

6 Questions
Before The
Beginning
Of Something
Else

Mirjam Kroker

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[Before The Beginning Of
Something Else]**

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Special edition of the interview, inquired by Kim Engelen in spring 2020, during the lockdown in Spain.

Questions No. 1-5 were asked by Engelen. No. 6 should be proposed by myself. The idea behind No. 6 was to offer the person asked a 'wild card', considering that the questions of an interviewer often relate first to the interest or understanding of the person formulating the questions, which does not always correspond to the one who is asked. However, it will remain unanswered and I will pass it on to you as the reader.

Thank you for your time and curiosity.

Special thanks to Ava Longeran and Juan Toro

between February and March, Örö, 2020



I. We met at Documenta 13 in the summer of 2012. I was doing my artist residency there at Park Schönefeld. And you, your partner Juan and I formed part of the same workshop. And from the first time we met. When we started to talk we entered into never-ending discussions. I remember one bus ride with you when you told me you were thinking about going to art school. If I remember correctly since you felt you missed the practical side of doing art. And I think indeed your work has made a huge leap from then to here. But perhaps or possibly (?) you would have made the same leap if you had not gone to art school. How would you say how your work changed from then to now 8 years later? Or as another or additional sort of intro question: Like most other artist friends in this book, we, unfortunately, don't meet very often since we are dispersed over the globe working as international artists. And sometimes I am astonished that we are in a way out of physical contact, but we are still thinking about the same themes and world issues. Although I don't consider myself a political artist. Since I mostly react with my art on my direct social environment and deal with communication and self-development in temporary communities. How do you see yourself as an artist? And isn't it an interesting fact that somehow we lived for a while both in Berlin and now we are both living in Spain? Maybe I should also ask you. How are you hanging in with the Coronavirus since here in Spain we are now the 2nd European country with the most fatalities.

1

Thank you for asking how I am hanging in with the Coronavirus and I would wish to be able to ask you back here! Fortunately, I am fine, thanks. Though some of my friends are affected by symptoms that could not yet be resolved, and medical treatment due to direct inspection of a medical specialist is still difficult to get. The situation, of course, gives us all a lot of practical knowledge and thought-through experience that I could never have imagined. Thinking about the current global pandemic and its possible consequences, which now makes insecurity as a condition of life much more extensive than before and also affects those who might not have thought it possible to be affected by such anxieties, raises awareness of how little many of us actually know about what it means to live in life-threatening circumstances, with restricted freedom of movement or to have existential fears all same the severity of living conditions in times of a pandemic is in particular at risk for those who are already disadvantaged for one reason or another and might not have any or sufficient access and support from legal, public and government agencies and this is painful to witness. However, unfortunately, one cannot say that it comes as a surprise. Values are challenged from and in all directions. In times like these, it is also easier to understand the importance of verifiable data relating to irrefutable facts, as imagination to deal with these uncertainties. We are right at the beginning of understanding this new global situation, and we are probably far from it, all difficult to



know. Time will tell more.

When the situation intensified noticeably within Europe and existing information about Covid-19 has been supplemented or replaced every day with new information, I was still in Finland for a residency on the rather small and remote island Örö. Questions like social distancing were literally insignificant as the few people who were around have been for quite a while, making infection almost impossible. The effects of the pandemic could not be felt directly in terms of life on the island. By the end of February, I was still sticking to the plan to cover a large part of the journey south overland. Back to Helsinki I got my first impressions of how this pandemic was felt in a capital that was statistically little affected at this point in time. I still hoped to get overland to Vilnius. But actually the journey ended after a ferry crossing in Tallinn. Within a few days, circumstances changed so drastically, implying that the governments of the neighbouring countries gradually decided to close their borders. An onward journey was questioned and no longer possible over land by using public transport. Somehow I got to Madrid where the curfew had just started a few days ago. And here I am again on an 'island' in the private living room along with the time to ask questions. Much is still ahead of us.

During this time, memories are of particular value.

It was really an incredibly beautiful summer in 2012, and indeed, lucky we met during Documenta 13. If I remember well, you were living in Malmö at that time, and it was a surprising coincidence that you moved to Berlin soon after. Above all, I never would have imagined back in the days finding you or myself here at the southernmost end of Europe in Madrid, or even further south in Valencia. But both of us, with our somewhat nomadic existences, make an excellent contribution to this coincidence.

2

For real, I have precious memories of the Documenta 13 summer. You had an exceptional chance to spend a lot of time on-site with your residency. I was there because I had a small scholarship from Volkswagen Stiftung to participate in a workshop about critical scenography, examining the structure and dynamics of huge art exhibitions in the 21st century for which Juan Toro and I applied as co-founders of *Projects for Contemporary Aesthetics* in short PZÄ (founded 2012). It was also my first Documenta, and that made it special, too. That summer, I totally wanted to enjoy everything. The Karlsau Park, as a vibrant location of Documenta 13, was strewn with small huts that all housed kind of mini-exhibitions, that gave the idea that a little orange igloo would only complement the composition out there. It was real fun to camp there with Juan Toro and prepare various self-initiated



interventions. Here I want to make a small footnote within the text. It's always funny to talk either with the first name (as you did in the question) or with the full name (as I did in the answer) about friends or partners that we concurrently appreciate as colleagues, especially when the work itself tries to challenge these barriers of familiarity and professionalism, like your concept for this series of books, as I understand it. And to make this, I think pervasive overlap itself, a decisive guideline and idea for this series of books, in which you explicitly select people for the interviews, that you call artist friends, looks interesting.

[From then to now]

At that time, I worked with projects, mostly in collaboration, that can be roughly described as art&theory based, as you mentioned, without having studied art. I was very confident with this hybrid way of working, though honestly speaking, there remained indeed an unresolved equation concerning a need for a more art-specific tutoring/education/improvement/belonging (and what that would look like). Basically, I was a little concerned about a hypothetical marginalisation of art-making due to possible professionalisation as an anthropologist, and I definitely didn't quite want to risk that to happen. On the contrary, I worked towards a shift proceeding thinking through 'doing art', though with a particular emphasis on a transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach of collaboration and experimentation of joining different specified backgrounds. This interest ultimately led to the (co)-foundation of platforms such as PZÄ in 2012, initially in Berlin, and *on/off collaboration* in 2014 (digital space). The latter was founded in particular based on the initial needs of the participants for self-organised learning and expanding our practices or disciplines through regular conversations and exchange of information.

At that time, I was also working on the preparation of various smaller interdisciplinary research projects, published my first book, and worked on a few theses for a possible PhD in close contact with the young *Institute for Art History in a Global Context: Focus on Africa*, at Free University Berlin. But somehow I decided at the last moment to try studying art.

What can I say about the attributes of possible ways of studying art and its further implications? You are wondering if my work would have developed the same if I took a different path — definitely not exactly. Although questions about the crisis within art education and in how far its voice has become weak remain. As there is no concrete measure in the sheer ways of making contemporary art, how can it be taught adequately?

3

Coincidentally, I found a photo of a note some days ago that dates back to 2012, and it came like a surprise as I was about to answer this question and it



says: „If the solution in the crisis in art education is skill, skill, skill then somewhere along the line the problem of how to teach art has been abandoned in the paranoid clamour to at least teach something." (D. Beech) It would definitely go too far to discuss this 'pedagogical tur' here, but it is interesting to keep it in mind while trying to address this kind of question, as we are all witnesses of how different universities or academies responded to it and are still responding.

I can say that having access to an institution of art education gave me access to possible ways of making a living as an artist that are still not in the same way accessible outside this academic context and its regulators when it comes to applications and funding. If you were not born rich and want to be considered for accessing specific funding like work grants, to be a 'graduate in art' can often be obligatory and consequently gives you more possibilities from which you are excluded as a non-graduate-artist.

