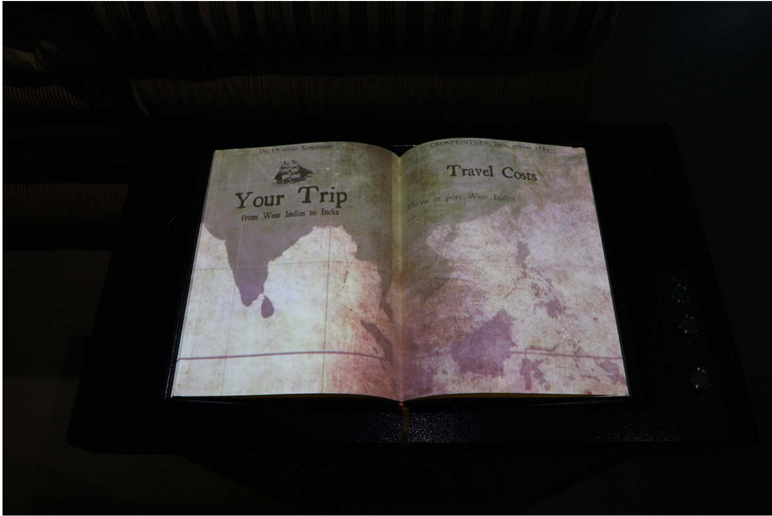
Market stall: maritime commerce in the collections of European maritime museums

Gabriel N. Gee

Gabriel Gee is an art historian. His research explores contemporary artistic and cultural negotiations of trans-industrial change. His interests include the development of the art scenes in the former urban industrial bastions in the North of England in the late twentieth century and have brought him into dialogue with artists and contemporary artforms engaging with maritime transformations, as well as the representation of maritime heritage, particularly in Europe. Here he reflects on the representation of commerce in European maritime museums at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The discussion considers the balance between self and other articulated by European maritime museums, situated at the crossroads of critical debates and the practical legacies of trading histories, as they continue to shape our contemporary global societies.

The visitor perusing the collections of the M / S Maritime Museum of Denmark in Elsinore might be tempted to partake in the museum's interactive game 'Tea time – the first globalisation'. Among exhibits related to eighteenth-century global trade, visitors can play the role of a merchant, buying goods in a European port, before selling them and buying new ones in India and the Americas. Using a digital logbook, players can get a sense of the century's longing for 'voyages, adventures and fortunes made in a world simultaneously far away and close by'.

Fig. 1: 'Tea time – the first globalisation', M / S Maritime Museum, Denmark, photo: Gabriel N. Gee



Maritime museums, which are typically to be found in port cities, are the repository on land of activities performed at sea. A museum's collection presents different types of past and present maritime activities, commerce – very often but not always – being one of them. The sum and balance of these activities defines the identity of the museum. The representation of maritime trade in Europe depicts a history of connected networks bringing different peoples and cultures into contact with each other throughout the Mediterranean and the Baltic, across the Atlantic frontier, and along their routes by water or horse to the continental hinterlands, before the age of the great sea voyages repositioned Europe at the heart of global circulations. The demand for spices, sugar, and tea and the competition to secure markets fuelled the global expansion of the early modern period.

This increase of commercial circulation was accompanied by political and military confrontations. The story of trade, in particular maritime trade from the sixteenth century onwards, is also a story of alienation, extermination, and spectres. 'Remember thee! Ay thou poor ghost, while memory holds a seat in this distracted globe. Remember thee!' the dead King Hamlet entreats his son on the castle's walls in Elsinore. So too the museums, guardians of our society's memories, play a significant role in the representation

of the past in all its layers, fortunes, and misfortunes. How, then, are trade and commercial networks, their history and geography, their men and their tools, their goods and their outcome represented in European maritime museums? In the 2010 documentary *The forgotten space*, by Allan Sekula and Noël Burch, children are shown playing in the maritime museum in Rotterdam within a micro-model of a container port terminal that links the container ships to lorries and trains to feed the 'greedy hinterland'. The film is an investigation into the moral and ethical nature of contemporary maritime commerce within our integrated capitalist global economy. Museums display our society's heritage; they are also strategically immersed in pedagogical missions that shape our perception and understanding of the past and present, and our future agency. Maritime museums tend to operate as an interface between the 'self' and the 'other', the community within and the worlds beyond. Furthermore, being located on land, they mirror the position of port cities as nexus between the sea beyond and the hinterland within; their collections and narratives give order to the history and geographies of maritime fluxes as they have come to shape the earthly territories where their visitors are based. This is particularly true of the representation of European trade, long associated with the importation and accumulation of wealth *within* the hinterland. In looking at the representation of trade in the cultural discourse of European maritime museums through objects, images, and narrative displays, we can gain an understanding of past and present European identities and cosmologies, as well as tackling some of the issues attached to the specific agency of commerce. We witness a confrontation of the parallel contemporary narratives of 'the wealth of nations', as captured by maritime merchants and networks, and the 'dark side of Western modernity', highlighting the destructive impact of European expansions. Collections of European maritime museums and their presentation thus also point to the manner through which this contested heritage is negotiated on European shores, just as it keeps informing the present, positively, negatively, and critically.

Sketching a maritime museum typology

Before considering specific modes through which trade is represented in maritime museums, we begin with a brief typology of such museums as they are found in Europe. The mission statement of the Hellenic Maritime museum, founded in 1949, offers a revealing insight into a significant aspect of the historical formation of European maritime museums.[1] Its aims were stated thus: 'to collect all types of heirlooms relating to the nation's naval struggles', 'to gather, preserve and safeguard all types of collected heirlooms … which are worthy of research in the context of Hellenic naval history', 'to establish, organise, supervise and enrich a maritime museum in Piraeus', 'to rekindle the national fighting spirit, to keep undimmed the lustrous trophies of our forefathers' naval struggles', and 'to foster the love of coming generations for the sea, as a source of national glory'. The creation of the Hellenic Maritime museum was grounded in the affirmation of the nation state, in tones that convey the military build-up of national identity, from the 1820s war of independence, to the more recent and traumatic experience of Nazi occupation during the Second World War.[2] Many museums share these military origins, such as the French national navy museums, the *Musée national de la marine*, in Toulon, Brest, Port Louis, Rochefort, and Paris; the *Museu de Marinha* in Lisbon, also under the administration of the navy, 'without being exclusively dedicated to military ships, but rather to all different aspects of human activities related to the sea';[3] and the British National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, which opened in 1937 next to the former Royal Hospital for Seamen, and whose elegant opening mission statement reads: 'to

1 Anastasia Anagnostopoulou-Paloubi, 'The hellenic maritime museum: a brief history', in *Hellenic maritime museum*, (Pireus, Vaporia, 2005), 7-16.

2 The prime mover in the inception of the Hellenic Maritime Museum was the minister of the navy, Gerasimos Vasileiadis, and its first president the shipowner George Stringos.

3 Museu de Marinha website, 'homepage' accessed 1 June 2019, https://web.archive.org/web/20070716035511/http://museu.marinha.pt/Museu/Site/PT/SobreMuseu/Missao. 'Organismo Cultural da Marinha de Guerra Portuguesa, ao Museu de Marinha foi atribuída a missão de salvaguarda e divulgação do passado marítimo português, não se dedicando em exclusivo aos assuntos militares navais, mas sim a tudo o que se relaciona com os mais diversos aspectos e actividades humanas ligadas ao mar.' The collection was built up under royal patronage in the second half of the nineteenth century. The museum opened in 1909 under the administration of the Portuguese navy; it was relocated, in 1962, to the historic monastery of Geronimos in Belem.

enrich people's understanding of the sea, the exploration of space, and Britain's role in world history'.[4]

Space, time, people; geography, history, anthropology; three fields connected through the sea, or rather their relation(s) to the sea, which each maritime museum explores through its own specific identity. This identity is historically defined by the collection of the museum, itself informed by its location, and the specific community, city, region, or nation whose history it preserves and represents. Localisation is thus often represented through the topographical situation of the museum's native port city, for instance the natural defensive quality of the bay of Toulon famously marvelled at by Napoléon Bonaparte; through its urban body, the object of an eighteenth-century panoramic panel in the London Gallery at Greenwich; and through historic developments in urban infrastructure, meticulously documented in digital form at Titanic Belfast, to show the dramatic physical transformation of the mouth of the Logan river during the phase of accelerated industrialisation in Belfast in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Technique is also a common object of display, focusing in particular on the ships. What were the materials, tools, and skills needed to build them? The ships can be seen in the display of numerous models, when not in the vessels themselves, such as in the expansive Pavilhaos das Galeotas in Lisbon. Life on land and life at sea can be combined with such technical considerations, for instance in the glass panels of the Altonaer Museum in Hamburg showing traditional Elbe river boats and various uses of fishnets, or in the focus of the Maritime Museum of Ilhavo, commonly known as the museum of baccalau, whose exhibits relate to its mission of 'preserving the memory of work at sea, to showcase the maritime culture and identity of the Portuguese', and in particular of Portugal's coastal communities.[5] When turned towards the vastness of the seas, maritime museums introduce their publics to the art of navigation through tools, charts, maps, and the hardships of living at sea, and to its joys, such as in the collection of nineteenth and early twenti-

4 The Royal Museums Greenwich website, 'homepage', accessed 1 June 2019, https://www.rmg.co.uk/work-services/what-we-do/mission. An opening mission statement shared by the four organs of the Royal Museums in Greenwich: Cutty Sark, the Queen's house, the Royal observatory, and the National Maritime Museum.

5 Museu Maritimo Ilhavo website, 'homepage', accessed 1 June 2019, http://www.museumaritimo.cm-ilhavo.pt. 'A sua missao consiste em preservar a memòria do trabalho no mar, promover a cultura e a identitade maritima dos portugueses.'

eth-century cruise posters at Hamburg's International Maritime Museum. It is when they touch on maritime routes, on the reasons for putting to sea, that maritime museum exhibits consider trade.

Fig. 2: The Geronimos Monastery, Belem; the Museu de Marinha is located in the monastery, photo: Gabriel N. Gee

As an epigraph by Sir Walter Raleigh in the introductory glass panels on the topic of trade in the National Maritime Museum in London reminds the visitor, where trade is concerned, politics cannot be far behind: 'For whosoever commands the sea commands the trade, whosoever commands the trade of the world commands the riches of the world; and consequently the world itself.' Power politics is not the only perspective on trade to be found in maritime museums, but it is certainly an important one, conducive to the writing of history in which the museum partakes.

Objects: identity and difference

Objects adorn museums, providing the visitor with a sense of a society's past and present mode of living, industry, leisure, progress, and taste.[6] Port cities, functioning as gateways between the inner self of the city, its connected roots in the hinterland, and the external maritime realm leading to the world beyond, serve as crossroads for commercial goods. Maritime museums exhibit objects characteristic of maritime and urban trade, of import and export circulation, as a testimony of economic and cultural exchanges and human industry. The Greenwich introductory glass panel on trade[7] features: a Roman republican coin with an image of Neptune, and another commemorating the battle of Naulochus in 36 BCE, at which Agrippa defeated Sextus Pompey; a hand-painted Delftware bowl depicting the launch of a Royal navy vessel (1752), and another with the inscription 'success to the herring fishery' (eighteenth century), the linchpin of a major British trading venture with the Mediterranean; a Swedish medal commemorating the protection of sea trade (Gustav Ljungberger, 1779, silver); a Hudson Bay company token (1857), commemorating the exploitation of extensive territories in what is now Canada, and a manila token (brass, c. 1843), said to be used in Africa as trade currency; a Kiel canal medal (G. Loos 1895), with Neptune seated between the two ends of the canal, symbolising the bridging of the North and Baltic Seas; a lustreware bowl depicting the paddle steamer *Trident* of the General Steam Navigation Company, a pioneer in commercial steam shipping (1842); a ship model of the *Silver Fir,* a tramp vessel selling and buying as fortunes permitted. Each of these objects conveys a dimension of maritime trade. Neptune and the Roman coinage evoke the Roman empire and the birth of the 'économie-monde' in the Mediterranean;[8] the Swedish medal reminds visitors of the political rise of the Kingdom of Sweden in the seventeeth century; the Hudson Bay and African tokens of the expansion of global maritime commercial networks from the sixteenth century onwards; the steam ship brings us into the era of industrialisation, while

6 In that the status of objects can be historical, ethnographic, and aesthetic. Mieke Bal, 'The discourse of the Museum', in *Thinking about exhibitions*, eds. Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, Sandy Nairne (London, New York, Routledge, 1996), 206.

7 Besides 'trade', the introductory topics which introduce the visitor to the museum's collection are 'science', 'work', 'leisure', 'ceremony', 'conflict', and 'memory'.

8 Fernand Braudel, *La dynamique du capitalisme* (Paris: Flammarion, 1977).

the tramp *Silver Fir* reminds us that before the rise of nineteenth-century cable technology merchants could not always prearrange their cargos, and often played it by ear, just as the game in Elsinore conveys to visitors. Each of these objects unfolds a narrative of commercial enterprise, sustained by the large wording of the sign TRADE on the glass panel, as well as informative legends pointing to each object's relation to commercial activity. At first glance, the objects on display either point to an inner realm – Britain – or to an external one, whose significance is suggested by way of synecdoche.

The balance between the local and the beyond is characteristic of maritime museums' collections. In the Hellenic Maritime Museum in Athens, while considerable attention is paid to ancient and modern Greek shipbuilding and to the struggle for independence, a gallery is also devoted to commercial travels in the Byzantine period, depicting the commercial sea routes to Constantinople at the crossroad between eastern and western worlds, to the control of international trade and the rising competition of Venetian merchants.[9] The maritime routes which furthered and then took over the silk road fed the European demand for eastern spices in particular.[10] Hence the presence of food samples in many galleries, an importance encapsulated by the Speicherstadtmuseum in Hamburg, where a reconstruction of a typical warehouse interior of the spice district in the city's former free trade zone guides the visitor through bulk bags of coffee from the new American plantations, jars of nutmeg, saffron, and turmeric. Aside from much sought-after bulk cargoes of pepper and tea, European merchants brought back curiosities, objects that triggered the imagination of European populations.[11] In Gothenburg's history museum, located in the former headquarters of the Swedish East India Company, a striking glass panel showcases a variety of such objects, including a flute made of silver and ivory, a Chinese glass painting from the eighteenth century depicting the Chinese merchant Poankeyqua, who was rumoured to have visited Sweden in the 1770s, a pagoda of soap stone after a tower in Nanking, East India porcelain, and two clay

9 There was also a gallery on the Greek mercantile marine in the nineteenth century. *Hellenic Maritime Museum*, 115-124.

10 Lizzie Collingham, *The Hungry Empire: How Britain's Quest for Food Shaped the Modern World* (London: Random House, 2017), XV-XVII.

11 Vanessa Alayrac Fielding, ed., *Rêver la Chine: chinoiseries et regards croisés entre la Chine et l'Europe au 17e et 18e si*ècles (Lille: Invenit, 2017).

likenesses of Chinese mandarins. These objects are found on one side of the glass display, under the 'global' sign. On the other side, another selection of objects, comprising ceramics, metal work, and caskets, makes up the 'local' production. In his study on the history of ethnographic museums and displays entitled *Le goût des autres*, Benoît de L'Estoile points to the distinction between the '*musée de soi*' and the '*musée des autres*'.[12] Museums of the Self represent a community: a village, a town, a city, a region, a nation, and revolve around the question: 'who are we?'. Museums of the Other look at that which is different or strange, and are typically linked to the development of anthropology as a discipline in the nineteenth century. Such museums investigate the question: 'Who are the others?' The great majority of maritime museums in Europe fall between these lines: dedicated to the identity of a community, while incorporating more or less consciously the part of a self shaped by an encounter with the other, that part of a self which is irremediably different.

Images: marine and cosmology

A range of images is to be found in maritime museums: paintings, posters, photographs, maps, and cartoons, as well as films and interactive digital screens. What is the function and meaning of these images? On the one hand they have a documentary character, while on the other they exhibit an aesthetic quality. Maritime museums often have a dedicated painting gallery. They also repeatedly use mixed displays, combining objects with images and text. Maritime museums, in other words, are not fine art museums, although they almost invariably showcase artistic work and represent aesthetic sentiment. Images, artistic or not, enable museums to lead visitors into envisioning the past, to see a place as it once was, a mode of living now forgotten, a manner of looking at the world and thus of being in the world.[13] The sea and the maritime world serve as a rallying ground, as the introductory words to the picture gallery in the museum of Ilhavo underline: 'The presence of a maritime

12 Benoît de l'Estoile, *Le gout des autres. De l'exposition coloniale aux arts premiers* (Paris: Flammarion, 2007) 'Musée de soi' and 'musée des autres'. The study takes as a starting point the historical transfer of collections from the Musée de l'homme to the Musée du quai Branly, questioning the capacity of ethnographic museums to tell the truth about the world, 17-22.

13 This they share with art history as a discipline. Michael Baxandall, *Patterns of Intention: On the Historical Explanations of Picture* (New Haven, London: Yale University Press 1985).

element in the paintings and sculptures exhibited was the first selection criteria of the artworks. The exhibits selected from the pictorial collection of the museum, a vast ensemble of varying quality, deals in part with the naturalist and late-naturalist genre, and in part with telluric representations of the sea.'[14] Coastal scenes with typical *moliceiro* fishing boats, such as *Costa nova* by Carlos Fragoso (1921), alternate with depictions of traditional folk life and type, such as *Gente de Barra e Ria de Aveiro* by Arlindo Vicente (1928). Such documentation of traditional communities is also particularly well represented in the photographic collections of the Altonaer Museum, which under the guidance of its first director, Otto Lehmann, initiated in the second half of the nineteenth century a programme of visual anthropology capturing the life of fishing and farming communities on the Elbe river and the Schleswig Holstein hinterland.

Fig. 3: Glass panels with traditional fishing techniques from the Elbe on display, 'Fang mit Baumkurre mit Besahnewer MARIANNE S.B. 25 und Norderneyer Schaluppe, M 1:25', @ Historische Museen Hamburg, Altonaer Museum, inventory number AB01162, photo: Michaela Hegenbarth

14 'A presença de maritimismos na pintura e escultura exposta foi o primeiro critério de seleção dos obras. A exposição versa, assim, a coleção de pintura marítima do Museu, conjunto muito vasto e de qualidade variável, onde releva o registo naturalística e tardo-naturalista e onde persistem as representações telúricas do mar. Tendencia comum a toda a pintura marítima portuguesa, que so a espaços traçou o mar romântico, nos seus confrontos trágicos com a natureza humana.'

In Northern Europe, a genre of painting well represented in maritime museums is that of the *marine*, a seascape that originated in the low countries in the late sixteenth century.[15] The International Maritime Museum in Hamburg, housed in a grand former warehouse in neo-gothic style in the heart of the city's former harbour, boasts an impressive painting collection, including Dutch marines. *Frigates in a choppy sea* (early seventeenth century), by the seascape master Jan Porcellis, depicts a busy day on the North Sea, with two light boats in the foreground, the outline of the coast on the right-hand side, numerous masts on the typically low horizon, and, in the middle ground, two large men-of-war flying the United Provinces' flag. The emergence of landscape and seascape painting in the Netherlands accompanied the affirmation of the protestant provinces' identity, which had recently gained independence from their former Spanish overlords. The marine itself, with its many different variations from picturing fishing and sailing to the observation of nature, was, however, first developed by painters such as Hendrick Cornelisz Vroom in direct correlation to the genre of history painting. A famous example, now in the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, is *The return to Amsterdam of the second expedition to the East Indies on 19th July 1599*. Hence in Porcellis' quiet depiction, the men-of-war signal the political space that the seas represented for the dominant maritime force of the seventeenth century. The monopolistic *Vereenigde Oostindische Compagnie*, the Dutch East India Company, furthered the commercial interests of the Netherlands along the new maritime routes opened by the Portuguese in the late fifteenth century. The marine, which, significantly, was further developed by the British as they came to govern the seas in the eighteenth century, revealed not only European societies' profound connection to maritime environments, but also the material value represented by ocean traffic for the rising power of European nations.

Such economic and political growth was closely linked to navigation and geographic knowledge. While it may be abrupt to reduce all geographical data exhibited in European maritime museums to commercial endeavours, the thirst for spices, textiles, sugar, coffee, and the financial rewards of global trade was instrumental in fuelling technological progress and changing representations of an interconnected planet. The cartographic images that abound in maritime museums encapsulate this convergence of skills and interests. In

15 Margarita Russell, *Visions of the Sea. Hendrick C. Vroom and the Origins of Dutch Marine Painting* (Leyden: Brill, 1983).

Hamburg, the historical importance of being able to visually recognise the topographic profile of port cities or the rivers leading to them in the hinterland is seen in compilations such as Pierre Mortier's atlas *Der Fransche Neptunus* (1693). In the Galata museum in Genoa, portolan charts, for which cartographers such as Niccolo Caveri became famous, testify to the Genovese's increasing command of the once mysterious maritime expanse, a point further illustrated by a magnificent wooden astrolabe reconstructed by captain Alberto Albertis in the nineteenth century. In Lisbon, in the maritime museum located in the monastery of Geronimos in Belem, whence the Portuguese caravels departed on their way to Africa and India, an armillary sphere similarly embodies this dual nature: used for astronomical calculations and cosmological meditation, it was also the personal symbol of King Manuel, and conveyed 'both the earthly and spiritual roles of the expansionist project of the king'.

Fig. 4: Armillary sphere, Museu de Marinha, Lisbon, inventory n.º MM.01896, photo: Gabriel N. Gee

European maritime museums are appropriately filled with the visions and instruments of European imperial expansion, of 'nature as a globe within which everything resides'.[16] Crucially for the present, while European dominance over the seas has unravelled, the principles of global trade have on the contrary pursued the weaving of their all-encompassing web. In the arrangement of their collections, maritime museums present their reading of such historical rhythms.

European maritime narratives: discovering, ruling, abating?

Objects and images contain narratives. Their arrangement in space, sequence, and framing within informative panels or audio guides articulate additional narratives.

Fig. 5: Internationales Maritimes Museum, Hamburg, photo: Gabriel N. Gee

16 Bruno Latour, reading the second volume of *Spheres* by Peter Sloterdijk, in "Onus orbis terrarium: about a possible shift in the definition of sovereignty", *Millenium, Journal of International Studies* Vol. 44 (3) (2016), 305-20.

The rhetoric at play in the museum involves both the curatorial discourse and the experience of visitors immersed within those curatorial strategies: 'The reading itself, then, becomes part of the meaning it yields. And this seems an important insight, for what is a museum for if not for visitors?'[17] In the introductory glass panel on 'trade' at Greenwich, different objects evoke different times in history when commercial exchange blossomed. Hung slightly above the objects, there is also a painting, *Shipping at Depford*, by Robert Cleveley, which represents the royal dockyards on the Thames in the late eighteenth century. The site of Greenwich maritime museum carries significant historical associations. The grounds, as Daniel Defoe reminds his reader in the 1720s, 'is the same on which formerly stood the royal palace of our kings. Here Henry VIII held his royal feasts with jousts and tournaments, and the ground which was called the tilt-yard, is the spot on which the easternmost wing of the hospital is built; the park…was enlarged, walled out, and planted with beautiful rows, or walks of trees by King Charles II soon after the Restoration, and the design of plan of a royal palace was then layed out.' Furthermore, the museum is located just east of the Depford dockyards, past the Depford creek. Defoe pointed to the infrastructural development just a little further down the river, at Woolwich. There, 'when the business of the Royal Navy increased, and Queen Elizabeth built larger and greater ships of war than were employed before, new docks, and launches were erected, and places prepared for the building and repairing ships of the largest size; because, as here was a greater depth of water and a freer channel, than at Depford (where the chief yard in the river of Thames was before) so there was less hazard in the great ships going up and down'.[18] Greenwich museum can be reached from central London by the docklands light railway (DLR), which goes through Canary Wharf, past the nineteenth-century East India and West India docks. Woolwich faces the Royal Victoria docks and Royal Albert docks, where London city airport is now located. These large docks were built for the same reasons Defoe noted, to accommodate the bigger and larger ships that brought back goods from overseas commerce as well as colonies of the British empire. Equally, when they became too small, they were abandoned, before being regenerated in a singular historical twist in their

17 Mieke Bal, 'The Discourse of the Museum', 208.

18 Daniel Defoe, *A tour through the whole isles of Great Britain, 1724-27* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1991), 44.

present form as part of 'London city': a major global centre of British financial might. What Cleveley's *Shipping at Depford* suggests within the trade glass panel is that references to the Pax Romana, to fruitful commerce in the North and Baltic Seas under the auspices of the Swedish crown, to the gold and silver to be made in expanding commercial horizons, concur with Britain's understanding of itself and its presence across the seas. In the royal docks of Depford lies the industrious foundational origin of this new Roman titan whose watchword was *Rule Britannia*.

In the second half of the twentieth century, in the aftermath of decolonisation and the reorganisation of commercial fluxes and geopolitical forces, museums in the West to a large extent entered a process of self-questioning parallel to the interrogation pursued on European decentred territories. How do European maritime museums negotiate the changing perception of maritime history? To what extent do they contribute (or not) to a re-writing and decentering of history urged by postcolonial critical discourses? Are they able, to echo the studies of Walter Mignolo, to consider Europe's dark heritage?[19] In cities such as Bordeaux, Liverpool, or Amsterdam, can maritime museums revisit the heritage of the Enlightenment, torn between the curiosity for foreignness, the articulation of critical rational thought, and colonial encroachment?[20] And crucially, how is the history of trade, as it continues to animate the present, represented in the museum's display? In his reflection on the location of culture, Homi K. Bhabha urged the Western metropole 'to confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous native narrative internal to its national identity'.[21] Perhaps in recognising in their own identities the effective constitutive differences inherited from history, their own irremediable otherness, European entities might truthfully break through the world of shadows they long held as certainties.

