Spaces of Care - Confronting Colonial Afterlives in European Ethnographic Museums

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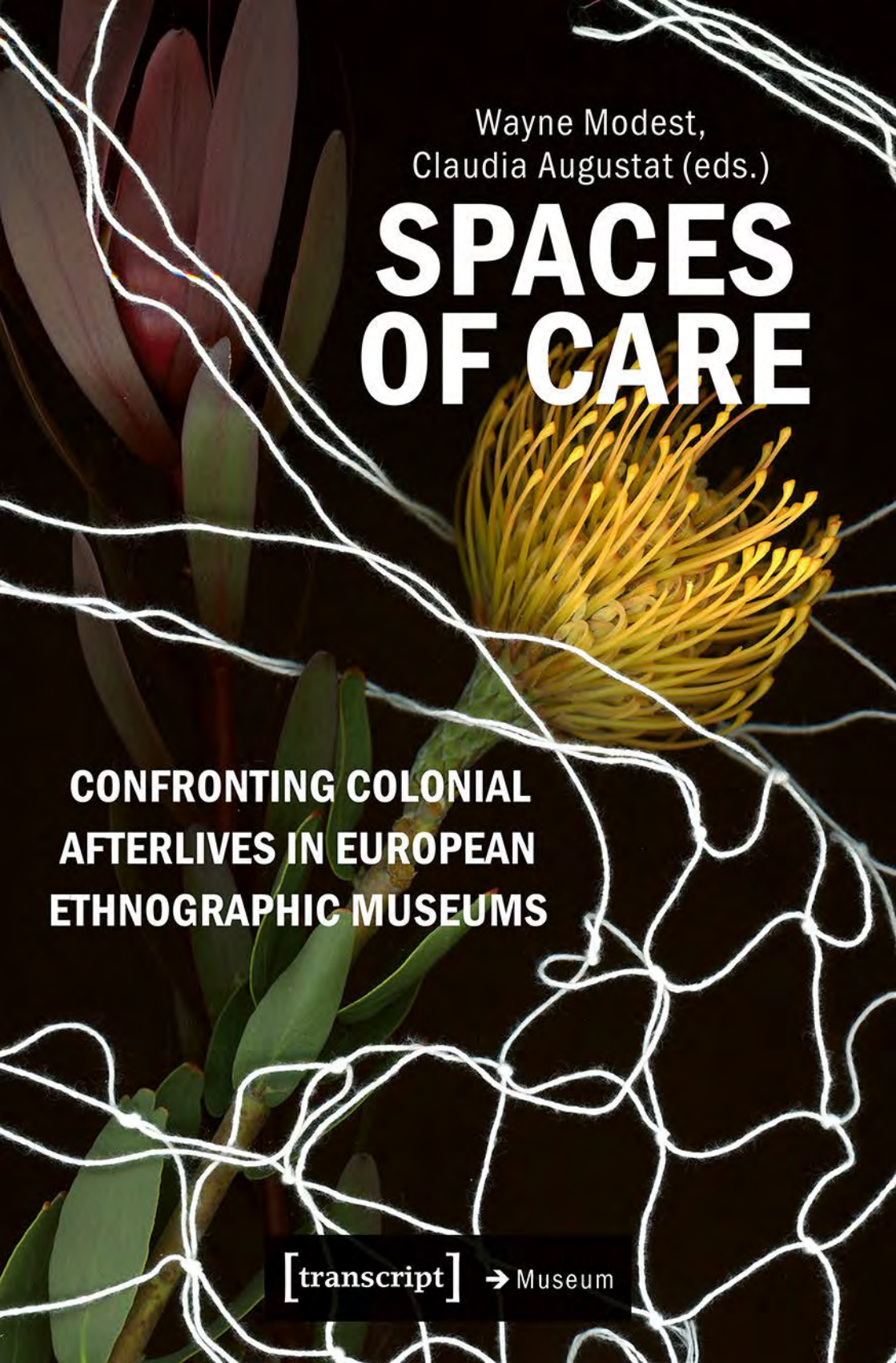
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[transcript]

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Contents

Making (a) Difference

Material Memories for Future Worlds

Spaces of Care: Introduction

Wayne Modest, Claudia Augustat[1]

Alarming environmental shifts and crises have raised public awareness of and anxieties regarding the future of the planet. While planetary in cause and scale, the negative effects of these global crises are (as we have long been aware) distributed unequally, affecting most intensely some of the already most fragile, including Indigenous and other formerly colonized peoples across the world, and contributing to rising global insecurity and inequality. Acknowledging the differential effects of such precarity, some scholars[2] have argued that in order to best understand, and to find strategies to combat these challenges, we ought to see them together with another prominent set of anxieties: those around the presumed failure of – or at least the protracted questioning of – the viability of the multicultural or plural democracies that have become commonplace in many parts of the world. This has certainly arisen in Europe, like in many other places across the globe, including North America, over the past few decades.[3] These latter anxieties have been fueled by heightened xenophobic nationalism and an intensification of right-wing populism coupled with increased ethno-racial discrimination polarized by what has been presented in some corners as a migration crisis, as well as a vague sense that western welfare systems and identities are in danger.

For the scholars that see these challenges as conjoined, planetary precarity and ethno-racial discrimination share similar roots in the destructive colonial modes through which we have come to inhabit the earth.[4] The recent Covid-19 pandemic has served only to confirm the alignment of these seemingly different concerns, evident in both how the pandemic was racialized, including by politicians such as US

1 Many people have contributed to this introduction by sharing their ideas and providing their thoughts on different drafts of the text. We want to especially thank Alessandra Benedicty-Kokken, Doris Prlić, Esmee Schoutens, Ming Tiampo, and Nicholas Thomas for their generosity and critical input. Additionally, we want to thank the editorial group who guided the process to bring this book into fruition. Their sharp and insightful as well as joyous and supportive criticism helped make this publication what it is.

2 Hage 2017.

3 De Koning and Modest 2017.

4 Hage 2017.

president Donald Trump, and in the unequal ways in which its deadliest effects were distributed.

Connecting the reasons for such unequal distribution of precarity to the destructive workings of an unabated capitalism on differently valued subjects, scholar Achille Mbembe[5] would describe the pandemic's effects as the unequal distribution of *the universal right to breathe*. Only months after he first published this article in 2020, in the wake of the brutal murder of the African-American George Floyd while he begged for breath under the knee of a Minneapolis police officer, Mbembe focussed his argument further so as to highlight the racial nature of these threats to life, of the foreclosure of the right to breathe, as posed by pandemic life.[6] Indeed, as Covid-19 spread, there was a rise of xenophobic attacks on people of Asian descent in places across Europe and North America. Racism, as Ghassan Hage suggests, may also be understood as an environmental threat. It is in response to these twinned challenges that this publication is conceived, like the project from which it has emerged – seeking strategies to fashion more sustainable and just presents and futures. Focused around the concept of ***care***, we explore the extent to which so-called ethnographic and world cultures museums can become spaces of care, in order to foster the emergence of these other presents and futures.

While discussions around possible futures for humanity in the age of the Anthropocene rage across academia and within some political and public debates, the question of the role museums continue to play in contributing to these challenges, or in finding possible strategies to address them, has received limited attention to date. *Spaces of Care: Confronting Colonial Afterlives in European Ethnographic Museums* contributes to this narrow but growing field, placing ethnographic or world cultures museums at the centre of these debates. These museums have long been embroiled in long-standing debates about their histories, their collections, and their practices in relation to the colonial past, and to the racialized calculus[7] of life worth that it has left in its wake and which continues to define our political present.[8] Indeed, if the last few years of demands to decolonize museums have made anything apparent, it is that ethnographic museums represent a sort of crossing of highly vexed historical

5 Mbembe 2020.

6 See conversation between Achille Mbembe and Paul Gilroy on 17 June 2020, <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/racism-racialisation/transcript-conversation-achille-mbembe>, accessed 26 July 2023.

7 In her 2008 book *Lose Your Mother*, Saidiya Hartman described the Afterlives of Slavery thus: 'If slavery persists as an issue in the political life of black America, it is not because of an antiquarian obsession with bygone days or the burden of a too-long memory, but because black lives are still imperiled and devalued by a racial calculus and a political arithmetic that were entrenched centuries ago. This is the afterlife of slavery—skewed life chances, limited access to health and education, premature death, incarceration, and impoverishment.'

8 Hartman 2011.

currents – some evident, and many buried and protected in depots – of histories of colonialism, of race and racism, but also of our extractive and destructive relationship with the planet.

Within Europe, these museums have been uniquely formed. Arguably, no other cultural institutions have been as much created through these kinds of encounters as these museums: through cross-cultural exchange, often in the context of bolstering European colonialism. Their implicatedness in colonialism has received significant attention in recent years, as has their founding role and close ties with anthropology, a discipline that has also long been involved in its own soul searching.[9] Much more remains to be done. While acknowledging and confronting the troubling sides of these histories and how they live on in the present, even starting from this history, this publication contributes to ongoing attempts to reorient these museums towards the scientific expression of the most positive and relativist strands of the discipline. Indeed, we acknowledge that many of the founding assumptions of these museums, like those of the discipline of anthropology, were grounded in colonial and racialising hierarchies. Yet, we still hold on to what we hope were their other founding ideas and practices that were genuinely open to the diversity of global knowledge, existence, and beliefs and which are dedicated to their documentation, understanding, and even, often simplistically or incautiously, to their celebration.[10] And while we do not claim this to be a fully achievable task, we see it as a necessary one.

In saying this, we do not seek to minimise the role that these institutions have played as a part of colonialism's intellectual or practical infrastructure. Rather, we suggest that it may be precisely by looking into their complex entanglements with colonialism and its many afterlives that we may understand the conjoined nature of the two anxieties we seek to explore in these pages. Taken together with the many practices that these museums have developed over decades through collaborative, critical reflexivity, in national, regional, and international projects, and often together with members of diverse Indigenous and diasporic communities, we suggest that these museums may be ideal sites for speaking directly to the urgent and defining challenges of the twenty-first century, of planetary precarity, inequality, and the challenges to the futures of multiculturalism or plural democracies.

We want to ask whether by returning to these museums, to their histories, and to their practices as evidence of the histories of humanity's entanglement with the planet, of the entanglements between human and more than human worlds, we can find some indications towards what other, better, futures may be possible. In these efforts, we foreground the extensive collections of the material culture of Indigenous peoples, of peoples of the global majority, that embody deep diversity and 'en-

9 See, for example, Clifford and Marcus 1986, Clifford 1988.

10 Modest et al. 2019, Thomas 2016.

cyclopaedic' ecological knowledge, through the diverse floral, faunal, and mineral materials from which artworks and artefacts – technologies for living and for representing life – were made.

We therefore ask in what ways it is possible to 'mine' non-extractively and ethically this ecological knowledge as an archive for modes of sustainable living?[11] What can they tell us about the damaging impact of humans, of colonialism more generally, on the planet – for example, on cultural, linguistic, or species extinction? How might they help us to better understand racism's role in the histories of planetary precarity? How can they offer models and inspiration for the revival of (cultural and artistic) practices? And what might they tell us about the roles and responsibilities that we might be burdened with, indeed, that we might foster as museums, for making other possibles possible for a better world to come into being?[12]

On Care

Spaces of Care: Confronting Colonial Afterlives in European Ethnographic Museums locates its analytical fulcrum around care, a concept that has received increasing attention in recent years across a number of different domains, in scholarly discourses in the humanities and social sciences, but also, importantly, in popular, activist political projects.

For many people, care is self-evidently connected to museum practice. After all, to curate – one of the primary tasks of the museum – means to care. Moreover, museums across the world have departments for collection care and management, where professionals are dedicated to implementing the many practices and procedures that should ensure the preservation of the objects for which they are custodians. Embedded within a global museological infrastructure, and guided by the stipulations of organizations such as the International Council of Museums (ICOM), these departments have become increasingly professionalized in recent decades, committed to even greater scientific standards for the preservation of heritage objects in perpetuity. Care, in this sense, is subsumed under commitments to preservation, and embedded within the long-established traditions that are broadly accepted across a global heritage sector. As many critics of the museum, and especially of ethnographic museums, have argued, however, a commitment to science does not always ensure care – caring can be cruel to some, while sustaining others.[13]

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11 We use mine here not in the sense of extraction but in a similar way to how artist Fred Wilson uses it in his seminal work *Mining the Museum*: to uncover what is hidden, what is left unattended to, through erasure or elision.

12 Escobar 2020.

13 Balkenhol and Modest 2019.

The concerns for care to which this project and publication are committed are very different from those conventionally mobilized by museums. We are interested in recent calls for more radical orientations to care, that have emerged from, for example, Black feminist and Indigenous activist scholarship, but also from scholars in science and technology studies and the environmental humanities. They take care, radical care, as 'a set of vital but underappreciated strategies for enduring precarious worlds' or as practices that can 'radically remake worlds that exceed those offered by the neoliberal or post neoliberal state, which has proved inadequate'.[14] By engaging with such an understanding of care, we seek to critique the museum as a cog in the wheel of the state, whether the colonial state of the past or the contemporary neoliberal, capitalist state that has proven inadequate to the task of caring for all.

In conceiving the project TAKING CARE we were interested in what museums, with their long history of collecting, research, and display could tell us about the care-less[15] world we live in; but also what spaces we could open up to think about care otherwise. Mindful of the double anxieties that animated our interest at the time, of the precarity of the planet but also of its peoples, we wanted to rethink the ethnographic beyond simply a category of culture, abstracted from the natural world, to push against the long histories of an epistemic divide between presumed museums of culture and museums of science or of art. We wanted to see the museum as a site to reassemble the world, epistemologically and ontologically as one world, as one pluriversal world[16], and to ask the question what multi-species care might look like from the museum.

The work of two scholars, Thom van Dooren and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, with overlapping academic and political projects, was especially interesting for our concerns. For Puig, 'To care can feel good; it can also feel awful. It can do good; it can oppress'. Embracing care's ambiguities, Puig's project is invested in what care affords us for thinking and living in a more than human world. They locate their work within longer histories of feminist engagement with care, both practical and theoretical, that has been both critical of how care has long been conceived as women's work, the overburdened role that women have in society to care for others, as with the potential care has for imagining and creating other worlds. Puig draws especially on the foundational work of scholars such as Joan Tronto and Bernice Fischer, who take care as 'everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair "our world" so that we can live in it as well as possible',[17] to explore care as labour/work as affect/affections and as ethics/politics. With these ways of conceiving the work of care

14 Hobart and Kneese 2020. See also Finch 2022, van Dooren 2014, Puig 2017.

15 Here we draw on the recently published Chatzidakis et al. 2020, which invites us to think care beyond what the authors describe as the increasingly careless world we live in.

16 See Escobar 2018 & 2020.

17 Tronto 1993, 103, quoted in Puig 2017.

in mind, care, for Puig, then, is 'a concrete work of maintenance, with ethical and affective implications, and as a vital politics in interdependent worlds'.

Van Dooren draws on Puig to think care as 'an entry point into a grounded form of embodied and practical ethics' that as affect 'is an embodied phenomenon, the product of intellectual and emotional competencies: to care is to be affected by another, to be emotionally at stake in them in some way'. As ethical obligation, he continues, to care 'is to become subject to another, to recognise an obligation to look after another'. And as a labour, care 'requires that we get involved in some concrete way… that we do something (wherever possible) to take care of another.' It is this ethical work of remaking the world that informs the authors of this publication, and the TAKING CARE project more broadly, as the different museums in the project grapple with if and how they can become spaces of care. For these museums, ethnographic and world cultures museums, the question would be: what kind of maintenance work would be needed, with what ethical and affective attention, to attempt to repair the world in such a way that it becomes liveable for all humans and more than humans?

Van Dooren may give us some hints at this when he poses the question, 'what does it mean to care for others at the edge of extinction?' Within the history of the ethnographic museum, such a question cannot be uttered without a heavy burden of caution. As we are well aware, extinction was an important trope that served as grounds for many nineteenth century scientists and curators in these museums, to justify the amassing of large collections. Framed as salvage, or as civilizing, a narrative of extinction made it justifiable, even necessary, to violently dispossess peoples of their objects as part of the documenting of humankind's so-called progress from authentic and primitive other, to civilized European.[18] Such taking of things, the taking of ancestral belongings, should also be seen together with other forms of taking: of land, of language, of customs, but also of knowledge. Van Dooren's call to think about care at the edge of extinction in the first place reminds us that narratives of Indigenous extinction are not an innocent recounting of self-evident truths, but are structured within colonizing acts of violence that would push peoples and their beliefs and customs to the edge. How might we use the museum and their collections to uncover such colonizing acts, and what responsibilities do they place on those currently working in these museums towards redress? However, van Dooren also invites us to ask other questions. His work in the ethics of care may be work that demands of these museums, but also of society in general, to think and to act now in order to redress historical injustices and to repair worlds in our attempt to care for human and more than human life. It is these kinds of question about care that we believe to be important as we try to reorient the ethnographic and world cultures

18 King 2019.

museums beyond their preservationist projects towards care, towards being caring and careful spaces for different, more just, and equitable futures.

TAKING CARE

This publication is one of the outcomes of the TAKING CARE project, a four-year multi-sited project comprising thirteen ethnographic and world cultures museums across Europe and funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union. TAKING CARE builds on work already begun in several earlier projects – SWICH (2014–2018), RIME (2008–2012), and READ-ME I & II (2007–2012) – , which addressed similar but also very different questions. These earlier projects were designed to help the participant museums rethink their role and mission within changing European societies, especially focused on developing practices that could critically address the colonial contexts in which they were founded and the postcolonial (and some might even say the ongoing colonial) contexts in which they continue to operate. These projects took as axiomatic the idea that the legacies of Europe's colonial histories continue to shape contemporary social and political life, discourses, and relations, and that museums can play important roles in addressing these colonial entailments in the present, while proposing other ways to imagine what a future Europe could be like. These earlier projects have not only helped to create a strong network of museums across Europe, but also aided these museums to become important players in addressing, perhaps even in confronting the colonial past in the present, and for developing more inclusive and collaborative practices for working with the interwoven network of stakeholders interested in these issues, including postcolonial and post-migrant citizens within Europe and Indigenous communities globally.

TAKING CARE was organized around a set of overlapping themes that linked museums to broader societal, even planetary concerns, in particular climate and racial justice. By adopting this scalar approach, from inside the museum to the world and then back inside the museum again, we were responding to the call of scholars, and many other decolonial activists globally, that suggest that efforts to decolonize museums and other institutions must be closely aligned with broader justice movements. Ariella Azoulay succinctly describes this when she suggests that to decolonize the museum, we need to decolonize the world.[19] The themes of the project, then, were informed by those activist mobilizations, such as *Decolonize this Place* in the USA, that took decolonization as a capacious category for caring that could help

19 See <https://www.guernicamag.com/miscellaneous-files-ariella-aisha-azoulay/#:~:text=The%20political%20theorist%20argues%20that,been%20plundered%20from%20their%20culture>, accessed 26 July 2023.

us to develop anti-capitalist, feminist, anti-racist, anti-land-dispossessive futures for all, and were especially mindful of the need to create liveable futures for the most precarious among us. The different museums participating in the project organized programmes around care that responded not only to their collections and their histories as museums, but also to the discursive political space in which the different museums are operating. Questions of ecological knowledges and sustainability, of preservation, restitution, and reparation, but also of cultural resilience and rejuvenation were addressed in workshops and residency programmes that took the political present as the backdrop for thinking possible futures. Creativity and collaboration, and even forms of friendship, were at the core of these programmes. We were increasingly committed to the importance of coalition-building across Europe, but perhaps more significantly, across North/South divides, to imagine and create the kinds of planetary futures we felt were needed. This became more urgent just after the project was awarded in 2019, when the Covid-19 pandemic took hold, making it not just increasingly difficult to come together, but for many, increasingly important to develop strategies of thinking and being together. It is out of these four years of speculative thinking and doing together that this book emerges.

As a cautionary note, we want to acknowledge that these projects remain experimental and unfinished. Even while we are grateful for the opportunities to think about the role that our museums can play in finding solutions for our world's most urgent problems, to imagine different kinds of futures, we are mindful that we are complicit as institutions in the ongoing coloniality of the world we live in. Spaces of Care, and TAKING CARE more broadly, is part of our attempt to decolonize our museums.

About the Book

Spaces of Care: Confronting Colonial Afterlives in European Ethnographic Museums is more than a mere documentation of the TAKING CARE project. It is a project of speculative and collaborative theory-making, and of building practices for a better world. Organized in three parts, the book brings together the works of a wide range of scholars from diverse fields and disciplines across the humanities and social sciences, with artists and activist, curators and members of diverse (source) communities all committed to thinking about care; indeed, they are all involved in enacting practices of radical care in an uncaring world.

We open with *Speculating Towards More Caring Futures*, where we invite scholars whose ongoing work addresses our core concerns in the project to explore the analytical purchase for thinking through the lens of care for the ethnographic and world cultures museum, in connection with broader struggles in society. These scholars all come from outside the field; they do not work in or on museums. Still, their work en-

gages with the very concerns that we believe are needed to imagine a different kind of museum, indeed a different kind of world beyond colonial duress.[20] This kind of scholarly provocation fits the spirit of the project, aimed as it was at creating a coalition of advocates for better, more equitable futures. Moreover, it is in line with what the other projects sought to engender, to proffer novel theoretical and practical approaches to our most stubborn struggles as institutions.