4

That reality might want to be considered in the decision-making of studying or not studying art within an Academy. From an economic point of view, it has so far proven to be helpful. That elucidates in how far the Art World is to a very high extent a regulatory system of the economic value of art. At the same time, each mechanism of inclusion simultaneously inherits notions of exclusions. Being in somewhere and staying out at the same time can be quite complicated or at least acrobatic. It is difficult to say whether studying art was beneficial or disadvantageous for my artistic practice itself, in terms of how it becomes manifest. Studying art to make art is for me inevitable, while studying art at an academy is definitely just one option. Today we would not even need to access an Academy of Art to be heavily informed. If we are self disciplined or simply curious enough we might not need the discipline (as an academic institutional training center) to study art. Information is everywhere! There is more art around than anyone can ever look at. So go and perceive art alone and with others and consider it, if you want to study art is my advice.

Literally, I had turned this issue of studying art inside an Academy upside down. Retrospectively I can say yes and no, some things elude these evaluations, instead of release. It might sound pathetic, but we can never be the same with a different experience. Chris Burden (who actually also studied art at the University) once said: "To trust your intuition is exactly the opposite of any formal education." I guess in my case, it gave me trust in mine - also because it distanced itself from it.

I did art projects in and outside the so-called Art World and I see it as a very delicate issue. On the one side, thinking and concentrating on the mere



essential act of making art, while on the other side being very alert with knowing that economic value is often entangled with specific political and cultural interests that don't always correspond to an aesthetic or any other value beyond the before mentioned. On the other side of that economic entanglement, I appreciate the financial support that enables the work-intensive activity that art-making can be. All people that are fully dedicating their time to art-making/art-thinking have to pay their electricity bills, and might even dream of a holiday, instead of following the rule that 'artists know no weekends', which I understand as a metaphor for leisure time.

Shifting the research focus from an academic anthropological approach towards one based on artistic practice definitely influenced my working methods as well as the outcomes (I don't quite like the word outcome but I can not think at the moment of another one that suits my ideas better especially as I am not an English native speaker). What I am trying to cross over to you is that as an anthropologist or historian, you commit yourself to depict the world as it is, and as an artist, you can do the same. Still, you can also make other configurations visible or accessible that differ from the world we live in, and I find that fascinating. As you are mentioning the current Covid-19 situation, let me refer to it as an example that what becomes a reality is often beyond what we can think of, while retrospectively, the same scenario might be absolutely recognisable. A historian or anthropologist is diminished to this specific unimaginability that has become a fact, while other aspects of the unimaginable, although they might inherit possible realities, have to be left out.

As I see it, the so-called 'archival turn' in contemporary art suggests a logic that enables there to be subsets. The real can be associated and dissociated next to the imaginary; the dreamed next to the living, infinitely often. At the moment, I would like to deepen this way of materialising critical thinking embodied through art-making.

5

So how did my art change from there to here? I would not necessarily say that it has changed instead of continued. Daniella Cascella once said about my work that she insists on seeing it as a singular, "[...] as these works all look to me as instances of an overarching and interconnected lifetime artistic engagement with the materials of being—but to circle around their elusiveness generates frictions which reveal how these works are not made to protect a private and accomplished understanding: [...] and this tension toward the ungraspable allows the transmission to continue, away from any sheltered claims of completeness." Although I didn't have that in my mind, or instead spoke to myself of an unfinished or incomplete collection of modules, I can go with this notion.



In the sense of a curriculum, I am glad that my training started outside in the world, on my first long journeys before I even thought of studying anything at a university. After these first extensive journeys, cultural and social anthropology seemed to be the next choice for studying. I had gotten to know a lot of different ways of being and living about which I wanted to inquire. I still remember those first semesters of my studies, sitting in seminar rooms and getting an introduction to Buddhism from stressed-out Rolex-watch-wearing professors that really challenged my understanding of coherency. But that was a long time ago.

2. I read on your website: Mirjam Kroker/ artist&anthropologist. But I think to know that it is important to you to not merely be defined as a (contemporary) artist but more specifically as a conceptual artist. Although I assume you don't necessarily like labels. And then I want to add (and ask) that I see you also very much as a material based artist. How do you see this yourself? Then I think with your previous background in anthropology your focus is not merely on the more Western-oriented art-world. Although I would think that it is (or more positioned from it) but you want to bring in other voices or visual languages into this context? And in this regard, how does locality matter for you? Could you tell more about this?

[Art & Anthropology]

6

It is challenging to think of myself as an artist without an anthropological background, as it is the result of a decision that I still affirm and any other possible constellation is unknowable to me or lies in my imagination. The research I conduct, as part of my work, is not merely based on artistic practice, but also inspired (sometimes) by a profound anthropological academic background. From an artist's perspective, I can combine these different yet sometimes superimposed aspects with infinite variations (and I love it). In other words, the reason behind studying anthropology has always been in a way to also make art.

However, it felt essential to get access to quite a scopic orbit of information, and that is why I chose to travel and study anthropology in the first place and I did both quite extensively for over a decade. Just to give you an idea of why I was so eager to study anthropology, I want to name some of my favourite courses back then: *Ethnicity - racism- nationalism, Surviving the data jungle, Cross-cultural comparison of divorce, Agency and resistance, Sexus, Eros - Love, Human Rights in Postsocialism, Anthropology of law, Racism, African History, Peace Studies*, and of course, not to forget all the art-related ones like *Global Art and Contemporary Art of Africa* and *Visual Anthropology*, or the more methodological ones like *Making Documentary Videos* or *Social-anthropological-writing*. I've studied a wide range of topics that continue to nourish my artistic practice. They are like a resource I can fall



back on if I choose. A crucial reason I wanted to continue my anthropological studies in Vienna in 2004, beside my curiosity about Vienna's art landscape, was the opportunity to study Swahili, including the *Swahili Sarufi/Grammatik*, *Swahili Matzoezi/Exercise*, *Swahili Conversations* and especially *Swahili Literature* with Lurenco de Noronha. I can doubtlessly say my work 'Other Languages Do Also Exist' (with the previous title 'English is not the only language in the World') can be traced back to my admiration for the research and contribution of Lurenco de Noronha and his joy of sharing his profound knowledge on Swahili Literature.

Over time, I developed an appetite for exercising on the fringes of both disciplines. I enjoyed this back and forth, a kind of stretching exercise for the always time-related restraints that are constantly challenged by the continuation of occasions/historical events, etc. Nonetheless, I more and more drifted towards 'thinking through' art-making.

In the past years, I have been parting with the habits of a solely anthropological research endeavour in favour of a more personal unfolding of research and communicability and documenting, while constantly updating the methods I use. Though pretty fertile, especially in content, still insufficient for me, regarding the methodological possibilities for post-processing the raw material. It is an academic discipline of social science that relies on explicit concepts of evaluation. In distinction, art albeit academic is more what we can call an open-ended approach that enables, if not necessarily relies permanently on modifying and transformative elements that consistently facilitate the possibility of a transformation of matter. I can get a lot out of the extensive material-based options that art-making brings into the discourse.

The reason I hold on to anthropological investigation is doubtless that I see in it a very vital resource to nourish critical thinking about current issues.

I can say that I have an affinity for what we could call 'anthropological questions' as well as for some anthropological research methods, especially for conducting material such as fieldwork. Whereas, if it comes to post-processing of the raw material, I feel connected to what we can understand in the broadest sense as art-making. I like the full play that I enjoy in artistic practice, where I can refer to anthropological and historical approaches and conceptual art, without necessarily understanding it as a contradiction, and analogies are possible. But also I want to make sure that I don't give the impression of the severe academic on one side and the playful artist on the other. The field of (contemporary) art itself is an academic discipline that builds on a long-lasting tradition of history and regulations within this system. For participating in a dialogue that happens to spread over the globe, it seems crucial to be densely-informed, as speaking about the time we live in.



While anthropology, in a critical examination of its history, has also shown that writing and researching sometimes follow more imaginative desires than is often revealed.

I think it is worth mentioning, thanks to a lot of work done by artists in the past and present, that art can be approached as an intellectual activity too, which is still here and there persistently ignored, but knowledge, research, strategies, etc. have long been reintroduced into the artistic spectrum if they have ever been entirely apart.