At Greenwich, a subtle balance is best observed in galleries such as 'traders', devoted to the history of maritime trade with Asia. Visitors are intro-

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19 Walter Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2011).

20 Vanessa Alayrac Fielding and Claire Dubois, eds., *The Foreignness of Foreigners: Cultural Representations of the Other in the British Isles (17th – 20th centuries)* (Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Cambridge Scholar, 2015); Antoine Lilti, *L'héritage des lumières. Ambivalences de la modernité* (Paris: Seuil, 2019).

21 Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 1994), 9.

duced to the display by a map featuring the monsoon seasonal orientation in the Indian Ocean and South China Sea. The accompanying text states that Asia was 'the centre of fabulous wealth' that 'brought together different people, places and culture'. Such a cosmopolitan confluence is illustrated in a ship cabinet with models of a dow used by Arab merchants, a surf boat used on Indian coasts, and two Chinese junks. However, the others are seen and presented through the perspective of the confident inner lens (the self), namely the East India Company created in 1600 by royal decree. The gallery is organised in a series of nuclei, each pairing paintings with representative objects of trade and paratexts. The paintings are either marines, contributing to the envisioning of distant shores by the visitor, for instance *A Dutch settlement in Asia* (Ludolf Backhuysen, c. 1670), some with a historical touch, such as *The capture of Geriah* on India's West coast (Dominic Serres the Elder, late eighteenth century), and portraits, figures of importance in the history of the East India Company. The company's rise and demise provide the narrative of this encounter with Asia. At the outset, we find the conquering spirit of the pioneers who rose to dispute the dominance of 'the most successful European spice traders', the Dutch. The lure of Asian markets is mirrored by panels on the growing demand and changing habits of consumption in Britain, in particular the British infatuation with tea, the 'national drink'. Tainted heritage – in particular the opium smuggling at the heart of the China trade – is embedded in the display. When depicting the progressive take-over of the Indian subcontinent in the eighteenth century by way of military engagement, the company's 'aggressive expansion' that transformed it from a 'commercial society' to a 'territorial power' is said to have 'ultimately led to its downfall'. William Gladstone's scathing condemnation of the opium wars with China – 'a war most unjust in its origins, a war more calculated to cover this country with disgrace, I do not know and have not heard of' – aptly bows to the judgement of time and closes the narrative. It also corresponds, in the gallery's rhetoric, to the end of the company, guilty of the liberal's capital vice: monopolistic hubris (1833).

At the monastery of Geronimos in Belem the intertwining of national identity and global expansion leaves little room for alternate voices. The tombs of Vasco de Gama and Luís de Camões are in the St. Mary church next door, while the square and gardens facing the monastery are part of a redevelopment designed to host the *Exposição do mundo Portugu*ês, the Portuguese colonial exhibition of 1940. The antechamber to the museum greets

the visitors with imposing statues of the famous Portuguese navigators Gil Eanes (1395-1460), Diogo Comes (1420-1500), Diogo Cam (1452-1486) … The first and well-furnished main gallery is dedicated to the 'Portuguese discoveries', a description which is in itself problematic, without underestimating the extraordinary maritime achievements of the Portuguese navigators. It depicts the Portuguese as the knowing agent, who also holds the pen of history, encountering the unknown, which in being discovered enters history and a life of which it was formally unaware. Units similarly combining artefacts with paintings, original maps, and informative panels touch upon medieval commercial routes, the conquest of the Atlantic, the war at sea, astronomical navigation, and 'the cartography of the discoveries' 'which contributed to a systematic collection of new information and to the construction of a new perspective on the world, on a planetary scale'; on religion and the missionary work of the Jesuits, and the increase of 'global competition' in the sixteenth century to harvest those newly-found lands. What it hardly engages with, to mention the elephant in the room, is 'the black Atlantic',[22] the profitable slave trade on the African West coast which accompanied the development of the colonies in Brasil. As with other European nations, the contemporary Portuguese society has been shaped by its relation with Africa and the Americas. Yet the exhibits remain looking out, without acknowledging the differences nurtured from within.[23]

'Where am I? Where am I going?', these are not the musings of Paul Gauguin, but, tellingly: 'two questions that sailors through the ages have tried to answer during their voyages in the elements, in science and in belief'. The complex legacies of global maritime trade, as woven by European ships in the early modern age, are negotiated differently by different European maritime museums. The possible answers to those questions have taken on a new light with the demise of European colonial empires, in the calls to 'reset modernity'[24] and to translate and articulate the legacies of European

22 Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993).

23 I have developed this question of 'inverse civilization' in Gabriel N. Gee, 'Beyond Narcissus: the metamorphosis of port cities in the 20th century', in Gabriel N. Gee & Alison Vogelaar, *Changing Representations of Nature and the City: The 1960s and 1970s and Their Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 2019).

24 Bruno Latour, 'Onus Orbis Terrarum'.

thought, beyond their maritime empires' historical demise.[25] At the Danish maritime museum, where we started this journey through exhibits pertaining to trade, the dark heritage of the early globalisation doesn't go unnoticed, in a period when 'beautiful, tasty good and cruel destinies were transported between the corners of the earth'.[26] The museum, whose collections pay particular attention to life at sea together with the dreamscapes brought about by maritime worlds, includes in its section on the Danish Guinea insights into the tragic fate of enslaved Africans. It has also launched a new display on consumption in the age of the shipping container, 'The world in your shopping basket'. In representing the history of trade and its legacies in the present, maritime museums feature market stalls where visitors can pick memories from the past to consume, thus channelling themselves into society's perception of our planetary condition. The nature of the offer in the market is not anecdotal. The manner through which maritime museums represent not solely the self, but also the 'relation to the others that sets historicity at the heart of its questions' appears significant of these museums' critical awareness, and their role in activating relevant interrogations within their communities.[27] The photographer Allan Sekula, taking his clue from the itinerant museum *The Global Mariner*, a ship owned by a confederation of workers' unions, that raises awareness about conditions of seafarers' work on ships, registered on flags of convenience, had begun a project entitled Ships of Fools, a kind of dockers museum, a collection of objects and images serving as an anti-museum and non-hierarchical anti-archive.[28] Its topical collections responded to Sekula's critical questioning: 'in what sense is the "real economy" of the sea an antidote to the myth of limitless wealth accumulated through financial manipulation?' The *Hinterland* exhibition organised at Corner College in Zurich in summer 2018 furthered a critical interrogation into the weight and implications of the commercial destinies of our maritime economies. What is represented and what are the blind spots in our cultural narratives: *the eyes of the lighthouse*. What are the material transformations taking place and where are they taking our planetary metabolic body: *blood*

25 Peter Sloterdijk, *Si l'Europe s'éveille* (Paris: Mille et une nuit, 2003).

26 Maritime Museum of Denmark website.

27 Benoît de L'Estoile, *Le gout des autres. De l'exposition coloniale aux arts premiers*, 288.

28 Allan Sekula, *Ships of fools / The Dockers' museum*, Hilde van Gelder, ed. (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2015).

as a rover. Maritime museums phrase these metabolic processes, which have shaped and continue to shape the design and perception of the hinterlands, from which and to which commercial maritime routes depart and return.

From lighthouses to barcodes

Cliona Harmey

Cliona Harmey is an artist based in Dublin, Ireland, whose work explores hybrid forms of technology and their histories. She often combines sculpture with data and attempts to make ephemeral digital information more tangible or physical. In particular, she has been reflecting on artefacts and histories of technological communication systems within a maritime environment and has in the past made works inspired by the stories of Marconi, Brunel, and mariner Robert Halpin who was responsible for the laying of the original transatlantic cable. She also engages with similar contemporary concerns in the field of aviation and climate transformation. The following text explores the lighthouse as an originary form of infrastructure[1] *with links to the ubiquitous barcode and modern, controlled spaces such as the airport. It also highlights the lighthouse as a node in a global network where the ability to regulate and direct light historically enabled safer shipping, which was linked to the advent of the modern age and the acceleration of globalisation.*

At Poolbeg in Dublin, the lighthouse is at the end of a long sea wall. The seawall was built as an attempt to hold back shifting sands. In the lantern room, there is a red octagonal glass screen that encloses a thick glass structure called a Fresnel lens.[2] The Fresnel lens surrounds a series of small glass bulbs. One bulb is operational and the others are backups ready to automat-

1 John Durham Peters, *The Marvellous Clouds: Toward a Philosophy of Elemental Media* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 106. 'Though the lighthouse can transmit news about weather and events, its most important communication is not subject to updates: "I am here" (this makes it a classic logistical medium).'

2 Optics Work Group, 'Glossary of Lighthouse Optics Terminology' (London: World Lighthouse Society, 2005), 17, accessed 2 Dec 2018., https://fyr.org/wiki-files/fyrskepp/Lighthouse_Terminology_read_2005.pdf

ically rotate into place should the operating bulb fail.[3] The Fresnel lens itself amplifies and refracts the light from the working bulb and projects it.[4] The Fresnel is made up of stepped individual rows of thick prismatic glass, which radiate around a large shallow bullseye lens. Its multipart assembly allows it to function as the compressed form of a much larger convex lens, taking on the properties and functions of a lens whose size and weight would make it impractical in the confines of a lighthouse.[5]

The first major working prototype of this type of lens was installed at a lighthouse at Courdouan, France, in 1823. Named after the French engineer and physicist who developed and popularised it, the Fresnel represented a major innovation in optics and lighthouse technology. The increase in control of light enabled by this lens coupled with new developments in engineering and lighthouse design revolutionised navigation, making shipping easier and safer. Theresa Levitt in her study *A Short Bright Flash: Augustin Fresnel and the Birth of the Modern Lighthouse*, describes the lighthouse and its technology as an enabler of increased globalisation. She describes the appearance of a Fresnel lens in a region as a marker of the increased importance of that location for the then developing global trade network.[6] There was a marked increase in worldwide trade in the late 1800s, which was supported by cheaper maritime transport and spurred on by increased investment in infrastructure, the sharing of technologies across borders and an increase in national and 'colonial ambition'.[7] The period between 1870 and 1939 has been

3 Bulb Changer – also known as a Lamp Changer – an electro-mechanical or clockwork device used to automatically detect and replace defective electric light bulbs in a lighthouse optic. Ibid.

4 'Fresnel Lenses: How They Work', *Jarphys.wordpress*, accessed 2 Dec 2018, https://jarphys.wordpress.com/2015/04/19/fresnel-lenses-how-they-work/.

5 Ibid., 'A lighthouse also needs a large diameter convex lens to project a wide beam across the water. But, there is limited space available at the top of the lighthouse. A set of huge and heavy glass lenses won't fit the small space.'

6 Theresa Levitt, *A Short Bright Flash: Augustin Fresnel and the Birth of the Modern Lighthouse* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2013) (ebook edition), 288: 'The moment a location became important in the new global commerce was when it received a Fresnel lens … Fresnel lenses lit the way for a period known as "modern globalisation", marked by an explosion in sea travel and worldwide trade.'

7 Ibid., 12, 'safely lighting the seaways of human commerce allowed international trade and colonial ambitions to flourish.'

described as the first phase of modern globalisation.[8] This was a time when global economies became economically integrated around the flows of trade, migration and capital.[9]

In Dublin, there had also been an increase in overseas trade in 1876 and it was in that year that operation of the Poolbeg lighthouse was taken over by The Dublin Ports and Docks Board via the Poolbeg Lighthouse Act.[10] Three years later Poolbeg's lens was one of two 'dioptric' lantern lenses mentioned as ordered by the port's chief engineer Bindon Blood Stoney in his Engineers Report for 1879.[11] Dioptric is another name for a Fresnel lens.[12] These lenses arrived against the backdrop of the increased worldwide overseas trade and after two decades of the modernisation of Dublin City. The previous decades there had seen the addition of buildings associated with an increasingly modern city such as 'elaborate banks, commercial and retail premises, railway stations and public buildings', which also used a range of new materials.[13] Poolbeg's new lens and light were 'exhibited' on the 11th of August 1880,

8 Antoni Estevadeordal, Brian Frantz and Alan M. Taylor, 'The Rise and Fall of World Trade, 1870–1939', *National Bureau for Economic Research* (working paper), 20, accessed 28 Dec 2019, https://www.nber.org/papers/w9318.pdf. In this paper the authors discuss the increase in global trade from the 1870s, ceding that this was in part due to a decrease in transport costs and an increased productivity in shipping. 'From 1870 to 1914 shipping was a sector with faster than average productivity advance, due to steam power, new infrastructure, communications and navigation improvements, and so on.' They link the rise in global trade to both the fall in transport costs and the also the rise of the adoption of the gold standard, which allowed for ease of transactions.

9 Paul Collier and David Dollar, 'Globalisation, Growth and Poverty', 39 (2002) *Policy Report World Bank* (Oxford: The World Bank and Oxford University Press, 2002), accessed 28 Dec 2019, http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/954071468778196576/pdf/multi0page.pdf. This article mentions that the 45 years after 1870 were characterized by increased global economic integration. The authors state that 'economic integration occurs through trade, migration, and capital flows'.

10 Dublin Port and Docks Act; 1803-1902, printed by Eyre and Spottiswoode, online version accessed 29 Dec 2019, http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1929/prv/2/enacted/en/html.

11 Ibid., Engineers Report for the year 1880.

12 See Ian C. Clingan, 'Rectangular and Drum Lenses', *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed 29 Dec 2019, https://www.britannica.com/technology/lighthouse#ref593057.

13 'Dublin's Buildings' article on Dublin Civic Trusts website, see section on nineteenth-century Dublin: It was not until the 1850s and 1860s, following the Great Famine, that the city centre began to take on a different appearance to the classical Georgian city, when many elaborate banks, commercial and retail premises, railway stations and public buildings

alongside another lighthouse to the north of the city, which improved visibility on both sides of the shipping lane.[14] The red exterior marking of the Poolbeg lighthouse at the entrance to the port still enables ships to identify their port side (red). A second green light structure in the channel to the north now marks out the starboard side of the channel.

'For a lighthouse to fulfil the reason for its existence, it must not only be seen but recognised when seen'.[15] While contemporary navigation systems are automated and enable using radio signals such as GPS and AIS,[16] physical markers such as lighthouses and buoys are still extremely important. Each lighthouse is identifiable via its lanterns' light sequence called a 'characteristic'. To identify a lighthouse at night its characteristic can be timed and cross-checked against a known directory listing for that area. Poolbeg Lighthouse has a number of unique global identification numbers (A5882, NGA 6620) in directories. A5882 is its UK Admiralty List number. The 'Admiralty List of Lights and Fog Signals',[17] its name a legacy of the British Empire, is a subscription-based digital directory, which identifies Poolbeg as a node in a global 'network of over 85,000 light structures worldwide'.[18] In fact, the data from digital UK Admiralty List coupled with information from maritime

were erected. These buildings employed new materials in their construction, such as terracotta, machine-made brick and plate glass windows, which must have appeared radically different to contemporary eyes. Accessed 24 Feb 2018, http://www.dublincivictrust.ie/dublins-buildings.

14 Eyre and Spottiswoode, Engineers Report for the year 1880, Blood Stoney, Bindon: 'At Poolbeg a new lantern has been erected and the improved light was exhibited on the 11th of August. On the same date an occulting light was lighted for the first time at the North Bull lighthouse, so that both sides of the entrance are now well defined.'

15 Sir William Thompson, 'On Lighthouse Characteristics', reprinted in *Popular Lectures and Addresses* Vol. iii, accessed 24 Feb 2018, https://zapatopi.net/kelvin/papers/on_lighthouse_characteristics.html#:~:text=For%20a%20lighthouse%20to%20fulfil%20the%20reason%20of,primary%20and%20most%20important%20quality%20of%20a%20lighthouse.

16 AIS stands for Automatic Identication System. Ships transmit their location through an Automatic Identification System (AIS), using their IMO number as an identifier.

17 'List of Lights and Fog Signals', *Admiralty: Maritime Data Solutions*, accessed 24 Feb 2018, https://www.admiralty.co.uk/publications/publications-and-reference-guides/admiralty-list-of-lights-and-fog-signals.

18 Its website lists the Admiralty List as having the 'Official light and fog signal information for over 85,000 light structures' with a global reach. Ibid., https://www.admiralty.co.uk/digital-services/admiralty-digital-publications/admiralty-digital-list-of-lights.

radio receivers form the data backend for many ship bridges, navigation systems and route planners today. The use of unique individual identification codes is an important tenet of modern systems of logistics and navigation.

Poolbeg has its own light characteristic: a red light on a 4-second sequence (fl1s, ec. 3s), this means a 1-second flash followed by a 3-second eclipse. This short on/off sequence of light and dark echoes the type of optical encoding used by the modern bar code. Here information is stored in a sequence of printed lines of varying thickness (from wide to narrow). The barcode reader emits a laser beam and decodes the data from the barcode sequence based on its reflection and absorption of light. This process of on and off signals of different lengths mimics the structure of morse code with its 'longs' and 'shorts' of tone or light. Both auditory and optical morse codes have a long tradition of being used for maritime and naval communication; with the additional use of codebooks, optical morse can still be used for the secure encryption of information.

In stories concerning the development of the barcode, one of its inventors, Joe Woodland, mentions a direct connection between the morse code he learned as a boy scout and his thinking around the concept for the barcode.

> I remember I was thinking about dots and dashes when I poked my four fingers into the sand and, for whatever reason—I didn't know—I pulled my hand toward me and I had four lines". …they could be wide lines and narrow lines, instead of dots and dashes…Then, only seconds later, I took my four fingers—they were still in the sand—and I swept them round into a circle.[19]

The prototype idea for the barcode was a circular graphic like a bullseye, an image not unlike the radiating rings of a Fresnel lens and indeed this is the image you see on the patent drawing of 1949 by Woodland and Silver. [20] It would be many years before technology was in place to develop it fully. A circular version of the barcode was prototyped initially, but proved too expensive to print and was error-prone so that a horizontal design was used instead.

19 Gavin Weightman, 'The History of the Bar Code', *Smithsonian Magazine* (23 Sept 2015), accessed 2 Jan 2019, https://www.smithsonianmag.com/innovation/history-bar-code-180956704/.

20 US Patent for barcode Woodland and Silver, online version accessed 2 Jan 2019, http://pdfpiw.uspto.gov/.piw?Docid=02612994.

If one looks closely at an actual barcode reader, one can see that the forms used echo some elements of the lantern room of a lighthouse, and more particularly the red glass wraparound screen at Poolbeg. While investigating these correspondences and wishing to photograph a barcode for my work, I sourced a defunct Motorola Symbol barcode reader online. I then took it apart to understand it better. It consisted of a thick red plastic optical mask which screened the laser light; behind that, there was a small section of ornately fluted, gold-plated plastic cradling a small triangular mirror, which rotated and must have transmitted the laser beam. On other barcode readers, one can sometimes see the vestige of the Fresnel lens in small sections of clear plastic at the edge with their elliptical ridges. Miniature and adapted versions of the Fresnel lens have found their way into a host of modern media devices, from overhead projectors, stage lights, traffic lights, to the micro-optics of mobile phone flash units and lights.[21]

Indeed the form of the lighthouse itself and even the ship's bridge/control room could be seen to linger and 'persist'[22] in the architectural infrastructural forms we find in other controlled spaces that exist further inland from the port. These can be seen in the control towers found at airports built in the first half of the twentieth century, such as the old airport in Dublin. This echo of the maritime precedent is made clear in geographer Peter Adey's description of Liverpool's Speke airport's landmark octagonal tower as a 'control tower-cum-lighthouse' in his essay *The Wish Image*. The wish image to which the title refers was a term coined by Walter Benjamin to describe a kind of interstitial 'object' in 'which the old and new interpenetrate',[23] an object in which the past leaks through. Adey describes how the glass-encased light on top of the control tower used to flash and optically transmit LV (Liverpool) in Morse code, thereby becoming a kind of inland lighthouse and transmission beacon.

The modern airport is a peculiar kind of space, which relies on a user's and agent's interaction with many automated technical systems, such as the

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21 BCD Technology, 'Fresnel Lens in Mobile Phones', accessed 2 Jan 2019, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e1typvw9bJI.

22 Peter Adey, 'wish image' in *From the lighthouse: Interdisciplinary reflections on light*, eds.Veronica Strang, Tim Edensor, Joanna Puckering (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2018).

23 Max Pensky, 'Method and time: Benjamin's dialectical images', in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin* (Cambridge University Press, 2004).

light-emitting barcode readers decoding the information that controls the transit and access rights of individual travellers.[24]

On a recent trip to Berlin, I visited the old Tempelhof airport. Tempelhof was originally a testing ground for early aviation and was later re-built during the Third Reich as a flagship engineering project. Indeed, its massive scale has enabled it to be used both as a modern film set and as a much-needed shelter for refugees during the Summer of 2015. Tempelhof could provide us with a glimpse of contemporary 'wish image' where the past and present powerfully collide. This was a building built as an image. As we ascended the cantilevered roof previously designed as a spectator's terrace, a panoramic view of the Berlin skyline behind us, I spied in the corner, almost out of view and behind a cordon, a structure reminiscent of a miniature lighthouse with a partially shaded but intricately formed Fresnel lamp.

Fig. 1: Cliona Harmey, lamp interior with red glass octagonal screen, March 2018

24 Martin Dodge, Rob Kitchin, 'Airport code/spaces', in *Aeromobilities: Theory and Research*, eds. Saulo Cwerner, Sven Kesselring and John Urry (London: Routledge, 2009), accessed 28 Feb 2018, https://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/m.dodge/airport_codespaces. See also the book *Code/Space - Software and Everyday Life* by Rob Kitchin and Martin Dodge from MIT Press (2014).

Fig. 2: Cliona Harmey, Fresnel lens and lamp apparatus, March 2018

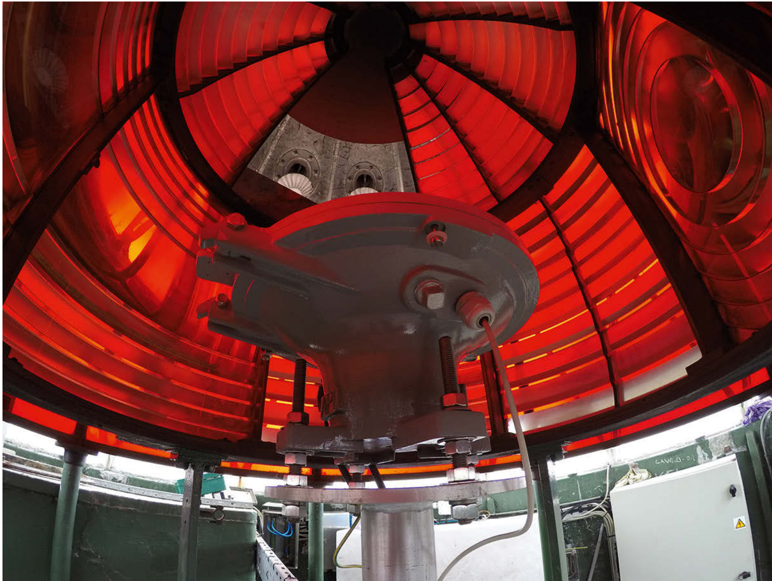

Fig. 3: Cliona Harmey, barcode reader image, April 2018

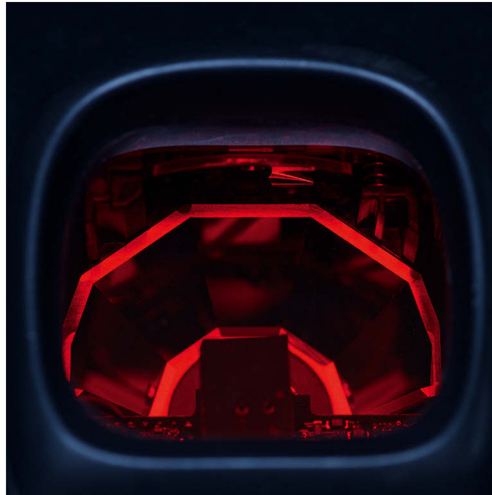

Fig. 4: Cliona Harmey, structures on roof of Tempelhof Airport Berlin with shaded Fresnel lens, July 2019

Fig. 5: Cliona Harmey, view from roof of Tempelhof Airport Berlin with shaded Fresnel lens, July 2019

The European tour

Gregory Collavini

Gregory Collavini is a documentary photographer based in Switzerland, whose work explores human environments in particular through architectural structures and landscape design. In January 2018, he went on a journey through the North Sea on the Amerigo Vespucci, one of the largest cargo ships in the world. With an interest in micro-societies and people who deliberately live outside of normal societies, Collavini immersed himself for six days onboard the Vespucci, photographing the minute details of life at sea within the body of a massive container ship. In between corridors made of steel and the temperament of the outdoors' sea, the photographer reflects on the fleeting landscape of remodelled port cities, attuned to the colossal demand of continental desires. The following text belongs to a documentary series that transports the reader into the floating machinery of global commerce, capturing the inside of one of the busiest trading routes in the world. This series is the beginning of a long exploration of people who deliberately or non-deliberately paint themselves out of the normal canvas of society.

Through the window of the taxi, the docks of the Port of Hamburg are saturated with colourful containers, as far as the eye can see. I'm wondering why I decided, four months ago, to take this trip. Suddenly, the taxi driver stops and says: 'Burchardkai Terminal'. I have to get out. An icy wind slaps my face as I enter and pass through an airlock that scans every truck going in and out. I walk to a small shed, a rough, neon-lit metal structure where I have to register. Inside, I announce myself to the man behind the counter, who takes out a folder on which the word 'photographer' is highlighted. The man in an orange jacket addresses me sternly: 'No picture in the enclosure of the terminal, we do not joke with security.'