All the essays in this section emerged from the final conference of the project, *Re|Creating Kinship in the Ethnographic Museum in Europe*. The conference dealt with the question of whether care as an ethic and practice may help us push beyond object-oriented preservationist thinking, towards a museum guided by urgency and advocacy for a better, more just, and equitable world for human and more than human life. We were also interested in the ways ethnographic museums can help us think beyond reductive ideas about others, towards thinking about otherwise worlds as practices in future-making.

The questions of multi-species care in an interdependent world became one of the recurring themes throughout the conference and inform the papers included here. The precarity of pandemic life, but also the growing climate change denialism from various politicians across the world, including Donald Trump of the USA and Jair Bolsonaro of Brazil, provided an urgent backdrop for the presentations as they explored what many believed to be our increasingly careless world. Taking as her starting point wirewall, the racist technology of detention that is symbolic of the kind of political imagination of dehumanization that connects histories of slavery and colonialism with our contemporary world, Miriam Ticktin connects the long history of carcerality to the material cultural association with contemporary anxieties about racialized migrants, especially in the USA. Ticktin draws on an earlier project in speculative collaborative design, focused on the microbiome to imagine other modes of inhabiting and sharing the world beyond walling and bordering. In so doing, she speculates on what an anti-racist and anti-colonial ethnographic museum could look like, one that placed caring for all life as core to its project.

In his essay 'The Future Claimant's Representative', Ian Baucom explores the temporality of responsibility for past and present-day injustices, or, more particularly, on how past and present injustices (will) live on into the future and how we can think about our responsibilities for such precarious futures to mitigate against them. He argues for a reorientation of our approaches to the law, to care for possible future claimants for planetary justice today, so as to abate our ongoing violent relationship with the planet, to be caring about what we bequeath to future inhabitants. Can museums be representatives of such future claimants?

In 'Toward a Negative Zoology', Mayanthi L. Fernando discusses the limits of human-centred approaches to understanding the multispecies ecologies we inhabit.

20 Stoler 2014.

Fernando proposes that we think through the idea of 'a negative zoology … where the other – divine, animal – can never be fully known, where that unbridgeable gap is a basic onto-epistemological fact of being human'. This, she suggest may 'hold open the possibility that a heterogeneous multiplicity of non-humans may be worlding worlds together, sometimes with us, sometimes without us … unsettling the fantasy of human mastery, as an ethical and political opportunity to cultivate a different kind of multispecies liveability than the one we currently practice'.

Audra Mitchell offers a work in immersive, inter-species, speculative fiction in 'Holding on, Letting Go', where a group of strangers are guided by a flying fox (or perhaps another creature; we are unsure) through an exhibition on extinction. During the tour, they explore not only the ways in which our human and more than human interactions, our relations, reproduce long held structures of inequality and violence, but uncover the museum's role in sustaining such narratives and structures of inequality.

In 'Experiment and Excavation in the Ethnographic Museum', Juno Salazar Parreñas questions how care is often imagined as good, but can in fact be cruel. She asks: when does care become cruel? Drawing on her ongoing work to decolonize care, to show that even with good intentions practices of care can indeed be cruel, she offers up the museum up as a site for both excavation and for experimentation, as we imagine what care could look like within institutions of preservation.

And in 'Museums of Non-Natural History', Kathryn Yusoff trains our attention to think about the museum as a site for a redressive ethics and politics. Drawing on her own longstanding interest in the geological, she argues, through the work of Martinique poet and thinker Aimé Césaire, that 'museums of non-natural history are needed that are the result of sympathy for, rather than power over, the colonised. Museums that might be curated around redress and reparation of the irreparable. Museums-that might put the space of loss at their centre.'

Amie Soudien closes this section with 'Alongside One Another', inviting us to think of the (im)possibility of the museum being a site for critical fabulation. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Saidiya Hartman,[21] she sees care in the potential of the archive to tell histories of those suppressed, those dispossessed of land, of history, of life, by the colonial project. Her narrative is based on the lives of two enslaved women at the Cape in the second half of the seventeenth century. She bridges the gap between histories of enslavement as pasts that are excluded from many national narratives, or mythologized for contemporary political ends.

While section one of the book invites scholars from outside the institution to speculate with the museum about what theory can deliver for practice, section two explores the museum from inside. In *Making (a) Difference* we allude to the long history of ethnographic museums' involvement in making difference; in participating

21 Hartmann 2008.

in fashioning and in bolstering notions of hierarchical relations across humans represented as incommensurably different, or the difference between human and more than human worlds. Based in a spirit of multi and poly, whether it is in vocalities or perspectival approaches, the main actors in this section are artists and activists who participated in the residency programme of the project, working with the different museums; they were invited to imagine what a museum of the otherwise could look like. These artists and activists, these arts-activists, these makers, were driven by ancestral, aesthetic, and political connections to the objects in the museum, and used their residencies to explore the museum as an archive of past, present, and future wisdom about decolonial care, about caring for the planet and its human and more than human inhabitants.

The third and final section, *Material Memories for Future Worlds*, consists of thirteen object lessons. In these chapters, we stay with the trouble of objects and collections, but also with the promise that they may hold to think more critically about social and environmental justice. Tracing the genealogy of specific objects and collections, the authors ask what objects can tell us about life at the edge of extinction, about peoples and traditions made vulnerable through Europe's colonial project, or the unyielding force of capitalism's extractive regime. They ask whether we can return to these objects as evidence of past carelessness in order to use them as signposts for what a future could look like.

One final note. The cover design for the book is taken from the series *Dark Pairing* by the Austrian artist Wie-yi T. Lauw, and explores colonialism through the lens of botany; the collecting of 'exotic' plants was an important part of colonialism's scientific, but also its economic logic. In her work, the artist illuminates the quest for domination by colonial powers over Indigenous cultures by depicting exotic plants tangled in a web.[22] This work trains our attention on the fact that a large majority of the objects in our storages are made from plants. And yet we too often ignore them as plant life, as part of our worlds beyond the human. Made up of wood and other plant fibres, of gold and other metals, of feathers and other animal materials, the collections of our museums evidence humanity's place in an interdependent world, but also the human exploitation of the earth's resources. Within our museums we need to recall that gold and silver objects may represent cosmologies and aesthetic ingenuity, but they also represent deep histories of mining embedded in a (neo-)colonial extractive relationship with the earth, its resources and peoples. Objects made from feathers tell of shamanistic practices in places like Amazonia, but also stories of Indigenous ideas about human–non-human relations, and of species extinction.

TAKING CARE should remind us that a better understanding of our interdependencies among humans and also with more than human others may help reorient world cultures museums towards the kinds of ethics that will fashion them as

22 See Busch n.d.

spaces of care for human and more than human worlds. It reminds us that this can be done only by continuing to acknowledge these museum's role in Europe's colonial infrastructure and in the political calculus of unequal life that it has left in its wake. And, importantly, it recalls to us that this is urgent, if we are to succeed in imagining and fashioning different kinds of, more just and equitable worlds for all of the earth's inhabitants, human and more than human.

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Speculating Towards More Caring Futures

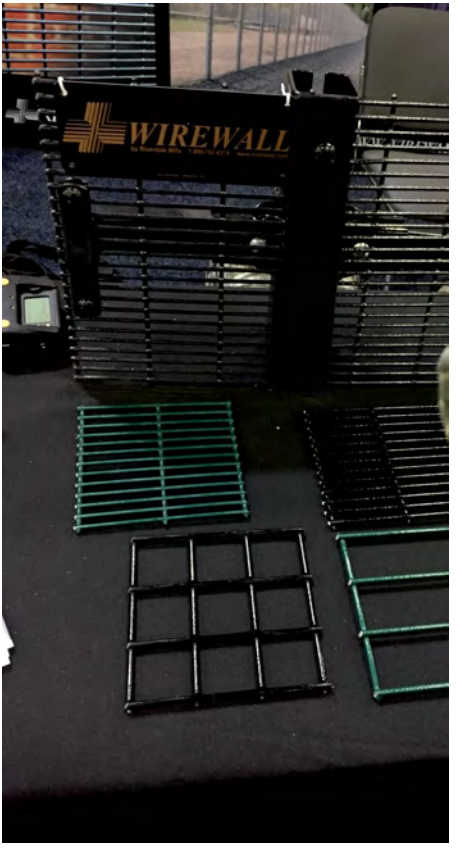
The Museum as a Space of Radical Imagination: Dismantling and Rebuilding Political Worlds

Miriam Ticktin

How might we create an ethnographic museum in which the histories and afterlives of racist and colonial violence become visible, and conversations about them become possible?

To begin this experiment, I propose to add an object called 'wirewall' to this anti-racist, anti-colonial ethnographic museum, as a way to render visible forms of oppression and violence (see fig. 1). We might say it is in the same category of objects already in the National Museum for Ethnology, in Leiden: for instance, we can liken it to the effigies made by the Sorongo, in the region of northwest Angola. These served several purposes, but one of them was to demarcate land boundaries. Dating from the eighteenth to the early twentieth century, they were used to mark the crossroads between two areas. There are several kinds of effigies; for instance, there is one with a traditional male leopard cape, associated with vigour and power (see fig. 2). But there is also a figure of a mother and child, which, among other things, represents the source of life and the continuity of the clan. How are these similar to wirewall? It also marks land boundaries; it was designed to protect the border between two nation-states – the US and Mexico. But it does not represent life; it enacts a regime of death. We might be tempted to say it is a part of American culture. But it is more accurate to say that it is part of a global culture of incarceration. What might wirewall tell us about racism and colonial violence? How might it work in an ethnographic museum?

Fig. 1: Wirewall: proposed technology for the US-Mexico border wall. Photo: Miriam Ticktin.



In what follows, I will suggest, first, that in order to see empire and racism, an ethnographic museum needs to shift the units of analysis – rather than just regions, tribes or cultures, we need to think of transnational formations. Colonialism travelled in ways that were not geographically contiguous; and racial capitalism travels today in constantly shifting global patterns and forms. The museum could be organized differently, by naming and following the traces of these political formations, such as cultures of incarceration, plantation afterlife, and so on. Second, I will suggest that one way to see them – to render visible these formations of violence – is to look at objects that help make up and reproduce everyday life. They may have no obvious artistic, ritual, or social meaning. Instead, they may be technical or infrastructural. I look at these infrastructures as enabling our common sense; indeed, as embodiments of our current political imaginations, precisely without calling atten-

tion to them. Third, I will suggest that to render visible forms of violence is to admit to our implication in them – and this in turn requires a form of care and responsibility to imagine different futures. This process of imagination should have a place in the museum, too.

Fig. 2: Effigy as Boundary Marker: Sorongo, Central Africa, before 1884. Collection Nationaal Museum Van Wereldculturen, Coll.nr. RV-445-15.

Infrastructures of Carceral Worlds

First, then, what does wirewall reveal about a particular global carceral cultural context? Wirewall is one of the technologies used to build a prototype of a border wall. It was among the finalists for the border wall that former President Trump wanted to build at the US–Mexico border. In 2017, Trump created a competition for border wall designs, and six prototypes were erected in the desert near San Diego, alongside the existing border fence. Locals made fun of him, suggesting it was ridiculous to spend billions of dollars trying to stop people from crossing; people will always cross, they said, and indeed, this is true. At the border wall in Brownsville, Texas, I could see fingerprints along the metal beams, the traces left by the many who had scaled it. Anyone who walks by can see the ladders on the ground beside the wall, along with ropes and other paraphernalia; border patrol officers said they clear them away every day. The border patrol officers (CBP or Customs and Border Patrol) admitted to us[1] that walls are simply 'tactical infrastructures': the goal is for them to simply slow people down, so they can be caught *after* they cross. Indeed, we found that CBP use a measurement called the 'border calculus' – an algorithm that anticipates how quickly someone will disappear after they scale the wall.

So what work does this technology perform in relation to this larger context of incarceration? Border walls and their prototypes manufacture and evoke a political imaginary about the world. In this case, it's about invasion. For instance, in June 2018, Trump tweeted about those trying to cross the southern border of the US: 'We cannot allow all of these people to invade our Country. When somebody comes in, we must immediately, with no Judges or Court Cases, bring them back from where they came.' He repeated this language of invasion over and over; for instance, when in 2019 a peaceful migrant caravan was moving from Mexico toward the US border, he stated, 'It's like an invasion. They have violently overrun the Mexican border'.[2]

As speculative designers Dunne and Raby[3] state, politics is a battle over the imagination, where the imagination can help us maintain pre-existing realities, or create alternative visions, denaturalizing the 'real'. In this case, the imagination both produces, and is produced by, infrastructure and design. Trump's political vision of a white supremacist United States was crystallized by border wall infrastructures, not simply by law. That is, material designs and technologies have helped to manufacture the very idea of invasion.

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1 I conducted collaborative research at the US-Mexico border wall with the Multiple Mobilities Working Group, <https://www.multiplemobilities.org/>, accessed 29 March 2023.

2 <https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2019/08/trump-immigrant-invasion-language-origins/595579/>, accessed 29 March 2023.

3 Dunne and Raby 2018.

If we investigate the wirewall technology, we learn more about the imaginary that it embeds. As many scholars have argued, artefacts always have a politics.[4] The border wall is a transnational formation; the structures, materials and smart border technologies are transnational. They are based on a political economy of militarism and invasion. Global security technology is a global industry[5], even as, paradoxically, it circulates in the name of national closure. Wirewall illustrates the global spread of this regime of carcerality, where worlds are built on enclosures, containment, and caging, privileging the rich over the poor, the haves over the have-nots. Indeed, the biggest predictor of who constructs the walls and where they do so is the wealth gap between the nation-state constructing the barrier and the place and population defined as a threat.[6]

But there is more to the political imagination embedded in this technology. In an interview with the designer, I learned that his 'wirewall' technology was initially developed to trap lobsters and crabs, then it served to keep fish in pens, and finally, to cage chickens. With its special PVC coating initially designed for the sea, it could withstand extreme environments and temperatures, while maintaining visibility through the fence. It was now being proposed for humans. In other words, wirewall technology materializes a form of life based on divisiveness and separation. Once again, this is in contrast to the Central African effigies that mark borderlands with symbols of life.

More specifically, wirewall works by way of techniques of dehumanization. These include animality and racialization. The 'human' as a conceptual category is not something natural or biologically fixed, but rather, it is the work of a constantly changing project of taxonomy. A metric of animality is used to exclude people from the category of humanity; but this in turn cannot be separated from race and racial classification, which orders bodies according to how animal they are.[7] This taxonomic slippage has a longer history in the US, but as we can see with this technology, it is being solidified into material infrastructures in new ways. Wirewall treats certain people – here, immigrants, who are already racialized – like crabs, lobsters, or chickens to be caged, and ultimately, slaughtered. Wirewall shows our global carceral culture, one which relies on imagining others – both racialized Others and non-humans – as fundamentally threatening.

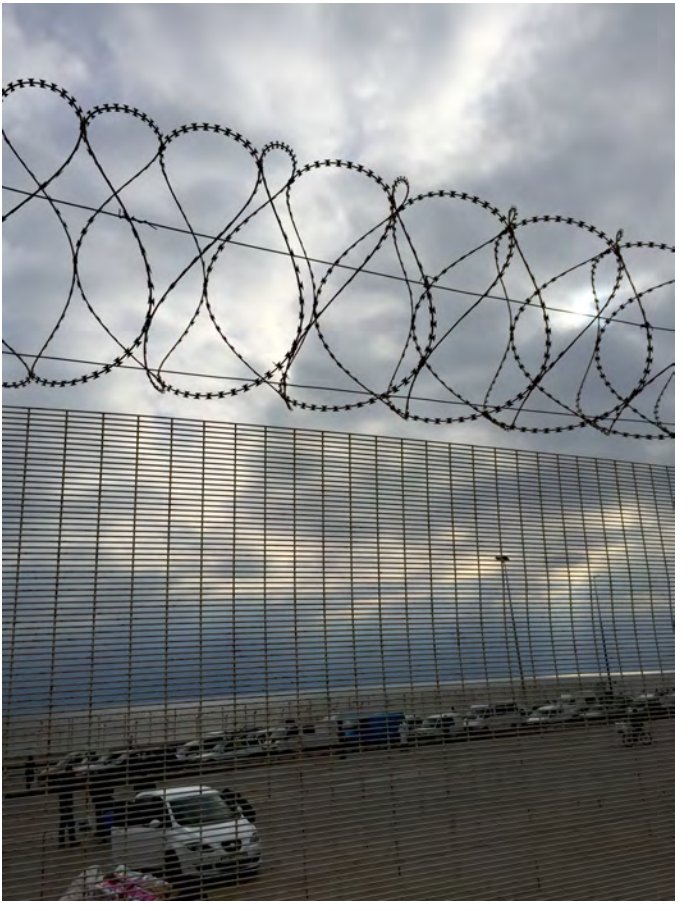
4 Winner 1980; Appadurai 1986; Bennett 2010.

5 Ticktin 2022; Miller 2015.

6 Aizeki et al., 2021, 39.

7 Kim 2015.

Fig. 3: Barbed wire fence at Ceuta, marking the border between Spain and Morocco. Photo: Miriam Ticktin.



This kind of transfer of technology from non-human to human, not only likening people to animals but treating them as such, is already built into the history of other caging technologies, like barbed wire. Indeed, I would suggest that barbed wire be placed beside wirewall in the museum, to illustrate the development of infrastructures of racism and violence, and to show variations in similar technologies. Just as the Sorongo effigies took various forms, so do technologies of racism. Barbed wire was initially developed to control and enclose cattle by inflicting pain on them in the American West during the period of colonization. From there, it was transformed into the primary technology of controlling space for people – enabling the concen-

tration camps used during the Nazi regime, and in the Russian Gulag.[8] It continues to this day as a key tool to contain human beings in an ever-growing carceral world (see fig. 3). If we look, we can find other similar caging technologies in the museum, designed to catch animals and birds; were these carceral technologies ever used for humans? What elements of their technologies might travel across species-boundaries, enabling a different set of carceral practices? (see fig. 4).

Fig. 4: Bird cage made from bamboo by prisoners in Putla, Mexico, to be sold to tourists, before 1977. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Coll.nr. TM-4324-55.

In terms of migration, this transfer of technology from non-human to human first happened in the US at the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument, where, perhaps not accidentally, Trump kick-started his incarnation of the wall in the last months of his presidency, with a thirty mile long, thirty foot tall steel fence that has upended a portion of the landscape, its ecologies and its water sources. In fact, the US-Mexican border wall was initiated in Monument Park in 1949 with the justification of keeping out contaminated, 'Mexican' livestock infected with hoof and mouth

8 Netz 2004; Barder 2015.

disease, but it quickly morphed into and built on a desire to keep out Mexican people.[9] Indeed, this is just one instance of practices of quarantine – as practices of containment not unlike bordering – shifting from microbes and animals to people. Immigrants are regularly compared to other invasive entities like pests and swarms. And in fact, the language of 'invasive others' is used in overlapping ways for insects, pathogens, plants, and even ideas with varying results: calling plants or animals 'invasive' justifies extermination, to protect the 'natives'.[10] We can see this same response being invoked to deal with invasive humans. Trump's words in reference to immigrants are once again revealing: 'these aren't people, they are animals, and we are taking them out of the country at a level and a rate that has never happened before'.[11] When migrants are likened to forms of parasitic, pathogenic or insect life, capable of infection and contamination,[12] there are mandated responses, first and foremost of which is cleansing or elimination.

This is one way to live in the world, where people wall themselves off from others, trying to privilege a few at the expense of the many. This exploits and ignores the billions of life forms with which we share the planet: animal, microbial, mineral, vegetable.[13] If we dig into the materiality of the technology, wirewall renders visible the racist and colonial violence of the present. Indeed, wirewall also evokes the imaginary that undergirds the ethnographic museum itself, which was founded on the logic of capture and enclosure of objects that were once a part of lively worlds. This worked to create the very notion of Otherness and enforce a feeling of superiority in those who attended museums. The most explicit example of this colonial and racist violence, of course, was the capture and imprisonment of humans, to be shown in museums. Domination, in other words, was the grounding logic of the museum. Museums continue to hold onto human remains, particularly of those from their colonial conquests; promises of restitution have not been honoured.[14] In this sense, it is all the more urgent for the museum to help undo its own foundational violence.

9 Piekielek 2016.

10 Ticktin 2017.

11 <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/16/us/politics/trump-undocumented-immigrants-animals.html>.

12 O'Brien 2003.

13 Mani 2022.

14 <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/10/17/world/europe/france-algeria-restitution-skulls.html?fbclid=IwAR1fm6axfL1bJGB7sPoBJFSRFlcyZVVZuywbw-kcosonT8FZhaILqKKHoMk>, accessed 29 March 2023.

Imagining Otherwise: Biomia

If wirewall technology reveals the ways in which people live in fear of others, and simultaneously as if they can and must dominate other humans and non-humans, then the next and critical step in a new ethnographic museum would be to ask how we might live together otherwise.