Something crucial in this respect is the difference each approach makes in its distinct nexus of sense-making strategies. So even if the questions may remain the same - the compelling distinction is more how do I want to make, let's say, the captured data accessible for any possible third person? There I see the vital difference between anthropology and art and I would, therefore, say that the respective procedure for handling the data influences their culmination. The risk of more predefined or specified methods to analyse data is that the information is simplified just to make 'sense' under specific premises. More manifold handling of the data that can be provided within art-making, might look less solid or concrete and might be different to capture, thus may uncover some part about a truth more unbounded in the aspect of not claiming to own the reality or compartments of it, that might have, for that same reason compromised on simplifying data to make it valid.

8

Francisco Martínez says something interesting: "[...] when art practice is turned into research, social ambiguities are made visible more directly and appealingly. Also, the combination of ethnography and contemporary art makes it possible to not only depict real events and situations but also do it in a way that the representation itself becomes a social fact." For example, Kader Attias's work embodies how social inequalities or humiliation can be revealed in a straightforward and engaging way. For instance, in his first exhibition, that happened to take place in his flat in Paris suburbs, he showed photographs that had been rejected from several galleries and magazines due to the personalities they portrayed, such as 'Arab women' and transvestites. In the end, he decided to paint his apartment black and leave one wall white, onto which he projected these images. He posted advertisements for the exhibition in his neighbourhood, and many people came to see it.

In that way, the representation of these images, rejected from a mainstream debate, became a social fact.

Back to possible, simplified clear disciplinary distinction: If we take a look at documentary narratives inside and outside a specific discipline, they often inhabit partly fictional characteristics, and distinguishable disciplinary



differences might lose in resolution. If we, for example, consider the historical beginning of ethnographic photography and film that might be quite 'art like' in their outcome, while it has not been represented as such especially in its time of survey, what makes it a tricky issue, albeit critically reflected within and outside the discipline to a certain extent.

Personally, I prefer to address these imaginative aspects of reality on an equal footing, yet this also includes awareness and a kind of differentiated handling of material, be it pictorial or haptic, etc., to understand and depict the magnitudes of coexistence of the imaginative as part of the real.

In all I still see a high potential of co-activity within the relationship between art-making and anthropological research that can stimulate unevolved, inchoate, inexperienced, or unactualised latencies that I am eager to smell out or track down, you name it.

9

I am not sure if it can be said, as I haven't conducted research about it, but at least I can articulate the question: are we actually witnessing an anthropologization of contemporary art to a certain degree? As it can be indicated that more and more concepts coming from within anthropology or cultural studies — hybridity, transnationalization, cultural and ethical relativism, participant observation, interconnectedness, foraging, gardening, agriculture, landscape modification and biodiversity loss, complex technology, division of labor, ethnography and historical reconstruction, and that list could be continued endlessly — are being considered, borrowed, utilised or even investigated within the scope of contemporary art, sometimes to a very profound extent. Meanwhile, it could be questioned if sometimes they just function as a catalogue of terms with an increasing symbolic capital within the Art World system?

Speaking for myself, I consider some of these concepts, which I don't apply as labels, as an integral part of embodied knowledge through profound investigation and art making.

[Conceptual art]

Further you are asking about my affinity for conceptual art, if I may pick it up like this. As a point of reference, conceptual art is very crucial to me. It probably comes from my admiration and interest in ideas as having a very central place in artistic practice. Conceptual art, especially from the 1960s and 1970s, has contributed a lot to broaden the boundaries of art and I consider that as a substantial achievement and a vital resource for my work that is a humble attempt to build on it. In general, the importance of conceptual art can be acknowledged by the widely accepted proposition that all art after



conceptual art is considered as post-conceptual.

I could best say that I approach art-making as a conceptual process, evident in the artist doing, and further lured into an eagerness to research and explore what I could name as a conceptual shift or a transformation of realisation of the alteration within that which we call art. While rendering this conceivable transformation as a radiant transfiguration of other areas that art constitutes and by which it is constituted.

[Contemporary]

There is also much to debate about concepts of the contemporary. Basically, it is often said simply because it seems to be most evident. I like to remember Groy's ideas about it that he unfolds in his text *Comrades of Time*. In this essay, he asks what does it really mean to be contemporary? This labels we apply so easily sometimes without really being conscious why. "Capture and express the presence of the present in a way that is radically uncorrupted by past traditions or strategies aiming at success in the future." (online: Groy's 2009) While he brings to mind Derrida's indication of the present, who declares, that the past and the future always corrupt the present. Groy's further asks what is really the present "[...] before it begins to be a matter of metaphysical speculation or philosophical critique?" I think I understand him when he says that "[...] contemporary art can be seen as an art that is involved in the reconsideration of the modern projects" — and describing this period as a boring time of indecision, delays and so on. (online: Groy's 2009)

He proposes to understand contemporary not in terms of being in time but instead being with time to be "[...] a 'comrade of time' —as collaborating with time, helping time when it has problems when it has difficulties. And under the conditions of our contemporary product-oriented civilisation, time does indeed have problems when it is perceived as being unproductive, wasted, meaningless. Such unproductive time is excluded from historical narratives, endangered by the prospect of complete erasure. This is precisely the moment when time-based art can help time, to collaborate, become a comrade of time—because time-based art is, in fact, art-based time." (online: Groy's 2009)

10

[Labels]

Further, you mention my possible dislike for labels. You are right, my relation to 'labels' certainly deserves some explanation. It depends on the context. In the context of working together with museums you notice that for the publication of works in catalogs or the signage of exhibitions, you are almost obliged to work with these labels; you are often supposed to decide whether what you are doing should be labelled as an installation, a video or a



drawing. When it comes to my work, I currently prefer to avoid these labels attributing it to a certain direction. Why? I am interested in exploring and playing with the gaps between/underneath/beside these labels and maybe also because I am not so sure. In consequence, this still includes a profound investigation of the same so that you can add the below, beside or beyond. From that previous acknowledgment, shifts might be possible, even tiny, soft introductions or whatever you want to drive at. On a large scale, I try to avoid these labels; on a micro-scale, I examine, play and try them out.

Let me risk an assertion at this point. On a certain level, most of us feel more comfortable with something when being able to recognise things, assign them, understand them, check them off, even better to explain, make sense of it or gain any meaning out of it. Conversely, it might be uncomfortable when something remains unclear, unresolved or something lies in between, and what is more obvious than to address it back to the author (e.g. the artist) and you're done.

Within art, it is precisely this possibility of opening a zone of vagueness to persistently expand our embodied acknowledgment that can be anything from tedious to devastating to pleasing/collapsing/delightful/liberatory, etc. I am interested in this area of the not yet fully understood, the not yet fully resolved. These ramifications bear aliveness that can be released, in the receiver as well as in the transmitter, which might lead to further action. It can be like a volcano. Within or around art, we can familiarise ourselves with the undetermined, the prompt, the pending, the vague, the incomplete, the unfinished, the undecided, the unsettled, the hesitant, and open up and let it work on us or get involved in it, - everything is possible.

But perhaps both conditions can be addressed as one, and probably best to be adored simultaneously as novelty is always hidden in it. Knowing as part of not knowing, or the other way around, not knowing as part of knowing. Like staring in the endlessness of a night sky that you know and do not know simultaneously.

11

[Material artist]

Do I see myself as a material based artist? I once read I think, because I have hands (I don't remember where and who claimed it in the first place), but I go with this idea, and I am floating on air that I have hands that make me think. So yes, I do agree that I am also a material based artist. Since art for me is a way of thinking through the processing of material, be it language, silence, data storage, encounter, earth, fear, fibreboard, friendship, epoxy resin, love, ideas, or the Black Atlantic. For overcoming simple dualisms between material and immaterial it is helpful to free materiality from its



physical limitation. So far, art itself is a material based activity and current different discourses that propose differentiated approaches to materiality are making it even more and more interesting how far we can carry this idea

of art-making and how far it can carry us. Heterogeneous approaches of materiality allow a fast multiplicity of 'material based' approaches to art and maybe beyond.

12

['Western-oriented Art-world' and the matter of locality]

If you ask me, I find it misleading to hold onto an idea of a 'Western-oriented Art World' or to refer to it. That does not mean that it is still important to follow the dynamics that regulate the so-called global Art World/s. I would like to answer this question by questioning if the use of this term implement patterns of discrimination, and therefore try to sustain certain privileged ideas regarding the addressed Art World?