The formalities settled, I climb into a minibus that drops me off in front of the Amerigo Vespucci, one of the largest container ships in the world.

Named after the Florentine trader and navigator who served the Kingdom of Portugal and the Spanish crown in the fifteenth century, this giant of the sea, weighing more than 155.000 tons and measuring 365 meters in length, built in South Korea and sailing under the French flag, was launched in 2010. I feel a slight shiver just raising my head towards her guardrail. To reach the ship, I must climb an iron staircase with narrow steps barely wider than my waist. I wobble under the weight of my big bag. Twenty meters farther up, I am aboard! A Filipino officer greets me, confiscates my passport and says in very approximate English: 'You can have it back when you disembark.' Without any further words, the anonymous sailor leads me to one of the six VIP cabins, a sort of tower beyond the hull that shelters the crew's sleeping quarters, the kitchen, the refectory of the officers, and that of the sailors. Carpet, double bed, sitting area, and a private bathroom with a panoramic sea view, a luxury compared to my Hamburg Airbnb where I had stayed the previous nights! Of course, this sea tourism has a price, 800 euros. I could have been fed and housed for a one-way trip to Le Havre. But at this moment, I do not regret it.

Hamburg, Rotterdam, Antwerp, Le Havre, I am travelling one of the busiest shipping routes on the planet: the 'European tour', as they call it in the merchant navy. One port per day, six days in total. From the navigation bridge of the Amerigo Vespucci, I am fascinated by the ballet of the gantries, trucks, forklifts and men who act like ants amidst a perfectly coordinated infernal hubbub. Everything seems too big and, at the same time, very small. I can hardly imagine that, once it leaves Le Havre, the blue cargo ship will be empty, and then ready to be filled in Malta before embarking on its journey to China. Owned by the French shipowner CMA-CGM, the third-largest shipping company in the world after the Swiss MSC and the Danish Maersk, the Amerigo Vespucci can accommodate 14.000 freight containers with all kind of goods.

Standing at the wheel on the day of departure is a German captain, binoculars in hand, eyes focused on the busy traffic of the Elbe. Once the moorings are released, I completely lose sight of any landmarks. I would later learn that each port has its own maritime characteristics, the captains of merchant ships must leave the bridge to experienced local pilots. Whether it is three in the morning or three in the afternoon, the activity level on board is the same, intense. I would like to be everywhere at once, see everything, understand everything, so I run back and forth from the bridge to the holds.

Only meals mark a hint of rhythm during the day, and also an opportunity for the 27 crew members – 6 officers, 4 French sailors and 17 Filipino seamen – to meet and exchange ideas. I look forward to these moments, especially as I am alone most of the time, walking the endless pastel-coloured corridors of this cold and squeaky monster, in search of the smallest detail: the noise of clashing containers, radar graphics, a sketch in the corner of a magazine, an empty can of soda rolling on the ground.

As we sail along the shores of a North Sea as smooth as a pond, I take the opportunity to gaze once more from the bridge; the view is almost 360 degrees from there. Despite the density of cargo ships, fishing boats and ferries around us, the atmosphere is laid-back. The Filipino officer at the helm, wearing a burgundy cap, explains that on these busy waterways speed is limited to 12 knots. In case of infringement, fines are high. Comfortably seated in his chair, the captain of the Amerigo Vespucci, a forty-year-old bearded senior with an Algerian father and a German mother, who is usually not very talkative, begins to chat with me about European politics, his investments in Germany, his family, and his retirement, which he is already planning. With the idling engine purring, the trip reaches cruising pace.

Rotterdam appears on the radar; the rest of the trip will be short. As soon as I enter the Rhine Delta, I feel like I am entering the Los Angeles of Blade Runner: grey and drab atmosphere, rainy climate, angular architecture, pale lights where nature has disappeared. Although I have seen from my limited perch only a tiny part of the biggest automated port of the Old Continent, which covers more than 12,000 hectares – the equivalent of 24,000 football fields – its vastness overwhelms me once more. I try not to miss anything that is happening outside and inside the boat, my camera always close at hand. Lack of sleep and the stress of this unknown environment do not help me keep my thoughts straight. Forbidden to disembark during berth, I spend my evening on the bridge deck, watching each fragment of this monumental and strange metal city. The constant hissing of the gantries fascinates me. They seem like machines communicating with each other. I fight the cold by eating the succulent meal prepared by the Breton cook. Tonight, it's cold cuts, gratin dauphinois, tarte Tatin and cheese, washed down with a good bottle of Bordeaux. I then join the twenty or so Filipino sailors from the Amerigo Vespucci in watching a local sitcom. Although the language difference deprives us of deep exchanges, we laugh and enjoy this moment of relaxation by sharing baklava bought somewhere between China and Europe. But

already they are standing up and returning to their positions to prepare the ship for its departure in the early morning, checking the tie rods that hold the cargo in place, controlling the temperatures of refrigerated containers, refuelling, contacting the tugs and preparing the moorings — as for myself, I go to sleep.

A few hours later, a complete change of environment in Antwerp. To reach the Belgian port, the freighter must enter the Scheldt estuary and sail upstream. For hours, the local captain guides the boat with breathtaking dexterity. Except for the return of real workers in the gantry cranes and some silhouettes roaming along the quayside, the environment is just as inhospitable as the previous stopovers. The fresh air of the night invigorates me. I meet the cook in his blue apron leaning on the parapet. This Breton, about fifty years old, first worked on fishing boats before discovering the merchant marine by becoming captain of a coal bulk carrier, then of container ships: 'Every boat I sail seems bigger and bigger. Moreover, once we are in China, this one will be cut in half to be lengthened. It will then exceed 400 meters.' In the distance, the smoke of an incineration plant draws abstract shapes illuminated by multiple street lights. The smoke tickles our nostrils with its unpleasant fragrance. The Amerigo Vespucci will remain docked for the time needed to unload and replenish the stock of spare parts that the mechanics will have to index; once on board, the crew is on its own to repair anything that breaks, including the main engine.

Rocked by the discordant sounds of the ports to which I have finally acclimated, I sleep soundly. The next day, during the crossing of the English Channel, two successive storms shake the boat. The wind blows so hard that I must cling to the rail when standing on the deck. The chief mechanic, a tall blue-eyed fellow from the north of France, chooses this moment to show me around the engine room and the main deck. 'With each wave, we go up and down by ten meters', he says with a smile when we are at the bow. This is the place where, according to him, we can best feel, and hear, the power of the ship while the bow bulb slowly sinks into the dark waters and rises to the surface like a whale taking a breath. Fortunately, I am not seasick.

My fifth and last night aboard the Amerigo Vespucci. While I quietly sip an instant coffee alone at a table of the sailors' refectory, a whirring pulls me from my reverie. Through the porthole, I can see a red light flashing in the dark: a helicopter! I rush to the stairs, climb them two by two to reach the command post...it is locked. I fall back onto deck F, just below. The blast

of the blades makes me squint and protect my face with my arm. Hovering over the port bridge, the aircraft tries to maintain its position in the wind while a man climbs mechanically down a flexible ladder like a puppet. It's the French pilot who will take us to Le Havre, my final destination. The helicopter is already moving away as I see the first lights of the coast off in the distance. My phone is on the French network: proof that we are approaching the mainland. For two hours, we will sail along the mouth of the Seine under a clear sky.

The second-largest French commercial port after Marseille, Le Havre is ranked lowest in Northern Europe in terms of traffic. Standing on the starboard bridge, the captain steers the ship from the outside control station. At his side, the captain listens attentively to the comments from the tug boats coming through his walkie-talkie. Without the slightest jolt, the container ship is docked. The huge mooring ropes are thrown, the engine stops. It's time to eat. During the meal, I discuss my disembarkment scheduled early the next morning with the captain, who will call a taxi to take me to the station. I take the opportunity to share this last evening with the French officers who spend half of the year at sea without seeing their family. Their loneliness is heavy, their impatience palpable. 'In 21 days, we will finally be in Singapore', sighs the young chief mechanic. 'I will finally go back home and kiss my daughters.'

In the wee hours of the morning, I leave the white castle. In the elevator, I review the photos of the 27 crew members displayed next to the weekly menu. 27 portraits plus one: mine. As short as this journey was, I was part of this ship. I am a bit sad as I enter the bridge; a Filipino officer returns my passport. Over a last cup of coffee, the officer of the Amerigo Vespucci says he regrets that I cannot come to China with them and apologises for not having had more time for me these past days. We say goodbye to each other, the taxi is waiting for me along the dock. I descend the iron stairs confidently this time. Tired, a little melancholy and nauseated, I sit on a cold bench at the Le Havre station and wait for my train to Paris. I experience the first effects of earth sickness. So it is on solid ground that I take my first pill against motion sickness.

Fig. 1: Gregory Collavini, a Filipino crew member stands by while the ship is filled up with fuel, 13 January 2018

Fig. 2: Gregory Collavini, near the rudder machinery, the crew members have a place for exercise and leisure, 15 January 2020

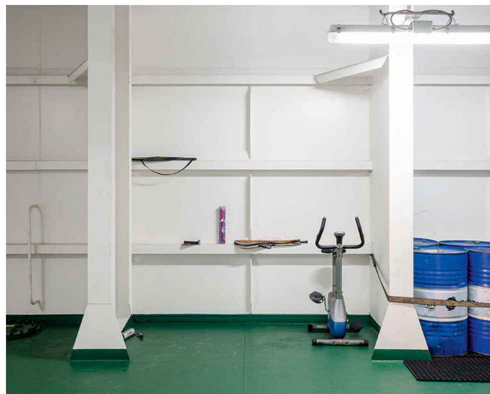

Fig. 3: Gregory Collavini, view of Rotterdam port, 13 January 2018

Fig. 4: Gregory Collavini, foggy view towards the stern of the Amerigo Vespucci, 12 January 2018

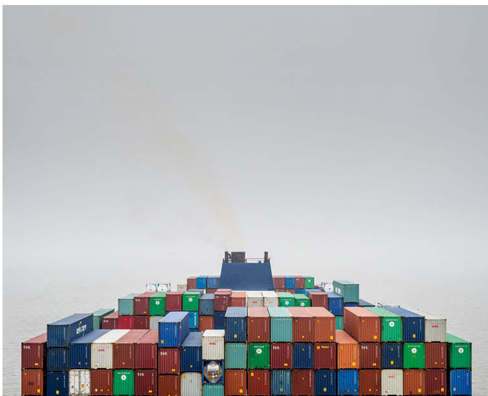

Fig. 5: Gregory Collavini, the chef enjoys his break and contemplates the Antwerp docks, 14 January 2018

Bottleneck pressure: Port Said

Jürgen Baumann

Jürgen Baumann is an artist based in Winterthur, Switzerland, who explores industrial legacies and imaginaries, in particular through references to engineering and design techniques. His sculptural work often evokes the large-scale infrastructural scale and impact of industrial production, while conveying the poetic associations attached to specific industrial sites, tools and people. In the Spring of 2018, he was an artist in residence in Cairo, Egypt. There, he went on a trip to the Suez Canal, which, in 1869, opened a new maritime route between the Mediterranean Sea, the Indian Ocean and the China Sea. In the following text, in the style of a holiday report, he touches on the political, historical and social textures of the canal. The canal was cut through the Middle Eastern hinterland, to facilitate maritime trade between Europe and Asia. In a site infused with intense past and present political significance, the artist muses on the global routes passing by, while confronted with the limited visibility conferred by its strategic position.

I went to the bustling Ramses railway station by metro. Despite the entrance looking immense from afar, you get sucked into the stream of people, pushed and squeezed through a tiny security door just to get spit out on the inside of the building – very much like the luggage going through the metal detector. Everything was written in Arabic, and I could not understand a thing. I faintly remembered a map I had seen on the internet (yes, there is a map for the railway station), and I navigated my way through the crowd to a booth in the corner. Here I would get my train ticket.

I wanted to see Port Said for a couple of reasons. It is the entrance to the Suez Canal on the Mediterranean, and I was curious as to what a canal, dug through the desert, looks like. Also, I once worked at a ship diesel company and I wanted to see the huge bulk carriers slowly moving through the desert. This strategic landmark, built out of nothing, had its appeal. I thought that

Port Said was probably quite a boring town, without too many tourist attractions, if any. The thought of being there, in a normal town, watching ships go by, seemed hilarious to me. I was going to have great fun.

The rail tracks leading from Cairo up to Port Said went through the lush Nile Delta, before taking a turn right, passing through Isma'ilia and then straight up north along the Suez Canal. As soon as we left the green fields of the Delta, the train followed the tracks through the desert. A little tin box on wheels directly under the sun. Because of the air conditioning that made first-class way too comfortable, I had to put on a hoodie. Then we reached the canal and aligned with it. It was a surreal experience, freezing inside a train travelling along a man-made canal through the desert, watching the huge ships from a close distance, the dark blue water contrasting with the yellowish sand. It looked better than I had imagined. Artificial and magical at the same time.

Unfortunately, I had a seat on the wrong side of the aisle. The other people were still busy inside the coach. Chatting, walking around, sitting here and there for a while, and laughing. So, as soon as the space across the aisle from me was freed up, I took my camera from my backpack and jumped over. A guy some seats further down yelled in a sharp voice: 'No Photo!'. 'I'm just a tourist,' I responded, smiling, and explained that I did not want to take photos of any people, just the canal. He too now smiled but nonetheless repeated his barked 'No photo!', just moments before I took my shot. Now I got a little bit upset. With a straight posture, I asked him challengingly whether he was a policeman, and why he thought he had the right to tell me not to take photos. He nodded, pointed to his shoulder where his badge would be if he was wearing his uniform and then proceeded to show me his gun. I did not take a photo. It turned out that there were about three police officers in my coach. They were the ones walking up and down the aisle, chatting with each other. Approximately every 200 meters there was a little booth on stilts next to the canal. Each made for exactly one person. I wonder how many lonely young soldiers were guarding the canal.

The next day I took a stroll along the waterfront in Port Said. After waiting a couple of hours for the big ships, I gave up. I was taking photos of all kinds of stuff, buildings, birds, cars, and of course, the canal. It was not as impressive as in the desert though. A man approached me and kindly reminded me that it is forbidden to take pictures of the canal. He apologised and told me that he was only concerned because of the political situation in Egypt and its

history. Due to the strategic importance of the canal, the Egyptian Military took special measures to ensure the secure passage of cargo ships at all times. The canal had become a symbol of human capability, much like the pyramids.

It turns out there are two entrances to the canal in Port Said. The older one, smaller and impossible to broaden due to the city of Port Said, which was built around it, and the newer one, a couple of kilometres away, made for bigger bulk carriers. I took the ferry across the canal and started to walk towards the second entrance. The sun burning on my head, I walked along some salt evaporation ponds and passed by a military training area. The road took me out of town. Far away I could see a big wall, behind it the bridge of a carrier. When I came closer, I realised that the wall went along the canal for way longer than my feet would carry me in this heat. I started climbing up the wall to sneak a peek but was seen by some army security guy and yelled at. Disappointed, I headed back.

Port Said turned out to be a very normal town. Not much happening. The only reason for its existence is the canal. Some stranger on the street desperately wanted to sell me weed, cocaine or a 'good time' with one of his ladies. I walked on and enjoyed the sunset on the beach. There were no tourists at all. The little beach shacks were blasting their loud music out onto the sea and the staff were watching their cell phones. I ate dinner in an Italian restaurant. It used to be famous for serving the sailors passing through.

One of the local tourist attractions is a plinth, without a statue on top. The architect Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi had designed a statue of an Egyptian woman holding up a torch to greet the ships entering the Suez Canal. But that statue was never commissioned. Bartholdi later realised a newer version of the statue on a small island in the New York harbour.

Fig. 1: Jürgen Baumann, Egypt, Valley of the Kings, 2018

Fig. 2: Jürgen Baumann, Egypt, Abu Simbel at Lake Nasser, 2018

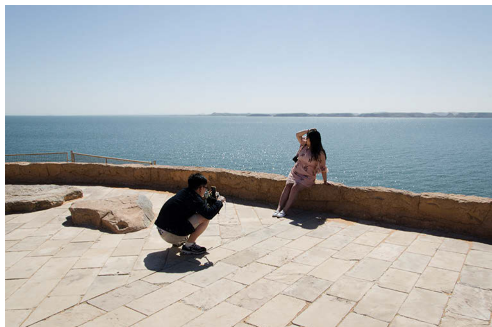

Fig. 3: Jürgen Baumann, Egypt, Excavation site near Sakkara pyramid, 2018

Fig. 4: Jürgen Baumann, Egypt, Luxor, 2018

Fig. 5: Jürgen Baumann, Egypt, Salt lakes in Port Said, 2018

Part 3: Metabolic pressure

Tarnished gold: border regimes from the Mediterranean to Switzerland

Caroline Wiedmer

Caroline Wiedmer is Professor of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies at Franklin University Switzerland. She has published in the areas of memory studies, environmental humanities, law and culture, and gender and sexuality. In her research, she is interested in the ways narratives circulate in different areas of society, and how their impact and function change as they traverse different epistemic realms and different forms of expressive media. The following text pitches the representation of forced migration in Europe during the 'crisis years' 2014-2016 in the film Eldorado against the policies, agreements and laws that determine the movement of refugees across the continent. The discussion asks after the ability of the documentary mode in film to grasp the uneven mobilities of people and wares across the Schengen area, and the figurations of citizenship and refugeedom that emerge in the comparison.

Border regimes

Goods, information, germs and currencies flow largely unchecked across the maritime borders to the EU and into its hinterlands, while refugees are routinely stopped, searched, registered, digitalised, incarcerated and trafficked. In fact, the Mediterranean has been pronounced the world's deadliest border by various international bodies.[1] This chapter introduces the section entitled Metabolic pressures from the human perspective, asking specifically about

1 See for instance the 2019 Impact Report by the UNHCR, accessed 15 March 2020, https://www.unhcr.org/publications/fundraising/5e7a167b7/2019-donor-impact-report.html?query=Europe%20deadliest%20border.

the various pressures and obstacles refugees are exposed to as they travel from countries in the Middle East and Africa across the Mediterranean in a quest for safety and economic stability on European shores. In turn, it also asks about the various ways in which European countries attempt to metabolise the pressures created by the arrival of these refugees through political and legal means, and how one artist, the Swiss filmmaker Markus Imhoof, represents the difficulties refugees face as they attempt to travel from a number of countries in the Middle East and the Global South to the so-called Fortress Europe.

While such pressures can be felt at many points in societies borders bear some of the most telling inscriptions of a nation's stance vis-à-vis its own territoriality, its relation to other nations, and its historical understanding of its own responsibilities in the face of forced migration, particularly in the way such borders are constructed, managed and imagined. For those hoping to traverse these borders as refugees and asylum seekers, their construction, and what they mean for the countries they enclose, can make the difference between life and death. I want to think about three aspects of the border in this essay: one, the consequences of the largely invisible, ever-shifting, and often contradictory latticework of agreements, laws, and regulations that have rendered the outer edges of the continent at once treacherous and unstable; two, the degree of violence made visible as humans attempt to move alongside circuits of capital and goods, each challenging territorial borders in different and often contradictory ways; and three, ways in which collective concepts of citizenship and what it means to be 'a refugee' are represented in policy and reproduced in artistic renderings. In terms of policies, I will concentrate in this essay primarily on the years between 2014 and 2016 – the years depicted in Imhoof's film *Eldorado* during which there was a massive increase of refugees into Europe, and the EU policy on refugees shifted markedly in response to this increase, thereby altering border and asylum regimes across Europe, creating new paths from coast to hinterland.

Borders can, of course, differ in their make-up: some are made of razor wire, others consist of patrolling ships, and others still are invisible to the naked eye and wont to change at the whim of policy-and lawmakers. They also differ in their ideological underpinnings: some, increasingly under the pressure of populist sentiment or dictatorial regimes, take on imposing physical shapes to 'keep out' foreigners based on the idea that nativity equals nationality; while others, like the borders between most EU countries,

and with Switzerland, barely existed at all for those with the right kind of passport (at least until the pandemic hit), namely a passport from a nation signatory to the Schengen accord. These borders were originally constructed in the name of promoting free commerce and mobility, and of celebrating the idea of open democracies after a long murderous century, though these democracies are still firmly wedded to the idea of territorial statehood. Borders can also be seen as socio-territorial constructs expressing cultural anxieties, which in turn take the form of the specific safety needs of the countries they guard; their significance and relative stability understood as embedded within, and reactive to, the collective memories and discourses of national belonging of the countries they demarcate.

The two borders I want to consider here in particular – the EU's outer borders and Switzerland's borders with the EU – are both influenced, albeit in different ways, by a master narrative of a borderless Europe that arose in the mid-1980s. While EU states embraced the concept, Switzerland repeatedly declined to sign on with the EU, preferring to go the way of bilateral agreements and neutrality, a concept well-rewarded throughout the 20-century.[2] When Switzerland did ratify the Schengen agreement (as distinct from EU memberships) some 20 years later, on October 26, 2004, it was primarily for economic and safety reasons: to make Switzerland more attractive to tourists, to augment its security systems by joining the so-called Schengen Information System (SIS) – a Europe-wide databank that facilitates cooperation in police matters – and to tighten asylum control under the Dublin Regulation, part of the Schengen agreement. As is the case for all land-locked EU member states surrounded by EU countries, the Dublin Regulation is beneficial to Switzerland because it stipulates that asylum requests must be processed, and either granted or declined, by the EU country on which a refugee first sets foot, typically Greece, Italy or Spain. There they are registered, and their fingerprints stored in EURODAC, or European Dactyloscopy, an EU-wide database of fingerprints, which allows member states to determine instantly whether a refugee has already been registered in another Schengen country, and hence, can be submitted to a so-called Dublin transfer back to that country. In 2015, for instance, Switzerland transferred roughly 20% of its 39,523 asylum seekers (just under 8000 persons) to another Schengen

2 Accessed 15 March 2020, https://www.eda.admin.ch/dea/en/home/europapolitik/chronologie/2000-2001.html for a chronology of Switzerland's history with the EU.

country under this scheme.[3] If the EU, then, was initially fuelled by the idea of a borderless Europe when the Benelux Economic Union, France, and Germany, signed the first Schengen agreement in 1985 (followed by Schengen II in 1990, which was eventually adopted by 16 countries) it has today become a matrix of complex cross-country surveillance systems that replaces more conventional interior, physical borders. Europe's territorial borders, in the meantime, have shifted outward, to the external borders of Schengen countries, and in some cases to the sea.

Over the last thirty-some years the Schengen agreement, then, has revolutionised the circulation of goods throughout the EU; it has re-calibrated border management, recast the laws and regulations governing trade, sped up the flow of traffic, streamlined the structures of supply chains, created new technologies of circulation, and – helped along by the spread of the internet – transformed the very way Europeans consume goods, and profoundly altered the space and pace of mobility across Europe, from coast to hinterland, and beyond. At the same time, it has changed the architecture of national security systems, laying a fine and powerful net of surveillance across the continent, thereby creating an intricate and largely invisible set of obstacles for the mobility of particular groups of people, mainly refugees. This results in two contradictory spaces: the space of the corporate supply chain and the space of national territoriality. These two spaces, in turn, have profound implications for the differing flows of goods and people. As geographer Deborah Cowen writes in her book *The Deadly Life of Logistics*: 'The paradigmatic space of logistics is the supply chain. This network space constituted by infrastructures, informations, goods, and people is dedicated to flows. Casually referred to by those in the industry as a "pipeline", logistics space contrasts powerfully with the territoriality of the national state.' (Cowen, 2014).[4] The migration of people cannot be thought without its largely invisible counterparts, the supply chain of goods and information: these pipelines are often at cross-purposes to one another, their mutual effects made manifest at unexpected turns, their contribution to a broader system

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3 Accessed 20 February 2019, 2015 report from the State Secretariat of Migration, https://www.sem.admin.ch/dam/data/sem/publiservice/berichte/migration/migrationsbericht-2015-d.pdf, 7.

4 Deborah Cowen, *The Deadly Life of Logistics: Mapping Violence in Global Trade* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 8-9.

of movement largely hidden. The 2018 film *Eldorado* by Swiss filmmaker Markus Imhoof helps to make visible these contradictory pipelines, and the logic behind the territorial imaginaries that animate them.

Eldorado: A visual rendering of the European border regimes

Visual renderings of refugees influence the way they are imagined both by themselves and others, and the responses to those seeking asylum, while at the same time shaping national collective consciousness with regard to what it means to be a refugee. Representations are also responsible for the degree to which the condition of being an asylum seeker or refugee is figured as a stable and immutable condition that adheres to a person, rather than the various historical and geopolitical contexts, and the various systems – legal, economic, political – that brought about refugee-ness. *Eldorado* offers an interpretation of Europe's, and particularly Switzerland's, stance on asylum and with it our understanding of the figure of the refugee that attempts to take into account not only history but also the political and capitalist systems that shape the conditions of being a refugee in twenty-first-century Europe. The film, in short, helps us think through political and cultural shifts as they unfold across space and time by tracing the path of refugees from the Mediterranean to Switzerland and comparing Switzerland's asylum system during World War II with that of the present. Operating on these two interlacing narrative levels – a retrospective frame that loops back to Switzerland's history of refugee politics during World War II, and an account of the fates of present-day refugees in Europe – the film connects the history of refugee politics across the twentieth century in Switzerland with present-day asylum practices. Imhoof's own history as a Swiss filmmaker is also pertinent in this regard: in 1981 he released his first film, *Das Boot ist voll (The boat is full)*, a title that echoes the metaphor used by both Minister of Justice Eduard von Steiger and Heinrich Rothmund, chief of the so-called *Fremdenpolizei*, or police for foreigners during the Third Reich, to describe the Swiss government's attitude to Jewish refugees, and which led to the official closing of the Swiss border on August 13, 1942, for Jews attempting to cross into Switzerland.[5] *Das Boot ist voll* relates the fate of a group of Jewish refugees

5 Markus Imhoof, *Das Boot ist voll*, 1981.

who, protected by some and denounced by others, were ultimately sent back across the border into Nazi Germany.