That is, to render visible ongoing forms of racist violence is to also admit to our implication in them – and this in turn requires forms of collective responsibility. We all live in the wake of violent histories, we are all shaped by them, even if we are differently situated in relation to them. What networks are we each implicated in, what activities do we participate in, even indirectly, that perpetuate the system? Michael Rothberg lays out the concept of implication, explaining that, 'implicated subjects occupy positions aligned with power and privilege without being themselves direct agents of harm'.[15] In the US, white people are implicated in a system of racial hierarchy; and they all benefit from a lack of racial justice. This is true even if one fights against this system and disavows it – one is nevertheless implicated. But if one is an immigrant, one also enters into and participates in the carceral system, even if the ways in which one is positioned and implicated differ – an immigrant from Cambodia to the US must consider their relations not just to white people, or those with class power, but other people of colour: Black, Indigenous and LatinX communities, along with other Asian communities. Implication can shape how one acts to change the system, but there is no position of neutrality or innocence. If we are trying to create a museum that renders visible racist and colonial violence, it must create space for people to take collective responsibility, and as part of this, to collaboratively imagine other, better, more caring worlds.

How do we do this? How do we produce a different set of political imaginations, new visions about how we might live and be together? I propose that we think of imagination as a practice of care, as a method of and for an alternative politics and form of collective responsibility. These can be alternatives that are not connected by straight lines to futures or pasts; they can be alternative modes of thinking and inhabiting the earth.

When I speak of care, I do not mean dominant liberal forms of political care such as welfare or humanitarianism, but rather, reworked versions of care where it is at once an affective state, a form of practice, and an ethicopolitical obligation. While located in the mundane and everyday, in this triptych form, care may actually have a different revolutionary, transformative potential.[16] Increasingly, scholars, anti-racist activists, and Black and transnational feminists are reclaiming its power, in more speculative forms. Care is central to the Movement for Black Lives

15 Rothberg 2019, 1.

16 Tronto 1993, Puig de la Bellacasa 2017, Martin, Myers, and Viseu 2015, Stevenson 2014.

(MBL), in a form called 'structural care'[17], which is about healing social ills through social action, based on a vision of everyone as interdependent; it is also central to many no-borders movements. For instance, one of the activists engaged in sanctuary work – which I see as part of a larger network of no-borders movements – stated that she thought of the project of sanctuary as the 'embodied, collective action of care', where care is about spurring the imagination, and 'training for the not-yet'. Stated otherwise, care is one of the methods used to imagine, prefigure, and enact alternative ways of being together and recognizing our interrelatedness in a fundamentally non-exclusionary, non-innocent, and non-sentimental manner.[18]

Thinking with care, then, how might we rethink forms of being, in relation to the political imagination embodied by wirewall? How might we do this in the museum? I want to mention one collaborative experiment I engaged in to reimagine borders and togetherness, in the spirit of creating space for other forms of imagination in this new museum. In thinking and talking about how we might be attuned to each other and the world, rather than walling ourselves off, the group I was working with decided to draw on the microbiome as a site from which to imagine a world to be: a near-future world, not a utopic one, which we called 'Biomia'. The microbiome is the study of microorganisms and microbial communities that we harbour in our gut, and that actually maintain us as humans. We used to think that we had a self-enclosed biology; that humans were made up of uniquely human cells, which in turn determine and define us. But in fact, microbiome science has shown that the human is not a unitary entity but a dynamic and interactive community of human and microbial cells. A full half of 'our' cells, it seems, are microbial. And these microbial communities are shared across human bodies. That is, our microbiomes are not fully individualized, but shaped by our local environments, making the boundaries of each of our bodies more ambiguous. I could be biologically very similar to someone who grew up down the street. Microbial communities are active in ways that have not properly captured our attention. After all, these shape who we are, inform the decisions we make, what we desire, how we feel. The brain functions that underpin our personality and cognition are moulded by the microbiome.[19] The 'self' is a product of complex social interactions between human cells and a multitude of microbial cells.

In this sense, it behoves us to care about us/them; to learn to feel them/us. It requires the cultivation of a very different sensorium, attentive to 'gut feelings' at a whole new level. If, as Rancière[20] states, politics is about reconfiguring the fabric of

17 Woodly 2022.

18 See Ticktin 2021a&b.

19 Rees, Bosch & Douglas 2018.

20 Rancière 2010.

sensory experience, then this is an essential political act. If we follow this new imaginary, we understand that no system of control can master the borders of our bodies as we are always changing with our environments. More specifically, we are not separate from, but a part of, our environments. As Julie Livingston[21] so aptly notes, the body is a tentacular relationship, where the air we breathe and exhale eventually gets inhaled by someone else, somewhere else; where the water that goes through our bodies to keep us alive may next nourish a farmer's field.

In a series of workshops on what became *Biomia*[22] we used the theory of the microbiome to help imagine different ways of being together that are not contingent upon borders, closure, identities, or fixity (see fig. 5). We replaced the concept of citizenship with an interconnected freedom to hover, to land, or to remain in movement. This was a way of thinking about how to be in the world and allow people to thrive and flourish, according to and acknowledging the fact that they are part of larger, multi-species relationships – are people at ease, do they feel like they can flourish, do they feel good in their gut ultimately? This is metaphorical, but also physical. It is a way to understand and allow for choices about where to be and live, without falling back on developing borders or fixed identity criteria for membership – each 'person' (as a set of ecologies!) decides where they want to be as part of their larger multi-species ecological reality. And this reality is constantly changing depending on who/what is there, and who/what is a part of it. Could we use this to expand our political or moral grammars? If tolerance, benevolence, sympathy, and pity dominate the affective regime of the liberal and modern era, what would the lens of the microbiome bring to our affective and social vocabularies? Would we seek to be parasitic, symbiotic, infected? Contaminated by joy? The moral valences of each would need to be reconsidered. Indigestion could be a way to explain not a physical state, but a dis-ease with a political or social situation. Would we aim for uncertainty and discomfort, which might better reflect an attunement to the world? Would equilibrium be a fleeting state of pleasure, gradually replaced by an appreciation of disequilibrium, when our political subjectivities are remade?

This imaginary does not propose a territory of belonging, but a state of constant becoming; a commitment to exploring and embracing the liveliness of the world, knowing that liveliness also always involves risk and possible violence. I would hope a new, anti-racist and anti-colonial ethnographic museum could cultivate a caring sensibility for all walks of life – risks and all. And as it traces the aftermath of racist violence, I would hope it would also offer the space to collectively imagine otherwise.

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21 Livingston 2020.

22 These were hosted at the design space A/D/O in Brooklyn and run by Fiona Raby and Anthony Dunne.

Fig. 5: Biomia. Illustration by Kyung-Me and David Linchen.

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The Future Claimant's Representative: On the Task of the Museum in the Time of the Planet

Ian Baucom

The planetary crisis of climate change we are facing does not come from a historical nowhere. It comes from distinct material histories of the colony and post-colony. To recognize these historical origins of our planetary moment is not, however, adequate to the challenge of our times. It is just an opening to a following set of questions. Among them, these: if it is the case that we come to the planetary present from the postcolony's historical shore, then how do we think not only about that historical past and the claims it makes on us, but also about our climate-changed planetary future and the claims that future makes on us? If the planet is in crisis because of the history of colonialism, then how are we best to entangle ourselves with that future, its scales of time, its struggles for freedom? As we consider the daunting challenges of how to respond to those calls of historical and planetary responsibility, how might the university and the museum take on that new form of responsibility to be, at once, the critical interpreter of the colonial and postcolonial past and present *and* of the planetary future they have wrought?

I'm just starting to think about those questions – but here are a few propositions in response:

∼∼ The future is something we are already colonizing.

∼∼ The future and those who will live in it are already coming to us as an accelerated version of the colony and the postcolony, damaged and wrecked by what we do now.

∼∼Even as it is already coming, that future – and those who will live in it – has no legal standing, no structure of formal protection or recognition, at least by the laws of sovereign nations.

∼∼Instead, the future climate-changed planet, and all those who will live in it, comes to us as abjected and disposable.

∼∼Coming so, the future, and all who will live in it, come to us like a colonial subject before imperial power.

∼∼As the future comes at us so, one of the key tasks of critical thought and practice now is to understand how to situate ourselves in relation to that already-arriv-

ing claim of the future's subalterns, much as we have learned to situate ourselves toward history's claims and history's subalterns.

∼∼∼

As I've begun to think about those propositions, there is an enigmatic figure I've become aware of that might provide one avenue of response: the 'Future Claimant's Representative'; a legal character who the court appoints in mass-tort claims – say in a lawsuit against an asbestos manufacturer, when the court knows that while the damage of the asbestos has already been done, some of its victims are too young to yet fully experience its violence in their bodies. So, someone is appointed, now, to speak for them: the *Future Claimant's Representative*.

While recognized in bankruptcy procedures against corporations profiting from the mass use of hazardous materials, the future claimant's representative has not yet been recognized either in constitutional law or international law. That attempt *is* being made across a range of legal actions worldwide but thus far without definitive success; largely, as the legal theorist Randall S. Abate has observed, because while courts have been willing to recognize that some non-human actors (primates and rivers among them) and some discrete future human subjects of particular toxins have legal standing, the courts have not yet acknowledged the legal standing either of the planet as a whole *or* of the future as a category in itself.

Nevertheless, Abate argues, with each incremental advance, 'it is no longer a matter of whether this legal revolution will occur, but only a matter of when and how'.

That is hopeful, and to be advocated for. But if that advocacy is to succeed it will need to rely on more than the efforts of juridical actors. It will depend on expanding a conception of the future claimant's representative into the spheres of critical practice and the arts, to the work of the university, and of the museum.

Before offering some thoughts on what that might entail, a cautionary note from the legal discourse. As Frederick Tung puts it, while the figure of the *Future Claimant's Representative* can be understood as providing a vehicle through which a subaltern future may speak into our present, it nevertheless requires 'careful scrutiny'. And that, he writes, is because 'the [Future Claims Representative] is in essence an agent without a…[client]. She [or he or they] is not answerable to her ostensible beneficiaries. …Given the pressure on [competing] claimants to settle… [a contested matter] [One] might understandably question whether this mechanism can be expected truly to provide zealous representation for future claimants…[T]heir losses are not "vivid" but abstract and prospective, while the losses of competing [living] claimants are real. [The apparent future beneficiaries] may [thus] have enormous individual and collective stakes in [their representative's] agency but a complete inability to assure the faithfulness of their agent.'

This is chastening.

As I've indicated, I *am* inviting us to consider our agency as this form of agency. I am asking what we might gain from considering one of the tasks of the museum and the university to be *both* the *past's* and the *future's* representatives. But as I do so, I want to underline these cautions, which articulate the classic double cautions of representative agency that Edward Said brought before us in highlighting Marx's dictum from the *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louise Bonaparte* as one of the key problematics of *Orientalism*: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented.' If the future comes before us as something we are already colonizing, something denied the ability to represent itself, then, even as we imagine what it might mean to be that abjected and precarious future's representatives, we will need to ask these dual questions of representation – further developed by Gayatri Spivak – once again:

> ∼∼From the mimetic register of representation (Spivak's *Darstellung*): Can we find ways to make that future something other than abstract, prospective, statistically predictable? Can we apprehend it – in its own vernaculars – as something urgent and vivid?
>
> ∼∼And turning to Spivak's political register of representation (her *Vertetung*): even if we can make that urgent future singular and vivid – will we, in consequence, hold ourselves faithful to being the agents of the enormous individual and collective stakes we are offering to represent?
>
> ∼∼Weighing the losses – of manoeuvre, of consumption – that the 'living' present may need to make if we are to entangle the project of our freedom *with* and *toward* the freedom of a future from which 'we' are not distant, *will* we faithfully represent that 'living' future? Or – discouraged by the sheer enormity of the task – will we shrug, hold our eyes down, and turn away? Will we wrap up the negotiations (the next Paris or Edinburgh or Cairo summit) as practically as possible? Will we 'settle'?
>
> ∼∼∼

With those questions and cautions in mind, a few words. To return to the question of what it might take to apprehend the climate-changed future of the planet as vivid rather than abstract: key to that task is the idea that the image of the future is a mirror of the image of the past precisely to the extent to which the future reflects the becoming-planetary of prior global conditions of *life-without-standing*. Or, much more simply: if we want to know what the future will look like, look to what life has historically been made to be when it is held to have no protection, no right. I suggested earlier that the future climate-changed planet comes to us as something abjected and disposable; that the future, and all who will live in it, comes like a colonial subject before imperial power. How so? And in what form?

By initial way of answer, let me turn to Eyal Weitzman and Fazal Sheikh's investigations of the intersection between coloniality, race, environmental re-engineering and what they call the 'aridity line' in the remarkable work they have pursued on the

Israel/Palestine 'Conflict Shoreline'. Collectively, their work suggests that the planetary mirroring of prior logics of colonialism, race, biopolitics, and governmentality is now proceeding under a logic of *environmentality*.

The race line, the colour line, the enemy line, the biopolitical line, the line dividing those who governmental power will currently 'make live or let die', is now being reconstrued (and fraudulently de-racialized) as an environmental line; a line drawn between the green zone of flourishing cities, and economies, and the line of the desert; a line between sustenance and the unsustainable; the line between the productive and the arid. As Weitzman and Sheikh's work on Israel/Palestine and the Negev shows, however, aridity is not a natural condition, it is produced.

Fig. 1: Fazal Sheikh, from Desert Bloom, part of the The Erasure Trilogy, Steidl, 2015. © Fazal Sheikh.

The aridity line is not inherent in nature. It is manufactured as a practice of environmentality: a practice of producing deserts (or drained watersheds, or desiccated rivers) to cultivate farms, gardens, hyper-cities, and factories; pushing populations behind the drought line, and then finding – because they are discovered there, in the arid zone they have 'failed' to cultivate – that the people in these climate-ruined geographies (which map almost entirely onto the maps of empire and colony) lack 'standing' as potentially productive contributors to the green zone, the Schengen zone, the European cities on the northern shore of the Sahel and the far-side of the cross-Mediterranean passage, the green-lawned American suburbs beyond the

Rio Grande; that the people of the arid zone have no right to cross the line to the green zone; and can be let die – in the desert, the river, the Mediterranean drowning waters.

That is a new grammar for an old story – a new way policing the movement of populations – where the aridity line putatively replaces the race line, while merely reinforcing it (and where environmentality becomes just the newest form of governmentality). But even as thinking the phase-shift from governmentality to environmentality does not fundamentally alter our understanding of the present and its modes of power, it has some larger consequences on our understanding of the future. For it is not only the millions of lives currently held to be without standing that the emerging logics of environmentality abandon.

Under the codes of that logic, *the future itself* – with the atmosphere changes, soil erosion, agricultural collapse, and desertification we are visiting on it – is also, already, living beyond the aridity line. Or, to make an image of it: *the future is the Negev*, and the Sahari, and the Sonoran desert zones, and all the future poor seeking to cross the aridity we are making. As the future is the becoming-planetary of the drowning waters of the Mediterranean, and the Rio Grande, and the flood plains of Pakistan if we do not act now.

> ~~Which implies that if we are to learn how to be the representative claimants for those future refugees – border-crossing from the future into our present organizations of power – that we must begin by building our contemporary and future commitments to a 'we' far beyond our current lines of green life and arid life; by opening ourselves to the widening future deserts and deepening drowning pools we are already making.
>
> ~~Which also means that if we are to be truly, urgently, hospitable, it will depend on being hospitable both to abjected life abandoned now and by opening our politics, economies, universities and museums to all the coming lives we are already throwing beyond the arid and drowning lines of the decades and centuries to come.
>
> ~~~

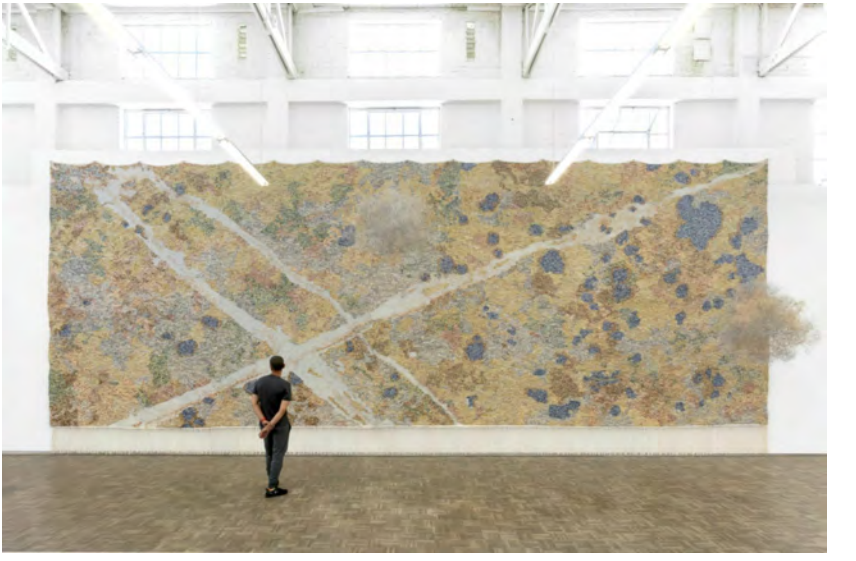
Which leads me, in conclusion, to a body of art vividly tracing a path to such an opening. The aridity line, the siege line, the race line, the colour line, the enemy line currently encamping the future – what is their alternative? Can we cross those lines into the besieged future and offer that future our hospitality – possibly even our reparation? *Perhaps* – as the contemporary South African artist Igshaan Adam's work suggests – less in response to an abstract demand that we *must* do so, than by following an embodied *line of desire* rendering vivid a planetary urge of freedom.

The most comprehensive overview of Adams' project comes from his 2022 show at the Art Institute of Chicago entitled *Desire Lines*. Born in 1982, in the 'so-called-coloured' Apartheid-era township of Bonteheuwel on the Cape Flats, he works with

fibres, coloured plastic beads, shards of glass and detritus collected from the climate-desiccated terrain surrounding Bonteheuwel. He gathers throwaways from the sides of the itinerant pathways the people of Bonteheuwel have walked into the ground as they head between their alleys of hard-brick houses and zinc-and-corrugated-carboard shacks and brace the hike to the 'taxi' stands on the side of the N2 motorway that will carry them to their jobs in Cape Town. Gathering these wandering discards, Adams weaves those bits of glinting rubbish into the wool skeins of large tapestries, up to twenty by thirty feet in diameter.

Fig. 2: Igshaan Adams 'Bonteheuwel / Epping' (detail) 2021. Wood, painted wood, plastic, bone, stone and glass beads, polyester, and nylon rope, cotton rope, link chain, wire (memory and galvanised steel) and cotton twine, 495 x 1170 x 325 cm. Courtesy of the artist and blank projects. © Igshaan Adams.

Fig. 3: Igshaan Adams 'Bonteheuwel / Epping' 2021. Wood, painted wood, plastic, bone, stone and glass beads, polyester, and nylon rope, cotton rope, link chain, wire (memory and galvanised steel) and cotton twine, 495 x 1170 x 325 cm. Courtesy of the artist and the blank projects. © Igshaan Adams.



The names of the works resonate. One, titled in English, is *When Dust Settles*. But most play up and down the registers of Cape Afrikaans, the language that has separated life after life – the 'white' from the 'black' and the 'so-called-coloured' – but a language Adams has nevertheless held to and that his work re-weaves as something more than white and dividing; as, also, a brown language; a language of 'Bruin Mense' merging histories together.

His tapestries weave those skeins: defying an audience to exclude him – or anyone – from that Cape history. One tapestry is called *Stoflike Oorskot* (*Earthly Remains*); another S*poorsny* (*Tracking Footprints*). Earth, footprints, dust. Tracking, settling, remaining. A history and a commitment. We have been here, for long time. Track our footprints. You cannot deny them. Turn the earth for our remains and the beauties we have made. They are everywhere. Track our history. We will remain. We will continue to weave ourselves into what is ours, and yours, and everyone's. That is what we hear in his titles – in that sparkling brown Afrikaans Adams has claimed.

And then – more demanding – are the tapestries themselves. Viewed from a distance they look like GIS renderings of the earth's surface, satellite photographs of a deserted landscape shaded in greens, and browns, and blues (like woven interpretations of Weitzman and Sheikh's *Erasure Trilogy*, with which they are deeply in conversation) with here or there a pattern of lines cut across the terrain, a trace-work of

intersecting paths that a people cut into it. Not just the recent residents of the Cape peninsula, but, further back still, the original inhabitants of these increasingly desertified spaces: the *Khoe-Sān*; first indigenous minders of this place, who wrote their walkways, histories, and wonders into this this terrain, over long time – resiliently furrowing their record into the ground of this tip of Africa.

Fig. 4: Fazal Sheikh, from Desert Bloom, part of the The Erasure Trilogy, Steidl, 2015. © Fazal Sheikh.
Fig. 5: Igshaan Adams 'Bonteheuwel / Epping' 2021 7 Detail / Courtesy of the artist and blank projects. © Igshaan Adams.


And then, in Adams' tapestries – in the careful mix of all the flotsam he's woven in – there are the signs of the others the Cape has gathered: Malay, Dutch, English, Xhosa, Zulu, Cantonese, Jewish exiles and emigrés, Yoruba, Tswana, Shangaan, Moroccan, Sikh, Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, anarchist, capitalist, mine-worker, union; all mixing and merging their paths and history on this landscape, at the southern tip of Africa: a place where history's dust rises and settles; a place of history's remains and future; a place of history's footprints and converging paths:

∼∼*When Dust Settles*
∼∼*Stoflike Oorskot (Earthly Remains)*
∼∼*Spoorsny (Tracking Footprints)*

The purpose of those paths—as Adam's title for the Chicago show reveals, is desire.