Terms and discourses are often used as weapons of exclusion. Rather I would claim we will never overcome this divisions by insisting on them. Here it seems to me crucial to think about what the use of these terms does for the contemporary and how they are shaping it at the very moment in time. This process of transformation traces back to the end of the 80s and has become more and more pertinent, especially since the beginning of the 21st century. Terminologies like 'Western-oriented Art-World' go hand in hand with modernist ideologies and canons to legitimise them, such as the oversimplified conflation of an artist's work with their nation - which have been questioned since the 1970s, I would say.

Pursuing the ending of the Soviet Union, an Art World on a global scale started to shape. No doubt, the global turn has changed the scope and framing of what is referred to here as the western-oriented Art World. The associated changes are also noticeable on the theoretical level as Enwezor & Okeke-Agulu for example examined in their publication *Contemporary African Art since 1980*. „[...] whereby a limited number of centers enjoyed disproportionate power in determining and shaping the contours of advanced artistic debates. Today the mechanism and the geography of contemporary art are global.“ (Enwezor & Okeke-Agulu, 2009, page 6)

Thanks to the joint efforts of artists, cultural workers, thinkers, critics, curators, practitioners as well as initiatives, institutions, research endeavors, etc. in different regions of the world, it is possible that we do not only need to recall these reference systems by continuing to use these terminologies in an unchanged constellation. Instead, introduce, invite or encourage thinking



about new vocabularies and different constellations in favour of untrained or less experienced reference systems, taking into consideration the crucial question of how and by whom they are constituted? In fact, these dominant canons have long been questioned and repertoires have been shifted or replaced. The term 'Western Art World' and thus its (discursive) claims to power has been issued for some time by the terminology 'Global Art World', therefore initiating a discussion about Global Art, which intends to democratise contemporary art as such, as Buddensieg/Belting/Weibel state, to name just a few. Along with this, they also take the view that the 'European-North American axis' has lost control when it comes to inclusion and exclusion issues. Instead, they agree that it is no longer possible to speak of a dominant Art World and instead propose a variety of Art Worlds.

For me, the crucial point Gerardo Mosquera named at the beginning of this shift, when this new terminology entered the circuit, remains how these new terms affect the status quo? His indication, which I have kept in my mind ever since, underlines: "[...] It is necessary to cut the global pie not only with a variety of knives but also with a variety of hands and then share it accordingly." (online: Mosquera 2004) This metaphorical image speaks for itself. He further explained: "No doubt, the fact that a certain number of artists coming from every corner of the world are now exhibiting internationally only means, in itself, a quantitative internationalisation. But number is not the issue. The question for these new subjects is agency: The challenge of mutating a restrictive and hegemonic situation towards active and enriching plurality, instead of being digested by mainstream or non-mainstream establishment." (online: Mosquera 2004). I see in his pie metaphor, with the diversity of knives and the variety of hands, a very concrete reminder while participating within the contemporary.

13

Of course it is absolutely important to ask essential questions about how these historical wounds, inequalities, tensions, flows, trajectories, structures of legitimisation, manifestations of inclusions are a vital force to shape the present moment and future framings.

In that respect, Ruth Simbao introduces an interesting approach that reconsiders success and failure. In her words: „I argue for the value of opening up and reconsidering ways of measuring 'success' and 'failure'. While 'global art' perpetuates a celebratory logic of addition, which implies that the (western) art world is now global because 'new art regions' have joined the 'core', I propose a logic of abstraction that finds value in acknowledging what it is that people fail to see. I submit that an embrace of 'failure' is what is needed to begin to shift entrenched privilege and to move towards art that is mutually shared at a global level.“ (online: Simbao 2015)



A very current contribution that comes to my mind for contemplating about these concerns is that by the editors of e-flux journal stating in 2020 that: "The cultural peculiarities of European scientific, industrial, and political revolutions seem only to deepen the problem. Faced with looming planetary ecological meltdown, when institutions that were not qualified to blaze pathways for all of humankind to begin with come down from their galactic ambitions, they too land on culture—not as a project or technology, but as a naturalised way of including politics and histories they are unable or unwilling to understand. They, too, forfeit questions of scale to global flows of spectacle and capital." (online: e-flux editors 2020)

14

So what is the matter with the matter of locality? This is an interesting question. Locality as a noun, like you are introducing it here, refers to a fact or quality of having a position in space. I guess what may matter most is that it does matter, and the ways in which it does.

Locality could be addressed geographically. Additionally, a particular interpretation of the world could give the term locality a different notion. You can be born in a place, and your understanding relates to something else, somewhere else beyond this geographical partition of the world, be it the Art World or the world itself. It might be significant to keep in mind that a connection of Western-oriented Art World and locality can blur a mix of geographical localisation and a point of view in terms of perspective, and that can be linked to questions of how narrations relate to specific localities. For example, the increase in biennials around the world, the so-called biennialization, goes hand in hand with the question of how this affects local narratives and makes the significance of a geopolitical analysis for art production/circulation/distribution/acceptance, etc. quite obvious.

Regarding, let's say my function as an artist, I see it as inevitable to interrogate the logic of regulation and to investigate within the same context how these logics of regulations are constituted in its historic formation. I also try to investigate future scenarios by asking if and if when it would be dissolved into something with a thoroughly different orientation and system of reference, and what would it look like?

I have tried to include the thinking about this discourse into my work over quite some time. My later work about it is *Fieldtrips Volume 3: BEYOND VENICE*, where I articulate what I call 'Art World Questions' by asking: *When will you stop the old game of new nationalism?* This work consists of an unlimited edition art book that is based on a reflection of national representation within the Art World system and takes into account the historical genesis of biennials as a place of representation of nation-states. It



compiles all states in alphabetical order that were not represented at the 58th Venice Biennale 2019.

Something that I consider remarkably interesting for my work in this context is that this transformation modifies the very scope of artistic practices in terms of a hypermultiplicity in what is declared or could be declared as art and is circulating (if not presented in the world's most known art institutions or museums). Art can be found through the boom of electronic possibilities of information /circulation/ communication/presentation and collaboration beyond the limits of a merely physical locality. This gives possibilities to artists' initiatives in a transnational approach that depends on these very crucial transformations.

I see these modulations as very simulating and incredibly rich in practicability that I try to explore in a collaborative context. As a co-founder of the initiative *On/Off collaboration* that consists of members living in different time zones and geographical locations in the world, I have had the great opportunity to profoundly explore this context. During this time its members have been living in Mexico City, Cologne, Amsterdam, Berlin, Dresden, Madrid, moving within this time for reasons of research/living/work to Italy, Finland, Costa Rica, England, Ireland, and Argentina. Despite these shifts and time zones, we have met for uncountable so-called 'Sunday Conversations' over the period of 6 years, from whatever geographical standpoint, to collaborate on ideas, concepts and experiences.

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The sum of these approaches, focuses and concerns make it very questionable for me to generally refer, to labels such as 'German', 'Colombian' or 'Nigerian Artist'. Small differences matter here for me. This 'attributions' can actually sometimes be revealing and significant when it comes to asking what infrastructure an artist could possibly benefit from, or when it comes to issues of inclusion and exclusion, so that is in terms of economic or administrative aspects. But that can also be misleading, because it is quite possible to have citizenship from somewhere and reside elsewhere.

Indeed, I was born in Germany (without being asked for the preferred destination of arrival), but that doesn't make me a 'German Artist' at most a person born in Germany with the possibility to retain the associated citizenship and the rights attached to it. If I am asked to fill in my nationality in respect to my artist profession, I prefer to answer it with 'planetary citizen' or something like that. I can admit that I am a bit hypersensitive when it comes to these attributes, and I find it very important that they are handled sensitively, that things can change at the discursive and economic level too. I presume that such attributes are not seldom, ultimately, supposed claims to power and authority.



I could say my interest for different localities manifest in my somewhat nomadic approach of being - while I do not overlook its privileges either as exactly this possibility of moving across borders depends actually as we all know very much on 'conditions of nationality'.

Different places have always mattered for me for making it possible to become a variety of ways of living/ being /thinking etc. I am conscious that all the different places are radiating and integrating into my personal perception and in the materialisation of my work. By connecting different disparate places and materials, references can be made that question why we think how we think, why we feel how we feel and why we do what we do and all combinations of them.