My interest in *Eldorado* derives primarily from two points: the fact, on the one hand, that Imhoof offers a matrix that spans history, geopolitics and economics from within which he articulates a critique of mass migration within the contemporary context of the European militarised border systems. On the other hand, I am interested in the artistic strategies used to create a provocative tension between the ahistorical figure of the refugee, even the nomad, which Imhoof contrasts to the fluidity of today's mobile lives in a hybrid form of documentary. Part documentary, part intertextual pastiche, part autobiography, *Eldorado* mirrors a recent transformation in the convention of the documentary form over roughly a century, during which photography as a documentary mode has given way to film and then video, and analogue has ceded its place to digital, rendering the truth-value that inheres in the image unstable. '(T)he resulting documentary-fictions of diasporic identities', art historian T.J. Demos notes, 'interweave the factual and the imaginary registers of the image for critical and creative effect…'[6] In the case of *Eldorado*, the mélange of styles allows him to capture some of the physical elements of mobility, while also gesturing at their larger metaphoric significance.

Imhoof achieves the hybrid documentary style by employing different documentary modes, some of which tease the fine line between the factual and the fictional. As the film moves from a largely historical autobiographical mode of storytelling to the documentation of the present-day we are taken from what film theorist Bill Nichols refers to as a poetic mode, which is frankly subjective to an observational mode, which purports to offer a window on the world, and on to a participatory mode in which the filmmaker becomes part of the event.[7] The film opens in the autobiographical mode with the filmmaker's childhood recollections of World War II, of the time when his mother took him along to the freight train station to pick up a child refugee, Giovanna, who had been sent from Milan along with hundreds of other children, each with a number around their neck, to spend three months in Switzerland recovering from the trauma of war. This frame, built from sepia

6 T.J. Demos, *The Migrant Image: The Art and Politics of Documentary During Global Crisis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2013), xvi.

7 Bill Nichols, *Introduction to Documentary* (Indiana University Press, 2001).

photographs, letters, and children's drawings, and narrated by the filmmaker, is a reminder not only of Switzerland's humanitarian gesture of taking in child refugees for varying lengths of time during the war but also of its anti-Semitic policy of closing the Swiss borders to 'refugees for racial reasons' in August of 1942, thereby refusing entry to tens of thousands of persecuted Jews during the war.[8] The effect of this opening is to draw the audience into the film from the get-go and to position the viewers ideologically: we understand, literally, where the filmmaker comes from, his sympathies are unmistakable and draw empathy from the viewers as well.

This frame narrative gives way abruptly to a scene on a present-day rescue boat. As though to emphasise the connection to the title of Imhoof's first film, the opening shot in the narrative present of *Eldorado* throws us into the glittering waters of the sea, and consequently into emergency mode: with a high angle shot of refugees fighting to survive in the shifting waves of the Mediterranean as the Italian coast guard scrambles to hoist people on board a small rescue boat, we are immersed – and at times submerged through underwater shots – in the reality of today's refugee struggles. Desperate screams, the staccato whir of helicopters, and the officers' barked commands, coupled with the unsteady shots of a camera mounted on the rescue boat, add to this multi-sensory rendition of what has occurred repeatedly in the waters between Africa and Europe. What was still a metaphorical boat in *Das Boot ist voll* some forty years ago has turned into a literal shipwreck in *Eldorado* –in turn, an apt metaphor for Europe's present-day refugee politics.

The next scenes show us the refugees going through the routines set up on board the ship: health check, numbering, registration, food, all accomplished by officers wearing white aprons and face masks, emphasising the

8 The so-called Bergier report, commissioned by the Swiss government in 1997 and published in 2002, examined among other things what happened to the Jewish refugees who sought a safe haven in Switzerland during World War II. It estimates that between January of 1940 and May of 1945 approximately 24,500 Jewish refugees were refused entry into Switzerland. See Unabhängige Expertenkommission Schweiz-Zweiter Weltkrieg, Die Schweiz und die Flüchtlinge zur Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, 21; see also https://www.uek.ch/de/publikationen1997-2000/fberd.pdf, accessed May 2, 2019. More recent studies estimate much lower numbers, see https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/politik/schweiz-und-nazi-regime-im-ii-weltkrieg_laut-einer-studie-hat-die-schweiz-weniger-juden-abgewiesen/43226652, accessed May 14, 2019. See also https://www.woz.ch/-7d82 for a left-wing commentary on these more recent estimates, accessed May 14, 2019.

ideas of refugees as contagious, as illness brought to the European continent. From the sailors to the doctors, the officials we witness are all kind and competent and efficient, one holding the hand of a frightened woman, assuring her that she needn't be afraid as the ship puts into an unnamed Italian port, and the routines of health check and registration start up again, much like a machine getting into gears. *Eldorado* leaves us in the dark about the political machinations taking place behind the scenes of the Italian rescue operation *Mare Nostrum*. The political reality is that the ship Imhoof and his team were allowed to join in 2014, and from which the footage in the opening sequences stems, was one of the last missions of the military and humanitarian organisation *Mare Nostrum*, set up by the Italian Marines and Coast Guard to save refugees and pick up human smugglers after 400 people had drowned within a few days off Lampedusa in the fall of 2013.[9]

In the fall of 2014, the 1.8 million euros per year in subsidies promised by the European Union in 2013 had dried up and *Mare Nostrum* was succeeded by an operation called *Triton*.[10] *Triton* was subsequently placed under the command of *Frontex* (short for the French Frontières extérieures), the EU agency in charge of protecting the Schengen border within 30 nautical miles of the European coastline.[11] *Triton* operated mainly by means of deterrents, focusing on destroying the traffickers' boats and, in cooperation with the Libyan coastguard, picking refugees out of the sea and placing them in pris-

9 This humanitarian operation, supported by advocacy groups such as the European Council of Refugees and Exiles, set up by the Italian Marines and Coast Guard at the behest of the Pope to save refugees after 400 people had drowned within a few days off the Italian Island of Lampedusa in the fall of 2013, saw the safe passage of 150,000 migrants during its existence of a little over a year. However, after one year of operation, in the fall of 2014, the support of 1.8 Million Euro spoken by the European Union in 2013 dried up, and it was deemed too expensive for only one EU state to carry. See for instance 'Italy Is About to Shut Down the Sea Rescue Operation That Saved More Than 90,000 Migrants This Year', *VICE News*, retrieved 19 April 2015; 'The worst yet?', *The Economist*, 19 April 2015, retrieved 19 April 2018, or 'IOM Applauds Italy's Life-Saving Mare Nostrum Operation: "Not a Migrant Pull Factor"', *International Organization for Migration*, 31 October 2014, retrieved 16 April 2019.

10 For reporting on this change, see for instance 'Italy Is About to Shut Down the Sea Rescue Operation That Saved More Than 90,000 Migrants This Year', *VICE News*, accessed 19 April 2015; 'The worst yet?', *The Economist*, 19 April 2015.

11 In response to the refugee crisis 2014/2015, the European Commission proposed to expand the operations of Frontex and to turn it into a full-fledged European Border and Coast Guard agency in December of 2015.

on-like camp facilities along the Libyan coastline. Those coastal waters had changed dramatically for refugees within a few short weeks. And yet, contrary to the EU expectation that termination of *Mare Nostrum* would result in fewer refugees, the numbers continued to rise in 2015, along with the death rates en route.[12] Within a month, then, the ships in the waters between Italy and Libya had gone from rescuing migrants to protecting the European coast from those same migrants.[13] The human pipe-line was thus transformed from one that offered passage to Europe, albeit of a treacherous sort, to a pipeline with dead ends that closed down rather than opened up options. With the change from *Mare Nostrum* to *Frontex*, the Mediterranean border itself changed its character from offering welcome and temporary shelter to an attempt to close itself off to refugees. These shifting politics undergirding Imhoof's images of human beings snatched from the sea, however, remain invisible in *Eldorado*; instead, we see sequences of refugees being welcomed in anonymous Italian port cities. While Imhoof notes in a voice-over looking out over the cramped ship filled to capacity that none of its passengers actually has a right to enter Europe legally, and that in order to get there they first have to risk their lives, we are not made aware that the likelihood of actually reaching safe harbours decreased radically in the fall of 2014. This obfuscation of the significance of the boat we find ourselves on, as compared to the reality of the Mediterranean border after 2014 makes us question to a certain degree the truth value of the documentary: while it surely depicts the reality of a certain time, *Eldorado* fails to grasp the transformation of the watery border during the height of what people referred to as the refugee crisis.

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12 In the first six months of 2015, 70,474 refugees and migrants arrived in Italy by sea, the vast majority from Libya; between 1 January and 29 June 2014, the number was 60,431. See Amnesty International 'A safer sea', accessed 1 June 2019, https://www.amnesty.org/download/Documents/EUR0320592015ENGLISH.pdf.

13 Elizabeth Collett, Director of the Brussels-based Migration Policy Institute Europe and is Senior Advisor to MPI's Transatlantic Council on Migration, assesses this deal as follows: 'The idea of returns coupled with large-scale resettlement is beguiling and, from a distance, charmingly simple. But policymakers have viewed the EU-Turkey deal through the lens of the last six months, amplified by concerns over Schengen, rather than the longer scope of the last (and next) five years. The complex and ever-shifting dynamics of migration flows, coupled with the well-documented limitations of existing protection capacity in a broad range of countries (not only Greece and Turkey) suggest the next crisis for the European Union will not be far behind.'

Imhoof, then, uses the image of a boat packed with humans more on a symbolic level than a documentary level, and this alone is significant for the reception of the refugees by European citizens. In fact, the almost ubiquitous images of humans on boats together with a discourse replete with images of the flood stoked fears in Europe that helped legitimise what Giorgio Agamben refers to as 'states of exception' by which he means putative emergencies that states sometimes call out to give themselves license to suspend the ordinary rule of law for certain populations of people.[14] As cultural anthropologist Heidrun Friese writes: 'It is exactly in this context that the image of the invader is created, of the enemy army, the not-to-be-controlled human flood, that has set out to colonise us, to subordinate us, to destroy our culture, to take our values away, our prosperity, our women.'[15] The suggested 'inundation' of Europe with desperate, dark-skinned humans, from cultures so unlike those in Europe, replayed over and over again across a range of media, she points out, elicits reactions of fear and the sort of political reversal we see in the transition from protecting the refugees with *Mare Nostrum* to protecting Europe with *Triton*. As Friese observes further, even 'the expression "refugee crisis" strengthens the construed connection between the healthy *Volkskörper*, or body politic, and the diseased forms, between societal states of normality, and mobility as the interruption of this structured state of normalcy'.[16]

Inferno, purgatorio, paradiso: representations of the refugee industry

Other systems that operate in the background to *Eldorado* are the formal and informal economies built by actors on a number of complex, intertwined levels to profit from the refugee industry. One of these economies the film is careful to uncover: an agricultural outfit that runs one of the many camps housing some of the thousands of refugees who have gone underground so as not to be deported back to Libya. 'Thanks to them, Italian agriculture is

14 Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

15 Heidrun Friese, *Flüchtlinge: Opfer – Bedrohung – Helden. Zur politischen Imagination des Fremden* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2017), 33-34.

16 Ibid, 34.

thriving. They don't exist for the state', the union representative who brings Imhoof to the site tells him. By day the men harvest tomatoes for European and African markets; by night women work as prostitutes. Imhoof visits the camps with a hidden hand-held camera carried hip-high and bouncing along as he walks through the uneven earthy terrain of the camp. What we see in the footage are glimpses of what Agamben has termed 'bare life': refugees working outside the law, living in squalor without protection or legal recourse, and yet on Italian grounds and in full sight.[17] We also learn from the union rep how the economic cycle works: illegal workers harvest, tin or crate tomatoes in Italy, which are then dispersed across Northern Europe and into Africa to be sold. They work for 30 euros a day, half of which they have to give to their *capo*, or boss for rent. They send a portion of their remaining salary to their families in Africa, who then buy the tins of tomatoes their family members have produced in the camp, instead of growing their own. This, the union rep tells us, enables the mafia to earn doubly off the men's labour. In European stores and outdoor markets, meanwhile, consumers buy the beautiful, fresh tomatoes from Italy with little knowledge of how they are produced, or of their true price. The agricultural centres that employ the refugees, for their part, receive subsidies from the EU. 'A perfect system', the union rep concludes, 'perfectly criminal … When they tell me about their crossing it sounds like Dante: inferno, purgatory, paradise. This is purgatory. But their goal is paradise, Northern Europe'.[18] Guy Standing, professor of development studies, confirms what we see in *Eldorado*. He notes the following in a discussion about how undocumented migrants both fuel and are the first victims of the economic engine: 'Too many (socioeconomic) interests benefit from an army of illegal migrants, and too many populists depict attempts at legalisation as eroding the security of the citizenry.'[19] Agricultural camps that use refugees as labourers coerced by circumstance, such as the one Imhoof takes us to, operate in a legal twilight, a state of exception, in which, to use Agamben's words, 'law encompasses living beings by means of its own suspension'; the

17 Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 3.

18 Imhoof, *Eldorado*, 0:58.

19 Standing, Guy. 2011. *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), quoted in Susan Banki, 'Precarity of Place: a complement to the growing precariat literature', unpublished paper presented at the Power and Justice in the Contemporary World Conference 9 August 2013, New York, NYU.

camps, and in this case the prison, constituting states in which those incarcerated have lost all means of legal identity, and are 'entirely removed from law and juridical oversight'.[20] This passage of the film is rendered in a participatory documentary mode, which gives us insight into a slice of underground life not often seen. Unlike the previous passage on the boat, this part of the documentary footage would seem to swing back into the realm of witnessing a present condition of lives lived today; it is a passage that adds an important piece of the European refugee puzzle.

Eldorado, then, is a narrative about states of exception, suspension of legal protection, and the multitude of actors who have forged a thriving refugee industry, from those who manage the border and the refugee camps to others who build their industries on the labour of men and women who have gone underground, to the EU, which gives farm subsidies to mafia-run agricultural businesses to keep industries in Italy. And it is, finally, a narrative about control and regulation. As the refugees disembark in Italy they do so over a platform covered in red material and doused in disinfectant, a seemingly futile gesture in light of the 1800 refugees that step foot in the country, but one that is redolent with symbolism aligned with the notion that refugees threaten the continent with disease; more still, that they are themselves the disease that threatens the body politic of the continent. Imhoof adds to this interpretation by calling the red platform a trap: if it is to disinfect the refugees for the Europeans, it also signifies the instant curtailment of mobility for them: in fact, the end of the legal road for most, for it allows member states to determine at the click of a button whether a refugee has already been registered in an EU country, and hence can be submitted to a so-called Dublin transfer back to that country if they try to move on. This also makes sense of a plea we hear early in the film: one of the young men asks that he not be fingerprinted in Italy so he can go to Denmark, to be reunited with his family. As the film then moves in the direction of Switzerland, following a small family from Somalia hoping to find refuge there, the matter of curtailed movement, borders and violence is about to be tested.

Eldorado makes a series of important points here: the right to mobility in Europe depends on the right kind of passports and visas; the digitalised fingerprints in EURODAC function as a reverse passport of sorts: instead of allowing free entry into Europe, they render refugees immobile. The geog-

20 Giorgio Agamben, *States of Exception* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 3-4.

rapher Reece Jones understands borders as fundamentally violent, arguing that the violence is made up of different forms: the overt violence of the border guards and border security infrastructure; the actual or threatened use of force or power that increases the chance of injury, death or deprivation; the threat of violence necessary to limit access to a country or a resource; and, finally, the violence borders do to the economic well-being of people. Together, she writes, 'this is a collective, structural violence that deprives the poor of access to wealth and opportunities through the enclosure of resources and the bordering of states'.[21] In Chiasso, the Swiss-Italian border town, border guards ask the Somalian family in *Eldorado*, along with a number of other dark-skinned people without passports, to leave the train. It is quickly established that they have already been registered in Italy, and the family is informed that they must, therefore, return to Italy. The violence of this subdued scene finds expression in the outbreak of the young daughter, whose watchful gaze directs our attention to the all-powerful border guards who have just meted out their sentence: screaming, she flings the water bottles and cereal bars the border guards had distributed a few moments before back in their faces, her youth – and the running camera – presumably shielding her from repercussions.

Routes, obstacles and openings

While the trans-European pipelines for goods, such as the tomatoes we saw in *Eldorado*, are well-secured and run along predictable, established routes, like train tracks and roads that present few obstacles, humans on the move across the sea and into Europe between 2014 to 2016, chose their routes to circumvent such obstacles as surveillance systems, multilateral agreements, leaky dinghies, camps, and border officials. By late 2014, after Lampedusa had become a flashpoint for the 'refugee crisis', and about two years before the Somalian family in *Eldorado* were being turned back at the Swiss border, roughly 4 million refugees had fled Syria and were surviving in the informal economies of neighbouring countries, such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey,

21 Reece Jones, *Violent Borders: Refugees and the Right to Move* (London: Verso, 2016), 9.

and Lybia.[22] As the war in Syria escalated in 2014, and more refugees had to flee, these informal economies had become strained.[23] At the same time, the suspension of the *Mare Nostrum* operation had rendered the Libya-Italy route much more dangerous, for both traffickers and refugees, encouraging a new route across the Mediterranean, from Turkey to the Greek Islands and on across Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary, what became known as the Balkan route, to Germany. By the summer of 2015, Hungary, under the political leadership of Victor Orbán and in response to the thousands of refugees entering the country, had begun to build a border fence to prevent entry into Europe through Hungarian territory. The first wave of refugees over the Balkan route, in the meantime, had already reached Germany, and a decision needed to be made as pressure built. Would Germany send these refugees back to Hungary, as was its right under the Dublin agreement, or would it break the agreement? Angela Merkel's decision to let refugees in, with her now-famous dictum 'Wir schaffen das!' ('We can manage') in August of 2015, was not only stunning to many political onlookers, but also acted as a magnet to many still lingering in the fragile economies of Syria's neighbouring countries, and to those still in Syria seeking a way out, as well as to migrants from African countries who saw this as the first real opening to Europe.[24]

One of the explanations for the German *Willkommenskultur*, or 'culture of welcome', advertised in the autumn of 2015 is typically sought in Germany's ongoing efforts to come to terms with a past that itself had contributed to the 60 million refugees produced by World War II, roughly 14 million of whom were Germans. Opening the borders against this backdrop might be understood as a cultural response that fits an ongoing national narrative. By the end of 2015, roughly 600,000 refugees had entered and were staying in Germany (or about one refugee for every 136 inhabitants).[25] In Switzerland, by contrast, *Eldorado* diagnoses no comparable culture of openness: while its history during World War II is tainted by the treatment of Jewish refugees,

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22 Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 78.

23 Ibid, 77.

24 Ibid, 88.

25 'Only 600,000 refugees stayed in Germany in 2015', *The Local* 17 March 2016, accessed 7 June 2019, https://www.thelocal.de/20160317/only-600000-refugees-stayed-in-germany-in-2015.

the facts and numbers surrounding that time remain murky and contested, and the Swiss reckoning with that past, which took place largely in the mid-to-late nineties, pales in comparison to the German process of *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The dominant Swiss national narrative continues to revolve around humanitarian deeds, such as the founding of the Red Cross, and the haven provided to select groups of refugees. Hence there was hardly a mental purchase for the brand of *Willkommenskultur* experienced in Germany, nor does Switzerland have the political structure that might have allowed for the kind of gesture made by Merkel. There were also nowhere near the numbers of refugees at its borders. A mere 39,523 people had requested asylum in Switzerland in 2015, which corresponds to 3% of all requests made in Europe that year.[26] Of these, 6377 refugees received asylum and 7787 received temporary asylum; together this results in roughly one in every 571 inhabitants compared to roughly one in every 136 inhabitants in Germany. Remarkably, while there was only a moderate increase in refugees passing into Switzerland in 2014 and 2015, the percentage of refugees requesting asylum in Switzerland as compared to Europe on the whole actually went down during that period, from approximately 3.7% in 2014 to approximately 3.0% in 2015, to approximately 2% in 2016.[27] Thus, while the border maintenance at the fringes of Europe and in countries along the refugee routes underwent tumultuous changes in the years 2014/2015, Switzerland's border policy remained relatively stable and restrictive with a consistent acceptance rate of 22%-25% asylum seekers.

Along with the Somalian family, *Eldorado* arrives in Switzerland, that supposed paradise, to investigate the conditions refugees face in a landlocked country under the Schengen Agreement. In the footage of these Swiss conditions, Imhoof offers a pointed critique of the Swiss asylum system: he juxtaposes the human with the bureaucratic, the personal with the political, and the past with the present. 'According to the Dublin Accord, we shouldn't

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26 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Staatssekretariat für Migration, Kommentierte Asylstatistik 2015, accessed 3 July 2020, https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv/2015.html.

27 Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft, Staatssekretariat für Migration, Kommentierte Asylstatistik 2014, accessed 3 July 2020, https://www.sem.admin.ch/sem/de/home/publiservice/statistik/asylstatistik/archiv/2014.html. Please note the numbers denoting the relative percentages of asylum seekers between the various reports shift slightly from report to report.

have any refugees at all. Except if they fall from the sky', Imhoof begins his musings, 'still, a few find their way to us'. We are allowed a glimpse of the process asylum seekers go through during an interview conducted by officials from the state secretariat for migration, and we follow, among others, a young African woman, Rahel, working in an old people's home, whose exact origins remain obscure. She spent seven months in a Libyan prison after the boat she was in threatened to sink, and the Libyans rescued her instead of the Italians. 'I warn others that the path is terrible', she says, 'terrible things happen. I can't tell you everything, I am ashamed'. As we watch her wheeling a patient through a park, Imhoof tells us in a voice-over that her asylum request has been denied and that she no longer works at the home.

Conclusion

We are reminded in the last scenes of *Eldorado* that in Switzerland, as in most other European countries, the process of deciding who can remain and under what circumstances, and who must go, is still firmly wedded to definitions and concepts set down in the 1951 Refugee Convention, and in the 1967 Protocol to that convention.[28] The definition of refugee coalesces principally around a notion of personal persecution and includes the concept of *non-refoulement* – the right not to be returned to a country where a person faces persecution – and the idea that once someone is granted asylum there are rights attached to this asylum, even including, in some cases, a path to citizenship. This legal framework, more than anything else, reflects the needs and concerns of the signatory powers at the time of the Convention's drafting, in the midst of the Cold War: namely, that people should not be sent back to communist countries. Today, many think the definition has failed to keep pace with contemporary realities of dislocation, which include environmental degradation due to climate change, the kind of generalised violence we have seen in Syria, and the inability to feed oneself and one's family due to economic hardship, this latter condition lumped under the often disqualifying concept of 'economic refugees'.[29] As Betts and Collier argue, 'it is not clear

28 See https://www.unhcr.org/1951-refugee-convention.html, accessed May 2019.

29 Alexander Betts and Paul Collier, *Refuge: Rethinking Refugee Policy in a Changing World* (Oxford University Press, 2017), 43-44.

that those fleeing this narrow understanding of persecution are necessarily more deserving than other displaced populations. […] One way of grounding how we should identify refugees in a changing world is through the concept of *force majeure* – the absence of a reasonable choice but to leave'.[30] *Eldorado* attempts to model a similarly expansive view on migration by allowing then-director of the police and military departments of the Canton of Bern, Hans-Jürg Käser, who oversaw cantonal migration between 2006 to 2018, to describe a painting from the first half of the 1900s that hangs in Rütschelen, one of the small communities under his command. The painting depicts the community's mayor at the time bidding good-bye to a group of people at the cantonal border, all of them forced into migration with fifty francs each to start a new life in another country. 'To say "those are refugees and those are merely economic refugees": those from Rütschelen were economic refugees, they had no prospects, they were hungry…that was a reality here in Europe. Now the Europeans have prospered and the migrants are somewhere else and they are coming to Europe.' While this view represents a more emancipatory stance than the narrow definition of a refugee in the Geneva Convention, the asylum practices during Käser's tenure held to the definition first forged in 1951, and indeed replicated the scene in Rütschelen in a cynical manner: one of the last scenes in *Eldorado* shows a migration official sending a man who was denied asylum back home with 3200 Swiss francs in his pocket, a stipend to help him re-build a life in his native Senegal. While this appears to be generous, the choice the man was presented with is not: the law in Switzerland says that persons denied asylum either go voluntarily or are forcibly deported; a procedure which, as Imhoof informs us, costs the Swiss State 15,000 francs per person.[31]

Eldorado ends on an autobiographical note: Imhoof, we learn in the autobiographical bookend to the film, comes from a family with multinational roots. In fact, he himself has lived as a nomad for much of his artistic life, raising a family in Milan and then moving on to Berlin. As the film closes we realise that *Eldorado* is motivated by a life's worth of personal and professional dislocations, but also that the film's meandering between complex

30 Ibid, 44.

31 For a discussion of forced expulsion in Switzerland and the legal basis for it, see Caroline Wiedmer, 'Forced Entanglements: Stories of Expulsion, Sovereign Power and Bare Life', *Kulturwissenschaftliche Zeitschrift*, de Gruyter Vol. 2, 2019.

representational registers risks a comparison between the different kinds of mobilities we have encountered, and which threatens to undermine the film's ethos. While Imhoof's own mobilities, and those of his family, are cast in a nostalgic light and portray a well-to-do, romanticised nomadic existence, the refugees in *Eldorado* – Giovanna, the day labourers in Italy, the Somalian family, Rahel – are represented as victims, often without names or personal origins and histories, and certainly without agencies or futures. This juxtaposition of refugees with mobile citizens invites two kinds of reading. One follows Agamben's proposal that only when 'the citizen has been able to recognise the refugee that he or she is – only in such a world is the political survival of humankind possible'.[32] Imhoof's self-conscious recognition of himself and his forebears as always already dislocated, this interpretation would suggest, allows him to close the conceptual gap between citizen and refugee, between him and them, between me and you. This progressive vision and heightened empathy is hammered home in the game the filmmaker played as a child: 'I made a discovery that confused me', Imhoof says, 'the others call themselves I, but I'm the one who is I. Now suddenly everyone else is I too, even you'. The second reading is darker: the comparisons set up between Imhoof and his own family, and the refugees he portrays narrowly as victims run the risk of empty reiteration, rather than active disavowal, of the profound and racist inequalities at the heart of the exclusionary politics in Europe and Switzerland.