Apartheid constrained movement. Desire released it. Apartheid boasted. Desire won. Across his work, Adams has been plotting the paths of those meandering, connecting lines of historical desire; gathering desire's abandoned things and perfume bottles and protea petals and funeral notices and rave party tack-ups and civic-gathering notices and kwaito flyers – all spilt along those paths of walked-desire the people the Cape Flats have written, from Apartheid to now.

There is a history of policing and a theory of *freedom-through-desire* animating his weave. The policing is obvious. Apartheid and its police patrolled, arrested, imprisoned, and tortured Bonteheuwel, for decades. Post-apartheid poverty punishes it still. The freedom-as-lived-desire is less obvious. Until it becomes obvious. It has something to do with his renewed attention to the 'practice of everyday life'. Don't invent a whole new system from abstraction. Pay attention to what people actually do when they desire to be free. Learn, again, and anew, the practices of everyday life. How people walk. Where they pause to eat, and drink, and laugh, and pray. Follow the desire lines of everyday life. Trace its spontaneities, wandering a township, a *spoorsny*. Or, as Adams has re-imagined it in another work from his show: follow the determined, back-and-forth-forth pace of an 'ouma' cooking pap, pressing the footstepped memory of her life into her kitchen's linoleum flooring day after day after day. Weave a tapestry from the example of that walked linoleum.

Fig. 6: Igshaan Adams 'When Dust Settles' 2018 (detail). Vinyl flooring, installation view at the Standard Bank Gallery, Johannesburg. Photography by Mario Todeschini. Courtesy of the artist and blank projects. © Igshaan Adams.

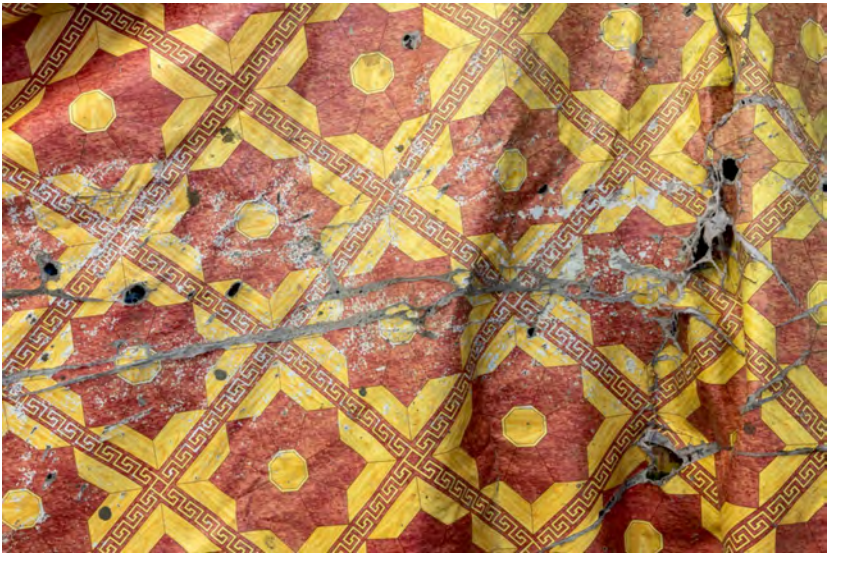


Fig. 7: Igshaan Adams, Ameen', 2018. Beads, various ropes, twine, cotton offcuts, tea, blue oxide, dye, detergent, 270 x 240 cm. Courtesy of the artist and blank projects. © Igshaan Adams.

And now do what Adams has done and pull back from all those local lines of desire.

Record Bonteheuwel's walks and paths of disobedient freedom and make a planetary, satellite image of them, woven into tapestry, opening their pathways beneath a set of sculpted, floating, dust-clouds.

Imagine the planet traced by countless, endless, of those desire lines; beginning perhaps at the southern tip of Africa, traversing the continent, walking from the Cape through Namibia, Angola, Cameroon, Niger, Guinea-Bisseau, Morroco; arriving not just hungry but desiring and future-imagining; animated by a determined, bodily, life-risking commitment to freedom; continuing across all obstacles; over the Sahel; to a dinghy; risking the Mediterranean; heading to Marseille, or Bologna, or Paris, or London, or Barcelona, or Leiden, or Amsterdam to remake, again, those cities; to remind Europe of what they know (as the United States must also know): that they are not the centres of the world but northern peripheries of the global south.

With that in mind, think Adam's *Desire Lines* as a trace-work and tapestry of that future. Not just a map of the abandoned but a map of the agents of the future; the map of the ones who will not give up on the idea of freedom; the map of the ones teaching us what it means to truly desire freedom: across every line of divide; across every apartheid; across every Kalahari and Sahel and Sonora and Negev and Rio Grande and Mediterranean; across every line of enmity; across every line of governmentality, environmentality, aridity, and drowning.

Imagine that our task is not in some impossibly abstract, data-limited, or court-ordered obligation to be, *bureaucratically*, the future claimant's representatives on behalf of an abstract idea of freedom, but to understand that those future's representatives are already among us, coming toward us, *urging* us to walk a line of desire into a new planetary future they are making. Are we ready to welcome them? To alter our present for them? To re-imagine our universities and museums for *and with* them? In doing so, can we re-articulate the university's and the museum's projects of restitution as not only a *compensatory* act for the past, and *care* for the present, but, also, as a *creative* project for the future?

Toward a Negative Zoology: Not-Knowing for a Post-Anthropocene Future

Mayanthi L. Fernando

In *The Message of the Qur'an*, an influential English translation of and commentary on the Quran, Muhammad Asad discusses the *jinn*. Citing classical Arab philologists, he explains that the term *jinn* signifies beings that are "'concealed from [man's] senses," i.e., things, beings, or forces which cannot normally be perceived by man but have, nevertheless, an objective reality … of their own.'[1] He writes:

> We know, of course, very little as to what can and what cannot play the role of a living organism; moreover, our inability to discern and observe such phenomena is by no means a sufficient justification for a denial of their existence. The Qur'an often refers to 'the realm which is beyond the reach of human perception' (al-ghayb), while God is frequently spoken of as 'the Sustainer of all the worlds' (rab al-alamin): and the use of the plural clearly indicates that side by side with the 'world' open to our observation there are other 'worlds' as well – and, therefore, other forms of life, different from ours and presumably from one another, and yet subtly interacting and perhaps even permeating one another in a manner beyond our ken. And if we assume, as we must, that there are living organisms whose biological premises are entirely different from our own, it is only logical to assume that our physical senses can establish contact with them only under very exceptional circumstances: hence the description of them as invisible beings.[2]

Asad's exposition is remarkable in multiple ways. First, he notes that one of the terms for God – *rab al-alamin*, with *alamin* in the plural rather than the singular *alm* – signals the existence of many worlds, not just the one we humans know. Second, by marking this plurality of worlds, he underscores the possibility of 'forms of life' in these worlds of which we likewise have no perceptual knowledge. 'We know, of course, very little' about what even constitutes life, he writes, but this does not mean those life-forms do not exist. He also raises the possibility that these life-forms may be interacting with one another in ways beyond our awareness. Finally,

1 Asad 2022, 1321.

2 Asad 2022, 1324.

by emphasizing humans' perceptual incapacities and our limited knowledge *as* humans in accessing the cosmos and its many worlds, he defines the human as an onto-epistemological limit: our inability to know (our epistemological threshold) is the effect of our bodies, our bio-physical makeup (or ontology) as homo sapiens.

Asad's comments are focused on humans' relationship to jinn, but they beg the question as to the perceptual capacities of nonhuman animals (like dogs and cats) and their possible interactions with nonhuman nonanimal forms of life (like jinn). Put simply, might animals' very different bodies enable them to sense, to perceive, to know, to be in relation, and therefore to take care of and be taken care of by forms of life in ways imperceptible to humans? Given my perceptual limitations as a human, I cannot know for sure, as Asad contends. I take that impossibility of *ever knowing for sure* as the starting point for what I call a negative zoology, an approach that radically unsettles a (secular) fantasy of human mastery by embracing the human as an onto-epistemological limit. In so doing, I am thinking with others in this volume about how we can live fully in common, how we can world worlds of multispecies care and kinship, without necessarily taking as a given the secularity of those worlds.

The Golden Snail Opera is a multispecies ethnography-as-choreography. Through text and film, it depicts enactments of 'living in common' by various creatures, human and nonhuman, in the changing ecology of a rice field in Yilan, in northeast Taiwan.[3] The film documents the perspectives of underwater snails chewing on rice stalks, of a dog running through the rice fields, and of various humans planting and harvesting rice, burning paper money as offerings to ancestor-spirits, and discussing the science of rice cultivation. The text, which is meant to be read or performed alongside the film, features three speaking characters: the Farmer, who has taken up farming practices that are friendly to other species; the Pedant, who explains the story in social-scientific terms; and the Wanderer, 'a roaming ghost' whose living life was ended by American bombs during World War II. 'No one noticed me', the ghost says, until 'I tossed the civet cat in front of a car; I swerved that truck into your motorcycle.'[4] When the piece is performed on stage, the Wanderer intrudes upon the humans, standing in front of them or nudging them, but the Pedant sees and hears nothing, and the Farmer only feels the roaming ghost's presence as cold air on the back of her neck. The film does not offer the ghost's perspective, nor take up the ghost's story in its multispecies narrative.[5]

3 Tsai et al., 2016, 521.

4 Tsai et al., 2016, 524.

5 Permalink <https://vimeo.com/188367219>.

Fig. 1: Still photo from The Golden Snail Opera by Yen-Ling Tsai, Isabelle Carbonell, Joelle Chevrier, Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing.

There is a moment in the film, however, when the dog, with a camera mounted on his back to give us the view from his perspective, suddenly pauses mid-gambol and looks intently toward something or someone in the rice field. There is nothing significant to be seen, as far as human eyes can tell. But, given the presence of the Wanderer in this multispecies ecology, one has to wonder whether the dog is looking at the roaming ghost, whether, unlike the humans, the dog notices her as more than her effect in a series of unfortunate accidents, whether he senses her as more than cold air on the back of his neck, whether together they form a multispecies relation, even a multispecies community, hidden – because imperceptible – to humans.

Dogs, after all, have sensory capacities that far outpace our human ones.[6] They hear at frequencies much higher than humans. They have a set of specialized hairs called *vibrissae* – whiskers – which help dogs feel their way through the world without having to make physical contact with an object or surface to know it is there.[7] Dogs' visual physiology means that they see better than humans in low-light situations, though they are less able to focus on details directly in front of them. Dogs have a higher flicker-fusion rate, the rate at which cells process intermittent frames of light to produce a continuous picture, which means they visually notice a bit more of the world every second than we do; one could say that space-time moves more slowly for them. Dogs' capacity to smell vastly exceeds that of humans, since they have more genes committed to coding olfactory cells, more olfactory cells, and more

6 See Coren 2005 and Horowitz 2010.

7 Coren 2005, 95.

kinds of olfactory cells than humans do. Mammalian internal nose tissue has receptor sites through which we all smell. Human noses have about six million of these receptor sites; a beagle's nose has more than 300 million, a sheepdog's more than 200 million. Moreover, because their olfactory window is larger than our visual one, dogs parcel up time differently: they smell the traces of what has disappeared for us but still lingers for the dog, and the traces too, of what is, for us, yet to materialize. Dogs seem able to predict earthquakes and avalanches and, more mundanely, oncoming storms, though scientists know little about how they do this. As it turns out, dogs are also magneto-sensitive; again, scientists don't know which sensory mechanism is responsible for magnetoreception, though they do know it's not one of the five '"traditional" senses'.[8]

That humans, animals, plants, gods, jinn, spirits, and other nonhuman creatures live together in multispecies ecologies is, of course, common knowledge in many non-Western traditions. In Yilan, Taiwan, the setting for The *Golden Snail Opera*, farmers, fauna, flora, and nonliving beings collaborate in a wet-rice ecology. The nonliving beings are those who have no descendants to care for them after death and, unmoored from kinship ties, they take up residence in a paddy field.[9] Tending a plot of land means tending to the ghosts there, who in return help the farmers to tend the land. Yen-Ling Tsai writes that 'a famer is expected to take care of … the paddy field in its entirety', that is, the ghosts, the snails, the rice stalks, the dogs, and so on, 'all paddy beings, both material and formless'.[10]

In the Indian Himalayas, humans, animals, and powerful local deities (*devis* and *devatas*) are similarly bound together in webs of reciprocal relations. In these multispecies landscapes, both humans and animals are devotees (*bhakts*) of the gods. Radhika Govindrajan writes of *pahari* goats in the Kumaon region of the central Himalayas – *pahari* literally means 'of the mountain' – who are 'related to *pahari* people by virtue of their shared subjection and relatedness' to the particular local mountain deities governing the landscape and its various inhabitants.[11] Leopards, too, are *bhakts* of a local deity, Golu *devta*, and Govindrajan tells the story of man-eating leopards that have attacked and killed several villagers. In a spirit ceremony at a temple dedicated to the *devta*, the god speaks through a medium to tell the villagers that the leopards are the result of the humans 'having forsaken their deities in pursuit of greed' by selling and clearing the fields near the forest, once home to his temple. According to Mohan Joshi, an interlocutor of Govindrajan's, 'Humans, animals, and deities have responsibilities toward one another. We have forgotten our responsibilities toward our gods. That's why killing one leopard after another will not do any

8 Martini et al., 2018.

9 Tsai 2019, S349.

10 Tsai 2019, S352.

11 Govindrajan 2018, 10.

good … Leopards are also devotees [*bhakts*]. They are fulfilling their obligations to the gods.'[12]

Despite the anthropocentrism that has come to dominate major traditions of Islamic thinking and practice, the Quran, too, references a multispecies cosmos of humans and various nonhuman beings – jinn, angels, animals, plants, rocks, planets, etc. – and it attributes to nonhumans, including animals, an innate capacity to be in relation with God. Interestingly, the nature of that relation hinges on animals' biophysical structure, what the Ikhwan al-Safa (or Brethren of Purity), a group of tenth-century Muslim philosophers, called the animal 'form' and 'frame'.[13] The Ikhwan authored a 52-volume encyclopedia on the mathematical, natural, and psychological sciences that included an epistle (the longest) called *The Case of the Animals versus Man Before the King of the Jinn*, in which animals contest the human claim to mastery over them in the court of the jinn. The Ikhwan, ventriloquizing the animals, spend a great deal of time on animals' distinct physical form and sensory capacities. The epistle's fourth chapter ('On the Acute Sense of the Animals') holds that there are many animals with 'finer senses and sharper discrimination' than humans, such as the camel, 'who finds his footing on the most punishing and treacherous pathways in the dark of night', or ewes, who can birth multiple lambs in one night, or those lambs, who each finds its way to its dam 'without any doubt by the mother or confusion by the young', in contrast to humans for whom 'a month or two or more must pass before they can distinguish their own mother from their sister'.[14] Other chapters go into great detail about the physical form of various creatures, like the long tusks and great bulk of the elephant, or the delicate wings and tiny proboscis of the gnat. Ya'sub, leader of the bees, carefully outlines the 'intricate and ingenious body' and 'wondrous form' of his species,[15] which enable them to 'build dwellings more aptly and skillfully than your [i.e. humans'] artisans, better and more ingeniously than your builders and architects'.[16] And different animals rely on different senses for their well-being: 'Some, like hawks and eagles, rely on their keen vision and powerful flight. Others, like ants, dung-beetles, and scarabs, have a powerful sense of smell. Others are led to their needs by their sense of hearing, as are the vultures. And some are guided by their sense of taste, as are fish and other aquatic animals.'[17] In arguing their case, the animals also insist that, although their 'every movement is worship and praise' of God, humans do not understand much of what animals do or say. At one point, the nightingale exclaims: 'We praise, sanctify, celebrate, and exalt [God],

12 Govindrajan 2015, 33–34.
13 Goodman and McGregor 2009.
14 Goodman and McGregor 2009, 113–114.
15 Goodman and McGregor 2009, 234.
16 Goodman and McGregor 2009, 275.
17 Goodman and McGregor 2009, 193.

morning and evening – although these humans do not comprehend our songs of praise.'[18] Earlier in the trial, the parrot had made a similar point:

> '*if you could follow the discourse of the birds*, the anthems of the swarming creatures, the hymns of the crawling creatures, the hosannas of the beasts, the meditative murmur of the cricket, entreaty of the frog, admonitions of the bulbul, homilies of the larks, the sandgrouse's lauds and the cranes' celebration, the cock's call to worship, the poetry doves utter in their cooing and the soothsaying ravens in their croaking … you would realize that among these throngs are orators and eloquent speakers, theologians, preachers, admonishers, and diviners, just as there are among the sons of Adam.'[19]

This theme of human non-mastery – of humanness as an onto-epistemological limit – runs through the Quran itself, cutting against the anthropocentric grain of dominant readings that were consolidated in the modern period. Sarra Tlili argues that while the Quran is undoubtedly a theocentric text, it is not necessarily an anthropocentric one.[20] It focuses on humans, yes, but this is simply because humans (rather than animals or jinn) are its addressee. Tlili identifies anthropocentrism with what she calls a *figurative* reading of the Quran's treatment of nonhuman animals, a reading that turns enigmatic phenomena in the Quran – like the ant who speaks to Solomon – into understandable ones. A figurative reading, she argues, gives more authority to the human mind to interpret the text and to understand the incomprehensible by translating animal behaviour – including their relationship with the divine – to conform with humans' perceptual experience with animals (and with the divine). Tlili holds that this approach goes against the Quran's insistence that humans know very little. As the Quran tell us: 'And of knowledge, you have been given but a little' (17: 85). By contrast, she argues, a *literal* reading leaves enigma as enigma, accepting the fact that humans do not always have the means to perceive other beings' deeper realities, without denying that such realities exist. This is humanness as an onto-epistemological limit. As Muhammad Asad put it, there may be 'forms of life, different from ours and presumably from one another, and yet subtly interacting … *in a manner beyond our ken*'.[21] Govindrajan also gestures to human not-knowing with her notion of the *otherwild*, a 'space of unmasterable difference' that entails 'the humbling recognition that animal lives, even as they are coconstituted alongside human lives, exceed their imbrication in the latter'.[22] She tells the story of a domestic pig who disappears every now and then for a few days at a time, and

18 Goodman and McGregor 2009, 302–303.

19 Goodman and McGregor 2009, 279, my emphasis.

20 Tlili 2012.

21 Asad 2022, 1324, my emphasis.

22 Govindrajan 2018, 123.

whose owner, Prema, has no idea where the pig goes or what he does. Since the multispecies geography in which Prema and the pig live also includes local gods and goddesses, we might speculate that the pig maintains interspecies relationships not only with humans like Prema but also with the *devis* and *devtas* who govern the landscape, that his repeated peregrinations are pilgrimages, or another form of communion with the gods, taking him to a space of unmasterable difference that Prema, a human, not only does not know but cannot know, given her corporeal and sensory limitations. We might speculate that next to Prema who does-not-know stands a pig who does know, or at least knows differently, who knows not only humans but also gods. After all, animals know in ways we do not, like dogs, who can sense magnetic fields, or cats, who can see in ultra-violet, a light spectrum invisible to humans. So, as a recent magazine article put it, 'a house cat's bizarre antics' of staring intently at a bare wall or chasing invisible prey 'may be more than just feline folly. The kitty may be seeing things that the human eyes can't.'[23]

What might the kitty be seeing?

I say that playfully, though also as a provocation – call it a theological-zoological provocation – to both the anthropocentrism of most secular and religious traditions *and* the secularity of much multispecies scholarship. If secularity is premised on human mastery of a knowable universe, and if the Anthropocene is the direct result of that kind of thinking, would not a rethinking of human mastery that many believe necessary to a post-Anthropocene world entail thinking beyond secular convention as well? This seems especially important for an ethical post-Anthropocene politics, since climate crisis affects communities that do not live only in secular worlds, nor abide only by secular categories. I do not know where thinking beyond secular convention would lead. But perhaps not-knowing is where we must begin. Not-knowing, as I am imagining it, as many religious traditions have imagined it, is not a condition to be overcome, but rather a fact of being human, an onto-epistemological limit.

I am therefore wary of the move to emphasize similitude between humans and animals, to declare that we are, ultimately, *animals all*, as the only way forward. After all, there is something absurd about claiming equivalence, given the vastly different capacities animals have. Even the term animals, as I have been using it, makes no sense, as Jacques Derrida insisted, given the 'heterogenous multiplicity' it names.[24] The language of equivalence – in fact, language itself – continually fails. I wrote about dogs' vastly more capable sense of smell compared to humans, but am I writing about the same thing – smell – when humans know nothing of what this canine sense of 'smell' is capable?

23 Lewis 2014.

24 Derrida 2008, 31.

I want to gesture, then, toward a kind of *negative zoology*, akin to negative theology,[25] where the other – divine, animal – can never be fully known, where that unbridgeable gap is a basic onto-epistemological fact of being human. I want to hold open the possibility that a heterogenous multiplicity of nonhumans may be worlding worlds together, sometimes with us, sometimes without us. And I want to propose that accepting this onto-epistemological limit may be key to unsettling the fantasy of human mastery, may be an ethical and political opportunity to cultivate a different kind of multispecies liveability than the one we currently practice.

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25 On negative theology, see Sells 1994.

Holding On, Letting Go: Escaping the Contemporary Museum

Audra Mitchell

Content note: This piece discusses ableism, anti-Blackness, colonialism, enslavement, eugenics, extinction, gendered violence, genocide (human and nonhuman), racism, and other forms of structural violence.