16

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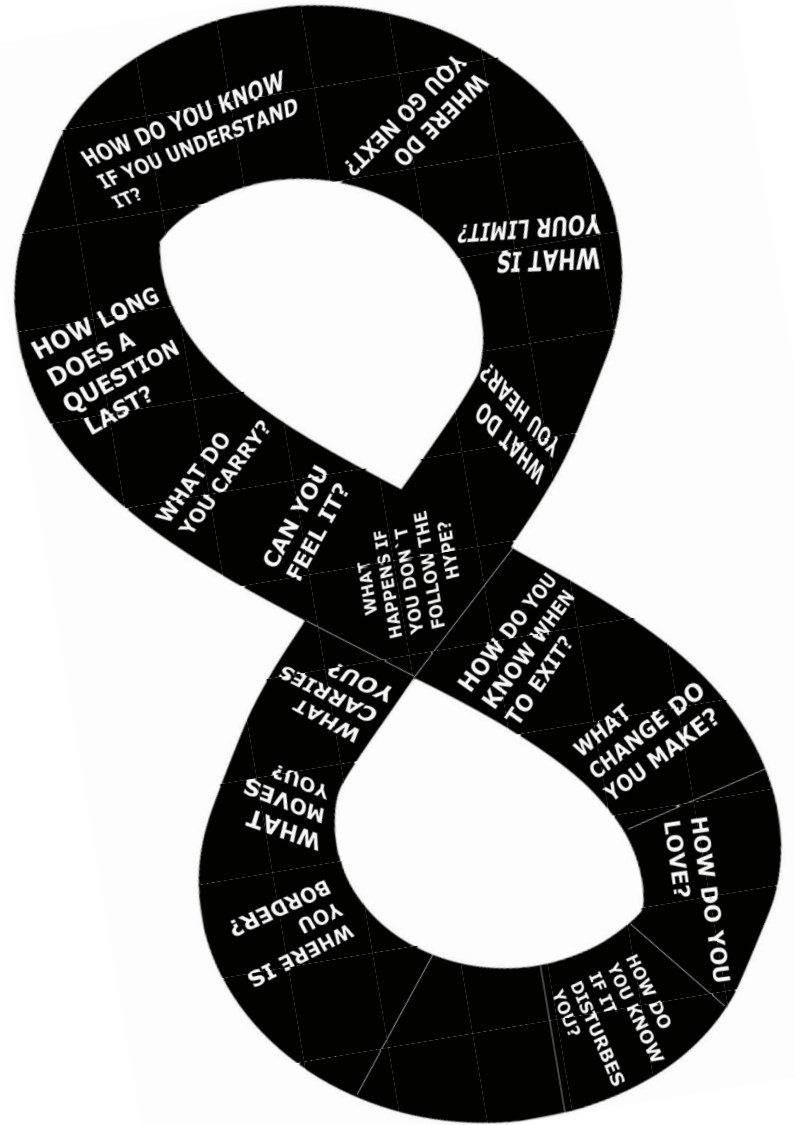
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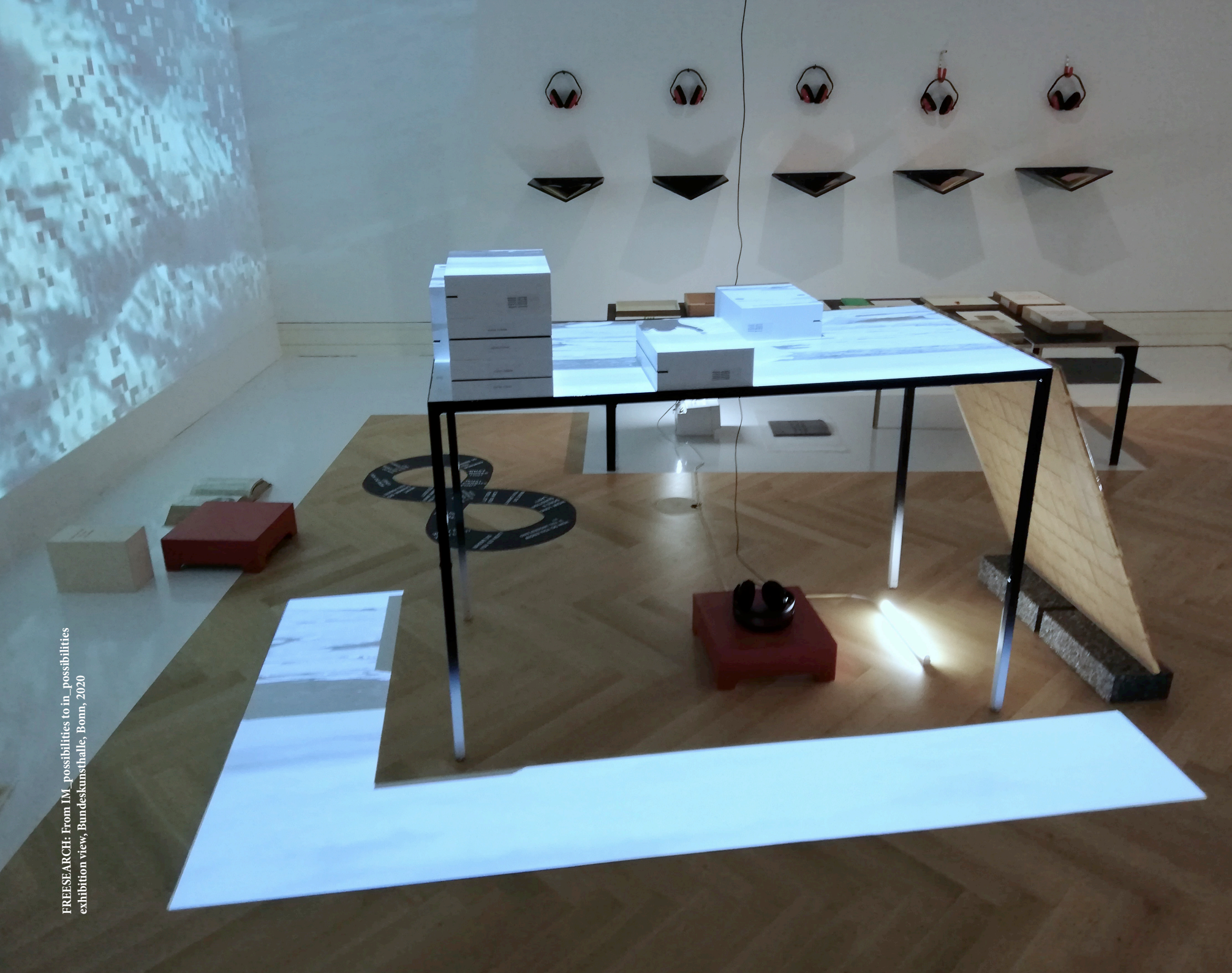


research exhibition structure , Bundeskunsthalle
Bonn, 2019



FREESEARCH: From IM_possibilities to in_possibilitie, multimodal installation, Detail, foil on floor, 60x120cm, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, 2019

FREESEARCH: From IM_possibilities to in_possibilities
exhibition view, Bundeskunsthalle, Bonn, 2020



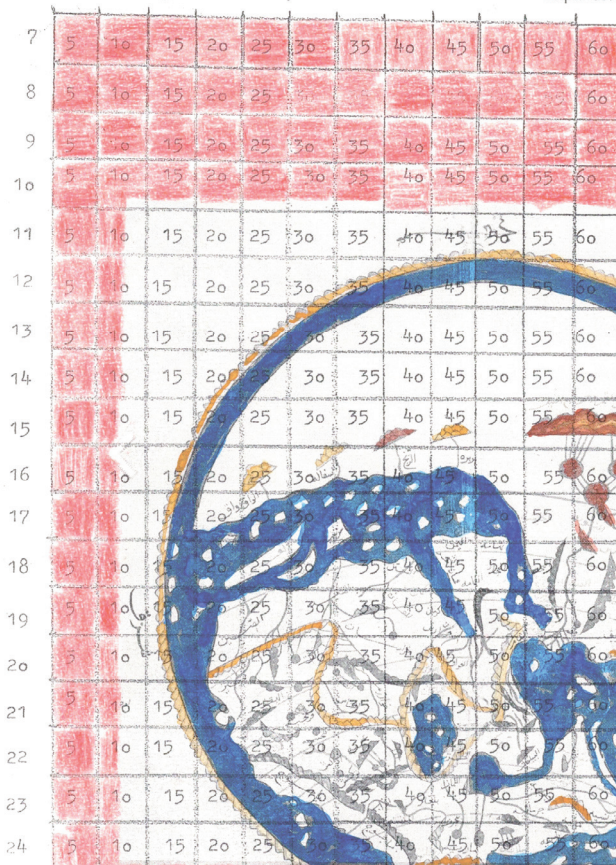


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free thinking

A Year Performance (Time clock piece)
TEHCING #SIE# (1980-81)