Since the 'crisis' of 2014/15, the gap in rights between citizens and non-citizens in Europe has widened under the pressure of emboldened populist leaders and right-wing groups. Merkel's gesture of welcome in 2015 has, by some accounts, cost her the chancellorship and enabled the right-wing, nationalist party Alternative für Deutschland (AfD or 'Alternative for Germany') to enter parliament in 2017 as the largest opposition party. One bit of collateral damage in this political transformation is the pacifist, anti-fascist rallying cry 'Nie wieder' ('Never again'), as nationalist sentiment is once again speakable in Germany and other parts of Europe, and anti-Semitic attacks surge. Europe's outer border, meanwhile, has been rendered less breachable in agreements with Turkey that keeps many of those fleeing Syria away from the European continent and results in fewer refugees arriving from across the sea, while the death rates have increased. Alternate

32 Giorgio Agamben, 'Beyond Human Rights', 26, cited in Demos, *The Migrant Image*, 18.

routes into the hinterland continue to be sought by those in flight, but they often rapidly turn into quicksand, the massive and notorious camps set up at key points holding tanks for many. The quest for new ways of thinking of refugees and citizenship that might reduce the deep divide between the two groups is as much on hold as the lives in the camps.

These metabolic reactions to the refugee crisis at borders, along routes, and in politics throughout Europe seem to have found expression in one of the most compelling and controversial exhibits at the 2019 Biennale in Venice: a fishing boat that sank off the coast of Libya in April of 2015 with several hundred refugees locked in its hull. The wreck was recovered in 2016 by the Italian navy and subsequently brought to a NATO base in Sicily so the victims could be identified. There it was recuperated by Swiss-Icelandic artist Christoph Büchel and exhibited as part of the Biennale in the Arsenale, the shipyard in Venice. It is entitled *Barca Nostra*, our boat. If *Eldorado* and other documentary narratives have attempted to represent the lives of refugees in such a way as to render legible the very absence of their political representation and legal subjectivity, to broaden the concept of refugee-ness and to point to possible imaginative paths out of the ethical and political quagmire Europe finds itself in, *Barca Nostra*, no longer documentary but pure document, no longer narrative but pure form, appears to aim its investigative gaze squarely at the viewer. Who are you, it seems to say, who have made such a mess of our boat?

Liquid territory

Monica Ursina Jäger

Monica Ursina Jäger is a Swiss artist living in London and Zurich. Working in drawing, sculpture and installation, her practice unfolds through a multidisciplinary reflection on concepts of space, landscape, and architecture that investigates the relationship between the natural and the constructed environment. Fluctuating between the intuitive, narrative and factual Jäger scrutinises processes of transformation, re-arrangement and mediation by unfixing the boundaries between artistic and scientific knowledge production. Recent works address the ambiguities connected to post-natural landscapes and the uncertainties related to geopolitics, natural resources and the Anthropocene. In the following text, she reflects on her ongoing research into sand trade and land reclamation, as exemplified in the paradigmatic case study of Singapore. Singapore, located at the tip of the Malaysian territory and politically severed from the mainland since its independence in 1965, has been pursuing a policy of territorial expansion onto the sea. The topographical environment is rebuilt from scratch by human cranes as new coasts and new lands emerge from the depth of the ocean to serve the state's global position and economic networks.

One quarter of Singapore's current island-state's land area has been artificially built. Starting with smaller projects under British colonial rule, land reclamation quickly became key to Singapore's development with newly produced land areas, increasing exponentially in size after the country's independence in 1965. Sand has not only shaped the island-state's urban form but also nearly every segment of its development. An essential material component of concrete, the sand supplied by the transnational sand trading industry has effectively fuelled the country's public housing program, which supplies housing to most Singaporean residents. The steady flow of sand across national borders has been central to the development of a repertoire of char-

acteristic political and regulatory strategies that shaped Singapore's urban and national identity, while also exerting a strong influence on regional and global geopolitics.[1] The Island, once a hilly, densely forested place of tropical life, has shape-shifted. The rivers once were flanked by mangrove swamps and green hills, and what now are busy inland streets of circulation were once beach roads that hugged the sea. Hill after hill was cut and its soil transported to the shores; my mother still remembers the buckets of gravel passing by the windows in front of her childhood home in Bedok, the mountains translocated by conveyor belts. In the case of Singapore, the Hinterland is not just the supplier of goods and labour forces, it was physically cut and projected into the coastal sea. In tidal movements barges of sand travel in and out the mega-port, load after load. What once was a slender sandbar in Cambodia, full of maritime life and cultural residues, has been washed and turned into an aggregate. Once it reaches its destination, it is transformed into coastal earthworks of uniform stratification to further expand the territory. History, culture and geographical distinctiveness are drained from the sand in the process. The songs of the fisherman that once resided in the natural material vanish.

The practices of land mining, trade of natural resources such as sand and gravel are not specific to Southeast Asia, it happens all around the world. Today, we know that sand is not a renewable resource and the global consumption of sand for land reclamation and construction exceeds the natural deposits. We will soon run out of sand. At the same time, land, once an intransigent thing, is being eroded and expanded. Grounded states dissolve into liquid spaces. Singapore is part of a global enterprise and regularly serves as a case study for urban development and economic growth. Global capitalism and culture have emphasised comparison, similarity and homogenisation. Instead of feeding into this global uniformity, I suggest investigating the micro-geographical conditions of Singapore, found in local ecologies, and their specific social impacts. Engaging with urban development through artistic research means engaging outside of traditional classifica-

1 Based on the scientific contributions by architect Hans Hortig to the art installation *Liquid Territory* by Monica Ursina Jäger. Hortig was a member of Architecture of Territory, a research project led by Prof. Milica Topalovic at ETH Future Cities Laboratory Singapore, focusing on the multiple territorial imprints of cities and using the island-state of Singapore as one of her research cases. Accessed 15 July 2020, https://topalovic.arch.ethz.ch/materials/hinterland;.

tions such as genre, type and style, and concentrating instead on means of assembly and juxtapositions, where natural and built elements begin their own conversations in specific places. These sites are particular and singular and their description should not eradicate their individuality. Landscape, architecture and urbanism always exist in strong relationships with political systems and social conditions. Land management and urban development are most of all cultural practices. Identifying and mapping the correlations between ecologies, politics and aesthetics of territories allows for a re-construction of places.

The project *Liquid Territory* is an ongoing artistic research project into sand mining, sand trade and land reclamation, and their ecological and geopolitical implications. Through researching academic archives, the National Archives of Singapore, conducting interviews with local residents, visual mapping of coastal territories and correspondences with UN Environmental Programme and researchers of the ETH Future Cities Laboratory Singapore, I amassed a diverse collection of visual and text-based material. In an artistic transformation process, these source materials are translated into a poetological structure by combining, collaging, layering, and paraphrasing the source material. The text above is an excerpt of the artistic text and part of an art installation. It consists of a wooden structure composed of different table-like layers, which display photographs, collages, poems and scientific texts, as well as actual sand samples. Wood, concrete, and glass surfaces at different heights allow the elements to fold into each other and create a complex collage of material, content, and impressions. This encourages a non-linear reading of the fragments, highlighting the impression of a multi-perspective space. The installation evokes the metropolis as a global hub that is stripped from historical and cultural peculiarity. The installation reflects on alternate hinterlands, their shape-shifting qualities and the manner through which we can think of them as a multi-layered, three-dimensional structure.

The first chapter was conceived as part of a research residency at the NTU Centre of Contemporary Arts Singapore in collaboration with Hans Hortig ETH FutureCities Laboratory Singapore and was first presented in the exhibition *Hinterland – The Eyes of the Lighthouse* at Corner College Zurich in 2019, curated by Anne-Laure Franchette and Gabriel Gee. Since then it has been extended by additional chapters based in Switzerland and the United Kingdom, and been presented as a 3 x 4 m installation at Helmhaus Zurich and Bündner Kunstmuseum Chur.

Fig. 1: Monica Ursina Jäger, Liquid Territory, 2018-19, installation view (detail), exported sand, wood, concrete, glass, collages, photographs, and texts, 145x300x140 cm

Fig. 2: Monica Ursina Jäger, Liquid Territory, 2018-19, installation view (detail), exported sand, wood, concrete, glass, collages, photographs, and texts, 145x300x140 cm

Fig. 3: Monica Ursina Jäger, Liquid Territory, 2018-19, installation view (detail), exported sand, wood, concrete, glass, collages, photographs, and texts, 145x300x140 cm

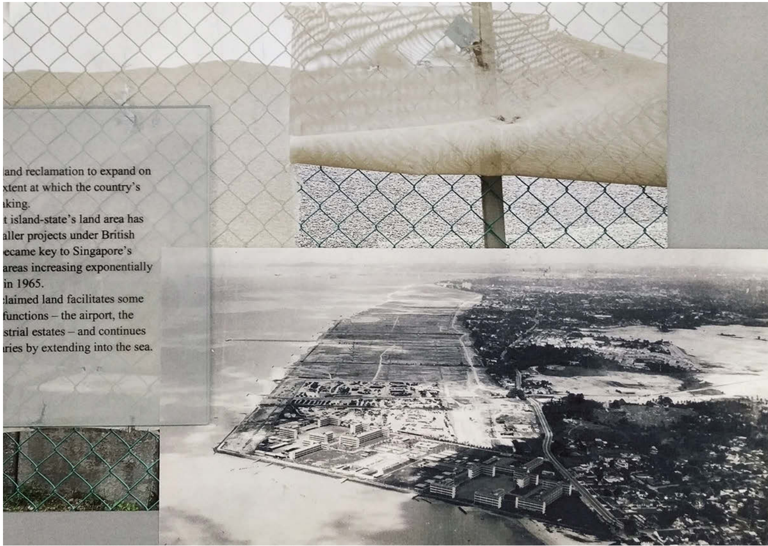


Fig. 4: Monica Ursina Jäger, Liquid Territory, 2018-19, collage on fine art print on Hahnemühle paper, 40x60 cm

Fig. 5: Monica Ursina Jäger, Liquid Territory, 2018-19, fine art print on Hahnemühle paper, 40x60 cm

They cleaned the beach before we arrived

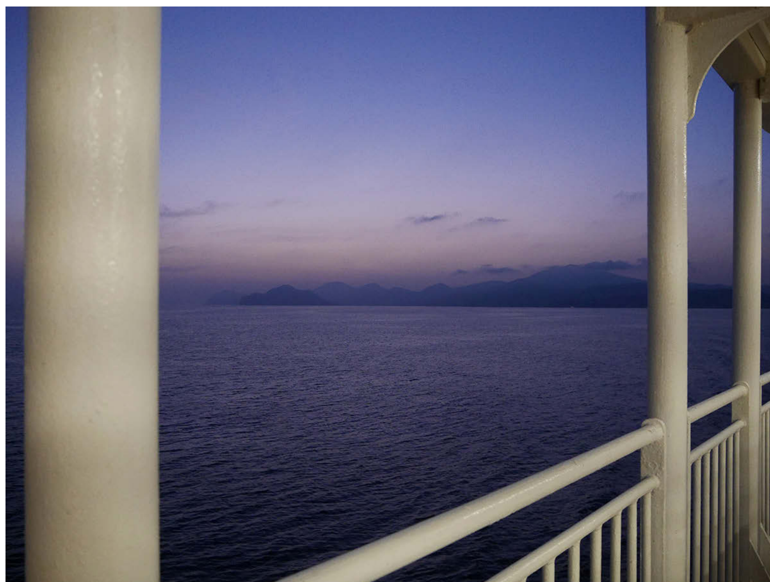
Anne-Laure Franchette

Anne-Laure Franchette has been exploring urban textures and narratives of our contemporary societies through botany, landscape and urban design, and temporary construction structures and sites. Through sculptures and installations as well as photograph and texts, she offers formal visualisations of 'invasive', unwanted and unmapped circulations between the natural and the human worlds, questioning our systems of knowledge, belief and emotion. In the following piece, she reflects on a journey she made to the island of Amorgos, in Greece, where the local environment has been dramatically transformed by human agency. Between the mountainous hinterland and the sandy shores, she looks at the metamorphosis that underlay the present landscape. Behind a 'polished' nature she reveals the tribulations of materials and men that conduce to the present shaping of a land at the crossroads of maritime currents, emblematically captured by the driftwood that is brought back to the land by the sea.

April 2018: From Piraeus, the port of Athens, I left for Amorgos, the easternmost island of the Cyclades, regularly praised for its 'virgin' beauty and 'wild' nature. Filmmaker Luc Besson famously shot scenes of the movie *The Big Blue*[1] here, such as the one featuring the shipwreck of the Olympia, which can still be visited. Despite the rust, the ship's previous name is still visible: Inland. Stories say that the ship was scuppered by pirates.

1 *Le Grand Bleu*, directed by Luc Besson, Neuilly-sur-Seine: Gaumont, 1988.

Fig. 1: Anne-Laure Franchette, ferry view of Amorgos, 2018



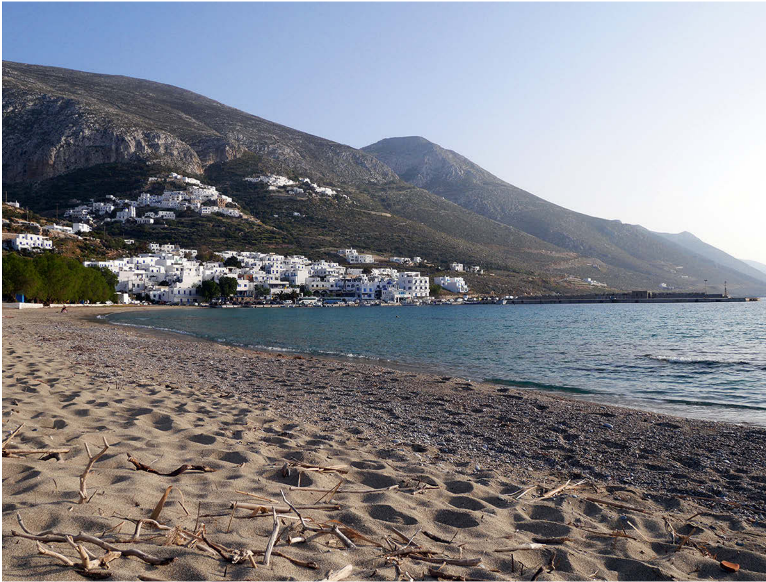
Sailing on a ferry, I attempted to dive into Nikos Gatsos's famous poem 'Amorgos', as a sort of preparation. 'Yet the seaweed's eyes are turned toward the sea (...) They say the mountains tremble and the fir-trees rage...'[2] I read it as an epic and surreal lyrical ride, which seemed to be holding some mystical yet unattainable truth.

Interestingly, Gatsos never visited Amorgos. Just as the French poet Arthur Rimbaud had never seen the sea when he wrote his 1871 poem 'Le Bateau ivre' ('The Drunken Boat'). In what seems like a deregulation of the senses, sinking is described as a voluptuous dive into an Edenic world, finally allowing a life 'in the fullness of the great dream'.[3] Similarly, in *The Big Blue*, Jacques, a professional diver, experiences a hallucinatory dream in which the ceiling collapses and the room fills with water. He ultimately decides that he is better off down in the ocean and goes for one final deep dive, to live and die in the divine reality of the subaqueous depths.

2 Nikos Gatsos, 'Amorgos', trans. Edmund Keeley, *Poetry* Vol. 105, no. 1, October 1964, 24 & 26.

3 Arthur Rimbaud, *Lettre du Voyant, à Paul Demeny, 15 mai* 1871.

Fig. 2: Anne-Laure Franchette, Aegiali's beach, 2018



Landing at the port of Aegiali, on the Eastern side of Amorgos, Theodoro, the hotel manager, greeted me with: 'You are lucky, they just cleaned the beach.' It was the very start of the tourist season, and as in many seaside cities, the coastal sand had been covered by dead seaweed during the winter, which made the shore very unappealing for tourists. Walking down to the beach, I mechanically collected a few bits of the seaweed that remained here and there. Looking at them, I started to wonder which botanical, but also symbolic, qualities they might be holding.

Through the ages, seaweed, embodying the living qualities of the sea, has often been thought to possess magical properties. Mythological sea creatures or deities have frequently been represented with seaweed hair or a seaweed crown. As a tool, it has been used to summon some of the entities dwelling in the sea, to conjure storms or to drive away evil spirits. Burning seaweed, whirling it, braiding it or rubbing it against something were some of the ways to activate its magical qualities.

In botanical terms, seaweed, which can be found on many Mediterranean beaches, is the dead leaves of *posidonia oceanica*, which is commonly known as 'Neptune grass'. This endemic seagrass, considered unaesthetic on

beaches, actually helps reduce the erosion of coastlines. Greek municipalities haul away many tonnes every year. Most of it gets buried, while the rest is used as compost or incinerated. Entrepreneurs of the green economy are now looking at seaweed as 'untapped nature', which could be recycled and transformed into an asset, at least for humans.

Fig. 3: Anne-Laure Franchette, driftwood structure in Aegiali, 2018

Amorgos is famous for its plants. Not the ones from the sea or the coastline, but those growing inland. The island is often described as a 'herbal paradise'[4] and its unique endemic plant species are widely used for health, beauty, and food purposes. Interestingly, the island is also said to have been covered by a thick forest, earning it the erstwhile nickname *Melania*, the dark one. Nowadays, it is rather hard to visualise such a landscape as the ground is mainly covered by small bushes and flowers. There are hardly any trees.

Vangelis Vassalos, a respected neurophysiologist and local plant expert, harvests, dries, distils, and distributes products made of wild herbs. He

4 Arne Strid and Kit Tan, ed., *Flora Hellenica* (Oberreifenberg: Koeltz Botanical Books, 1997-2014.

often drives around the island offering treatments and prescriptions to his local and foreign customers. During the course of a car ride, we discussed deforestation, limestone,[5] and seaweed. I was especially curious about the stories about *Melania* and the current absence of trees on the island.

Fig. 4: Anne-Laure Franchette, in Vangeli's car, 2018

> VV: There are many reasons for the deforestation. One was the need to cultivate land. That's why in the valleys and on the low land, you can see many fields with only one tree. It means that people in the old times cut down all the trees and used it for timber to build houses, boats and a thousand other uses. They cleared the ground and left just one tree, for shade, to rest and eat. We see that in many places. Empty fields for cultivation and one tree, somewhere in the corner. So that was one reason: cultivation, specifically in the low lands.

Now in the mountains, people also needed to cut wood for many reasons. In old times, on the island, people produced the limestone, this whitewash you

5 Limestone is a sedimentary rock composed mainly of skeletal fragments of marine organisms, such as coral and molluscs. It is used as a building material, a component of concrete, an aggregate for roads, a white pigment in toothpaste or paint, a soil conditioner or a popular decorative addition to rock gardens. On Amorgos, and other Greek islands, it is the component behind the whiteness of the buildings.

know. Limestone comes from the earth and to convert it into hydrated limestone, which is the one they then use for the whitewash, they add water and it becomes the milky stuff that they paint the houses with. The walls, everything is white, it comes from the limestone milk. And to make what they took from the earth ready for hydration they needed to build huge ovens using the stone of the limestone and to create very high temperatures, they had to clear big areas of bushes, because they needed a lot of bushes and burning materials, to burn the wood for days. This process converted the limestone into its dehydrated form, so they could make the white milk and paint all the houses. And then there must have been some disasters, maybe some fires in the old times.

Then in the later years, the deforestation was worst because they raised too many goats and sheep. This is an excess of animals. This is also because of a mismanagement on the part of the EU. They supported more the breed of animals and less the agriculture, and people started to breed more and more goats who have been eating everything, all the vegetation of the island. The animals don't let the bushes grow into trees because they keep trimming them. And plus the lack of reforestation. People don't plant trees. As a rule, of course, there are exceptions.[6]

Thinking about the seagrass and seaweed surrounding the island and invading the beaches, I asked Vangelis how the inhabitants of Amorgos had been using these plants, whether they considered them a resource, too, for cooking for example.

> VV: We use seaweed for compost. But for food? We don't know much about it. I am sure it is good for many things, but we don't have the know-how, the knowledge about it. There is so much on the land that we haven't reached the sea. Of course, we get things from the coast, but not seaweed.[7]

It is hard to find historical accounts of the forest, but the construction of ancient buildings, such as the monastery of Hozoviotissa, could be a testament to a large natural wood resource on the island. And it is established that, in 1835, an enormous fire burnt to the ground the forest around Krike-

6 Vangelis Vassalos in conversation with the author, April 2018.

7 Idem.

las, the highest mountain of the island. Today, the only remaining forested area, which counts around five hectares of tall oaks, is located on Mount Papas, a place difficult to access and known mainly to shepherds and hikers. (figure 5)

Fig. 5: Anne-Laure Franchette, Eastern view, 2018

Vangelis was driving to see a patient in Katapola, the second port of the island. He dropped me off by the coast in Aegiali. As I reached the beach, I noticed driftwood lying on the sand. Small branches and planks. And even though it obviously didn't all come from the same tree, it was all of the same very pale colour washed down by the salty water. Erosion and wave action actually makes it difficult to determine the origin of driftwood. It could be the result of natural occurrences, of logging or even of a shipwreck. It suddenly struck me that somehow the trees were coming back to the island – through the back door.

Driftwood is more layered than it looks: it is an ecosystem. Submerged or not, it provides shelter for small animals and organisms. Humans like to use it as decoration, especially to create sceneries in fish tanks. Tutorials on how to make fake driftwood are also popular. But this marine debris has a

fascinating multi-faceted character. Most of the broken wooden debris ending up on the shores is the result of human activity. But driftwood arrives on the human shores as a product of the sea. It, therefore, is a sort of hybrid material, a hinterland coming from the sea, which tells us of other places, and of transformations. Changing form and colour under the effect of water, wind, and sun, driftwood appears as a symbol of life, death, and decay. The remains of a once-living being resurface as washed-out bones, as witnesses and reminders of a tree's dismay.

The driftwood's silent and mysterious return is a reminder of how natural resources are valued, what their commodification and uses represent. This ever-present debris speaks of outside forces, both natural and mechanical, at the intersection where water meets land. Ultimately, we must peel back the layers.

On the last day, I packed many small pieces of driftwood in my suitcase, thinking about the story of the prophetic sea god Glaucus,[8] who becomes immortal after eating a magical herb that could bring dead fish back to life. Enamoured with the nymph Scylla, he declares that his love will not cease before seaweed grows on top of mountains and trees grow into the sea.

8 S*cylla et Glaucus* (1746), five-act tragic opera, by French composer Jean-Marie Leclair.

Between the city and the deep sea: on the plastic nature of the Helsinki shoreline

Tuula Närhinen

For over 20 years, the artist Tuula Närhinen has had the opportunity to observe the Baltic Sea at sea level from her studio located on Harakka Island in Helsinki. Having a studio on an island, which requires a short sea crossing every day, has provided her with an understanding of the intertwined nature of marine life and urban culture. On her way to the studio, the artist can touch the sea, which is one of the reasons her visual art practise is deeply rooted in fieldwork. Water is both the subject matter and the medium of her projects. Engaging and interacting with natural phenomena such as water or wind, enables her to unfurl the aesthetic and material agencies inherent in the forces of nature. Moreover, an intimate connection with the sea allows her to explore environmental threats, such as plastic pollution, from an artist's perspective. In the following text, Närhinen focuses on a series of projects dealing with plastic waste washed up on shore, and reflects on the complexity and controversial nature of marine plastic pollution.

It all started in the winter of 2006 when I came across an article about tiny plastic crumbs, or so-called nurdles, also known as microplastics or 'mermaid's tears'. I learned that among seaweed and flotsam washed up on the shore it is common to find small plastic pellets, which resemble fish eggs and pollute the seas of the world. My first thought was that the problem manifested itself only in the oceans. Walking on the seashores in the vicinity of my island studio, I had not noticed any small plastic pellets. Perhaps the mermaid's tears would not be found in the Baltic Sea?

But at the onset of the following spring, I decided to check it out. I was shocked to find several square meters of shoreline awash with agglomerations of small plastic pellets. I must have passed the same spot hundreds of times without noticing anything out of the ordinary. But to perceive it,

you need to look for it, and to look for it, you have to know that it exists. To actually see the plastic pellets and to tell them apart from similar grains of sand, such as the translucent crumbs of quartz, one has to be familiar with the concept of mermaid's tears. I developed a sieving method for separating microplastics from the rest of the flotsam. The installation I devised shows the sieves along with the final result, a necklace made of tiny pieces of plastic. The mermaid's necklace looks beautiful but the story behind it is sad. My work develops out of the contingencies of the seashore, mediated through a visual logic governed by my subjective sense of pragmatic aesthetics. In the form of colourful plastic fragments derived from objects made of oil, a fossilised black sun resurfaces from the bottom of the ocean and casts its prismatic rays all over the world.