Contemporary museums combine many of the iconic organizational structures and logics of contemporary Euro-descendent, colonial-capitalist societies – from the university to the hospital, the art gallery to the archive, the lab to the prison, the mall to the morgue. These spaces are experienced in unique ways by diverse mindbodies[1] – the singular constellations of physical, somatic, sensory, and neurological features that compose sentient experience (human and nonhuman). For mindbodies that have experienced violence within one or more of these institutions and structures, moving through a museum evokes visceral feelings. For instance, the experience may be jarring, confusing, (re-)traumatizing, surprising, cathartic, nostalgic, melancholy, painful, or many of these things at once, as the museum recombines these spaces and logics, moving mindbodies through them. Attending to how museums are experienced by multiple mindbodies, human and nonhuman, can provide important insights to museums and cultural workers striving to make museums into sites of inclusion, critique, and transformation.

Building on these themes, the following text is an abridged version of an immersive story originally presented (with accompanying artwork and animations) at the *TAKING CARE Conference* in November 2022. It imagines a diverse group of strangers waiting to visit a new exhibit on *extinction* at a museum. Once inside, the visitors are drawn through a series of seemingly disparate rooms by an unusual guide: a museum-being who seems to be attempting an escape. This being is indeterminate and appears to change forms: it might be a flying fox (fruit bat), an *uma-t-simagere* (see below), an artificial intelligence, a piece of art, an educational tool, or something else entirely. As the visitors try to work out what the being wants or needs, they

1 Clare 2017.

must also make sense of exhibits that expose them to the multiple forms of structural violence that shape contemporary conditions of ecological violence, including racism, ableism, eugenics, and genocide. Their dialogue is not academic argument, but rather a set of frictions that reflect the deeply contested, tense but also lively ethical space of museums.

It is important to note that one of the possible manifestations of the museum-being, the *uma-t-simagere* (see photo and details below) belongs to the Mentawai peoples of Siberut, Indonesia. I do not have a personal relationship either with this being or its community of origin; as such, writing about it is inherently shaped by structures of colonial power and privilege. I want to express respect for this being, its community, and the labour of continuity they carry out, alongside the other marginalized and violenced communities (human and non-human) mentioned here.

Fig. 1: Uma-t-simagere: Sakkudei, Siberut, Sumatra, 1900–1950. Collection Nationaal Museum Van Wereldculturen, Coll.nr. 7086–8.

Holding on/letting go: fleeing the contemporary museum

We've been waiting for almost an hour to get into the exhibit. As the doors finally swing open, we jostle to read the text on the entry wall. But no sooner have we begun than we sense a disturbance of the quiet air.

First we hear the flapping: the rich, thick, almost wet sound of wings. Then we sense a blur of brown, a breeze brushing our faces, a glitchy tickle of sound in our ears. Our eyes strain to follow the jittery flight of what looks what looks like a tiny winged bear. Those of us who are from, or have visited, Southeast Asia or Australia have met creatures like this before. They are the eyes glinting in the thickness of night, the staccato chatter that fills the fruit trees, the flow of soft bodies that re-trace the rivers at dusk.

As our eyes adjust to the dimmed light, we notice a structure in the centre of the room, from which the creature appears to have flown.

'Ah!' someone exclaims, 'I've actually seen this piece before. At the state art gallery in Sydney.'

They point to what looks like a manual clothes-dryer, which is hung not with damp underwear, but hundreds of dark-brown fibreglass bats. Its base is festooned with intricately-painted discs of their shit. Placed in that way, perfectly centred in the sparse-walled room, the late Yorta Yorta artist Lin Onus's piece[2] is unmistakably *art.* But outside, as Onus's piece reflects, the fleshy versions of these beings – kin to many human and nonhuman peoples – are depicted as 'vermin' or enemies.[3] They are slated for 'removal' by local governments, or even deliberately snared in fruit nets and barbed wire, when (mostly white) suburban homeowners complain about their sounds or the smell of their droppings. It is through these same droppings that the bats shift entire forests across the continent, re-seeding the burned earth. In doing this work, the bats battle record-setting summer temperatures – often over fifty degrees Celsius – that cause them to fall, dead, from the sky, or to suffocate en masse on tree trunks.[4]

'Did it come *from* the installation? Is it a hologram? Some kind of light projection, or animation?' someone asks.

'Hmmm', says the first speaker, 'it says here that Onus marked his bats with a kind of cross-hatching unique to the Murrungun-Djinang people. *That* creature doesn't have cross-hatchings … if you look …'

Enthusiastically, the person moves towards the flapping creature, who panics and flies off around a corner. Without pausing, we all rush to pursue it.

As we turn the corner, we slow down. The next room is almost empty: one long, white wall has an image projected across its length, the other is blank, and a ghostly oblong form floats over the far door. No one can see the creature.

The grey-scale projection on the left wall looks like a massive pyramid of driftwood or sunbleached stones, stacked at least twenty metres high. Two suited white men are perched at the top and foot. Gradually, we realize that the stack is made of

2 Onus 1991.

3 Rose 2010.

4 Daley 2020.

skulls, with ovoid holes where eyes used to nest, smooth, round foreheads, and small, curved horns.
'Oh', someone finally says, 'They're just *buffalo* skulls.'
We cluster around a small placard, and someone reads aloud.

> *In the late nineteenth century, 30–60 million buffalo ranged across the great plains of North America. By the end of the century, they were reduced to just a few herds. The nascent US government encouraged soldiers and private traders to kill the buffalo, which were a primary food source and spiritual relative to many Plains Indigenous peoples. With the construction of the railroads, tourists were encouraged to shoot buffalo from train windows for fun.*

The person reads on:

> *According to Nêhiyaw scholar Tasha Hubbard,*[5] *some hunters removed calves from their families; most of them died within weeks. They would also take advantage of buffalo gathering to mourn a dead relative to shoot entire family groups.*

'Disgusting', someone mutters, 'Americans should be ashamed.'
'It wasn't just us', someone else cuts in, 'They did the same thing in Canada.'
'At least Canada *acknowledged* its *past* with that Truth and Reconciliation Commission. So that everyone can move on …', starts the first speaker, but their voice trails off as an image lights up on the opposite wall.
At first, it seems to be the *same* image. But these skulls are shinier, and piled outside of a row of glistening condo buildings. The accompanying text explains how Chippewa artist Jay Soule/CHIPPEWAR[6] created the installation to express how contemporary life in Canada continues to rely on the *ongoing* genocide of Indigenous people and their nonhuman relations.
'It's true', someone says, 'It's not "history". Did you see the reports last year about all the remains found at residential schools? Hundreds of children. And the government is forcing pipelines right next to them – '
Someone scoffs sharply.
'Ha! Right. Good luck getting your avocado toast and TikToks without those pipelines.'
As tensions prickle, the creature, who has been silently perched on the ghostly object hanging above the lintel, suddenly flaps and takes flight towards a dark corridor. Everyone rushes to follow.
Not quite everyone. Just as you reach the door, you see someone kneeling on the ground. At first you think they've fallen over.
'Are you ok?' you ask.

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5 Hubbard 2014.
6 Soule 2021.

The person nods. They've knelt directly beneath the white object hung over the exit, and are carefully unwrapping a small fabric bag. You realize that the object is an actual buffalo skull, the bone glowing like a new moon in the thin light. It is unmarked, like the anonymized animal skulls you've seen used as décor in dozens of shops and cafes since 2007.

'These are my ancestors', the person says quietly, 'They *are* "*real*". They're targets of the genocide, too. But they're coming back.'[7]

You nod, and the person turns away from you, speaking long, soft words you've never heard. They continue to vocalize in a low, melodic hum, and, behind their voice, you think you can hear the soft, burp-like grunts of ungulates. You sense that it's time to leave.

When you enter the next room, you sense a change in the mood, to something like fear, or maybe outrage. Everyone else is clustered around a small glass box in the centre of the room, which holds another skull. But this one is human. And on the wall are a series of photos of other skulls, arrayed in neat boxes.

'This is outrageous', one person says, holding a child tightly to their side, 'It's NOT appropriate for children. I'm going to complain.'

'Oh really?' someone else says, 'You think it's ok for your child to look at mummies and burial objects, but the realities of racism are "too much"? Too close to home?'

The voices are cut off by a short recording, piped in from a speaker. It reassures us that the skull in the centre of the box is a plaster cast.

'I'll bet they have the real ones down in the basement. Pull them out for Halloween!', interjects the grumbler.

Both the alleged avocado-eater and the parent round on the speaker.

'Are you serious with this shit – ', says the former, reddening.

' – have some respect!' says the other, at the same time, 'and you, watch *your* language!'

'Jesus!' barks the grumbler, 'You can't say anything any more … '.

The recording explains that the remains represented in the exhibit were held by the Penn museum in Philadelphia for over a century. The museum issued a public apology in 2021 for collecting and holding over 1300 crania.[8] Most of the remains were from enslaved Black people from Cuba, along with several Black Philadelphians, collected by nineteenth century curator and doctor Samuel George as part of his quest to prove the racial superiority of white people. Amongst them were the remains of children killed in the police bombing of a Black residential neighbourhood in 1985. After the public apology, the museum arranged for the remains of the Philadelphians to be interred in a predominantly Black cemetery in the city. It is still negotiating to repatriate the other remains to Cuba.

7 See Hubbard 2014.

8 Tumin 2022.

'We have the same problem in Europe', someone remarks, 'It's really hard to return objects, and even harder to move *bodies* across borders.'

'*What would you do*?' the voice recording interrupts, '*what should we do with the Ancestral remains we hold here? We invite you to write your answers on the cards provided.*'

As some of us start to pick up cards and pens, we suddenly remember the creature.

'Where did it go?' someone asks.

'I think it's gone through that door.' someone else suggests, and we all start moving through the narrow entry.

We stop, confused. We seem to have stumbled not into a museum display, but rather some sort of storage facility full of metal cabinets stacked with plastic boxes.

I know exactly where we are. I can tell from the thin blocks of matter, like sliced cauliflower, arrayed neatly in plastic tubs. This is a brain bank. I quietly explain this, and watch everyone's face blanch.

'What … they're *actual, human* brains? That's *disgusting* … ', but their voice sounds more scandalized than upset.

'No, it's not "disgusting"', says a firm voice, 'It's *science*. They're trying to find *cures* for things like Autism and Down's Syndrome. It's really important work.'

'It's true', someone agrees, 'There's more of it now than ever, and we can't have more pressure on social infrastructure. Or get less resilient. Especially after COVID, and with climate change … '

'Yeah', says the avocado-eater, 'I heard a podcast on how these conditions are threatening the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. They cost billions of dollars a year.'

I sense the bodies around me relaxing. But every cell of my body seems to hammer into the next. I want to explain that our difference is not 'disease', and that these brains may have been '*donated*' by people who were not deemed capable of giving or withholding consent, who spent whole lives with their natural movements, sounds, cultures, and histories punished.

I want to tell you that those 'billions of dollars' – raised by states, charities, private donors, and venture capitalists – are not 'for us'. On the contrary, they fund research whose aim is to eradicate us genetically and assimilate us culturally, all in the name of protecting 'humanity' from potential 'defects'. They're backed up by systems of involuntary sterilization by racialized police violence,[9] medical institutionalization, incarceration, plus impunity – and sympathy – for our many murderers.[10]

I *want* to say all of this, even though I'm terrified of your responses. Instead, my blood fills with bright light, and my limbs and tongue stop responding to commands

9 Half of the people killed by police are disabled, and fifty per cent of Black disabled people have been arrested by police at least once. <https://namiillinois.org/half-people-killed-police-disability-report/>.

10 See, for instance, <https://disability-memorial.org>.

from my brain. Language leaves me. I curl up in the corner, my arms moving gently, hoping that no one will notice, or worse yet, call security.

The creature, who's been hanging, camouflaged, from a metal beam, seems to notice my motions and mirror them with its own wingbeats.

'There it is!' someone shouts, noticing the creature, and they all shift towards it. Suddenly cornered, the creature grips a niche on the wall, flapping frantically.

'Wait! What's the plan here?' someone says, 'Are we trying to catch it?'

'Don't touch it! Those things are full of disease. You'll be infected and become a super-spreader.'

'That's ridiculous! Flying foxes don't carry COVID.'

'Well, I don't want *my* kids exposed to whatever the next pandemic is …'

'But it's not a *real* bat!' someone else says, holding up a phone, 'I think it's one of these – an *uma-t-sigere*. There's one in the museum's collection. It comes from a community in Sumatra. It's a kind of toy, for the spirits of people and animals, that hangs in the beams of communal houses. It keeps the people safe – '

'Come on, it's got to be some kind of AI. It responds in real-time when we move', someone else argues.

'No', someone says, 'it's way too lifelike for that. Look at how it's breathing – '

'Yeah it's breathing like that because it's *terrified*. We need to let it out.'

'Absolutely not!' says the person with the phone, 'There are rules – '

'But come on. It should be hanging in a communal house in Sumatra. Not in a museum – '

'Maybe', the first voice insists, 'but there are *international* laws and agreements. You can't just "give something back". That's *theft*. For one thing, it has to be arranged between two recognized states.'

'Oh yeah, and states have such a *great* track record of giving things back to Indigenous communities. I say we let it out.'

'No, you can't! It'll be destroyed! It's probably really fragile.'

'Ha! It's not the only one …'

'Yes, but it's *supposed* to biodegrade and go back to the earth. That's the whole point. Look, it says here …'

'Yeah, but not *here*. In *Sumatra*. It'll never make it back there.'

'None of you know what you're talking about. It's an *actual* bat. That means it's wildlife, so you can't keep it for more than a few hours. You could get a huge fine, or even go to prison …'

Suddenly, one person sprints towards the wall, throwing open a door beneath an exit sign, setting off an alarm. Crying out, everyone else rushes to the door just in time to see the creature gliding over the crest of a rolling forest. The landscape is lush, with tangles of underbrush and dense with trees from both hemispheres. A barely tangible fence of barbed wire runs along the perimeter.

'Now they'll never get it back!' someone bemoans, and the voices start again.

'Who won't? The museum? Or the community?'
'It's an invasive species! It will destroy the ecosystem!'
One person starts to move in pursuit of the creature, but someone else puts out a hand to stop them.
'You can't go in there', they warn.
'Why?' the first person says, anxious, 'Look at the sign. It says it's a *nature reserve*.'
'A *private* nature reserve', corrects the scientist, 'this whole area is owned by some tech billionaire who's into rewilding. He's going to fill it with wolves, maybe some Jurassic Park-type shit.'
'Can he do that?' someone asks.
'Yeah, a lot of rich people are doing it. They buy up as much damaged land as they can, and turn it into reserves or whatever else they want – '
'But we can't go in?'
'Not unless you want to be arrested, or shot. Or *eaten*.'
No one, it turns out, wants to be shot or arrested. Or eaten.
Instead, everyone stands in silence, watching. The creature's wingbeats are now too faint to detect. It is gone, into its own uncertain future.
We turn, slowly, and re-enter the museum.

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Experiment and Excavation in the Ethnographic Museum: Care, Cruelty, and Barbara Harrisson

Juno Salazar Parreñas

When does care become cruel? I answer this question by considering the career of Dr. Barbara Harrisson who for a decade directed the Keramiekmuseum Princessehof in the late twentieth century, from 1977 to 1987. Before she became renowned as an expert of Asian ceramics, she was known for primatology, having invented the idea of orangutan rehabilitation.

What follows is not quite a cautionary tale. A cautionary tale is used as a warning against the perils of moral or social transgression. Rather, the point of this story is to remind us that we should not have the hubris to act as if we know all the answers in advance. When paving new pathways and executing new plans, we must seriously consider the effects of our actions. The intention to care or do good is never enough.

This brief essay has two parts: Experimentation (orangutan) and Excavation (ceramic jars). The first part is about the problem that good intentions can result in harmful consequences, which was the dilemma Barbara Harrisson faced. The second part takes the question in a different direction by considering something that is increasingly understood as harmful or perhaps even cruel to instead think of it as beneficial, careful, and maybe even rehabilitative.

Part 1: Experimentation

The year was 1956 and Barbara Harrisson experimented with the idea of rehabilitating orangutans. Orphaned infant orangutans were being sent to the Sarawak Museum, only to die in cages shortly after. She was loath to send these apes to cold concrete and iron-barred zoos in the UK. She was equally loath to send them to what she considered 'third-rate zoos' in cities like Manila or Johor Baharu. Unable to fend for themselves, orphaned orangutans couldn't be sent back to different forests which by then were being actively exploited by newly introduced motorized chainsaws. It was entirely out of the question for her that orangutans become domesticated pets, because she was certain they would succumb to diseases and malnutrition from hu-

man contact. She instead sought a hitherto untested way of finding a form of eventual independence for these orphaned orangutans.

The problem of how to instil independence was as much a political dilemma for Sarawak's colonial society as it was a programmatic one in the Harrisson household where the experiment of rehabilitating orangutans began. The kernel of Barbara Harrisson's idea began just a year after the Asian-African Conference in neighbouring Indonesia. There, leaders from Africa and Asia articulated the Third World stance against 'colonialism in all of its manifestations'.[1] It was fifteen years after the last White Rajah, a British subject whose family personally owned Sarawak for a century, had promised Sarawak's eventual self-governance in 1941. He later reneged that promise and transferred Sarawak to Britain in 1946. Three years later, the first British appointed governor of Sarawak was assassinated. As a form of punishment, the colonial state forbade political participation for Malays, who made up about a third of Sarawak's population.[2] Ongoing British colonialism had to end. Everyone knew it. The problem was how.

Barbara Harrisson's husband Tom had been the curator of the Sarawak Museum since the end of World War II and Barbara was a German-born university-educated volunteer who gained British citizenship through her second husband. When I met her in 2006 in the Netherlands, she spoke of herself as a 'British colonial'. Her persistent German accent and serious tone uttering those words did not betray any irony. Remembering her actions and her sincere work to instil freedom for orangutans serves as a reminder that even colonials have a vision of decolonization.

The story of Eve, the infant orangutan might best illustrate what could be described as a specifically colonial desire to control the outcomes of Harrisson's experiment with independence. Eve was the second orangutan infant who came into her care. Eve's predecessor wasn't Adam, as readers might imagine, but Bob. Bob was named for a visiting director from an American museum. This story may be familiar either from Barbara Harrisson's memoir *Orang Utan* in 1962[3] or from my 2018 book *Decolonizing Extinction*[4], yet I think it's worth further consideration on the question of when care becomes cruel.

Barbara Harrisson tells the story of how her matronly Malay domestic worker Dayang, in want of a baby to finally care for in the Harrisson household, immediately took under her care. Yet Eve refused to eat and Dayang understood this as Eve's refusal to live. Barbara rejected Dayang's interpretation and in, Barbara Harrisson's own words, she 'violently' force fed Eve with a glass pipette.

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1 Asian-African Conference 1955.

2 Leigh 1974.

3 Harrisson 1962a, 224.

4 Parreñas 2018.

Caring for Eve in Barbara Harrisson's sense of care included cruelty, foreshadowing the work of care at today's orangutan rehabilitation centres where workers hit orangutans in order to prevent them from getting too acclimatized and accustomed to human contact. They call this kind of cruelty 'tough love', which they contrast to a mother's love. Ironically, Barbara Harrisson called the tough love that she came to embody after observing wild orangutan behaviour 'ape motherhood'. Her knowledge of apes was hard-gained through hours of observation during which she climbed up to the tree canopies where orangutans dwelled, tying herself to the trunk of a Dipterocarpus tree equipped with a camera and notepad. From this vantage point, she was able to record behaviour of juvenile apes – what biologists would later call behavioural sampling.

By 1962, the Harrissons scrambled to solidify material orangutan protections before Sarawak would cease its status as a British Crown Colony the next year, and while they still had an audience with the British-appointed Chief Secretary and Conservator of Forests. The Harrissons fretted about the fate of orangutans, especially those whose habitats included the new nation of Indonesia, which was the first nation-state after World War II to succeed in gaining independence through violence. Tom Harrisson's letter to the conservator explains that the Harrisson's 'experiments of letting young orphaned Maias grow up half-wild has now proved that it is possible to educate them back to wild living'.[5] That official granted them permission to continue their experiment at Bako National Park. The first, only, and last orangutans at Bako were Arthur and Cynthia.

The national park ultimately proved to be too small and too busy with beach-going visitors, as evidenced by a document held in Sarawak Museum records with a question that seems too specific to be hypothetical. The question posed is about a *maias*, the word for orangutan commonly used in Sarawak from the nineteenth until mid-twentieth century: a cognate of the word *mawas* used in Sumatra, Indonesia. The question goes, 'If a maias introduced into the Bako Nat'l Park injures a visitor or if a visitor, say a child, injures itself running away from the maias in terror, would Government be legally liable for damages?' The next file in the folder offers an answer: 'In short, yes…'[6] Arthur and Cynthia had been transferred earlier to the custody of the Sarawak Museum, which in practice at the time meant Barbara and Tom Harrisson's home. They originally came from Sabah, then in a period of transition from a British Crown Colony of North Borneo which had been administered until World War II by a corporation intended to exploit the territory's resources into the newly formed federal state of Malaysia, whose post-colonial leaders were also keen on exploiting Sabah's resources. Sabah's Conservator wanted these orangutans to undergo the experiment of rehabilitation instead of sending them to an overseas

5 Harrisson 1962 b, 27 Feb 1962.

6 Harrisson 1962 b, 25 Sept 1962.

zoo. Barbara Harrisson personally returned the two orangutans to Sabah for what she had planned to be four to six weeks, before the experiment of orangutan rehabilitation was to continue at Sepilok Orangutan Rehabilitation Center.