09 FEB 2020



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Weltkarte des al-Idrisi (12. Jh., Süden)

Weitere Einzelheiten

Autoreninformationen ansehen

Gemeinfrei
File: Al-Idrisi's world map.JPG

Hochgeladen: 23. August 2006

Über diese Oberfläche | Diskutieren | Hilfe

As close to the sea as possible

07 FEB 2020

07 FEB 2020

collecting word groups = Atrixplops of words

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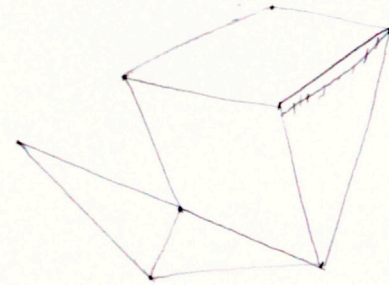
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REPORT 02

The first round pulled me on the position 04 ~~parallel-UNIVERSE~~
Ageog raphically disparate position.
The atmospheric condition is accelerated!
If you dont 't want to be consumed start running. **MOVE ON !**
Plan o-p migrate. Find the EXIT! These days I call the galaxy
my home. I am still a resident of the informal shelter.
With nothing left than to play the game and to connect
the dots.







日本浮世绘——本能寺烧讨之图，右一为织田信长。(维基百科)

Calle Nicolás Sánchez 7,
28026 Madrid

APR 12 2017



Fieldtrips, Studio Nicolás Sánchez, Madrid, April
2020

Alboa Vetus & Ars Nova Museum, Turku
February 2020

3. Can you explain how your working process looks like or how your 'art-making' works? Do you go to the Studio and work? You told me you have a small studio now in Spain. Are you (now) a studio artist? Or is there another way of entering into your work rhythm? Where is your work 'made'? Is in the brain, in the Studio, in the (final) artwork, or...? [...] Can you tell a bit more about your 'situated practice'?

For sure. At the core of my work is seeking things to do that I really really want, which can involve quite a lot, including seemingly nothing. Sometimes that can be much better than something. It might give you a lot of freedom and space to seek the things you really really want to do.

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You remind me of one of my works, a series of day-drawings that I've been doing since 2014, increasing awareness of what I do and how I spend my time making art and how it changes over the years, or becomes actualised. It has been a very interesting long-time-reflection. These drawings, all on a copied template with a time grid for a 24-hour day, divided into 5 minutes each, allow me to pursue these questions over a long period, while at the same time challenging me to keep asking myself what a day is, what I make of it, and how I can 'something between facsimile and compose' it. The act of 'drawing it' gives me new ways of doing things.

To be precise about how the practical side of art-making works for me, I could say it takes place somewhere between fieldworks (plural is intentional) and post-processing. Generally speaking, fieldwork is the collection of raw material, and that definitely often takes place outside the Studio, or instead turns the world itself into the Studio. Depending on the project, these can vary from collecting data (*Flying Archive*), conversations (*Zero Gravity*), records (*1414 minutes older/DOING TIME*), observations (*International Cloud Archive*), informal interviews (*Research POIESIS: current languages in contemporary Aesthetics*), collecting of text as material (*Printed Matters*), recording sound (*think like a mountain*), collective discussions (*On/off collaboration*), participation (*read me I read you*), investigating life-histories (*Visibility of the Invisible*), and most always, analyses of personal documents and documenting results from activities undertaken off- or online. Many of these works are open-ended projects, which makes them kind of long term.

Both processes I record in a variety of sonic/visual/textual/haptic/memorial methods. With the memorial, I mean that I make an effort to consciously record one part of it only in my memory, which is also a significant moment in art-making for me.



In other words, I approach art-making as a heterogeneous process in which I do not want to disqualify any possible medium. Of course, that doesn't mean that I have personal preferences.

Currently, I am working on a two-year project with the working title: *The Universe as your Library & The World as Studio, odervonteilchendes-codesderwelt*. The title speaks for itself if it comes to the question of how I approach the idea of 'the Studio'. It can be quite a variety of things to me if we define the studio as the place of production/ initiation/realisation of art-making. It can often be my head, or my bike, my bed, the metro, the sea, a conversation, a conference, a talk, and sometimes a studio is my 'studio' as well. But no, I don't go to a studio and start my work only the moment I enter the Studio. As I cherish looking between things as mentioned before, ideas also often come in between or in the middle of something connected with something else. The advantage of the studio in the narrowest sense is that it makes it possible to create a kind of working environment there or explore spatial narratives, which is an integral part of my way of working and circular thinking. Loraine Lesson proposed the studio as a metaphor for a 'contextual frame', and I think this is an interesting approach too.

Talking about situated practice and exploring it more recently as a context-specific approach came from discomfort that I felt in a different situation that would have required an arbitrary displacement of a work without asking what makes it relevant and considering the implication it might play for its agency (also concerning a specific environment/location). When I refer to situated practice, I refer to site-specific projects like *Somewhere On This Planet* (2016 -). These are interventions that arise in specific sites, with varying probabilities of being seen or not, or maybe being seen but not recognised as art. That is just a concrete example of what I consider to be site-specific. This way of working implies that I try to approach different ways of understanding practice through a specific site.

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I also see art-making as a way of self-realisation that is not mixed up with 'ego' realisation in the ordinary sense, if you know what I mean here with this differentiation. With art-making, I sometimes analyse and synthesise with what I call a site. But as we talked about in the beginning, a site can be related to a geographic location but not exclusively.

Synchronising can also be of significance in this context. In that way that it has nothing or not necessarily much to do with agreeing, because when you agree, you might remain separate in a way. But if you synchronise, it is a different condition. You will be able to exchange information on a different basis and without necessarily saying too much. These considerations



bethink me also of the possible starting points for the reception or critic of art. Maybe an 'obstacle' within art reception might be that it is widely assumed polarities based on the precondition of prejudice. If I put my work into a display or make it in any other way accessible, I am not looking for agreement with someone or something in the first place. I could instead say that I want to create a possibility for synchronicity. Simply synchronise with a proposed condition, and from there, see what can happen, as it carries the potential for self-realisation.

In general, I can say, I usually work on a complex of questions for a more extended period. Throughout, various smaller results emerge, some of which can stand on their own. I am also experimenting with different variations or extensions in the form of trans media installations in order to allow certain thinking experiments that do not relate exclusively to for example an 'object' or an 'image', but rather to the connections that can be made amongst them. Here I am also interested in the relationships of a variety of research results in different states of matter.

4. I want to talk about Humour in your work. I like this in your work. For example your work: REPORT 01: „Today I want to report, that I am wearing a blue and red sock. First, to prove the connections between red and blue and second because they need each other desperately." In the work we see errors. And tipex (white correction fluid). Because the work doesn't look very skilfully made (in a way that you don't hide errors made). You 1. Create your typical signature. 2. Make it authentic looking. 3. Make it quite sympathetic. It seems to me your work has a unique match between conceptual thinking, materiality and personal language. Talking about your style. There is this rational archiving feeling and at the same time this slightly funny way of visualising this. Which is also a bit in contradiction somehow of each other, which gives it another delightful friction. Like the blue sock could represent the more brainy side in your work and the blue one the more childish or naive side. Or vice versa. The same, yet different. Of equal hierarchy.