Nurdles are the raw material that new plastic objects are made of. In natural waters, the nurdles were first found in the Bristol Channel in the 1970s. There had been a freighter spill and several containers of the pellets had been dispersed off the English coast. More recently, people have become aware of the problem due to the improper handling of nurdles during transport. For decades no one paid attention to spills and shrinkage from pallets and containers during shipment. Like dandelion seeds on the wind, nurdles blew into river estuaries polluting marine environments. For years to come, mermaids all over of the world will continue to shed tears.

In *Frutti di Mare*, I continued working with bigger items of plastic waste. I collected a pile of trash from the shores of Helsinki and put odd pieces together to make floating sculptures. This installation shows thirty-six sculptures in plastic boxes partly filled with water. All the sculptures were photographed as well. The boxes containing the sculptures are placed on metal shelves and they are illuminated with fluorescent tubes. The colour prints representing the sculptures hang in long rows in the vicinity.

The word 'plastic' is derived from the Greek πλαστικός (*plastikos*) meaning capable of being shaped or moulded. It refers to the malleability or plasticity of the material. Plastics can be cast or shaped into almost any form. The floating sculptures represent a new kind of marine species originating from a previously unknown sea called the *Plastic Ocean*. While working on the *Frutti di Mare* creatures, I observed how plastic materials behaved in an aquarium. Some of the plastic floated, while the heavier parts sank towards the bottom. I started to wonder what would happen if they were released to swim in natural waters?

The installation *Baltic Sea Plastique* shows how the plastic creatures interacted with waves and sea life. The work consists of nine creatures put on exhibit in tall and narrow cylindrical glass containers filled with water. Short video clips depict the sculptures floating in the Baltic Sea. A plastic bag jellyfish contracts its transparent swimming bell, a pink seahorse dances to the rhythm of the waves, and a plastic tube ray fish lazily flaps its blue fins. The synthetic organisms swim in the shallow brackish water meeting algae, fry and murky flows. While watching the videos one begins to understand the strain on marine organisms. The water's movement makes the plastic waste seem surprisingly alive. The synthetic material adjusts to its surroundings with appalling ease. The plastic creatures take to the water like ducks.

The work contains analytical drawings that present a kind of closed-loop recycling of the creative design process. New plastic objects start as dreams on a designer's drawing table. Your mobile phone (used for one year), your shampoo bottle (used for one month) or your grocery bag (used for one hour) – are all produced in factories where the raw material, that is the nurdles, gets extruded or moulded into design items that maintain their polymeric chains and structural properties for hundreds of years. After being consumed, the products are discarded as trash and – sooner or later – they might end up in the ocean. When the plastic debris floats to shore, it is picked up by an artist who puts together the bits and pieces. Within this work, the plasticity of the plastic has run full circle. The analytical drawings return the plastic designs to the drawing table – the place where it all started.

The latest 'additions' to my projects on plastics are the *Impressions Plastiques*. Two plastic rugs (*Soleil levant* and *Soleil couchant*) represent romantic seascapes: a sunrise and a sunset. Discarded plastic bags and odd pieces of rope drifted ashore serve as warp and weft of the rugs. On the floor, between the two textiles hanging on opposite walls, lies a pile of plastic filaments arranged in a rainbow constellation to form a sun path. The colourful filaments are pieces of shock tube detonator wires used to blast bedrock. When a city expands, exploded rock material gets dumped into the sea, together with the plastic wires. The installation is the epitome of the complex fabric of the urban seashore; it is a midden of shipwrecked dreams, vanished islands and marine debris.

A sun path reflected on the water creates a bridge between the observing subject and the sun. Optically, the path seems to move as the viewer moves; it usurps the observer's position in relation to the setting sun and creates a visi-

ble link between the seer and the seen. The disruptive beauty of the sunrise (or sunset) strives to unravel the complexity of the challenge that marine plastic pollution presents to the resilience and ecological sustainability of the oceans.

The sea and its wonders keep capturing people's imagination. The astonishing plastic beauty of marine creatures – this time all synthetic and made of plastic trash – evokes the formative process of nature. For better or for worse, plasticity is a testament to life's metamorphic capability – this applies to all beings, animate and inanimate. The plasticity of plastics and its effects on the ecosystem are now definitely out of human control. As a visual artist, I am possessed by the desire to take the pulse of the seashore. The fascination resides in the process itself, in the oscillation between romanticism and rationalism, or *natura naturans* and *naturata*. Time after time, I return to the seashore and find myself lured by the enchanted voices of the sirens. I want to dive into the brackish water of inspiration – while trying to stay resilient and keep my feet dry.

Fig. 1: Tuula Närhinen, detail from the installation Mermaid's Tears (2007), necklace made of the 'mermaid's tears', small plastic pellets that resemble fish eggs. Acrylic display case for the necklace (40,5x35,5x7.5)

Fig. 2: Tuula Närhinen, detail from the installation Mermaid's Tears (2007), C-print on aluminium (25x40 cm)

Fig. 3: Tuula Närhinen, detail from the installation Baltic Sea Plastique (2014), screenshot from video

Fig. 4: Tuula Närhinen, details from the installation Frutti di Mare (2008). C-prints on aluminium (70x50 cm each). The installation consists of 36 wall-mounted C-prints and 36 floating sculptures in plastic boxes partly filled with water (49x25x29 cm each), placed on metal shelves, and illuminated with fluorescent tubes

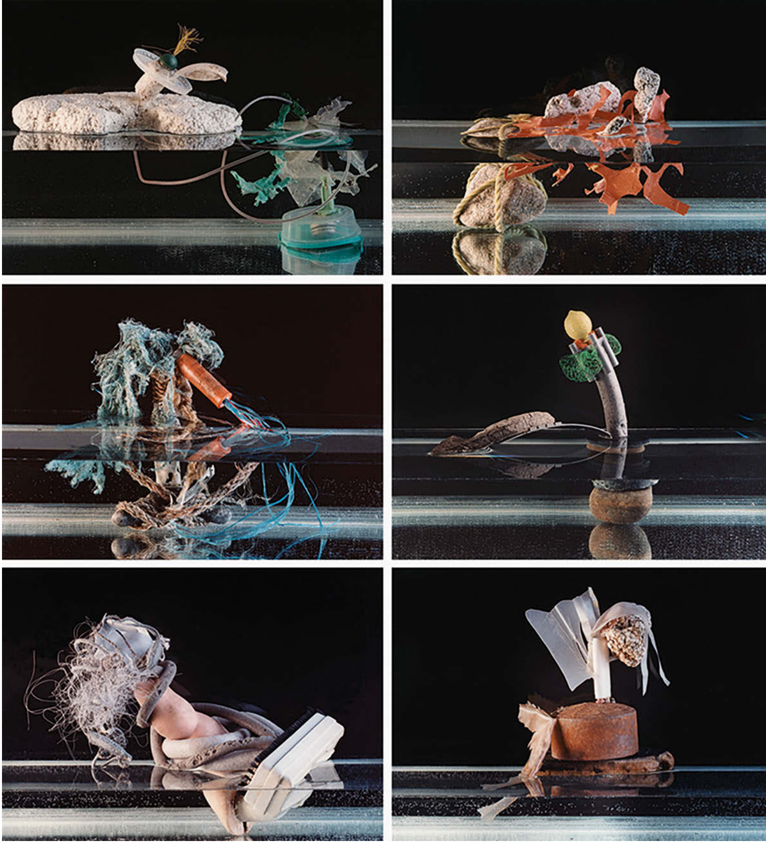
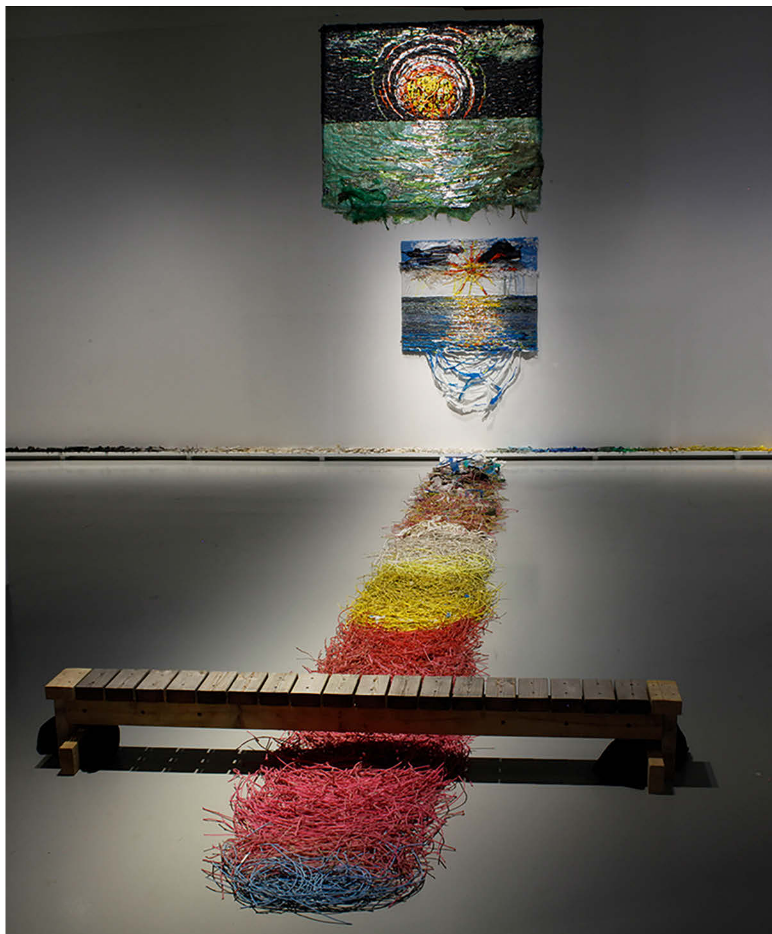


Fig. 5: Tuula Närhinen, Impressions Plastiques (2019). The installation consists of two tapestries (110x90 cm each) entitled Soleil levant and Soleil couchant, both woven out of plastic bags drifted ashore. Under the two rugs hanging from the ceiling lies a 'sunpath' (700x80 cm) put together from bits and pieces of rope, plastic filament and other debris from the Harakka Island in Helsinki



No trophy

Michael Günzburger

Michael Günzburger is an artist based in Zurich, Switzerland, with a longstanding interest in drawing practices, which are developed through projects involving graphic investigation, and spatial body and installation proposals. In the past few years, he has started making prints of various animals, from dogs to beavers, pheasants to wild boars. The particular printing technique required the artist to be in physical contact with wild creatures. The project would end with a polar bear. In the following text, Günzburger reflects on the process that brought him to the edge of human territory, where sea and land merge into an indistinct border, and on the issues of representation that underly human societies' relationships with the animal world in the twenty-first century.

It still makes me laugh to think I spent more than six years planning to get a polar bear, just so I could lay it down in a film of greasy matter.

The 'Bear of the Ocean', *Ursus maritimus* in Latin, hunts on the arctic ice, preferably for young and fat baby seals at the edge of the water. Edges are always a source of life. It proved to be a great matrix for producing many rich forms of work, and for developing questions, as well as for providing plenty of pleasure while seeking answers. It took me from my Swiss harbour to places at the fringes of human civilisation, where the question of whether the predators or the humans should wear senders, so as not to disturb one another, is not rhetorical.

At the heart of the project was a form of laziness: coming from a practice of drawing, I found it more practical to produce prints of animals so precise that eventually, every hair would be visible. The genre of prints stretches from petroglyphs and touch relics like the *Shroud of Turin*, to the Japanese fishprinting technique *Gyotaku*, all the way to Yves Klein's Anthropométries,

among others. All of these prints were done in the blink of an eye. The moment the person or the animal transfers the colour onto the flat matter is short.

It started with the print of a lambskin at Thomi Wolfensberger's lithography workshop in Zurich, followed by the print of a hare on display in a show assembled around Markus Raetz's *Metamamorphose 2*. This is a small sculpture that looks on one side like a bust of Joseph Beuys, and on the other side like a hare. Raetz's piece is related to Beuys' performance in which he explained art to a dead hare. Beuys is himself referring to Albrecht Dürer, who showed his mastery as a painter and draughtsman by painting and drawing fur. So the obvious thing to do now was to let the hare print itself.

At the opening of this show, at which I was asked multiple times to print other visitors' pets, it became clear how utterly important it was to decide on an end to the series. I could have printed Noah's Ark Bestiary, but I promised (without really knowing what I was promising): 'it will end with a polar bear', adding a bit later that night that 'all animals necessary for developing the technique, exploring other facets of the projects, or convincing possible collaborators to be part of the project would complete the series'.

I wanted to work slowly. The territory of work staked out by this idea was too tempting to just pass by for the goal. At this point, I had no clue I would be printing a calf, a wolf, a brown bear, a lynx, a pheasant, a beaver and a wild boar with woolfat, metal pigment and transparent plastic film.

What would you do to get hold of a polar bear and make a print of it? Would you open a web browser and type something like 'Polar Bear Printing Safari'? Would you reach out to a Zoo? Call through the main line and ask the desk if you could print one of their polar bears? Or would you use your connections to reach an arctic hunter? Buy an expensive seat on an arctic hunting expedition that includes a tag, which allows you to shoot a bear in the substantial harvesting quota for polar bears in the Nunavut Territories? Would you travel to Churchill in Canada to see the 'Polar Bear Jail'? Maybe you have a connection to the Russian Arctic? Any options in Alaska, or Norway?

This would be a good moment to reflect on how you, in fact, work. What do you allow yourself to do to other living beings for your purposes? What are your purposes? What is your position in the *cycle of nature*? Did you ever think about selling the fur coat you inherited from your grandmother? Will you buy chicken wings for your kids? Is it OK to fly to the arctic?

Or will you do things just because you can, even with little knowledge? This would explain why the polar bear is so often used for something it is actually not: its whiteness (it actually has colourless hair) is a great projection space. It triggers our fantasy. It's an 'easy myth-making tool'. It is only its symbolic value that constructs what could be considered 'something strong and exotic out of the cold wilderness'. Eventually, it makes you talk about things you don't know.

The number of representations of polar bears is quite amazing, which indicates that we are in the realm of powerful symbolism. The polar bear is at the top of the food chain. Living in remote, vast, cold, and wild areas, it looks like a human when it is stripped of its skin, endangered by the receding ice sheets that result from climate change, which is invisible but still can be felt, ... From my vantage point, in a country with good internet access, what becomes clear is how unimportant the bear's actual physicality is. What is crucial is what it represents. It is the monster under your bed. And it can't be touched, which leads us to the field of the arts.

Few people have actually touched a polar bear, though many have used its image and symbolic value. Therefore, to go and touch a polar bear is an enlightening journey: one has to understand how the animals behave, but even more importantly, how somebody behaves, who could give you access to a bear. You don't get far without a recommendation. Most of the people recommended do not pick up the phone, as there are usually half a dozen phone calls a day from all over the world, from someone who wants to cuddle a polar bear.

You really don't want to cuddle a polar bear. You are not going to stay alive for long in the same room with a living polar bear. Few people can predict its behaviour. It doesn't expect to meet anybody stronger (some bears try to attack flying helicopters). And you would have to start to think of yourself as prey, as meat, as a juicy steak. And if you have a tool with which to kill it, then you have to start thinking about doing it quickly. It's unpleasant either way.

So a polar bear has preferably to be dead if you want to make that print. Would you really kill? To make art? Or would you be a scavenger, waiting for someone else to do the job? Or waiting for starvation – how else can you die at the top of the food chain? Would this make a polar bear accessible to you? Would you go where the bear is? And would you not go if an animal doesn't meet your expectations in terms of size and weight?

The polar bear I finally printed was an absolutely average polar bear. It was dead. Getting to the place where it was found was pretty easy: there are three regular flights a day to Longyearbyen, which is not far from the pole. The teenage polar bear was neither large nor small, and it died at an age when polar bears have the highest mortality rate. It was found dead by a group of arctic tourists. Some people who have seen the print think it is the trace of a big dog. It doesn't necessarily look like what you might imagine a polar bear looks like. But I can guarantee you it was one.

Printing a polar bear created that moment for me when your work and ideas circle around the thought of an object. Your mindset changes radically once you've touched it. It appeared that the whole process of getting the bear was the most rewarding part of the project. Printing was easy once I held the polar bear in my hands. It was the moment when my expectations flipped to experience. It was not what I imagined. It was temptation.

Fig. 1: Photo: Gerry Amstutz

Fig. 2: Video still: Michelle Ettlin

Fig. 3: Photo: Michael Günzburger

Fig. 4: Photo: Francesco Origgi

Fig. 5: Photo: Thomi Wolfensberger

Part 4: Dreamscapes

Haul away: Liverpool's irregular currents

Bryan Biggs

Bryan Biggs is the artistic director of Bluecoat, Liverpool's centre for the contemporary arts, where since the 1980s he has curated numerous exhibitions and events at the intersection of the contemporary visual arts, performance, literature and music. In the following text, he explores the particular position and history of Liverpool through the prism of its late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century artistic imaginaries. Between the memories of the slave trade and a deindustrialization process that engulfed the port's former economic prosperity, an estranged hinterland and an unbound river, artists in Liverpool constructed an alternate poetic space in the late twentieth century. Biggs sees these as so many paths through which to articulate an alternative relation to the world beyond, and within. In being tuned to alternate frequencies as they rise from the unknown self as much as the familiar outsider, Liverpool maritime poetics suggest a different mode of envisioning our interconnected presents

The Mersey's cultural flows

Flowing from its Lancashire hinterland, taking ships out into the Irish Sea and beyond to the Atlantic Ocean, the River Mersey is synonymous with Liverpool. The land on both of its banks is known as Merseyside. The river lent its name to two cultural flowerings in the 1960s: first, 'Merseybeat' was used to describe the distinctive sound of groups, notably The Beatles, which flourished at the start of the decade, taking their American rhythm & blues-inspired music from the city's cellar clubs onto a national, and then global stage. This was followed by *The Mersey Sound* (1967), the title of an anthology of new poetry that emerged from the same urban environment as the beat groups, and was performed in some of the same venues they played in. Tenth in the

Penguin Modern Poets series, this volume became Britain's biggest selling contemporary poetry collection and, with its combination of wit, everyday subject matter – much of it drawn from Liverpool itself – as well as inventive and accessible play with language, introduced a young generation to the hitherto stuffy and intimidating world of poetry.[1] It is significant, then, that two art forms which helped define Liverpool culturally in this decade and brought national, indeed international, attention, were framed by its fast flowing river.

The Mersey, 4.8 km across at its widest point and with the second highest tidal range in Britain, is a formidable and unyielding presence. Its potential was first harnessed for hugely profitable mercantile ends at the start of the eighteenth century, when revolutionary dock engineering and architecture created the port infrastructure that would propel Liverpool to global significance through multiple maritime trade routes. Unsurprising then, that the Mersey literally flows through the culture that developed in tandem with the city's mercantile growth. For music writer, Paul Du Noyer, the city's pop musicians do just what the river does: 'they reflect the heavens while they churn the dirt below', a reference to the silt and sand kicked up by the river's fast current that renders it murky brown.[2] From The Beatles, through successful chart acts of the 1980s like Echo & The Bunnymen, to more recent groups such as The Coral, there is a strand of transcendent Liverpool music that reflects a duality, 'a contrast between the grit of its people, with their workaday concerns, and the romantic escapism inherent in their songs.'[3]

Merseyside-born writer Malcolm Lowry, author of the modernist classic *Under the Volcano* (1947), had a more ambivalent relationship to Liverpool, which he described as 'that terrible city whose main street is the ocean'.[4] He sailed from the Mersey in 1927, aged seventeen, as a deck hand on a tramp steamer bound for the Far East, a maiden adventure that produced his first novel, *Ultramarine* (1933), and the start of a writing career of largely unfin-

1 Adrian Henri, Roger McGough and Brian Patten, *The Mersey Sound* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1967).

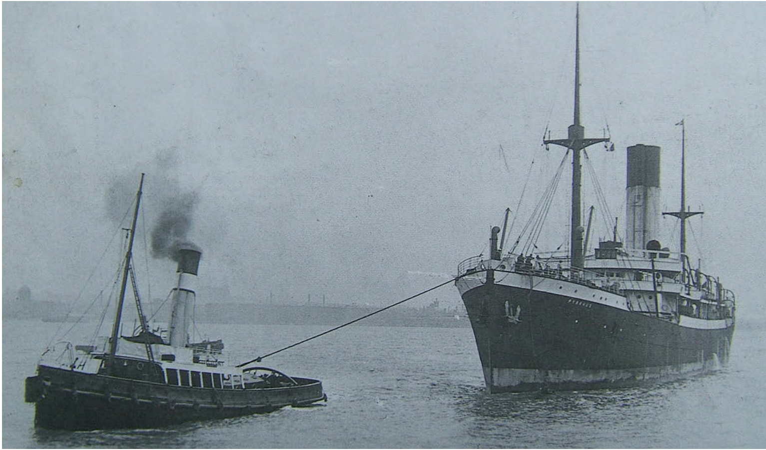
2 Paul Du Noyer, 'The Heavens Above and the Dirt Below: Liverpool's Radical Music', in *Liverpool City of Radicals*, eds. John Belchem and Bryan Biggs (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2011), 97.

3 Paul Du Noyer, 'The Heavens Above and the Dirt Below: Liverpool's Radical Music', 97.

4 Malcolm Lowry, 'The Forest Path to the Spring', in *Hear Us O Lord from Heaven Thy Dwelling Place & Lunar Caustic* (London: Picador, 1991), 226.

ished work that he called – in reference to an intended suite of novels – 'The Voyage that Never Ends'. The river as site of restless journeying – and the port as destination, place of refuge, and also point of departure – informs novels, poems, songs, films and other art created in response to maritime environments, and the Mersey and Liverpool are no exception.

Fig. 1: SS Pyrrhus leaving the River Mersey. Malcolm Lowry sailed on this boat in 1927



Apart from in *Ultramarine*, however, Merseyside is a central locus for Lowry, together with the port of Preston, further North up the Lancashire coast, in only one, uncompleted, novel, *In Ballast to the White Sea*, the only manuscript of which the writer, falsely, claimed had been destroyed in a fire, and which was only published, in a scholarly edition, nearly 60 years after his death.[5] Even though he never returned home, the river and seaport of his childhood inform Lowry's writing.[6] It is as if the coastline and topography of the Wirral, the peninsula that faces Liverpool across the Mersey where he grew up, clung to his consciousness, surfacing in poems, or remembered in forensically

5 Malcolm Lowry, *In Ballast to the White Sea: A Scholarly Edition* (Ottowa: University of Ottawa Press, 2014).

6 See Bryan Biggs and Helen Tookey, eds., *Malcolm Lowry: From the Mersey to the World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), particularly the editors' introduction and Colin Dilnot's chapter, 'Lowry's Wirral'.

described detail in a chapter of *Under the Volcano.* This book, set in Mexico yet mostly written in Canada, exemplifies Lowry's approach in writing 'about a particular place *from another place*'.[7]

For Lowry, Liverpool becomes a mythical site, one from which he was detached, yet onto which he superimposed memories that brought symbolic resonance. The writer grew up in the city's Wirral hinterland, in Caldy, a wealthy enclave surrounded by countryside, picturesquely overlooking the River Dee, with the mountains of North Wales beyond. Connected by rail and later road (through tunnels under the Mersey) to Liverpool, where his father worked as a cotton broker, the area nonetheless felt remote from Lowry's 'terrible city', and, in contrast to it, represented innocence, a childhood idyll. This topographical imagining is evident again in Lowry's long sojourn in Canada, living in a squatter's shack in the Edenic setting of Dollarton, on the Burrard Inlet outside Vancouver, a port city he loathed. Christened his *Eridanus*, after the river of Greek mythology and the heavenly constellation, Lowry's waterside paradise was in contrast to the 'sordid and sanctimonious city … (and gave) him everything he desired – independence, escape and isolation amid the healing balm afforded by love and nature.'[8] For Lowry, the hinterland was where he was happiest, a backwater that allowed a simpler existence and deeper relationship to the natural world. Arguably, the hinterland helps inform and shape his understanding of modernity: as a condition not solely enshrined in the experience of the modern industrial city. Expressed most clearly in his 'Paradiso' novella, *Forest Path to the Spring*, Lowry's embrace of nature as an alternative to urban alienation, harks back to Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*,[9] and also anticipates American Beat writing, which found beauty in the great American hinterland as much as in the relentless rhythms of New York life.

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7 Helen Tookey, 'Re-Placing Malcolm Lowry: From the Mersey to the world (and back again)', paper presented at University of Brighton Conference, Placemaking, 29 May 2015, and published in *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice* Vol. 8 no. 2 & 3, 2015. Author's italics.

8 Gordon Bowker, *Pursued by Furies: A Life of Malcolm Lowry* (London: HarperCollins, 1993), 300.

9 Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods*, 1854.

City on the edge

The Mersey's Anglo-Saxon name translates as 'boundary river', separating the ancient kingdoms of Mercia and Northumbria and, later, the neighbouring English counties of Lancashire and Cheshire. Despite once being 'gateway of Empire',[10] Liverpool is not a typically English city. Rather, it is on the 'Celtic fringe' of the UK, consolidated by the large influx of Irish who arrived in the port in the nineteenth century, as well as the city's proximity to Wales, and the presence of Scots too.[11] It is also on the edge of Europe. Until the late seventeenth century its horizons extended no further than Ireland, but through Britain's imperial quest and colonial consolidation in the following two centuries, Liverpool's maritime expansion connected it to other parts of the world, and, from the 1960s onwards, its global reach extended beyond trade in goods via its cultural and sporting reputation.