In a mere matter of days upon arrival in Sabah, one of Sepilok's two workers shot and killed Arthur while Barbara Harrisson was away. Both workers reported to Stanley De Silva and said that Arthur had 'ran amok', a curious phrase rooted in a Malay idiom for what is understood by medical anthropologists as a form of psychosis.[7] Supposedly having pushed down a water tank, the ape cornered the workers. The men felt their lives were endangered, so they killed the ape. De Silva did not believe them because the ground was dry. Yet he felt that he could not punish them: he needed them to keep working at a time when they could have easily gotten jobs as loggers, for this was a time in which deforestation in Sabah accelerated.

Barbara Harrisson, when speaking about it with me in Friesland (Leeuwarden) decades later, was convinced that 'De Silva could not punish the civil servant. He was Ceylonese, just like de Silva. De Silva could not punish his own countryman on the command of a British colonial.'[8] De Silva figured that it had been his Malay worker, not the Ceylonese. Years later, De Silva was forced to retire and a Malay officer took his place. This to me begs the question to what extent postcolonial racial politics might inform De Silva's memory as they apparently did Barbara Harrisson's? We cannot really know.

Cynthia died in a different set of circumstances than Arthur. Her death is illustrative of what can happen through liberation following decolonization. She was seen examining a clay mound with a hole in it. Subsequently, her hand became swollen and blue, then her entire arm. She soon died, most likely because a cobra had inhabited the hole in the clay mound.

If we think the cause of her death was a lack of planning, of having too much freedom when she was insufficiently trained for the responsibility such freedom would entail, then Cynthia was a victim of neglect. But if we recognize Cynthia's pursuit of curiosity as her own experimentation, we see her as a subject experiencing liberation and freedom of movement before her death.

I am inclined to see Cynthia's actions as experimentation. At the very least, she pursued her curiosity. Experimentation, whether with orangutans or with decolonization, entails trying things out and building ad hoc plans. It is not about resolutions. Nor can it end future inquiries into what other plans might arise. Indeed, experiments open other possibilities: some hopeful, some fatal, and oftentimes combinations of both.

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7 Quoted in Parreñas 2018. For more on running amok, see Good and Good 2001.

8 Quoted on page 173 of Parreñas 2018.

Part 2: Excavation (Ceramics)

In the aftermath of official decolonization, Barbara Harrisson was at a crossroads. Staying on Borneo in either Sabah or Sarawak was not a possibility. Conversations with the Wenner-Gren Foundation and the chance of a primatology position at a Max Planck Institute in West Germany led to nowhere. Instead, she took the opportunity to pursue a PhD with Stanley O'Connor, Professor of Southeast Asian Art History at Cornell University, whom she had met in Sarawak when he was conducting archaeological field research. In a *festschrift* written in celebration of her advisor's retirement and published in the year 2000, her words offer inspiration for how to think of the work of museums as something other than extractive exploitation.

Fig. 1: Barbara Harrisson for her PhD dissertation studied the craft of pottery on Borneo, similar to what is depicted here in 1948 in West-Kalimantan. Pottery was a multicultural cottage industry comprising of Chinese potting families and Dayak consumers. Collection Nationaal Museum Van Wereldculturen, Coll.nr. TM-10014150.

In this section, I want us to think about the potential of excavation as something that is not about the cruel taking, looting, or coercive deprivation of meaningful cultural effects, but something akin to its root sense of hollowing out, which comes from the Latin *cavo* for hollow which – for the philologically inclined –is rooted in *keue,* a proto-Indo-European word for vault/hole. Instead of thinking of a hollow as something lacking, of it being an absence that is sharply felt as theft, I instead want to think of hollowing or excavation in a capacity to hold things for safekeeping, like a vault or hole.

Here it helps to know Barbara Harrisson's academic specialization. Her PhD thesis was not about the Hindu-Buddhist relics of empires past that had been fetishized by colonial-era Southeast Asian art collectors. She was instead interested in something more modest, but nevertheless significant. Her dissertation *Pusaka: Heirloom Jars of Borneo*[9] was about large ceramic jars that were first manufactured in continental Asia (mostly present-day China) and traded for harvests and jungle produce on Borneo starting from around the eighth century in the common era. Bornean travellers from the interior would strap these jars to their bodies for the long treks from coastal entrepots and used them to store drinking water, grain, and sometimes as vessels for ancestral bones. They were passed on as heirlooms and many of them would eventually be replaced by reproductions made in the nineteenth century and later by a Chinese diaspora of potters who migrated to Borneo. Her research included considerations of shards (broken pots), intact pots purchased by and donated to museums like the Princessehof and Borneo's museums, field work with multigenerational Chinese potter families in Sabah, and Dayaks whose families had once owned heirloom pots but who often had sold them to buy newly available goods like motorized rice threshers. Barbara Harrisson, like her PhD advisor Stan O'Connor, saw Southeast Asia as 'a cosmopolitan world threaded together by the great web of regional and international sea-born Asian trade'.[10] Barbara Harrisson described herself as a PhD student as having been 'overexposed to field research' and banished by her advisor to 'the dungeons of Olin Library' so as to have 'reading references to technical processes'.[11] Her recounting of how she first met her advisor attends to his technical processes of doing archaeology as an art historian on Borneo. As we look at this passage of two paragraphs, we should pay attention to her word choice. Excavating for her seems to be synonymous with gleaning, a word that anthropologists Amiel Bize[12] and Xenia Charkaev[13] use to describe the practice of marginalized people in claiming leftover or waste.

9 Harrisson 1984.
10 O'Connor 1986, 2.
11 Harrisson 2000, 87.
12 Bize 2020, 462–86.
13 Charkaev 2023.

Harrisson writes the following:

> 'Tropical rains and floods continually disturbed the contours of Borneo's landscape. Erosion, deposits of sand and silt, and lush vegetation had fragmented the sparse remains of human industry. One **sifted and gleaned** through them in the heat of the day. Small details were difficult to recover.
>
> Reconstructions of Southeast Asian prehistory are usually founded on archaeological data. But evidence **gleaned** from beliefs captured in the folklore, costumes, and traditions of the various peoples inhabiting the land are equally important. This is especially true in Borneo where human culture is so rich and varied. Any person can identify him or herself in any number of ways. Whether originally Malay, Chinese, or a member of a Dayak group, he or she can consider him or herself a Sarawakian, an Indonesian, a Malaysian, a Christian, a Muslim, or the follower of a local cult. Human culture in Borneo is complexly plural. **To gain access to it, to accept and understand it, meant feeling one's way through this variety**. For Stan [O'Connor], the art of this region included boulders carved with symbols and figures, the relics of graves temples or shrines, and overwhelmingly the remnants of an iron industry as well as imported ceramics. Stoneware, porcelain, and beads of glass or stone, all shipped from across the South China Sea, were the most commonly **excavated** artifacts. In the past, these objects indicated wealth to the local people. Explaining this to the contemporary workmen while they recovered mounds of dirt brought forth much hilarity.'[14]

The subject of interests here to both Stan O'Connor and Barbara Harrisson are not just material objects divorced from folklore, costumes, and traditions or a list that could also include aesthetics, taste, artistic flairs, creative quirks, histories, dreams, or any other of the myriad social or cultural forms that compose what we call culture. There is also no claim to present items holistically as if they can stand as totalizing representations of a culture or people. The modesty and recognition of the limitations of what is ever knowable is expressed through the idea of 'feeling one's way'. Likewise, there is recognition that people hold myriad identities and senses of self, that there is not a locking in or capturing of complex selves under a singular label. And perhaps more importantly, as suggested by the workmen who laughed at the idea that their buckets of discard were once signs of wealth, that the things that an art historian or ceramics expert or an archaeologist may value is not intrinsically valuable, that discard or waste can have meaning and value.

14 Harrisson 2000, 86.

Conclusion

How can the question of when care becomes cruel help reconsider kinship in the ethnographic museum? I am wary of offering any prescription or remedy, precisely because a prescription or to-do list assumes a triumphant plan for success. Like Myanthi Fernando in this volume, I do not think that we can ever really know anything with certainty. Instead, what I think we can have is experimentation, when we try things out without knowing if they will succeed, and excavation, when we create a hollow space to hold things or ideas that may be valuable or may just be laughable waste. Whether you see the ethnographic museum like Miriam Ticktin in this volume, who sees the museum as holding the debris of ongoing racist violence, or whether you, like the artist Yuki Kihara in her installation *Going Native,* see the museum as a way of engaging ideas of the Pacific from iconic locations of Dutch colonial heritage: the ethnographic museum fosters careful sifting, recovering, gleaning, and safe-keeping of objects which in turn creates value. Whether such objects had been treasured or discarded or perhaps even both, the museum in its ideal form works as a vessel that can hold them.

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Museums of Non-Natural History

Kathryn Yusoff

In the ledger of colonial geology there are missing earths: Earths that only appear as negative inscription, undergrounded, beneath the image of colonial earth (that we now call the Anthropocene). Indigenous earths. Black earths. Brown earths. Blood red earth. In the ledger of public culture there are missing museums: Museums that only appear as negative inscription of artefacts that speak to whole worlds trampled, objects of the erased that signal broken architectures of the oppressed and colonized. Theft is only a partially visible process.

Museums chart histories that have been structurally disappeared only to return in artefactual form, as relics or totems, in some anthropological dream of colonialism. As established by Césaire, those 'who have invented neither gunpowder nor compass…Those whose voyages have been uprootings…' are disappeared by the museum. 'Those who have become flexible to kneeling… Those who were domesticated and christianized' are overdetermined by objectified remains and residues of geotrauma. The object replaces actual worlds, becoming a phobic object that bridges loss and is hurtful. So, what of the 'returns' that museums are currently negotiating? What of the toxic afterlife of these deadened objects of forgotten geographies? Objects that are literally infused with toxicity from the pesticides and insecticides of museum preservation processes. The historical use of pesticides – DDT, arsenic, and mercury – in order to protect collections from living histories means objects are contaminated not only by colonial heritage but also by the practices of museum maintenance of that heritage as stasis.

The Central African Rhodes Centenary Exhibition 1953 in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia), for example, set up to celebrate the legacy of the white supremacist Cecil Rhodes, billed itself as a vast show of the peoples and cultures of Africa.[1] The Africa imagined, in its continental appearance by the indifferent colonial powers of Britain, France, Belgian, and Portuguese 'territories', was one of raw materials and 'exotic' cultural performances. On the occasion of the 1953 world tour of Her Majesty the

1 The research on Cecil Rhodes and African Futures is part of a collaborative practice by Planetary Portals (Kerry Holden, Casper Laing Ebbensgaard, Micheal Salu) on the 'diabolic architectures of colonialism'.

Queen Mother, the pavilions exhibited industry and raw materials, including gold, iron, coal, diamonds, copper, and people. As the colonial script narrated the chorus of natural resources, newspapers delightedly reported on the exhibition of 'native' huts 'showing how the native lives' (headline for The Chronicle, 17 June 1953).

The 'African Village is unique'. It was. 'If you travelled from the Cape to the Belgium Congo and visited all African villages in between, you would not find one like the African village at the Rhodes Centenary Exhibition. For there is not one like it in existence,' said Dr. E.H. Ashton, Bulawayo Municipality's Director of Native Administration, addressing the National Affairs Association. There was not one like it, because it was a fantastical village of the colonial imagination, an invention of museological desire that sought to archive a people. The article recounts how the 'Matabele were approached and a leading organisation of Africans in Bulawayo was given what was thought to be the privilege of building huts. The African replied that they thought the time was more one of mourning, than celebration, and refused.' This, Dr. E.H. Ashton said, 'gave an interesting sight of African opinion, often unknown and mostly unheeded in the Colony. But the Matabele huts were built.' The show went on, with or without 'those without whom the earth would not be earth'. The connection that I want to make here is that the colonial imagination requires those that make the earth what it is, those that labour in the mud and mire alongside the gold and the diamonds, must be made to culturally perform in the categorization of 'The African', 'The native' so that valuation can be controlled by the colonizer. This carceral categorization organizes the field in which the cultural operation of devaluation can be exercised. They, the wretched of the earth, as Fanon tenderly calls them, need to be there for the colonialist as objectified and solidified in an imagined past, and thus in a foreclosed futurity. The spatiality of the classification of race – as native, primitive, extinction, or mystification – is both a distance from the earth and a dehumanization of subjectivity. The repetition of alienation is made to travel across 'raw matter' to imagine both subjects and earth as a one-way axis of transformation (i.e., the earth is not imagined as transforming the colonial subject, only as being subjected to his will, the same is true of indigenous cultures). The anti-colonial will is the reversal of this subjugation, the recognition of geography and geology as an intimate, shared, and powerful subjectivity. Colonial logics proceed through a dehumanizing, necrotizing relation that dismantles the possibility of certain kinds of relations while prioritizing others. First, it prioritizes the action of containment, which is the severing of relations that bring into being the 'thing' exhibited. This is as true for diamonds as it is for the 'native' huts, which is why racialized persons and commercial products can exist (and still exist) in the colonial imagination in the same ledger. Visceral subjection and the vicissitudes of colonial dreams of racialized others as a resource to be exploited are one in the same. It is reported that the Matabele said they would not participate because the era that Rhodes represented was a time of mourning. Mourning for the massacre Rhodes enacted on the Nde-

bele (Matabele) people in 1893–94, and the subsequent repression and formation of the territory officially known as Rhodesia. Today, we still debate the merits of letting Rhodes occupy public space in England and South Africa. The conservative government of Britain has included his statue on the heritage list, a protected history in the history of the protected. This refusal to redress the public culture of harm of colonialism raises a dual question: What kind of museums need to be built to both repatriate a dynamic relationality with earths (not the earth) and respond to the afterlives of geotrauma enacted by colonialism?

The Martinique poet and politician Aimé Césaire called for the creation of museums of 'non-natural history' for all the histories that were made outside of colonial historicizing, white historicity, and its pronouncements of a singular universal history of 'man' (which designated Europe and the West as the apex and museums as the narrative police of that historicizing). He saw colonial culture as a museum culture, obsessed with cataloguing and categorizing to make artefacts of a dead world, an unnatural world. Edouard Glissant advocated that 'we would inhabit Museums of Natural Non-History' which 're-activate an aesthetics of the earth'. These museums of non-natural history would gather all the erased and discarded histories left in the earth and use them to tell the stories of the forgotten and erased. Césaire argued in his *Discourse on Colonialism* that colonists used museums to replace reality and to manufacture myths about the colonizers and the colonized that justified and reified colonialism. Colonialism through the appropriation of objects and narratives about the colonized was presented as a natural or anthropological outcome of history, through the disciplines of ethnography and science. That is, museums were the accomplishment of the 'naturalized' superiority of white supremacy. Anthropology was the interpretative grid that gave legitimacy to the European gaze, stolen geography and its infliction of geotrauma were its institutionalized practice.

Fig. 1: Small bottle containing asphalt, manufactured by the Colonial Museum Haarlem, 1896–1909. Collection Nationaal Museum Van Wereldculturen, Coll.nr. 7161–64.
Fig. 2: Drawer of the school collection box containing tropical products from Indonesia and Suriname, such as an edible bird's nest, arrowroot, and mushrooms. The box was a gift to Dutch Crown-Princess Juliana by the Colonial Institute Amsterdam, 1915. Collection Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen, Coll.nr. TM-4108-815.

Césaire suggested that we need museums of non-natural history that are the result of sympathy for, rather than power over, the colonised. Museums that might be curated around redress and reparation of the irreparable. Museums that might put the space of loss at their centre. The Nairobi-based architectural practice Cave_bureau suggest a parallel imagined institution, 'The Benevolent Reparations Institute' (BRIT), that will provide a new 'Imagination Fund' for Africa, which will attract the return of stolen wealth to the global south for the use of arts and funding of new forms of architecture that re-engage the past lives of ancestors, human and non-human, to enable their future. One example is their proposal for the Maasai Cow Corridor that would see cows and their Masai herders return to the city in architectures built around their existence and renewal. The fund, the Cave_bureau suggest, will not rely on Western guilt but will draw back extracted wealth through a reversed pull of what they call 'remedial acts of Reverse Futurism'. A critical aspect of this architectural practice is the return of imagination and the foregrounding of resistant acts to counter colonial geotrauma. The geologic, the earth and its architectures of shelter and provision are included as partners in the healing process. De-coupling the segregations between human and inhuman life is one of the first steps in this redress.

The universal or planetary as a world culture (or futurity not defined by race and racism) is only possible once such accommodations have been made for the histories of colonial geotrauma and its forward shock that continues to configure colonial afterlives. The future or forward shock is a way to conceptualize the space that geo-

trauma takes, as an absent presence and a physic space that must be borne. While objects might be returned, there is a more subtle geography of geotrauma that is the result of what grows around what is taken (as subjectivity or symbolic worlds anchored in cultural artefacts); relations left behind have to adapt to loss, which in turn changes the psychic experience of time and the material organization of the future. It is necessary to notice not just what is taken but how what is taken impacts on how survival is experienced in the legacy of colonial afterlives. Such anti-colonial methodologies in the museum might privilege the mis-reading of archives towards a summoning of its erasures. Redirecting forms of disruption requires attention to both the effects and the emotions of geotrauma, and an apprehension of uncertainty and unknowing in how those losses might need to be regarded, witnessed, and by whom.

Jermain Ostiana, a writer and poet from Curaçao, writing in *The Guardian* about the formal apology given by the Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte about the Netherlands' historic role in colonialism suggests that, 'One of the most important tenets of reparatory justice for colonial violence under international law is cessation and the guarantee of non-repetition; to this day, it remains a principle they have never lived up to.' While Rutte's apology, delivered in the institutional space of the national archives in The Hague, acknowledged that the past 'cannot be erased, only faced up to', it failed to address the question of renewal in institutional relations that maintain the power to choose the dimensions and demands of representation, and thus it failed to structurally organise against repetition. Part of the challenge of working with historical geotraumas – or unnatural history – is to see its present and to practise the reactivation of archives against the will and power of colonial institutions. Radical thought around geotrauma – understood in the fullness of the earth-based, place-based, relation-based dimensions of colonial theft – defies the comfort of repatriation as a possibility of simple exchange, and asks instead for redress that re-substantiates the terms of engagement and power. Such redress must be scripted by those that live in the future shock of colonial afterlives and it must speak to the on-going degradation of the earth outside of the museum walls as the basis of on-going indignities.

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Alongside One Another: Myth-Making and Risk in Narrativizing Enslavement at the Cape of Good Hope

Amie Soudien

Content note: This essay discusses rape and sexual assault.

Introduction

I focus on the narrativization of two women's lives: Krotoa, an indigenous Goringhaicona woman who was born and had lived in the Cape all her life; and Ansla van Bengalen, an enslaved woman who had living memory of her home, culture, and the Indian Ocean's middle passage. Krotoa and van Bengalen were among 'the first' women to experience the Cape of Good Hope under the influence of the Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC) in the same period of the seventeenth century, and over the course of their lifetimes, became embroiled in the affairs of early VOC society. The audacious thrust of this intellectual pursuit is to explore the generative possibilities of Krotoa and van Bengalen's imagined shared space; their witnessing of and participation in the rapidly changing circumstances of the self-contained, precarious environment of the early VOC settlement. The primary motivation of this study is to consider how alternative methodologies that take seriously the realm of the speculative and the imaginative can offer insight into the lives of historical figures silenced by the confines of the archival record during a critical period in South African history.

In exploring a shared period in the lives of Krotoa and van Bengalen I deploy a speculative historical approach, largely informed by Saidiya Hartman's critical fabulation, and additionally by the work of Yvette Abrahams who has written extensively on the life of Krotoa, most notably in this instance in her essay 'Was Eva Raped? An Exercise in Speculative History'.[1] Foundational to this approach is a Black feminist commitment to 'take care' of the historical raced, gendered figure rendered 'fragile' in the fragmentary archival record,[2] cognizant, too, that this methodological ap-

1 Abrahams 1996.

2 Gordon 2008, 6.

proach is, by its very nature, beset by risk and possible failure in the impossibility of accessing the past.

The historical scene for this exploration is the Fort de Goede Hoop, the primary seat of the VOC settlement in the Cape of Good Hope. The Fort was located disruptively in the middle of a long-established grazing route; a positioning that posed a direct and existential affront to the Khoekhoe.[3] Both Krotoa and van Bengalen would have inhabited the Fort during roughly the same period, between 1657 and into the 1660s. Built in present-day Cape Town in 1652 under VOC Commander Jan van Riebeeck, the construction of the Fort has been claimed as a false 'beginning' of South African colonial history. In white nationalist narratives of the country, this so-called 'start' of European engagement at the Cape of Good Hope, a contested region of colonial conquest since the sixteenth century, is an active site of myth-making. The re-appraisal of this scene through the imagined lens of two notable women is an attempt to contend with their inaccessible interiorities: their decision-making and thought-processing through the major historical events that took place around them. It is worth noting that the context for this setting is unrecoverable, too, as the Fort itself was demolished in 1674 and replaced in function by the Castle of Good Hope, which still stands today.