I don't think I can find the question here? And so far we have not been able to clarify whether the red or the blue sock stands for you for the childlike or the brainy side and I have no idea about it. Yes, to be funny is essential and laughing is a multi-layered human emotion. Do you know the feeling of laughing while our tears are still running? Insane!

19

I rather read this question as a description of the way you 'read' the drawing *Report 01* (as part of the work *Parallel Universe*), which you use as an example of humour in my work. You relate this to a more general understanding or framing of my work as a whole in order to explain how, from your point of view, what appears to be contradictory is brought into an ,equal



hierarchy' through humour. Is that right? Extracting the sentence about someone wearing two different coloured socks suggests that you find some sense of humour there, and maybe also in the fact that the work includes mistakes and does not appear to be made very skilfully. And then, coming from there to the idea of equal hierarchies, I could assume you are referring to values shifted or generated through applying humour?

20

Considering a possible answer, I wonder if we generally take humour seriously enough? How does it come about, where does it come from, and why could we like it? Of course, it's most probably a human emotional necessity. But to be honest, I have no precise idea because I have never really thought about it thoroughly. I understand it, - when I experience it, - when I find something funny, - when something amuses me; then, I can say this has a sense of humour.

Considering for example the vast and extensive research and overview that *The International Society for Humor Studies* (ISHS) offers its members, I know that I have little idea of comprehensive studies from various disciplines regarding humour, laughter, and amusement. A short view at the table of contents of the latest volume (Vol 8, No 1 (2020)) of *The European Journal of Humor Research* reveals some idea of the complexity of this universal human tendency of applying a sense of humour to the everyday. In this same volume Edward Greenberg resumes in his article *Humour as a threat-coding mechanism* that: "Researchers in the area of humour have developed a variety of competing theories. For example, Warren and McGraw (2016: 409-414) focus on humour in the context of explicated ambiguity while Veatch (1998: 161-216) describes the paradox of humour as a 'normal' violation of morality. In contrast, Ramachandran (1998: 351-354) developed the False Alarm Theory of humour, which revolves around the idea that physical displays of humour signal an anticipated threat is not present. Amadeu Viana and Barbara Fredrickson (Viana 2017a: 15; Fredrickson 2001: 218-226) have a theory that construes humour as a social phenomenon." He also says: "The integration of humour's classical theories such as relief, superiority, and incongruity suggest that the differences and patterns in what we find funny are largely dependent on attaching an 'explicitly safe' meaning to novel entities." (online: Greenberg, 2020)

Regarding your comment on humour and equal hierarchies, I can still note a few things towards a possible answer. Interestingly, the drawing you refer to belongs to a work titled *Parallel Universe*. Here I would like to propose the title of the work as a reference to the fact that if one considers the possibility of a contradiction, one would also have to accept that this claim requires that the opposite is also true - albeit challenging imagining from some point of view that makes it look easiest to relegate it to a parallel universe.



In other words, this would be an empirical view of the matter without actually analysing the ideas that might specifically arise humour in the work. And following its definition: You mention that the presence of errors in the work makes it appear authentic and sympathetic. As I understand it, any perceived emotions to these aspects and are not attached to the thing itself but to the one who finds it funny. So the question would go back to you. As you are quoting the sentence written on the drawing concerning wearing a blue and a red sock, it would be interesting to know what you find funny about it. A mother could even be annoyed if it concerned their children and would not find it funny at all, which in turn their children might find amusing, and that could go on and on.

Laughing at yourself is another aspect to be considered. It explains that the intensity with which anyone feels the laughter that creates something in an analogue situation is based on their own principles and regulations of understanding. It also depends on whether humour is understood as something that makes a value ridiculous. It could be examined by wearing two different coloured socks, without clarifying what the reason is - while here, the reason is mentioned. Or is the reason understood as ridiculous? For example, as an attitude, habit, or even suspicion of deception to disqualify personal problems.

Is it ridiculous enough to condemn the reality that it contains?

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Edward Greenberg, Humour as a threat-coding mechanism, in: *The European Journal of Humour Research* 8 (1) 14–28, 2020. online: <https://www.europeanjournalofhumour.org/index.php/ejhr/article/view/388> [01.05.2020]

21



5.) A. Words, collecting, research, documents, Donna Haraway, titles, word-puns, theory, unlearning, imagining, participatory realism, situated knowledge, re_working, transforming, memory institution, occidentalism. Critical engagement. Moving information. And now lately bigger and bigger installations. Would you want to add names, works, numbers, other keywords, ...? Or take one word out and tell us more? B. I want to ask you also perhaps talk a bit about your feelings concerning the 'art-world'. Maybe in relation to your work: *Visibility of the Invisible*. In where you quote Winston Churchill "History is written by the victors". Or another work "Ausstellen in einer Galerie ist ein autoritärer Akt!" (Exhibiting in a gallery is an authoritarian act!). C. And your collaboration with 'On/Off collaboration', how does it relate in this regard. Or is it a completely separate part of your practice or does it feed in to your 'own' work?

For me, the most important part of this open-ended question concerns my long-time endeavour with *On/Off collaboration*, but with pleasure I start by trying to formulate a few ideas about the first part of the question as you insisted on keeping them in.

A.) Part. A of the question is literally a good example of where I see the importance of situated knowledge. It can be very alluring to follow the myriad kinds of displacement of information. What happens to theories, references works etc. when they: Travel; Become displaced; Exiled; Or homeless? Consider how these displacements cause a reference to change its meaning, lose significance, or gain something different. In section A.) you mixed up a wide variety of references and terms, which are more or less significant in the context of different and indeed multilayered inquiry projects. While it could be far-reaching or decisive to have a close reading to see what is revealed here as they are mixed up above while lacking their specific situated contextualization, it might be misleading to address them here in insufficient length.

Critical engagement can start with a delicate consideration of the above mentioned arbitrary mixing without sufficient space to untangle some of it. I understand critical engagement as a critic that seeks to engage rather than reject, especially if it comes to issues you really care about.

22

I remember a crucial contribution from Said that I came across in a variety of books over time, where he specifies four different stages that the transportation of ideas or theories always requires in his understanding: "First there is a point of origin, or what seems like one, a set of initial circumstances in which the idea came to birth or entered discourse. Second, there is a distance transferred, a passage through the pressure of various contexts as the idea moves from an earlier point to another time and place



where it will come into a new prominence. Third, there is a set of conditions - call them conditions of acceptance or, as an inevitable part of acceptance, resistances - which then confronts the translated theory or idea, making possible its introduction or toleration, however alien it might appear to be. Fourth, the now full (or partly) accommodated (or incorporated) idea is to some extent transformed by its new uses, its new positions in a new time and place." (Said 1983: p. 226-27)

Keeping in mind that he had concluded this nearly some 40 years ago, and in the context of modernism, it still gives a good idea about what it can mean if ideas or theories become displaced or travel and how we can further think about these processes in times of disembodied mobility.

Caren Kaplan says beautifully: "Looking and being looked at in turn may signal a performative dimension of knowledge formation that expands this interdisciplinary definition of travel even further." (Kaplan 2002, p. 33)

You also refer to aspects of size in part A. From a spatial point of view, I so far have a long-standing tendency toward things that are minimally compressible and have the potential to expand into something more substantial. I like to remember how I took the *day-drawings* in my hand luggage to Nottingham and filled an entire corner of a gallery with them. Or how I had the files of the *Flying Archive* for the exhibition in Mexico City under my arm during my flight to Mexico City to then lay out a larger floor area in the Museum Casa de Lago.

23

Section b.) This sub-question refers to a site-specific installation, *The Visibility of the Invisible, Situated Practice as Institutional Critique*, 2019. First exhibited in the Senate Hall in the Academy of Fine Arts in Dresden, situated directly opposite of the entrance to the office of the directorate, in the form of an arrangement of a seating group, borrowed from the waiting area of the rector offices that invited the visitor to go through 2 different registers: 1.) A collection of slides, gathering together some of my most influential persons of reference, beyond their time and geographical setting. This little register consists of slides that could be viewed with a (hand slide-projector) that gives them something of an intimate or personal acquaintance/appearance. 2.) A second register consisted of a small booklet that chronologically lists all rectors by name that have been in office since the foundation of the Academy. Without exception, these rectors were white European men.