Yet post-war economic decline and decades of misfortune meant that Liverpool had become by the 1970s – notwithstanding the worldwide fame of its greatest cultural export, The Beatles – a symbol for all that was wrong in post-Empire, post-industrial Britain. Abandoned by central government and vilified by a media concentrated in London, it felt cut adrift, until European Union structural funding came to the rescue. Culture was a major beneficiary, and played a significant role driving regeneration, as abandoned dockside buildings were transformed into museums and galleries, notably Merseyside Maritime Museum and Tate Liverpool, which opened in the disused Albert Dock in 1980 and 1988 respectively. This process culminated in the city being awarded European Capital of Culture in 2008.

Liverpool shares its *difference* with other 'cities on the edge' like Naples, Marseilles and New Orleans, described as '"strangers" to their own nation states'[12] by Steve Higginson and Tony Wailey in their provocation, *Edgy Cities*, where they argue that 'in maritime culture (time is) always felt differently through the rhythms of the tides. Port cities had a *tide* sense, never a

10 See Tony Lane, *Liverpool Gateway of Empire* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1987); second revised edition, as *Liverpool City of the Sea* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1997).

11 In 1886, the *Illustrated London News* described Liverpool as 'a wonder of the world…the New York of Europe, a world-city rather than merely British provincial', cited in John Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool exceptionalism*, second edition (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

12 Steve Higginson and Tony Wailey, *Edgy Cities* (Liverpool: Northern Lights, 2006), 13.

time sense… '.[13] This is in contrast to neighbouring towns that also expanded rapidly in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, driven by the industrial revolution, places like Liverpool's North West rival, Manchester, where the regulated time of factory work, the strict regime of clocking in and clocking out, created a very different culture, one closely observed by Friedrich Engels who lived there for 30 years. His report, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, which described the 'social misery' of such industrial towns, fed into the *Communist Manifesto* that he and Karl Marx wrote in 1848.[14]

In Manchester's cotton mills and factories employing masses of workers, labour could be more easily organised than it could in Liverpool, with its casualised workforce largely dependent on the docks. Manchester played a pivotal role in the founding of the British trade union movement, while Liverpool gained a reputation as the 'organiser's graveyard', despite occasional mass displays of working class solidarity, such as in the 1911 transport strike. A more fractured workforce, one divided along sectarian lines, Catholics against Protestants, continued to mark out Liverpool from more solidly Labour, Northern English industrial cities, and, post-war, it was the last of these large conurbations to elect a Socialist administration.

This differentiation of port cities from their hinterlands through their 'exceptionalism'[15] – their cosmopolitan populations, historic global connections, dissenting traditions, independent spirit, black economies, or the aforementioned political complexities – is evident in Liverpool's relationship to its immediate hinterland, and arguably farther inland to the wider North of England, to Lancashire and Yorkshire. Defined as 'lying inland from the coast' and 'remote from urban areas', *hinterland*, used in a literal sense, represents only a fraction of Liverpool's adjoining territory, the towns and villages 'out in the sticks', populated by 'woollybacks', a derogatory local slang expression dating back over a century for people from adjoining areas who travel to Liverpool for work or entertainment, and who lack Scouse credentials.[16]

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13 Ibid.,17. Author's italics.

14 Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (London, Penguin Books, 1848).

15 See John Belchem, *Merseypride: Essays in Liverpool exceptionalism* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000).

16 By the 1980s, Liverpool's Lancashire hinterland had become 'a rust-belt of vacant cotton mills, declining coal fields and stagnant canals'. Jonathan Brown, Matthew Cocks, Chris

Manchester, however, while technically the 'land behind' and located over 60km from the sea, can hardly be defined as part of Liverpool's hinterland: until 1982 it had its own port at Salford, connected to the Mersey by the Manchester Ship Canal – a feat of Victorian engineering that bypassed Liverpool and helped to undermine its monopoly on maritime trade in the region. And Manchester is also the regional capital, the 'Northern Powerhouse' whose higher concentration of commerce, media, transport infrastructure and population renders Liverpool its poor relation. Yet while Manchester can boast its International Festival, a high-profile reputation in the arts, and the international reach of both its footballing success and musical exports, Liverpool retains its global cultural brand, in no small part due to its position as a maritime city shaped by its historic interface, as a port, with the world.

While Higginson and Wailey conceptualise ports like Liverpool as 'irregular places', where regular time is suspended, in our homogenised present their idiosyncrasies and independence are in danger of disappearing, as local distinctiveness is increasingly bleached out by processes of globalisation, the economic effects of neoliberalism, and the march of gentrification. And with their traditional role as global interfaces becoming increasingly determined by the digital, there are new pressures for old port cities to compete in this rapidly changing environment.

Yet ports are also mythological places, *ports of dreams*, in relation to both destination – Liverpool held the hopes of the Irish fleeing famine and poverty – and departure – the persecuted, destitute and workless, many from Eastern Europe, who embarked from the port in their hundreds of thousands in the nineteenth century, seeking a better life across the Atlantic. Liverpool was a boomtown for merchants dreaming of making great fortunes overseas through colonial adventure, not least in the Transatlantic slave trade, which, together with the trade in commodities that it enabled – sugar, tobacco, cotton – brought great wealth, to such an extent that it has been claimed that every brick in the town was 'cemented with the blood of an African'.[17]

Couch, David Shaw and Olivier Sykes in 'A City Profile of Liverpool', *Cities*, online journal, 2013, 9. https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/mcs/lfs/docs/A%20city%20of%20Liverpool%20profile%20Cities.pdf.

17 The quote is attributed to actor George F. Cooke, who, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, appearing drunk on the Liverpool stage, retorted to the hisses of the audience, 'I have not come here to be insulted by a set of wretches, every brick of whose infernal town

Global trade and the expansion of Empire enabled global communities to take root in the port, as seamen from Africa, Arabia and China made their home in docklands, many marrying local, often Irish, women. Cultural exchange and hybridity is the nature of seaports: The Beatles, for instance, absorbed African American and country music and adopted the transatlantic swagger of the 'Cunard Yanks' – those Liverpool merchant seamen who manned the Cunard liners that went back and forth to New York after the Second World War, bringing exotic pop culture and tantalising glimpses of modernity to a city still shattered from wartime bombing and enduring economic privation.

A century before, in Herman Melville's *Redburn* (1849), the New York protagonist sea captain is given a map of Liverpool by his father, only to find on arrival that it is fifty years out of date and the street plan has altered dramatically. Like all port cities, Liverpool is dynamic, its fortunes shifting with the tides, and since Melville's account, the seaport has continued to evolve, physically and in the imagination: it has been variously misread, misrepresented and mythologised – unsurprisingly perhaps for a city whose symbol is a mythical creature, the Liver Bird.

The pool of life

Exploring mythological Liverpool, its 'unconscious textures and imaginary realms', there are some surprising revelations. The Swiss psychiatrist and founder of analytical psychology, Carl Gustav Jung, dreamt in 1927, of Liverpool as the *Pool of Life*. Unlike Lowry or Melville, he had never visited the city, however. It came to him in a dream:

> I found myself in a dirty, sooty city. It was night, and winter, and dark, and raining. I was in Liverpool. With a number of Swiss – say, half a dozen – I walked through the dark street. I had the feeling that there we were coming from the harbour, and that the real city was actually up above, on the cliffs. We climbed up there. It reminded me of Basel, where the market is

is cemented with an African's blood', noted in Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool* (London, Williams & Norgate, 1907), 204.

> down below and then you go up through the Totengässchen (the 'Alley of the Dead') ...[18]

He goes on to describe the scene: a square where the streets converge, in the middle of which is a pond and a small island containing a single magnolia tree blazing with light. His companions spoke of another Swiss who was living in Liverpool, and expressed surprise that he should have settled here. 'I was carried away by the beauty of the flowering tree and the sunlit island, and thought, "I know very well why he has settled here". Then I awoke'. Jung then interprets the dream: his 'vision of unearthly beauty' had enabled him to live: 'Liverpool was the "Pool of Life". The "liver" is ... the seat of life – that which "makes to live".'[19]

Jung started working in Zürich in 1900, and 75 years later an imaginary connection was made between the Swiss city and Liverpool, where a poet, Peter O'Halligan, set out to realise Jung's dream of the Pool of Life in the same location, Mathew Street, where The Beatles had started their journey in a cellar club, The Cavern. In a former fruit warehouse, he established the Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream and Pun, a free-form arts space where synchronicity and the unconscious were central, connecting memory with place and possibility. Mathew Street was becoming the epicentre of an emergent alternative culture in Liverpool, with, on the opposite side of the street from the Liverpool School, the music club Eric's, a subterranean hang-out for the city's nascent punk scene, where groups like Big in Japan, Teardrop Explodes and Wah! Heat were formed, with independent record shop, Probe, just around the corner in Button Street.

It seemed as if Liverpool was about to explode, as it had in the early 1960s, with a new cultural vitality. Events at the Liverpool School included Ken Campbell's Science Fiction Theatre of Liverpool, with *Illuminatus* – an anarchic performance adaptation of American writers Robert Shea and Robert Anton Wilson's counter-cultural trilogy charting the 'ancient conflicts between orthodoxy and unorthodoxy, the state and the individual, estab-

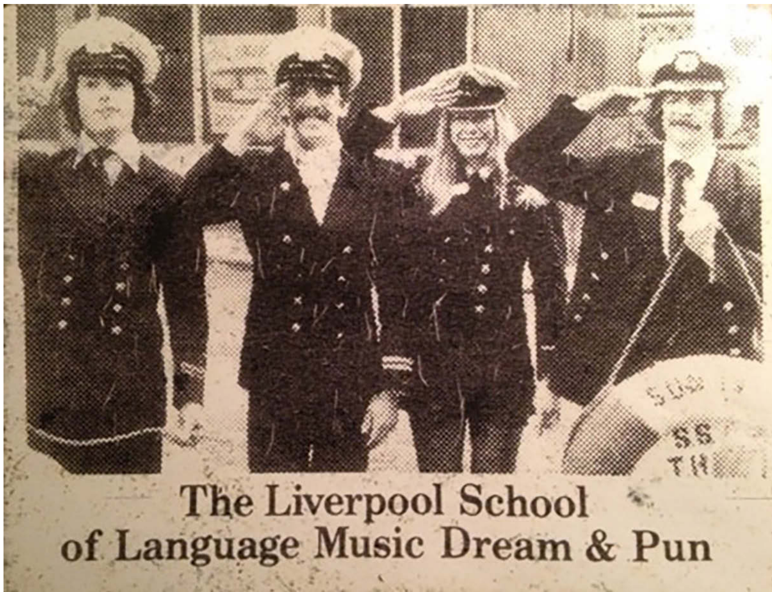
18 Carl Gustav Jung, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (London: Collins Fountain Books, 1977 (1963)), 224.

19 Ibid., 224.

lishments and iconoclasts, us and them. Is the world really run by the Illuminati and are a confused bunch of dope freaks really our last chance?'[20]

The Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream and Pun acknowledged the Jungian inspiration of its founding by organising three annual Jung festivals in Mathew Street between 1976 and 1978, inviting the Swiss Ambassador to the inaugural event.

Fig. 2: Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream & Pun



The official duly obliged, arriving wearing his ceremonial regalia, apparently bemused by the absurdity of the occasion. O'Halligan's cousin, Sean Halligan, and his friend Donato Cinacolla III drove across Liverpool's European hinterland to Switzerland, to collect a piece of stone from a quarry near Bollingen where Jung had built his tower. From this stone a plaque was made, inscribed with the words 'Liverpool is the Pool of Life' and placed on the exte-

20 Review of *The Immortal Trilogy* in *Fortean Times*, issue 17 (August 1976), 26-27.

rior wall of the School. In addition, a bust of Jung was created to sit above it, being unveiled in June 1976 by Jung's grandson, Marc Baumann.[21]

The car journey inward to the heart of Europe, to a country bounded not by the sea but by mountains, reflects a different trade route for Liverpool. As gateway to a European hinterland, the port had occupied a strategic position on the continent's Western edge during the Second World War, both in terms of Transatlantic trade and as the Allies' lifeline – constantly at risk of attack from German submarines – to America. However, by the time the UK became a member of the European Union in 1973, Liverpool's already emasculated role as global port was about to diminish further, as trade shifted to Eastward destinations, to European markets. Merseyside found itself forgotten on the outer edge, not just of England, but of Europe too. In articulating a prophetic vision of a rejuvenated Liverpool gleaned from an obscure dream, the Liverpool School of Language, Music, Dream and Pun pointed the way for a different cultural outlook, one not dependent on a fading American dream, but one forged from a recognition and appropriation of earlier progressive thinking in Europe's heartland. The staff of the Liverpool School may have worn Swiss naval uniforms and been photographed in them posed around a lifebelt, while the building itself had ships' load line markings painted on its outside wall; yet their voyages were journeys, not of the oceans, but of the imagination.

Half a century earlier, in 1927, another cultural institution in the city centre, Bluecoat was formalised as the UK's first arts centre, and it too found inspiration in progressive ideas from Continental Europe's avant-garde artists, starting with two Post-Impressionist exhibitions the building hosted in 1911 and 1913, which included works by Picasso and Matisse. In the 1930s, diners in the building's restaurant, run by Liverpool bohemian arts group the Sandon Studios Society, included significant European arts figures such as Stravinsky, Bartok, and George Balanchine and other members of Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. Liverpool's strategic position as a European conduit to the Americas, as well as Imperial importer, arguably contributed to its openness to influences from outside the UK, looking both inward to Europe and across

21 The bust of Jung has been replaced by a less convincing sculpture, accompanied by a heritage plaque created by Larry Sidorczuk about the Liverpool School on the building, which is now an Irish themed pub, Flanagan's Apple, in a Mathew Street transformed into a Beatle tourist mecca and drinking destination.

the sea to America. And the city's arts infrastructure – including long-established venues like Bluecoat, short-lived ones like the Liverpool School, and more recent initiatives such as Liverpool Biennial – remained attuned to such international cultural currents long after the port's decline had set it.

New artistic migrations

Liverpool Biennial, the UK's first such festival of contemporary art, has, since its inception in 1999, brought artists to the city to engage with the poetics of a post-industrial maritime location, a 'shrinking city' depopulated through decades of decline.[22] The Biennial does not restrict itself to Europe's hinterland, casting its net far beyond Europe, outward to the rest of the world. Increasingly, issues around migration, homeland and borders, of free movement and citizenship, preoccupy the artists who travel to Liverpool to participate in the event, using a wide range of formal and found sites across the city.

For the 2008 Biennial, Palestinian artist Khalil Rabah created a pop up museum at Bluecoat entitled *After 12 Years*, part of his ongoing project, *The Palestinian Museum of Natural History and Humankind*. Ariana Park, which surrounds the United Nations office in Geneva, had become the repository of five olive trees that the artist had brought from his home, Ramallah, and replanted. The story of the trees, all but one of which have since disappeared, was told in the Bluecoat exhibition, drawing attention to the Museum's battle to get Swiss citizenship for the trees, having been resident in the country for 12 years. The accompanying brochure notes:

> The right of the return of a botanical object such as a tree is of concern to all those with an interest in the globalisation of capital markets and issues such as biodiversity and climate change. Due to social, political and geographical changes, the condition of the original location of many displaced biological

22 Liverpool's population has started to grow again. As a 'shrinking city', it is considered, within a wider discussion of the city's development, by Jonathan Brown, Matthew Cocks, Chris Couch, David Shaw and Olivier Sykes in 'A City Profile of Liverpool', *Cities*, online journal, 2013, accessed 1 June 2019, https://www.liverpool.ac.uk/mcs/lfs/docs/A%20city%20of%20Liverpool%20profile%20Cities.pdf.

specimens has changed, and it is a difficult task to return them to exactly their original location.

A Biennial partner, as a venue and sometimes curatorially, Bluecoat's own year-round arts programme has long worked with artists engaged with post-colonial realities, including those of the Middle East. In 2017, another Palestinian artist, Larissa Sansour, presented a film at Bluecoat, *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain* that adopted a science fiction trope to address the politics of archaeology, depicting a resistance group on the brink of apocalypse, a metaphor for the ongoing Palestinian struggle. Territory and the experience of migration and exile was also the subject of Lebanese artist Ayman Balbaaki's *Destination X* installation, shown in the gallery in 2010.

Fig. 3: Ayman Baalbaki, Destination X installation at Bluecoat in Arabicity exhibition, curated by Rose Issa, 2010 © Bluecoat, Liverpool

Working with a long-established Arab community in Liverpool that grew from the settlement of mainly Yemeni sailors, Bluecoat initiated the Liverpool Arab Arts Festival 20 years ago, and continues to participate in a programme that addresses the region's political tensions and worsening refugee crisis.

Liverpool is no longer the port of departure for the New World, nor a place for seafarers from all corners of the Empire to drop anchor. Neither is it a place for new arrivals, other than the large number of foreign students, particularly from China, studying at its universities. Yet the echoes of Liverpool's former maritime global pre-eminence – resonances of past migrations and settlement – provide a fertile backdrop against which contemporary artists addressing diasporas, postcolonial fault-lines, and the experience of exile, can present their work.

Cargo of questions

2017 saw the 300th anniversary of the Bluecoat building, an opportunity to explore its heritage: two centuries as a charity school for orphaned children, and from the early twentieth century a pioneering arts centre. The tercentenary year was an appropriate time to reflect on a history that began with the growth of modern Liverpool in the early eighteenth century through the port's expansion. Merchants involved in the trafficking of human cargo – the triangular trade from Liverpool to West Africa, and on to the Caribbean and America – also supported the school. This contradiction of barbarism (the enslavement of Africans) and philanthropy (helping poor children) was one of the themes of the year's final exhibition, *In the Peaceful Dome*, which brought the story up to date with the inclusion of several artists addressing legacies of slavery.

These resonances were further explored in a conference and participation weekend in partnership with Liverpool's International Slavery Museum, which included a powerful improvised music and movement performance, *Sweet Tooth*, by British artist Elaine Mitchener, interrogating her own Jamaican background and our troubled relationship to sugar.

Fig. 4: Elaine Mitchener, Sweet Tooth performance at Bluecoat, 2017, with (left) Jason Yarde and (right) Sylvia Hallett. Photo: Brian Roberts © Bluecoat, Liverpool

This Bluecoat commission was the latest in a long line of postcolonial enquiries to look at the trajectory of Liverpool's mercantile maritime history. The arts centre first engaged with this area of discourse in 1985 with *Black Skin/ Bluecoat*,[23] an exhibition by four emerging Black British artists interrogating issues of race and identity. One of them, Keith Piper, subsequently worked with Bluecoat on a major exhibition project, *Trophies of Empire* that took Columbus' voyage to the New World, 500 years earlier, as a starting point from which to examine the imprint of colonialism on Liverpool and two other port cities, Atlantic-facing Bristol and Europe-facing Hull.

What all of the above programmes – involving performances, a conference, commissions, gallery exhibitions and site specific interventions – had in common was the artists' acknowledgement of history, framing globalisation not as a recent phenomenon accelerated by neoliberalism and the revolution in digital technology, but as an extrapolation from the beginnings of global trade and colonial and capitalist expansion, processes that Euro-

23 *Black Skin/Bluecoat*, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool (1985), featuring Sonia Boyce, Eddie Chambers, Tom Joseph and Keith Piper.

pean ports like Liverpool were instrumental in driving and from which they derived great wealth.

The port city as global interface also provided the context for another artwork, *Re:LODE* by Philip Courtenay, in *In the Peaceful Dome*. The essential stuff of maritime trade – crated cargo – was the physical and metaphorical focus of this installation in the gallery that revisited Courtenay's work from 25 years before, titled *LODE*.

Fig. 5: Philip Courtenay, LODE performance with Yellow House, Bluecoat courtyard, 1992 © Bluecoat, Liverpool

This was a live art commission connecting Liverpool, on the West coast of England, and another port city, Hull, on the East. Instead of physically connecting the two ports by land across the North of England, Courtenay went the long way around, drawing a map on the circumference of the globe, crossing continents and oceans, from Hull to Liverpool, via Europe, Asia, Australia, South America and Ireland.

He journeyed along this 'lode line', creating simple compasses in each place he visited, to indicate its relative position to Liverpool and Hull, bringing these back home, and packing them into wooden crates. He then collaborated with Liverpool community group Yellow House, to transport the crates

in a performance from the docks by the Mersey, and unpack them at Bluecoat, where their content and origin were discussed. The young people participating related the cargo to their own experience, growing up in a port city that now offered little prospects for them to connect to a world that some of their fathers, or grandfathers, had experienced as dockers or sailors.

Courtenay used the exhibition to reflect again on globalisation, which had provided the work's original impulse, as well as digital communication, repositioning *LODE* in the current geopolitical situation, particularly the context of Brexit and contested borders, both ideological and actual. As an ongoing project, one idea the artist has for *LODE* is to transport the cargo from Liverpool, not however sailing from the Mersey and out across the ocean, but taking instead a slow route – a barge along the canal network across Northern England – engaging people he encounters on the way in conversation about Britain, Europe and national identity. Arriving in the seaport of Hull, which faces mainland Europe across the North Sea, the work would resonate with Britain's angst over Brexit as it contemplates an uncertain future. Courtenay's crates however, laden with the potential for imaginary realms and the dissolution of borders, constitute a 'cargo of questions', opening up possibilities beyond the horizon.

North Canada – English Electric, 2010

David Jacques

David Jacques is a multi-media artist based in his hometown of Liverpool, United Kingdom. His practice deals with varying forms and approaches to narrative, often underpinned by socio-political issues transpiring from intensive periods of research and fieldwork. His project North Canada – English Electric emerged from a personal and family connection to two former worksites found at the peripheries of Liverpool. His scripting of the subsequent artwork relied on literary and mythological references, academic citations and anecdotes that revolved around the historical aspects of these environments and their present-day reconfigurations.

Stereoscopy

The installation comprises 100 stereoviews, a stereo viewing apparatus and a looped audio narrative (11 minutes). Much of the material that informed the project was collected whilst undertaking fieldwork, inspired by and modelled upon the Situationist practice of 'Militant Research'. This, paired with the optical phenomenon / visual medium of stereoscopy then crystallised into a speculative 'weird' narrative, titled: *North Canada – English Electric*, a preamble to which reads:

> A retired worker habitually returns as an amateur photographer to the sites at which he was previously employed: the Port and the Industrial Estate. Both now exist in liminal zones, at the de-regulated, toxic edges of the city. He's been detained at the port, detected by and recorded on CCTV. He's about to be questioned about his activities, at which point a voice from the supernatural intervenes…

North Canada Dock is one of many semi-derelict dockyards located in the Port of Liverpool. The English Electric Co. was a factory situated on an outlying Industrial Estate to the North of the city. A cursory wander through either the redundant Liverpool Docklands or the ex-Industrial Estates at the edge of town would generally require having to negotiate the regular positioning of surveillance cameras. And apart from the fact that both areas are effectively private concerns situated on cordoned-off land, they operate as open repositories for toxic waste of the ferrous and chemical varieties. This all occurs in plain sight, within a stone's throw of the neighbouring communities. An examination of the environmental concerns hanging over these areas would entail interacting with local residents, campaign groups, independent researchers and academics.

The project emerged in the wake of what was a catastrophic global financial crisis. The year 2009 bizarrely arrived with a big push in the home entertainment market towards 3D technology, so 3D televisions with the requisite viewing apparatus were to be the definitive 'must-have' consumer item. Also prior to the crash many urban regeneration projects boasting grand developments were utilising 3D as part of their promotional material. In Liverpool, a Saudi-backed conglomerate had taken possession of the Mersey Docks & Harbour Company and all it managed, everything. It was pushed as '…one of the largest single-ownership port-city development schemes in Europe'. 3D simulations were deployed in their planning proposals using state of the art 'fly-through' animation. New spatial configurations and built environments were invoked, projecting up to fifty years into the future.

The storyline of *North Canada – English Electric* centres around two protagonists. The first, a 'retired worker', came out of a chance meeting with an ex-seafarer who had served with the Merchant Navy. He was furtively photographing the dismantling of a supply vessel from the Falklands War at a ship-breaking facility located within the South Canada Dock. The second, notionally a female voice (a channelling of the soothsaying spirit 'Awen' from Celtic mythology) expanded the reach of the tale into referencing ancient folklore and the mythopoetic. This interweaving of factual and fictitious content helped posit a series of dualities, of literal 'stereo views' and a playing off of one protagonist against the other – 'vice versa' (hence her role as spirit form and 'all-seeing narrator', his as corporeal and 'distracted interloper', etc.). As their roles become realised, they deem to inhabit a narrative that is shaped by ensuing reflexivity and criticality.

Her intervention and opening pronouncement that we should see stereoscopy as a problematic medium sets the tone for what's to come. She is about to embark upon an unravelling of the disagreeable, 'unhinged' assemblage of his stereoscopic work:

> Though it's got its history as part of your optic trajectory here – it sits in a difficult place. It would have arrived out of left-field. After the camera obscura… and the microscope…and the telescope – all monocular, similar in form to the human eye…all-powerful and pervasive. Devices that actually trace right through to the one you located me with…an obliteration of all that went before it. It disrupts the visual cues, presents as a derangement of space. Things don't exist in any unified order, they find their own space to inhabit and it's really not possible to navigate this space. What we'd be presented with is essentially an aggregate plane of disjunct forms…You can't regulate it. The components don't fit. It holds no truck with perspective…

She talks further about the 'seeing body', orientates around uncanny, existential musings and begins to flit through temporal registers, bringing etymologies into play:

> …Through this process and its apparatus, the observer and object take on a particular relationship. By a simulation of anatomical positioning…the positioning of the eyes in your head…we engage with a dual or binocular view. Consequently, our gaze will relay two slightly dissimilar views from slightly different angles, they're recorded as such and re- presented – they will ultimately be converged into one image. This will result in a particular type of visual illusion…something akin to depth perception – but not quite. We can also make reference to the 'parallax'…'Parallax' – that'll come from the Greek 'pa-ra-llax-is', meaning 'alteration'…a retinal disparity…a corr-es-pond-ence problem…

She speaks in the 'continuous conditional', a dual tense that simultaneously engages with the past and the future by referring to unfulfilled actions. She determines the variety of usages stereoscopy has been put to throughout its history. Its physiological and psychological affects, its theoretic and philosophical significances. Her digressions and ruminations finally find their

focus as she reflects upon a history of distractive banalities – of home entertainment, 'virtual tourism' and 3D crazes...