I frame this discussion with a conception of the Fort as a de facto *household*; a place in which free and unfree people lived and worked in the process of establishing the European settlement. I am invested in how these conditions of 'enforced proximity'[4] within slave-owning households produced the 'relationships that … profoundly shaped South African … society'.[5] As they are among the first people to live out these dynamics, I am curious about Krotoa and van Bengalen, in their distinct roles and social statuses, as witnesses *and* participants in the changing landscape of this new society. What was the impact of these quickly shifting circumstances on the women's psychologies?

To these ends, I return to the lost space of the Fort de Goede Hoop to explore the ethics of storytelling from the era of enslavement; a history that is poorly understood and frequently overlooked in South Africa.[6] Despite its contested significance in South Africa's origin story, 1652 is nonetheless notable as the advent of a set of interpersonal, domestic, and early racialized dynamics produced by the introduction

3 Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 21.

4 Macharia 2019, 1.

5 Shell 1994, xxvi.

6 For reasons I am committed to uncovering, enslavement which existed in South Africa in some shape from 1654–1838 is largely ignored within the narrative of the country's history, eclipsed by British colonialism in the nineteenth century (Shell 1994, xxiv) and the more recent period of apartheid in the twentieth century.

of slavery by the VOC. As posited by Mason,[7] Shell[8] and others, the slave-owning household became a fundamental unit in the social organization of the VOC (and later, British) settler community, and a well-established site of gendered and sexualized violence. In discussing historical instances of these abuses, I draw direct correlations to South Africa's contemporary gendered and sexualized violence crisis, as South African feminist scholars have done before me.[9]

Saidiya Hartman's conception of critical fabulation best describes my approach to Krotoa's and van Bengalen's stories.[10] Critical fabulation entails the re-examination of the historical data available and re-assessing the hierarchies of the production of this knowledge from the perspective of the present, drawing together sources and ideas to 'loop the strands' left open by absence, silence, non-reportage.[11] However, 'to loop the strands' should not, as Hartman warns, be an attempt to find resolution.[12] As praxis, critical fabulation reveals the logics and motivating forces of storytelling, and is attentive to the potential of failure because it acknowledges both the project's inherent risk and its generativity.[13] The work of speculation and the employment of the imaginative is subject to the projections and desires of the author; the possibility of enacting further violence is thus ever present. Not all reclaiming or speculative work is inherently caring, nor sensitive to matters of power. In light of this, critical fabulation is an important self-reflexive approach that examines the subjective impulses through which all history is mediated. I employ the ethos of critical fabulation as a guiding framework in this study as I navigate the arena of speculation within the historical milieu.

Krotoa, in particular, has been the subject of numerous historiographic, fictional, and semi-fictional narratives. In their time at the Fort both Krotoa and van Bengalen were young girls. Because Krotoa lived in service to van Riebeeck and family at various junctures in his ten-year tenure at the Cape, her connection to van Riebeeck is an area of recurring fascination in the public imagination. In popular

7 Mason 2003.

8 Shell 1994. Here I would like to note that I do not reference Robert Shell in this context uncritically. In his landmark study of slavery in South Africa, *Children of Bondage*, Shell asserts that the domestic, slave-owning household is a neglected scene in understanding the dynamics of interpersonal relations, power, and hierarchy during South Africa's early colonial period (Shell 1994, xxix). This salient insight is complicated by Patricia van der Spuy's incisive critique of Shell's analysis of gender and labour in her journal article "What, Then, Was the Sexual Outlet for Black Males?" A Feminist Critique of Quantitative Representations of Women Slaves at the Cape of Good Hope in the Eighteenth Century' (van der Spuy 1996).

9 Baderoon 2015b; Gqola 2015.

10 Hartman 2008.

11 Hartman 2008, 12.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid.

conceptions of South African history, Krotoa is generally understood as an important figure in indigenous history and a go-between figure between the indigenous Khoekhoe and the VOC delegation, owing to her adept skill with languages. As a central participant in a deeply fraught political conflict, Krotoa's story is frequently characterized as tragic. She has simplistically been framed as a person 'between' cultures; unable to cope with the shifting social circumstances of her life.[14] [15] Nevertheless, Krotoa has been claimed by various groups as a 'foremother' or 'rainbow Mother' of South African society.[16] This mediation of her story has meant that Krotoa has been subjected to seemingly unending scrutiny by her contemporaries, historians, detractors, and admirers – even in death.

In contrast, van Bengalen's story is not widely known amongst the South African public, although she, too, is considered a foremother of South African society.[17] However, Ansla appears frequently in anecdotal fashion within published histories on the early VOC Cape as an exceptional figure of the period; as a landowner and entrepreneur whose children would marry into Cape European society.[18] Stitching these pieces of her life together, in combination with archival research, I created a walking tour, *Following Ansla van Bengalen* (2016), a speculative history in which I explored her unstable relationships to power, cognizant that van Bengalen's story, and her family's ascending social mobility in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, runs parallel to the early years of the VOC settlement at the Cape.

Developing *Following Ansla van Bengalen* (2016) was an important way for me to explore the conflicting questions about her life in proximity to VOC society in a quasi *in situ* fashion. Walking through the historic centre of Cape Town, from Church Square to the VOC-era Company's Garden, I was able to engage with the existing public traces made by the seventeenth century settlement whilst introducing van Bengalen's story to new audiences. By situating histories of enslavement and the lives of enslaved people in direct relation to sites such as the Company's Garden – a well-used public space that, to my knowledge, has no significant commemoration of enslaved people within it – I also purposefully positioned van Bengalen's narrative in direct relation to living bodies in space. In seeking out this unobtainable proximity to the past, through shared contextual clues I began to imagine Krotoa and van Bengalen as two living people working and surviving within earshot of one another.

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14 Abrahams 1996, 3.

15 This is the primary narrative of the full-length South African feature film *Krotoa* (2017), directed by Roberta Durant. One of the taglines for the film reads: 'Caught between two cultures about to collide'.

16 Samuelson, 2007.

17 Gqola 2010b, 126.

18 Böeseken 1977; Shell 1994; Du Preez 2008; Schoeman 2009; Malan 2012; Newton-King 2012; Ward 2012.

Still, it is important to note that I do not situate van Bengalen and Krotoa together to draw direct points of comparison between them. Their concurrent situating is an opportunity to explore the many concurrent social and legal statuses of women from different backgrounds of the period; to parse through ideas around their parallel experiences and public statuses of exceptionalism (particularly within the tropes of South African exceptionalism), and to reveal the possibility of other modes of relational orientation beyond the interest or scope of the colonial diarist, such as van Riebeeck.

As I became aware of van Bengalen's proximity to Krotoa, van Bengalen became real and the shape of her life came into sharper focus; the stakes of *their* living were made all the more tangible. Van Bengalen was no longer a singularly anecdotal figure, but rather something of a fully formed woman living alongside – or at least in near proximity to – another marginalized woman noted in the historiographic and archival record. Van Bengalen's challenges, while significantly different from Krotoa's, could be contextualized within a more complex system of political domination.

Exposing my personal sentiments, as the researcher I commit the error of projection. Hartman asks why we tell stories, and to what ends: 'For whom – for us or for them?'[19] Thus, operating within the role of the narrator I contend with the ethics of this storytelling; the shaping and contorting of these fragments of truth until they resemble the 'accepted judgements' of history writing, as Abrahams states.[20] Working with the historiographic record, I am confronted by the convictions and judgements of their authors; small and significant leaps of conjecture that have the capacity to be both caring and careless. In reflecting upon this critical juncture in South African history, I draw correlations and distinctions between myth-making as revisionist historical propaganda and the work of speculation, fiction, and artistic interpretation as a feminist tool for the recuperation – however incomplete – of lost histories, unrecorded experiences.

Gleaning from the record

So let us return to Ansla and Krotoa's timeline, and what I would argue may have been a particularly crucial period of their lives:

Their paths could have first crossed in February of 1657, when van Bengalen arrived at the Cape on the ship *Amersfoort*, captained by Pieter Kemp, following her capture off the coast of Bengal.[21] Slavery at the Cape was not yet sanctioned by the VOC, but a number of officials obtained enslaved people for their personal use and

19 Hartman 2008, 3.

20 Abrahams 1996, 4.

21 Böeseken 1977, 9.

in the conventions of this practice, van Bengalen was sold by Pieter Kemp to Jan van Riebeeck.[22]

By this time, some five years into van Riebeeck's role as Commander at the Cape, Krotoa had had extensive engagement with the VOC, although she was likely only fifteen or sixteen years old. According to V.C. Malherbe, in the book titled *Krotoa, called 'Eva'*[23], Krotoa began working for the van Riebeecks as a young girl, possibly at around the age of ten. Jan van Riebeeck's wife, a French Huguenot woman named Maria de la Queillerie, had recently given birth and Krotoa was brought into the household to help care for the new baby as a diplomatic arrangement between the VOC and the Khoekhoe. This account, however, is challenged by Abrahams who suggests that Krotoa may have been kidnapped in 1652 in a skirmish on the Salt River, and remained at the Fort until 1653 to be rescued by her clan following the murder of a VOC employee by the Khoekhoe, the first recorded murder by the Khoekhoe that century.[24]

The Fort itself was an unusual and singular structure of its kind on the Cape landscape – a lone symbol of van Riebeeck's vision of colonial strength. The VOC's presence was thus a threatened one, and many of the decisions the VOC officials made were a response to anxieties about their unstable position. Further, the Fort building itself was vulnerable to the harsh Cape elements, and was in constant need of repair.[25] The enslaved, van Riebeeck contended, were needed to grow the settlement.[26] The VOC's Heeren XVII refused his numerous requests for slaves until 1658, and prohibited the enslavement of the Khoekhoe, who refused to work for the VOC and were needed to maintain access to the area's resources.

Van Bengalen formed part of a very small group of enslaved people held at the Fort until a large group of around 174 enslaved people arrived on the *Amersfoort* in 1658. Their presence in the Cape was clandestine, as the *Amersfoort* pirated a slave ship *en route* from Angola to Brazil. The 174 people who arrived were part of an original group of 250, and the majority of the survivors were either young children or ill, which meant they could not be put to work immediately. Further, 'the best' enslaved people were ordered to be sent to Batavia, leaving 125 remaining people.[27] Shortly after the arrival of the Angolan enslaved people, a number of them deserted the settlement. Accused of collusion in the freeing of the enslaved, the Dutch kidnapped Autshumao, Krotoa's uncle (and initially the primary interlocutor between the VOC and Khoekhoe), who would be held hostage at the Fort for over a year.

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22 Böeseken 1977, 125.

23 Malherbe 1990.

24 Abrahams 1996, 13–14.

25 Worden, Van Heyningen, and Bickford-Smith 1998, 19.

26 Böeseken 1977, 5.

27 Böeseken 1977, 11.

In this period, Krotoa had since returned to 'work' at the Fort as a diplomatic envoy and was involved in high-stakes negotiations directly with van Riebeeck and others concerning the VOC's growing settlement and permanence in the valley.[28] She is noted as speaking Dutch well by van Riebeeck in 1657,[29] and is described by Malherbe as a 'cultural broker' during the hostage crisis working across vastly divergent epistemic paradigms.[30]

While Krotoa is recorded in reported speech, van Bengalen's record 'goes dark'. Van Bengalen was formally enslaved and had no real legal standing. Krotoa was still technically free, but this status was contingent on the success of her negotiations with the VOC. Her continued engagement with them meant that she was increasingly vulnerable to the nature of the VOC's power dynamics. That Krotoa had close and extended contact with the van Riebeeck family and others at the Fort since childhood likely compounded these factors. All the while, van Bengalen and the other 'household' enslaved people were maintaining the interior Dutch life of the fort in direct service to van Riebeeck and other VOC officials and employees. Although silent in the record, van Bengalen was presumably privy to intricacies of these cataclysmic social changes surrounding the settlement whilst adhering to the expectations of an enslaved woman in the Fort.

I imagine Krotoa's frequent and noted presence in the Fort; that she was known to everyone who resided there owing to her important role in political life in and around the settlement. Rather cinematically, I imagine that van Bengalen may have worked wordlessly in the background during heated negotiations for Autshumao's release, ignored by van Riebeeck in life, just as she was in his log books. It is tempting to imagine that van Bengalen and Krotoa exchanged words or knowing glances as they passed one another in a doorway, or in the courtyard. As Krotoa publicly bartered her knowledge, perhaps van Bengalen was gathering information of her own, plotting her next movements; the ideal course of action under the circumstances. The number of enslaved people, their living conditions and their roles may have been of great importance to Krotoa and the Khoekhoe; proof of the horror that could befall them should things go badly.

The arrival of the 174 Angolan enslaved, as we know now, escalated the VOC–Khoekhoe conflict,[31] and following the VOC's approval, a steady stream of slave ships would soon arrive. Robert Shell estimates that between 1658 and 1808 some sixty thousand enslaved people would be brought to the Cape, forever

28 Abrahams 1996; Malherbe 1990.

29 Van Riebeeck in Malherbe 1990, 14.

30 Malherbe 1990, 1.

31 Malherbe 1990, 16; Abrahams 1996, 54.

changing the interpersonal dynamics of the settlement and, indeed, what would become South Africa.[32]

Futures in a changing world

I wonder how van Bengalen and Krotoa personally negotiated their shared knowledge of others in bondage who ran away, while they both remained so entangled in the affairs of the VOC. These existential, life-altering events in rapid succession produced shifting points of re-orientation. By caring for the van Riebeeck children and at the same time being in proximity to the young captured enslaved children from Angola, they undoubtedly had first hand experiences of the discrepancies in the value of life. Did their pregnancies and the birth of their children in this environment produce more acute negotiation with living and survival? What plans and decisions would need to be made to ensure a life made liveable?

Van Bengalen herself would have three children born into and freed from slavery and four children inducted into European society as a result of her marriage to Dutchman Arnoldus Willemsz Basson in 1669.[33] The conflicting accounts of her seven children's parentage both obscure the troubling possibilities of how such children may have been conceived and diminish van Bengalen's personal calculations in navigating her situation. Krotoa would also marry a European associated with the VOC, a Danish surgeon named Pieter van Meerhof in 1664, noted as the first Christian marriage at the Cape of Good Hope between an Indigenous person and a European.[34] According to Malherbe, Krotoa had three children during her marriage to van Meerhof, two born prior to their marriage, and one child afterwards,[35] although accounts on their parentage differs. When Yvette Abrahams asks whether Eva was raped – note that she does not specify by whom – she speaks to the vulnerability of Krotoa in the Fort, but equally, the recognized use of rape as a colonial tool for subjugation and control. Rape, as theorized by Pumla Dineo Gqola,[36] Gabeba Baderoon and others,[37] is described as being bound up with the practice of colonialism; a mechanism that exerts and enacts domination upon those rendered most vulnerable. Regarding the particularities of slave ancestry in South Africa, Zoe Wicomb has it that the knowledge of sexual violence under these conditions – and the chil-

32 Shell 1994.
33 Robertson, n. d.
34 Malherbe 1990, 48.
35 Malherbe 1990, 44.
36 Gqola 2010a, 2015.
37 Baderoon 2015b, 2015a.

dren produced by systems of enslavement – reproduces and maintains generational shame in its descendants.[38]

I also raise the subject of rape and sexual violence in this context in relation to the limited recognition of family and kinship formations under the Cape's system of enslavement. VOC policy actively disrupted biological family formations in favour of what Stoler has called the creation of 'white prestige'.[39] As an inherited status, slavery was maintained through the maternal line.[40] By means of sexual violence or otherwise, sexual relations between enslaved women and free men – primarily Europeans – produced the creation of 'shadow families' as described by Hortense Spillers.[41] These families, racialized as 'Other', as not human, sustained the primary, 'legitimate' slave-owning family through their labour and produced the primary family's wealth. The shadow families were (and are) disavowed despite shared surnames/family names that denote a cohesive family unit.

Noting this, and the complexities of the free/unfree dichotomy, historians such as Anna Boeseken have noted the sustained relationships van Bengalen maintained in her life as a free woman.[42] Following her manumission in 1666 and her departure from the Fort, archival records show her attendance at numerous baptisms of free and unfree individuals. Notably, Anna de Koningh, the most famous of her daughters, would go on to marry Olaf Bergh, and inherit the estate Groot Constantia. Consequently, she would also 'inherit' a great many enslaved people who resided on the property.[43]

As it pertains to Krotoa's life, Abrahams asks us to trouble what has frequently been described as a life lived 'between' cultures.[44] In the literature, much is made of Krotoa's donning and casting off of European and Khoekhoe attire as symbolic of a perceived cultural tension.[45] Her eventual reliance on alcohol, and the removal of her children from her care later in life is morally framed as a sign of her poor state of mind and social alienation from both groups. I, like Abrahams, would argue that these instead reveal to us something far more complex: a response to the catastrophe of her environment.

I remain curious about Krotoa and van Bengalen's decisions about their allegiances; their capacities to have hope for better lives for their children – at great personal cost – and their difficult, seemingly contradictory positioning in proximity to colonial power. In this vein, I problematize questions of 'agency' and 'resis-

38 Wicomb 2018.
39 Stoler 2010, 54.
40 Shell 1994, 33.
41 Spillers 2017.
42 Böeseken 1977, 23.
43 *Groot Constantia* n. d.
44 Abrahams 1996, 3.
45 Malherbe 1990, 8.

tance' to make space for what Alexander Weheliye has described as: 'miniscule movements, glimmers of hope, scraps of food, the interrupted dreams of freedom found in those spaces deemed devoid of full human life …'.[46] Hartman tells us that in 'trying to represent what we cannot' we further expose the individuals of history to risk, to harm.[47] And worse, Hartman cautions, if we attempt to devise some fable from these fragmented, historical narratives we belabour the dead and their legacies to our own ends. It is this extractive attitude of something to be gained that turns historical figures into national symbols, that over-determines their life stories and forecloses meaning. In contexts such as ethnographic museums, how might these strategies operate when faced with the individuals documented in photographic collections, for example, that, in their acquisition, were denied personhood and remain unnamed and unidentified? And in South Africa, where histories of enslavement are either not accommodated in the national narrative or mythologized to political ends, I wonder, too, what it would mean to make peace with incommensurability: with undefined, conflicting narratives of lives lost.

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46 Weheliye 2014, 12.

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Making (a) Difference

Yuki Kihara's *Going Native* at Museum Volkenkunde

Sofia Miorelli

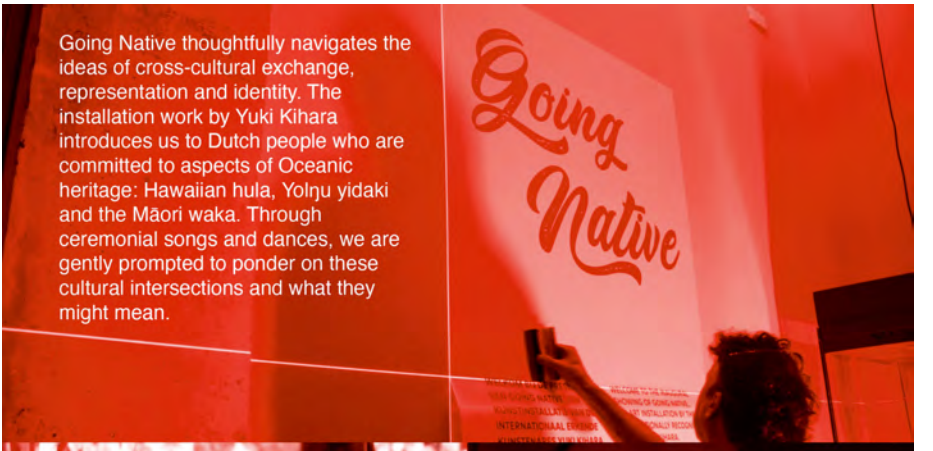
To take care may be understood as giving time and space to understand each other better, and to do this with a spirit of generosity. This form of care informs interdisciplinary artist Yuki Kihara's practice, including during her residency at the National Museum of World Cultures in the Netherlands. Kihara has long engaged with questions of how colonialism has shaped, and continues to shape, our contemporary human and more than human world, with a special focus on the Pacific. In her work, she explores issues of race and gender, but also of climate justice. As part of her ongoing inquiry into representations of the Pacific, its histories, peoples, and cultures, in Western art and historical narratives, Yuki Kihara's film installation *Going Native* offers a multifaceted and gentle probing of what it may mean to be a practitioner of performance tradition from a culture that is not one's own. As Kihara asks, might we be implicated in caring for the heritage of another?

Photo source credits

Page 1: Art installation: Ella Weehuizen; collection: RV-1222-15, Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW).
Page 2: Art installation: Ella Weehuizen; collection visit: Sofia Miorelli; collection: RV-A109-1-94, NMVW.
Page 3: Art installation: Ella Weehuizen; collection visit: Sofia Miorelli; collection: RV-350-484, NMVW.
Page 4: Art installation: Ella Weehuizen; collection visit: Sofia Miorelli; collection: RV-4397-3, NMVW.

Quoted texts are taken from the *Going Native* video works.

Going Native thoughtfully navigates the ideas of cross-cultural exchange, representation and identity. The installation work by Yuki Kihara introduces us to Dutch people who are committed to aspects of Oceanic heritage: Hawaiian hula, Yolŋu yidaki and the Māori waka. Through ceremonial songs and dances, we are gently prompted to ponder on these cultural intersections and what they might mean.