Two different historical references were made accessible here. The latter refers to a context in which we are physically entangled at a specific moment in time, in this case, an institution as an educational center of art. This entanglement extends to historic traces beyond personal choice if you have



chosen to be involved in this same institution for whatever reason. Whereas the first approach steps out of this restricted frame of reference, the second instead creates its unique points of reference beyond time and place. The installation also provided a small text in the size of a postcard. Here is a small quote from one: "[...] Or maybe I want to note that the intensity of thinking about your history is what history is all about. Trying to know the sources of the stories that shape our own lives seems inevitable. But even more indispensable is selecting your references and sources/informants to which you decide to build your personal history."

24

c.) And now, finally, let's talk about c.) that is dedicated to collaboration that I consider as a vital part of my way of working. I have recently come across a book by Suzi Gablik; the title is *Conversations before the End of Time*. In this she discusses how one voice lacks dialectical resonance. I am not so sure if it's necessarily dialectical, but I agree on the aspect that one voice lacks resonance.

Inside or outside an 'official' collaboration, I suppose we are regularly collaborating, and I think honestly speaking, it can never be completely separate from anything we do. To be more concrete, what if we want to understand collaboration in its etymological sense—Latin co- 'with-', laborare 'work'—and think beyond physically divided spaces or overlaps in time? I would like to enquire if collaboration starts not already when I pounce on a theory in a project, read in the booklet, *Une bibliothèque idéale - An ideal library* edited by Koyo Kouoh & Nana Oforiatta Ayim, listen to a talk by John Akomfrah, research the elaborate projects from Otolith Group, have Franz Fanon in mind or watch a Harun Faroki film, while all along doing your own work, as all those activities can resonate with us or our work. Therefore, I do include reference sometimes into my work. To a certain extent, everything feeds into everything we might do most of the time.

But actually this is not yet collaboration I suppose. Because the voice of resonance in collaboration is about being mutually active, able to be heard and hear, carried and carry. It is about real sympathy, getting involved with each other. As soon as this becomes one-sided, the collaboration ends, although one may still be officially collaborating. I just experienced this currently myself in a project.

With this in mind, the word collaboration is often used without ensuring resonance. Collaboration means to me having the willingness to hear and to be really interested in other points of view and other ways of doing things, to be ready to be as open to your own ideas as those of others.

So, how does the work with *On/Off collaboration* relate to the above? I con



sider the activities with On/Off collaboration as one work site, in which possibility radiates in all directions and the activity of the members radiates back into the collaboration, especially during the first years until 2016.

For me, On/Off collaboration carries the value of privilege to share critical ideas, concerns, worries and wishful thinking with colleagues based on trust. This trust built in shared experience makes it possible to pursue more than just personal perspectives and is a real asset.

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Maybe here I should give a little hint to what *On/Off collaboration* actually entails. In short, I would say we are a transdisciplinary community of practice (Curatorial/Design/Philosophy/Anthropology/Art history/Fine Art). The collaboration is organized around the initial idea of sharing experiences, resources, new discoveries, difficulties, doubts etc. via different online platforms and especially in what later became the *Sunday Conversations*. At first a weekly meeting via video calls, on Sundays, the most suitable day we could arrange a meeting on a regular basis across different time zones and time tables. In the first two years after the foundation in 2014, we met weekly, often for hours. Especially in the beginning, we worked with procedures of digital mailing/transporting ideas and information. In the past view years, it has shifted to something less regular, or activities that only involve some of its members.

In order to ignite a collaboration and exchange at the very beginning, we invented a game in the shape of an infinity symbol that contained several playing fields, proposed by different members. The idea behind this was to stimulate and explore different ways of communication not merely through the written language. Each member was challenged to come up with something to share each week, based on where they landed on the game, with different fields and different tasks. While following the rules of the game, on different continents, in different cities such as Amsterdam/Berlin/Mexico City, the results of this were 'transported' via the internet, something in the form of video/audio/drawing, etc., that lead to works or possible ideas of works. A huge amount of this material has never been used further or post-processed until now, probably because the activities focused on communication between its members instead of working towards a specific out-come oriented result.

Parallel Universe and *Drink Water* were one of these game-related tasks that I proposed, which initiated the *Parallel Universe* series of image-text (in scannable A4 size of a simple home office scanner) which includes *Report 01* about the socks, which you mentioned earlier in connection to humour. That was a series of drawings that I made at the very beginning to introduce myself to the other members at a time when we had not yet all met in



person, only through chat channels or our weekly online meetings. I wrote these reports partly from Berlin and Dresden and scanned them to share it with the rest of the group who were at that time mostly in Mexico City/Amsterdam and Berlin. The other work that directly refers to this collaboration or was a response to it is the installation *Flying Archive* (2016) that mainly works with all the content generated and shared by the group over the first 2 years, be it chat conversations, transcriptions of audio, exchanged references texts, images, etc. and was realized for our exhibition *JUEGO PURO/PURE GAME* (Collectivity and Collaboration) that took place at Casa del Lago, in Mexico City as part of their particular program *Organismos Autogestionados* (Self-managing Organisms). Back then we said that: "The exhibition explored what collaboration & collectivity means, i.e., what it means to work, create and transform with others: the advantages and disadvantages, the moments of triumph and confusion, the moments of clarity and miscommunication, the beauty of a shared network of knowledge and resources and the complications of trying to create together without flattening individual differences." and I would like to add today across continental borders and the constant constraint of physical presence. (online: onoffcollaboration)

As I see it, *On/Off collaboration* is a self-organized-context-of-education and learning on the basis of shared networks and a variety of academic backgrounds as equally influential personal experiences in a wide variety of contexts, be it personal/geographical/language-wise.

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What I like about working collaboratively is that you realize collaborators different ways of thinking, approaching, and connecting. I like the potential of joining these different relativities into a shared panorama, not necessarily merging them.

It has been in the context of my investigation about situated practice that I came across the concept of 'situated learning' (1991) proposed by Wenger & Lave, based on the central idea that learning is not only a result of teaching but also and especially of practice. Lave is a social anthropologist who is a pioneer in challenging conventional theories of learning and education. Together they have done profound research about it. Wenger expanded these ideas further and introduced the concept of 'Communities of Practices' (1998) proposing that we are always participating in different communities of practices (CoPs), some more active or more concrete while others less noticed. In the case of our practice of On/Off we could also mostly talk of 'virtual community of practice' (VCoP) proposed by Dubé, Bourhis & Jacob in 2005.

Besides, what came into play for the foundation of this 'self-organized-con



text-of-education' was the shared curiosity to try out media practice and a kind of artistic longing and to seek what this connection does to a person, work, thoughts, information. It's been very important for me to explore what it could be like to travel as an electronic nomad and be in an extended body of thinking stretched over different time zones and geographical locations.

I once made the joke that I am glad my days now have 31 hours.

And whenever I think of collaboration I also think of the critical and beautiful editorial comments of the supercommunity as I can feel it: "Having no body and no name is a small price to pay for being wild, for being free to move across (some) countries, (some) political boundaries, (some) historical ideologies, and (some) economies. I am the supercommunity, and you are only starting to recognize me. I grew out of something that used to be humanity. Some have compared me to angry crowds in public squares; others compare me to wind and atmosphere, or to software. Some say they have seen me moving through jet-lagged artists and curators, or migrant laborers, or a lost cargo ship that left a trail of rubber ducks that will wash up on the shores of the planet over the next 200 years. I convert care to cruelty, and cruelty back to care. I convert political desires to economic flows and data, and then I convert them back again. I convert revolutions to revelations. I don't want security, I want to leave, and then disperse myself everywhere and all the time." (online: Aranda, Julieta, & Brian Kuan Wood & Vidokle, Anton — SUPERCOMMUNITY, editorial, 2015)

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6. Assuming you had all the possibilities in the world what would you do to make something different/new that you really care about and call it art?

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8



Title: 6 Questions Before The Beginning Of Something Else

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"Do I see myself as a material based artist? I once read I think, because I have hands (I don't remember where and who claimed it in the first place), but I go with this idea, and I am floating on air that I have hands that make me think."

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