> It would have been a craze, a 3D craze. A popular form of mass home-entertainment. But it would have been realised by physiologists involved with studying the human eye, then it finds its place as a toy within bourgeois households. Though its scientific origins would still be played up, it was to belong in the study – a fitting environment, a domestic take on the laboratory... for your new device, your brand new ultra-modern gadget. It would sit with your neatly catalogued archive of views that you'd have begun collecting, all named and painstakingly ordered. I'd venture the term 'anti-travel travelogue' – a type of heavily mediated reportage or documentary. They would often come with accompanying texts, knocked together by experts in whatever given field – and maps as well! Where you'd be able to locate the actual coordinates of your disembodied position and your simulated view. They're almost like pop-ups in a children's picture book, hard-edged objects trying to isolate themselves in space. As if for the first time, as if to elicit a 'name,' to find an 'order' so that each thing can be known and expressed in all its parts... Though by my reckoning these images aren't amenable to that sort of caper – still, they'll have to be held to account though.

Her final words fix to lead us away from the recollecting, from the digressions and speculations and bring us back to an existential pressure brought to bear by the dilapidated scenarios captured by the photographs. The hard evidence of Late Capitalism's discarded excesses and festering waste. A reveal of what lurks behind the illusory digital spectacle of the Millennial Smart City.

Acknowledgements: Brian Ashton (Independent Researcher), Dave Whyte and Steve Tombs (Liverpool University, Social Policy and Criminology). Bedford Road Community Centre. K.A.T.S (Knowsley Against Toxic SONAE).

Fig. 1 and 2: David Jacques, North Canada – English Electric, 2010, installed at METAL Arts Centre Liverpool

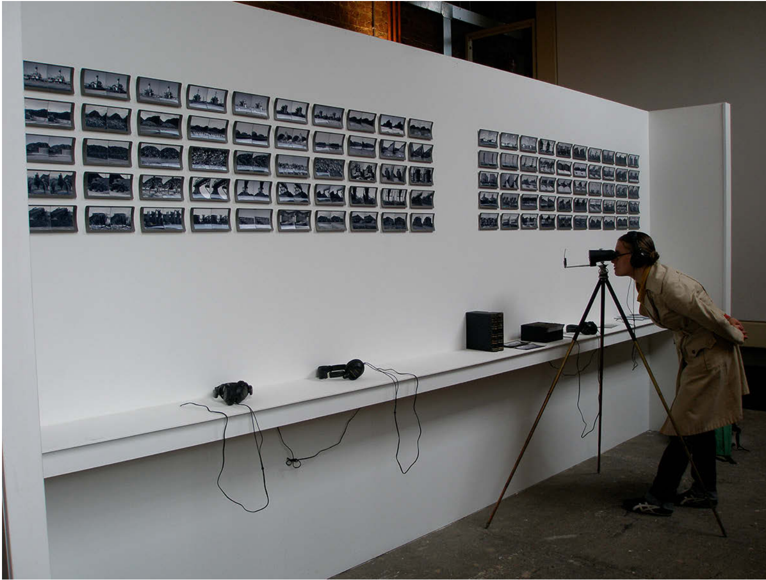
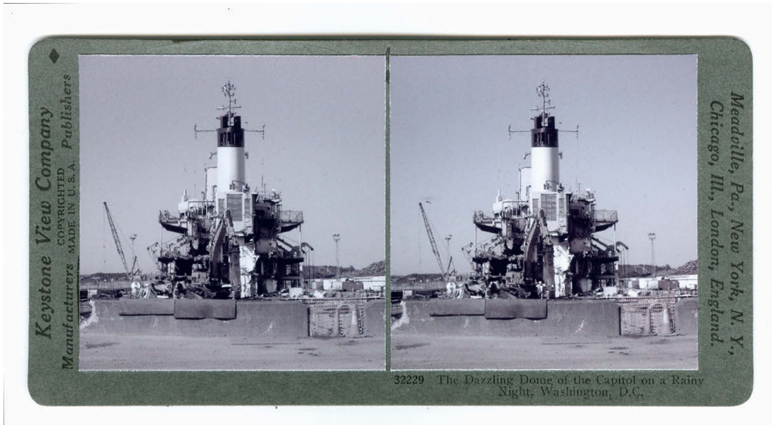


Fig. 3 and 4: David Jacques, Stereoview (one of one hundred) North Canada – English Electric, 2010, digital photographs on archive stereoview card, 18cm X 9cm



A short journey (from Derry to Inishowen)

Conor McFeely

The consideration of one's 'place' has been a constant factor in Conor McFeely's practice. Place is given as much as it is chosen, which has led McFeely to probe how much choice and free will a person has. Though not always foregrounded this questioning of autonomy is an ongoing consideration of his work, whose contexts have been varied and include references to literature, cinema, art history and social and political contexts. This approach to making has led him to create a vocabulary of object-signs, which are questioned and continuously developed. An understanding of 'place' is frequently informed by historical events. This relationship is a constant feature in McFeely's practice and has led to a coalescence of references that he compares to a Venn diagram. This merging of layers can be thought of as a waking dream, a meandering rumination, a recall provoking the idea of the interplay between a hinterland of the imagination and memory, and the grounding effect of tangible material presence. This meandering is acted out in Flann O'Brien's novel The Third Policeman where the journey of the main protagonist drifts across place and time. His experience is one of managing his own disorientation.

'If I ever want to hide', he remarked, 'I will always go upstairs in a tree. People have no gift for looking up, they seldom examine the lofty altitudes.'

I looked at the ceiling. 'There is little to be seen there', he said, 'except a bluebottle that looks dead'.

The sergeant looked up and pointed with his stick.

'This is not a bluebottle', he said, 'that is Gogarty's outhouse'.[1]

If an artist has a responsibility to question the time and place they live in, defining or creating some limits on the scope of one's practice for the sake of

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1 Flann O'Brien, *The Third Policeman* (Dublin, London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1967, 1996), 122.

aesthetic communication can be a difficult task when confronted with complex and overlapping events that present themselves for consideration.

Some such considerations can be found inside relatively small geographic areas. The effects of changing social and political histories leave their traces on the physical and psychological landscape, from the macroscopic to the microscopic. Let us look at one such configuration, on the north-western shores of Europe.

A route from Derry, situated on Lough Foyle, to the Inishowen townland of Leenan on the Donegal Atlantic coast offers a compression of evidence of over two hundred years of transmutation of the urban and rural landscape in this Northwest region. It is perhaps reflective of the island of Ireland as a whole. Wired into this landscape are a series of charged landmarks whose closer inspection aggregates to a territory overshadowed by the construction of a zone that is tribal, cultural, political and economic. This has come about since the partition of Ireland in 1921 that divided the country with a border still contested today. This border was essentially drawn up to appease the Unionist community in the North but contains areas within it that are still strongly Nationalist and aspire to the reunification of Ireland. New names and shapes have been applied to locations by successive generations of power. A time-lapse from a drone perspective might show the dynamics of continuous flickering collapse, shift and restructuring. Historical references superimpose themselves one on top of the other.

At one end of this path, like the emergent map formed on the cracked ceiling in MacCruiskeen's gloomy bedroom, sits Derry, whose docks on Lough Foyle were once one of the main points of departure to America for emigrants during the famine in 19th-century Ireland, and later the site where the German U-boat fleet formally surrendered to the allies in 1945. The docks, long redundant in every meaningful way, are now reorganised into a recreational zone. At the opposite end of this crack is Leenan Fort looking outwards to the Atlantic. The remaining smashed forms stand in as an earlier and abandoned version in the historical trajectory of architectural experiments described by Bataille as being a kind of physiognomy expressing the true nature of society. A former 19th century naval encampment, built under British rule, whose guns speak of their perceived threat from the sea. This fort is one of a series built by the English around this part of the coast because of its strategic importance. Slightly inland on the same route is an area known in pre-famine times as The Poitín Republic of Urris. In a small act of resist-

ance to a fine imposed on the parish whose main economy was poitín[2] production, the residents, using the geographical advantage of the Mamore Gap, sealed themselves in for three years from the military police. Smugglers and poitín makers would hurl rocks and boulders from above onto anyone who tried to disturb their activities. Impending border changes may see a return to similar enterprises. The western shore of Lough Foyle which is part of the Republic of Ireland is still currently grounds for dispute between Britain and Ireland. Britain still claims ownership of the shoreline, which is now tax-free for oyster farmers who maintain their beds along this tideline.

Encountering the currently invisible border between North and South a deeper inspection offers up a complex set of markers that have contributed to our current nexus. A memorial plaque on the border at Coshquin indicates the site of an infamous proxy-bomb in 1990. From the early 1970s until the mid-1990s this particular point is also associated with advanced experiments in surveillance and detection where demands for the verification of identity, 'what's the name?', were a common refrain addressed to motorists at the crossing. Jumpcut to Lough Swilly and the capture by the English of Wolfe Tone in 1798. Tone, sometimes called the father of Irish Republicanism, was on board a French ship in a failed naval battle at Tory Island. He was subsequently brought to Derry and later to Dublin where he died under unexplained circumstances three weeks after his incarceration. At the same location as Tone's capture on the shoreline stands the long-dead textile factory of the Fruit of the Loom who employed over 3000 people at its peak: the last monument to big industry in this area long since relocated to Morocco in 2006. The experience of journeying across this terrain induces what Debord might have called 'derive' or drifting, that is the movement or rapid passage through varied ambiences where one becomes aware of the psychogeographical effects of the situation one is in. It amounts to an engagement with a history of labyrinthine contours and pivotal points on a given itinerary. A planned journey, but with random involuntary and serendipitous encounters.

"You will agree", he said, "that it is a fascinating pancake and a conundrum of great incontinence, a phenomenon of the first rarity".[3]

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2 Illicitly distilled whiskey.

3 Sergeant Pluck's observation of the map of cracks on MacCruiskeen's ceiling from *The Third Policeman* by Flann O'Brien, 1967.

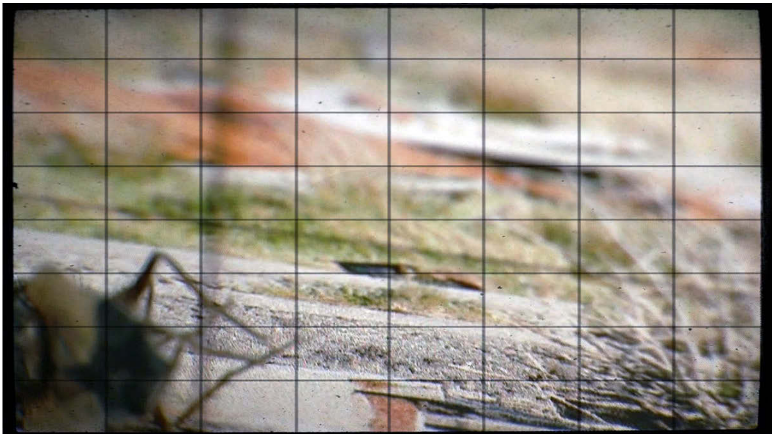
Fig. 1: Conor McFeely, A natural History of Destruction, 2019, video still, 5min, HD Video with stereo sound

Fig. 2: Conor McFeely. Pioneers, installation detail, 2017, Dimensions variable; resin, exotherm, iron filings, magnets, perspex, fluorescent lights, photographs, artificial teeth, video, and sound loop on cassette

Fig. 3: Conor McFeely, Weatherman, installation detail, Franklin University, 2013. Dimensions variable; light boxes, resin, photographs, video and sound

Fig. 4: Conor McFeely, Weatherman Projects Dunree seq 2012. 4min.44sec. Video still1. HD Video with stereo sound

Fig. 5: Conor McFeely, Weatherman Projects Dunree seq 2012. 4min.44sec. Video still 2. HD Video with stereo sound



A letter to Henrietta

Dorota Lukianska

Dorota Lukianska is an artist based in Götenborg and Berlin, whose work explores our societies' mythologies through images, language, and objects often appropriated and rearranged in alternate and fictional compositions. She started her maritime journey in 1986, when, at the age of 11, she began to travel back and forth between her original home, Poland, and her future home, Sweden. The boat trips were frequent: at Easter, Christmas, the Summer holidays, weddings, and funerals. These travels were always made by boat and involved eating, playing, and sleeping routines in the cabin overnight. Years later, she started to work on the psychological and physiological transformations that occurred between these two homes, reflecting on the acts of bidding farewell and greeting, of discovering and forgetting, on home as a place of belonging and renewal. Her interest in maritime imaginaries, both literally and metaphorically, took her to the Algarve in search of Portugal's navigation past. In the following text, she reflects on the letters she wrote to Henry the Navigator Prince of Portugal (1394-1460), known for his patronage of long-distance maritime journeys. In Lukianska's letter, Henry is not the man he used to be. Rather, she points to some newly discovered qualities the former Portuguese ruler's lingering presence reveals to the interrogations of our twenty-first-century.

It was 2015 and I was writing from Porto, Portugal, explaining to Henry how he had caught my interest. I told him that I had started to have dreams about him, about his presence, while I was in Portugal. I told him that I was not convinced of the facts written about him in the history books, about the truthfulness of his depiction in portrait paintings. I felt that there was more to tell and to discover.

I started to collect oral histories, as well as myths and legends about Henry. When myths get repeated over and over, they eventually become accepted truths. I started to shape an installation exploring Henry's mythical life with

objects I found, and items that I collected and created. I soon discovered that this well-known representation of him – a man with a rounded hat – to be found on all paintings, was, apparently, not him at all. If he was not the man wearing that hat, then who was he? In another myth he was a she and maybe her name was Henrietta and she also wanted to discover the world. If she were a woman, how would she explore the world, and what would she find? In yet another story, he felt he had to leave Porto and abandon all his plans of starting a family to become Grand Master of the military order of Christ – surrounded by scientists and navigators – as a cover for his homosexuality. I hope that he followed his heart in the end.

I was trying to talk to Henry's ghost when I was in Raposeira, the place where he stayed in the Southern Algarve. He remained resolutely silent. Instead, his shadow pursued me in the streets while I was following his footsteps. In his house I found signs that I think he wanted me to see, such as disappearing images of the sea that made me think of the current troubles with our environment: disappearing ocean life, a sea fighting to breathe due to oil 'bubbles'. And the broken sail above his bed? A souvenir of discoveries and colonization? Maybe he saw the poet Nayyirah Waheed trying to cross the ocean to come to Europe, only to realize that no one wanted her there? Did he collect an army of angry shells? The army is growing and the sea refuses to feed us; there are rumours that say it is only for now but what if it becomes permanent? Why was the chinaware in the kitchen unpainted? And what about the story of the last cork tree in Portugal? Did he see it coming? We could barely save it. We also realized that the fire came from inside the tree itself. It was a forest fire brought on by nature. In a second letter in 2017, I wrote about our deep concerns. I told him that we are all burning up and dying slowly inside. And I told him of how paralysed we feel, desperately wondering how to go on. How can things ever change? We don't have kings anymore, for whom the only way to be remembered was to wage a war. But, to be sure, we have greedy and incompetent politicians and dictators.

I told him about us, people who spend holidays on his old territory. I asked him if he remembers the first time he was there. This place is now crowded with tourists, people who have taken time off work and are still so very busy. I asked him whether we are better people now than we used to be, or whether we are just bystanders.

I told him that our world today is run by powers no longer visible to us, and that we have been kept away from the truths and distracted with small-

scale topics, while powerful nations negotiate our fate; that we still have wars, poverty and systems of enslavement. Is a long-lasting state of peace impossible, because we cannot come to terms with the true meaning of it? The boundary of the no man's land is gone. There are limits now more than ever. Every city, street and home has its border. Where does my land start? And what is the story of that land? I am writing a third letter to him, and I am convinced that Henry is actually Henrietta. I am telling her about oil drilling in the Algarve, about 'cleaners', who determine the course of people's lives, and about facts; about the sun that doesn't take a break, about democracy and diplomacy, about society and citizens in the present fairytale of the emperor's new clothes. I still have so many questions to ask her. In December, when I return to Raposeira, I will try to call her again.

I went to Raposeira, but I could no longer feel any connection to her. It made me sad, but I realized that it was time for me to move on. As she wanted to back then; as she wants me to today. My mind is in the North, in the Far North. On the land where the fire and lava eat all that lives. The fires from the inside really exist. My mind is there. My body will soon join. And there the story will continue.

Fig. 1: Dorota Lukianska, The nature was helping me. Cork sculptures, various sizes, 2017

Fig. 2: Dorota Lukianska, What if you were a woman? Photo, 40x35 cm, 2016

Fig. 3: Dorota Lukianska, How is the sea doing? Photo, 85x130, 2016

Fig. 4: Dorota Lukianska, Your home in Raposeira. Photo, 65x40 cm, 2016

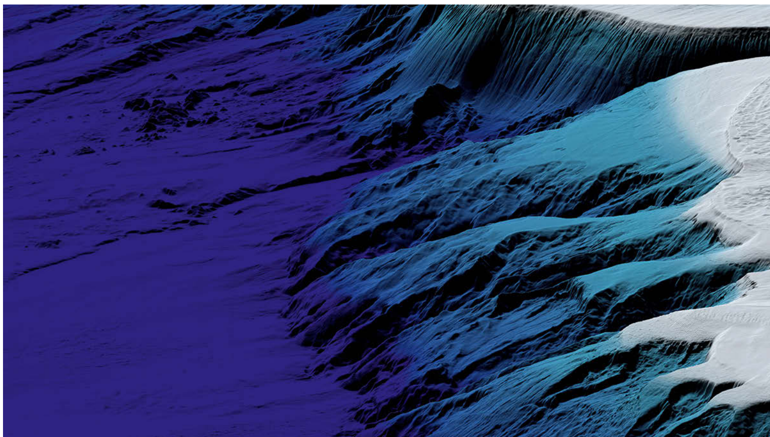
Fig. 5: Dorota Lukianska, You were not present then. Photo, 35x60 cm, 2016

Acoustic ocean: annotated video script

Ursula Biemann

Biemann's pluralistic practice spans a range of media including experimental video, interview, text, photography, cartography and materials, which converge in highly formalised spatial installations. In her videos, the artist interweaves vast cinematic landscapes with documentary footage, SF poetry and academic findings to narrate a changing planetary reality. The artistic gesture of acoustic ocean is that of rewriting a script for inter-species relations and of a mind-body intra-active form of knowledge creation. It addresses the science of a marine landscape by showing the scientific interest in the images and sounds of an altered sense. Acoustic Ocean draws on a range of recent scientific insights in its foray into modes of marine-biological expressions, proposing an immersed image for the complex and fragile interactions between humans and nonhumans, knowledge and instruments in these multimedia landscapes.

Fig. 1 to 4: Ursula Biemann, Acoustic Ocean, annotated script, 2018



The submarine immensity of the Atlantic Ocean is a layered three-dimensional space where countless species interact with one another. Given the poor visibility in this penumbral liquid universe, the sonic dimension is the primary means of communication, navigation and survival. Formed by a difference in water density, the horizontal layers of the ocean allow for distinct sound frequencies to travel. In the mid-1940s, scientists discovered a deep sound channel where low-frequency sound travels great distances, the so-called SOFAR channel. To locate enemy submarines operating in the deep channel, arrays of hydrophones were placed on the North Atlantic seabed, connected by cables to listening posts on shore. The instruments also detected sounds whose sources were at first unknown, later found to be low-frequency blue and fin whale vocalisations. Their acoustic range extends across the ocean floor, emitting vast environments. For a long time, the submarine environment was thought to be a silent place until these spy technologies initiated a new understanding of the ocean as an acoustic and semiotic ecosphere.

The aquanaut lays her acoustic instruments out in the hydrosphere, intercepting the vocal signals marine beings are sending through. The hydrophones function as external organs, enabling her to deeply immerse herself in the aquatic habitat. There, she adjusts the frequencies to capture the dense sonic signature of entire ecosystems. Spreading her sensors out into the deep, she tunes into the transmissions of marine species. Going from attentive to immersive, her sensing discloses a sea full of intentions. For weeks she

has been scripting the seascape, seeding it with an auditory dimension that leaves space for a reply.

> Although she is using Cold War technology, our aquanaut here has friendly intentions. She is a Sami marine biologist, a native of the insomniac territories of Northern Norway, equipped with all kinds of hydrophones, parabolic mics and instruments for acoustic reception, recording and mixing. She is spreading out her long sensors like outer organs, linking herself with the instruments and the organisms she examines. She merges with the environment and through her sensing techniques, reveals a sea full of intelligence. Her gestures activate humans' relationships with animals and other bioforces. She is the NatureCulture figure, a mixture of an ethnic indigenous wearing a reindeer hood and a high tech scientist in a deep-sea diving suit.

You know, we have seen this for a long time now.

Even my Grandmother told us about it.

When she was young they suffered from hard winters.

A changing climate.
Rain falling when it wasn´t expected.

In wintertime, the rain becomes ice on the snow.

And the reindeer cannot dig down to reach the lichen beneath.

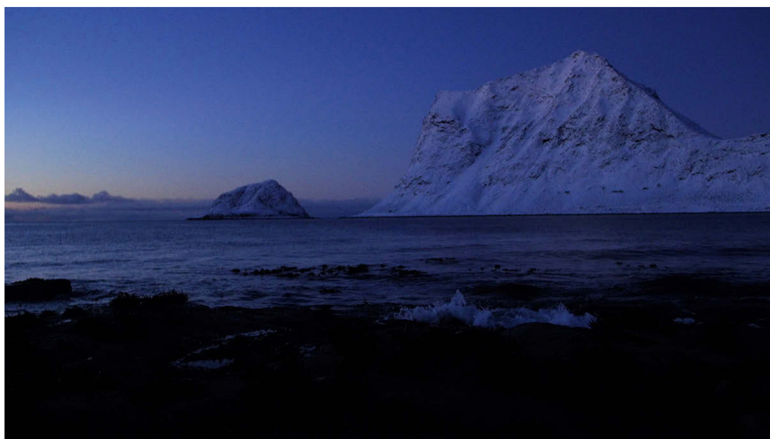
And thus, before spring comes,
many reindeer starve to death.

The reindeer that makes it through the winter
is our guardian.

And we are its guardian.

The reindeer is the livelihood of my people, all of us.

The video experiments with narrative forms as it explores the changes in the ocean and the atmosphere. The experimental nature of the form and delivery of their narration is in direct connection to the unimaginable scale of alterations that are in store for humanity and the highly speculative mode in which we can engage them at this stage. In search of a new language, one particularly urgent question has emerged: how to reframe the relationship between the artist-author and the nonhuman world.



That night, a few whales gathered near the surface. Their enlarged memory-chambers contained images from near-extermination. They sent a canto of impermanence before diving back down into the deep. Some have re-learned to flourish in this murderous sea.

The mind has its own technologies.

With the voices of Blue Whale, Harbor Seal, Spotted Sea Trout, Sea Urchin, Silver Perch, Black Drum, Midshipman Fish, Right Whale, Fin Whale, Shrimp, Minke Whale, Haddock Hawkins, Humpback Whale, Dolphin, Bowhead Whale.

There is a parallel between her scientific and my artistic, instruments of sensing and recording the nonhuman world. Rather than the posture of the author, the artist here takes up a sensitive position, listening for a reply. The artistic gesture is that of rewriting a script for inter-species relations and in doing so, *Acoustic Ocean* invokes the indigenous scientist and the artist as equally important explorers and mediators of the contemporary understanding of our planetary ecosystems.

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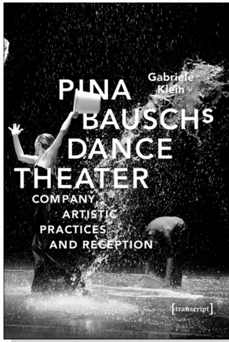

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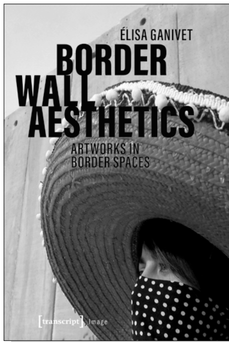

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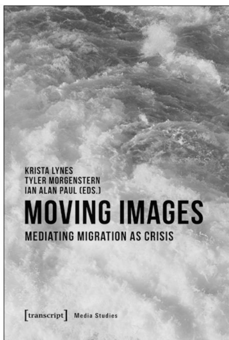

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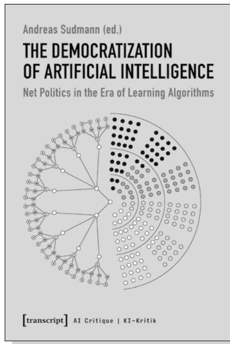

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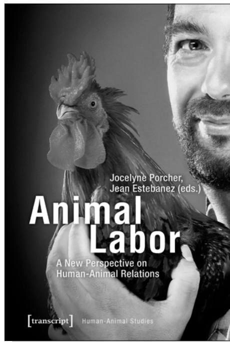

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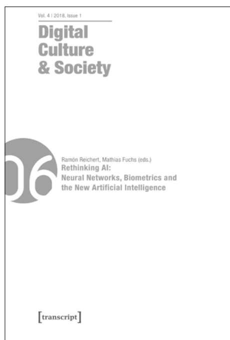

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