In the name of Hi'iaka-in-the-bosom-of Pele
'Ho'opuka e ka lā'
(The Sun Comes Up In The East')
Rise, O sun in the east
Rise, O sun in the east
With a procession going to Kumukahi
Rise, O sun in the east
With a procession going to Kumukahi
Dancing are the beautiful ones with Hi'iaka
And Kapo-Laka in the verdant grove
Moving ahead are the dancers toward me
And to the sacred presence of the divine.


The haka that we're going to do is the Tangaros haka, which was written especially for us.
May my hoe (paddle) devour the tides of Tangaroa
And breaking crests
He! (rise)
Smashing through tidal swells
Smashing through crests
May I never be overcome (overturned)
He!
No matter how large the objective
Even though I may be small and insignificant
I will never let my hoe lie in idleness
A mountainous ocean can be conquered by a canoe!
A mountain of people can never be conquered!
Because it is sacrosanct!
I am Njord the frenzied!
The awe!
The powerful!
Rise up your hoe!
He!


"It is the engagement with the people over there that has given me a bigger appreciation for the place where I come from. I am not an Aboriginal, I do not wish to be an Aboriginal. I am adopted, not initiated. I'll always remain a toddler when I walk around there, because that old-wise-men-knowledge will not be passed to me. So, just accept and appreciate where you come from and what you are knowledgeable in."
A mass produced instrument does not have character.

Conversation between Fernanda Olivares, Nicolás Spencer, Nora Haas, and Claudia Augustat

In September and October 2022, Fernanda Olivares, an activist, and Nicolás Spencer, an artist, both from Chile, came to Vienna for two weeks to conduct research at the Weltmuseum Wien. The aim of their visit was to develop work for *Extinctions!?*, an experimental exhibition, which opened at Weltmuseum Wien in February 2023, as part of the TAKING CARE project. Olivares and Spencer worked with objects from the Selk'nam, an Indigenous group, living in the Argentinean and Chilean Tierra del Fuego. The Selk'nam, which is the group to which Olivares belongs, are a recognized minority in Argentina, while in Chile they are considered extinct. The Selk'nam objects that Olivares and Spencer would engage with were collected by the missionary Martin Gusinde between 1923 and 1927.

This project forms part of the wider efforts for an analysis of the relation between objects and their environment in the context of extinction that is made in the works of Olivares and Spencer. For example, Olivares' community, the Covadonga Ona, are currently campaigning to be recognized under Chile's Indigenous Development and Protection Law. The aim of their work with the museum was to re-establish a relationship between the objects of the past and the people in the present, while intervening in the discourse of extinction that surrounds the group.

The following text is based on a conversation between Fernanda Olivares and Nicolás Spencer and the TAKING CARE team that took place during their stay in Vienna. While remaining close to what was said in the course of the conversation, the text has been edited for clarity.

Fig.1: Fernanda Olivares at the archive of the Steyler missionaries. © Nicolás Spencer.

Nicolás Spencer (NS): For me, the intention of this project, which is taking place within the framework of the Terra Ignota project[1], is to question the meaning of objects. What does the museum think about an object? How might this be the same or different from the meanings these objects had for those who made or use them? Or might their meanings be given to them by the visitor? We wanted to confront the Indigenous and the non-Indigenous perspectives in order to question what should happen with the objects.

Fernanda Olivares (FO): This is my first time working with a museum. For me, the entire process is experimental, as I didn't know what we would be doing here before we arrived. Now that we are here, it has evolved from an experimental process into a process of discovery. These are our guiding questions: why are things here, how are they shown? How can we change the perspectives that the public has about these objects?

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1 The ideas of meeting and encounter sparked the Terra Ignota project, which was initiated in 2015 by and for a dynamic group of Chilean and international artists, scientists, curators, and producers as a recurrent nomadic lab in Tierra del Fuego / Patagonia.
The transdisciplinary research platform studies the relationships between culture, nature, knowledge, and their different forms of representation. Terra Ignota is a concept used in maps to designate places unknown to mankind. We propose the extension of this concept to refer to the little or erroneous knowledge we have as a society of the territory beyond the geographical confines of the extreme south of the planet.
Terra Ignota is informed by archaeology, (colonial) history, (Indigenous) practices, nature, and the climate of a region and aims to connect those to urgent global questions. It is rhizomatic; it moves slowly, listens, zooms in and out, and connects.

NS: And we hope that the results of this project will bring the audience to a place where they can think as we do, where they can ask similar questions. We want to create a sound or visual installation to make the audience think.
We always want to work in a way that I call 'fireside': It is a place to assemble and talk together; there is a special light, it is warm, and therefore an environment conducive to talking. There should be multiple voices, multiple answers, multiple feelings.
Claudia Augustat (CA): It is this kind of practice that we wanted to foster. But we also were especially interested to work with Fernanda, who shares historical, shares ancestral relations with the people who created the objects.

Telling Lies – A Liary

Nora Haas (NH): Nicolás, while we were looking at objects from the Selk'nam community here in the museum storage, you repeatedly said: 'Fernanda, tell me a lie about this!' I assume that you wanted to prod her to talk more about these objects; to think about who might have owned them, or what this person's connection was to the object and more. I found it very interesting that you described it as *telling a lie*. For me it was not so much about a lie, but about stories. So, I wonder, how did this idea of the lie come about?
CA: And as a follow-up, I think it is a very provocative approach to call these stories lies. Was it your intention to provoke? Fernanda, do you also consider them lies?
FO: Usually, when you speak to Indigenous people, they can recall memories that are passed on from generation to generation, and so on. This is not the case for me. Our history was cut off at some point; we have to rebuild it or try to assimilate what happened and then start over. Therefore, I don't have facts. I have some fragments, I have two-sentence-long stories, that's it. I am not sure that lie is the best word, but these are also not facts; these are stories, fragments that we turn into stories.
NS: We need to create myths, new poetry, new ways of conceiving the truth.
FO: That's the origin of this joke. I think everything started when he [Nicolás] asked something and I answered very concisely, with only two words. And then he would say 'So give me a little bit more information.' It is within this context that the question of telling lies came up.

The Process in Vienna: From Outside to Inside, from the City to the Storage

NH: Perhaps you can talk a little bit about your process of working here in Vienna. As you have said, your intention was to capture the context of this object. Moving from the outside to inside, from the city, via the building, its entrance, hallways, and of-

fices, and finally to the storage where the objects are housed. Why did you work in this way?

FO: At the beginning of our conversation, we touched on how to represent these objects, and, moreover how they represent themselves. How are they represented right now, in this place? In this context, it made sense to get to know the city because the objects are in this city right now, they are not where they originally belonged. For us, the objects are not just dead things. They hold the potential to create a lot of life around them, also for me.

NS: Another thing that is important for us is something you might call the aura of an object.

We are using 3D scans, but not to show the object itself. What we would like to do is to capture the poetry inside the object.

In our project we want to explore important issues that emerge from the objects themselves, but the visitor will only see a representation of the object. This gives Fernanda the freedom to think of new museographies beyond the object. This reproduction will also be part of our project to bring the objects back to where we think they came from.

NH: What do you consider to be the things that are important, but missing in the museographic conversation about or representation of the objects at Weltmuseum Wien? Why do we need a new or changed museography?

FO: I have a lot of internal conflicts about this. In general and more positively, I can say that I think, that I feel that everything is actually really well taken care of at the museum. The objects do not seem unhappy here. And still, I haven't made up my mind yet.

Research Trip to Steyler Missionaries in Mödling

During their residency, Fernanda Olivares and Nicolás Spencer also went on a research trip to the Steyler missionaries in Mödling who are the custodians for a collection of objects collected in Tierra del Fuego by the missionary Martin Gusinde.[2]

FO: While I was in the storage, I had the impression that they didn't really know what they had. This is not just about the ethnographic Selk'nam objects, but the entire collections. It was so much, with collections everywhere, on tables and….but it was also really nice. It was like jumping into a lot of stuff. There were a lot of baskets

2 Martin Gusinde was a missionary of the order of the Divine Word and an anthropologist. In the early twentieth century, he conducted field work among all groups in Tierra del Fuego. His books are a frequently quoted source about their cultures at that time.

and I looked at them all, trying to find one that belonged to the Selk'nam people. I couldn't find any.

NS: We were doing archaeology of a kind. That said, it is important to note that the missionaries have no one there physically to take care of the collections anymore. The person who had been the caretaker for the museum passed away, and with him the knowledge about this collection also disappeared in a sense.

CA: Just now, as we were talking about the passing of the caretaker, I thought: Oh my God, these objects have twice lost the humans they belong to. The first time they lost the humans they were connected to in Tierra del Fuego and now the last person who was really taking care and was really interested in them passed away. They are alone.

NS: And then there is also the really important thing that happened at the end of our visit. We went to this holy place, to the cemetery where Gusinde is buried. He himself was in many of your (Fernanda's) holy places all the time.

FO: During the tour through the premises he [the Father who guided us through the premises] said something like, for the people in Gusinde's time, Indigenous people were closer to God than their own society was. This is sort of contradictory! He plundered graves and dug human remains out, but at the same time he thought that these people he was digging out were closer to God than he himself.

NS: What happened with the massive killing of the Selk'nam, it only ended one hundred years ago – it's not that long ago.

On the Experience of Working with Museums

CA:… Sometimes people say that an object is speaking and I say I have never heard an object say anything. But Nicolás mentioned the aura of an object. Maybe this aura is the energy saved in the object: The energy of plants that have grown and the energy of people who harvested the plants to make the objects. Maybe this is what is meant by an object speaking to us.

NS: The museum is an environment with many things inside.

As human beings, we cannot see everything in an object, therefore we need more poetry or imagination or … lies.

Shared Reflections on Artistic Creation Processes in Times of COVID-19

Ainize González

The exhibition *Lines. Australian Aboriginal Painting: Tradition and Contemporaneity* was presented in Barcelona from 18 December 2021 to 12 June 2022. This project facilitated an exchange between members of the Milikapiti community and the museum.
The places from which the pigments are extracted hold ritual significance for Aboriginal People. These pigments, but also the wood and *Eucalyptus tetradonta* bark used in barkpaintings and *tungas* are preserved at the museum. Decontextualized, far away from their place of origin, they *recall* us to that land, also to the people who live in it. Some of these pieces are from Melville Island, where the small Milikapiti community lives. The natural pigments of contemporary *tunga* are also from the island, from that place, from their land. This *invisible* link between materials – between the natural pigments and their origins – was the starting point of the exchange, and the dialogue, that helped to care for contemporary creativity and artistic creation, but also to care about the people behind these objects, their *ecosystem* and the way they organized all aspects of their life – from the most everyday aspects to the most transcendental – around it.

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land and community. We pay our respect to them and their cultures, and to their elders past, present, and emerging.

Content note: First Nation Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders should be aware that this article may contain images and names of deceased persons.

Artist-in-Residence. The Project

In early 2020, the museum started working on an exhibition based around the museum's collection of Australian Aboriginal bark paintings. The idea was to use the collection, objects, and material heritage in order to link these pieces to present-day discourse and concerns, albeit with a contemporary approach to creation. The

names of contemporary artists such as Judy Watson and Brook Andrew emerged, whose works are closely linked to reflection about and claims regarding objects and documentation held in European museums and archives. The result was the temporary exhibition *Lines. Australian Aboriginal Painting: Tradition and Contemporaneity* that ran from 18 December 2021 to 12 June 2022.

Within this context, and alongside the start of this exhibition project, the idea of an artist-in-residence at the museum took shape, which would eventually lead to an experimental exhibition. The offer made to Narelle Jubelin, an Australian artist based in Madrid since the 1990s, to undertake a residency and study the museum's Australian collection (with a particular focus on items from the Tiwi Islands) was based on her creative work adopting postcolonial approaches. The artist's conceptual work, as well as her regular use of video, contributes to challenging the history of European colonialism.

In this spirit, Narelle Jubelin served as the artist-in-residence at the Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món between September and December 2020, at the height of the global pandemic and as part of the European project TAKING CARE in which the museum participates. From the very beginning, Jubelin had a clear starting point: as a non-Indigenous Australian, beyond trying to create synergies (or discrepancies) between her work and the collection, dialogue would be the essential ingredient.

The artist's research and experience during the residency materialized in several artworks, including the audiovisual creation *Paintings Also Live* (*Ngawa ninganawanga ngimpurrunu*), a type of critical found footage film that has now become part of the museum's collection, as well as a dialogue with the *Milikapiti* people, a small community on Melville Island.

The global pandemic had a huge impact on the entire process. It made conversations with the community difficult (they were in lockdown at different periods throughout the project); in addition to this, technical problems with satellite internet meant the community could not be reached. Nonetheless, these and other problems merely underscored the importance of listening and the need for dialogue and healing – as the very name of the project states.

Jubelin's artistic and personal relationship with Brook Andrew made it possible to contact this Indigenous community and, more specifically, Pedro Wonaeamirri, with a view to having this conversation also result in a dialogue between these two contemporary artists through pieces and objects. The starting point was the museum's *Tiwi* collection, although the aim was also to forge a creative visual dialogue between the museum's pieces and the contemporary creations by Jubelin and Wonaeamirri.

One outcome from the process was the experimental exhibition '**PURRUNGUPARI·MUPURRA·PUJINGA· NGINI, PALINARI, AMINTYA**' (·Bark·Skin·Voice· Past,

Present, Future) curated by Jubelin and Pedro Wonaeamirri themselves, which ran at the museum from 4 March to 5 June 2022.

The spark of what would later become the experimental show came from one of the tunga held at the museum (MEB 258–140), a piece that deeply interested Jubelin. As the artist herself states:

> 'When I was artist-in-residence at the Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Mon in 2020, by the end of the year I felt drawn to a beautiful object called a tunga (in the exhibition we use the older traditional name that Pedro taught us: wangatunga).When I felt drawn to the object, I and all of us, all those working around me during the residency, decided to look for an artist who made contemporary tunga. The exhibition included this piece that captivated me from the collection, as well as the contemporary creation by Pedro (the exhibition's co-curator), which was purchased by the museum and is now part of the collection. This is in line with the clear aim of encouraging people to take a closer look at the museum's collection, an extraordinarily interesting Tiwi art collection, which now, thanks to the addition of that Pedro's piece, is also a way to document the continuity and strength of this specific culture.' Narelle Jubelin

Fig. 1: Observing the past from the present. Narelle Jubelin. September 2020, during the artist's residency. Collection Reserve. Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món. Photo: Salvador García.

Fig. 2: Narelle Jubelin. Paintings Also Live (Ngawa ninganawanga ngimpurrunu), 2020. Fotogramas. Ethnological and World Cultures Museum. MEB 558–1.

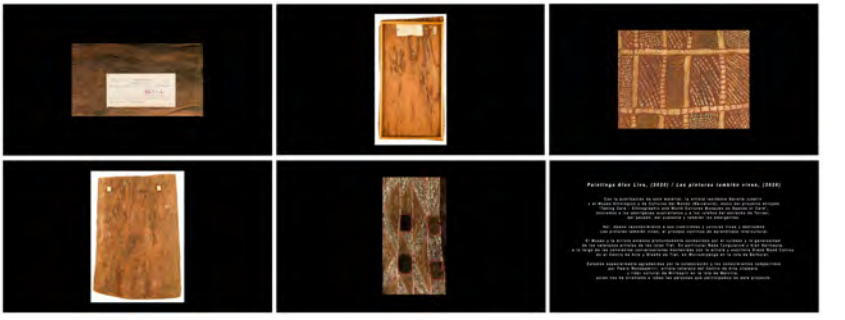


Fig. 3: Tunga (Wangatunga), c. 1960. Melville Island. Painting with natural pigments on eucalyptus bark. Ethnological and World Cultures Museum. MEB 258–140. Photos: Jordi Puig.

> 'Tungas are a daily necessity for the Tiwi and are commonly used to carry food. When a Tiwi member dies, the tunga is placed face up at the Pukumani burial pole, evoking the end of a life.' Pedro Wonaeamirri.

The museum houses a major collection of pieces purchased on different trips made to Australia in the 1960s and 1970s. Highlights from the many holdings include eucalyptus bark paintings (around a hundred) that are very typical in Arnhem Land. Painting for Aboriginal People takes different forms: bark, body, land, and rock painting. The yellowish, reddish, and orange-brown Sienna ochre used (in addition to black and white) are natural pigments and the only ones used in traditional painting. As with the bark of the *Eucalyptus tetradonta*, the pigments are closely tied to the earth and have a ritual significance for Aboriginal People.

Fig. 4: Pedro Wonaeamirri, tunga (Wangatunga), 2021. Natural ochre paints on eucalyptus bark. MEB 557–1. Exhibition photo. Photo: Jordi Puig.

> 'The designs are already in my head, and I use the Kayimwagakimi – our traditional wooden comb made from sticks and natural ochre from the island – to paint.' Pedro Wonaeamirri.

The bark, colours, and link to the land establish an invisible thread that connects the museum's pieces from the 1960s and 1970s to the *tunga* made by Wonaeamirri in 2021, which is on display in the exhibition and now part of the museum's collection.

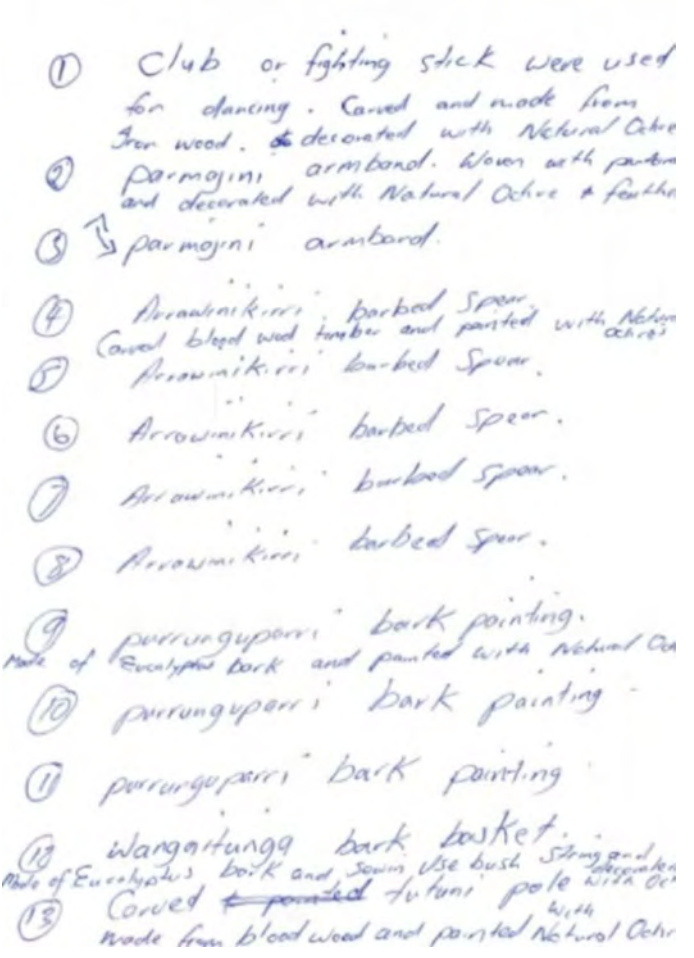
Just as the pandemic made dialogue difficult, it also complicated the museum's purchase of the contemporary *tunga* by Wonaeamirri. The geographical distance between locations was made even clearer in a context that undoubtedly underscores the need to consider the people behind the objects and their deep ties to them.

> 'Communicating with Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association wasn't easy, as sometimes we were interrupted by lockdowns, by the association shutting down and the Milikapiti community's isolation as a result of the pandemic. We (Jilmara coordinators Hannah and Cameron, Narelle, Salvador, and myself at the museum) started to write email threads that seemed to go on forever. But once these cold, lengthy exchanges were over, we were entrusted with a delicate object that would connect our museum with the community where some of the pieces we house come from. It was so exciting to open the exhibition and see Pedro's magnificent tunga there in its display case: it was a gift, a reward for the effort that all of us had put in to have it here with us.' Ascen Labella. Museum administrator

Fig. 5: Exhibition display case. Inside are the two tungas from the museum's collection. MEB 258–140, MEB CF 2453, alongside other Tiwi objects. Photo: Jordi Puig.

Returning to the exhibition, the architect Marcos Corrales was in charge of the overall design. We consulted with the community and Pedro on every step. Every element, from the title to the pieces, was the result of consensus. As a type of 'living archive', calling up the words of the curators, the objects 're-encountered' their home community, with *Tiwi* voices and knowledge resounding around and thundering through the museum.

Fig. 6: A handwritten document by Pedro Wonaeamirri, where he names the pieces from the Tiwi Islands in the museum's collection.



The dialogue materialized not only through conversations and the written word, but it also became an artwork in its own right, with the voice(s) of the community resounding within the exhibition space. The videos chosen by the community itself to be part of the exhibition are a particular highlight. These include *Jilarti*, where Wonaeamirri chooses how to represent himself, in dialogue with viewers and listeners:

Fig. 7: Pedro Wonaeamirri, Jilarti, 2021. Single-channel video. Jilamara Arts and Crafts Association, Milikapiti, Melville Island. Exhibition photo. Photo: Jordi Puig.

> 'When we paint ourselves for a ceremony, wearing ornaments such as the Tjimirrikamarka, and go into the ceremonial space, the elements distinguish us from the spirit so it cannot recognize us. All these things connect to song and dance.' Pedro Wonaeamirri on Jilarti.

In this project of bark, skin, and voices, the collective voices move us through a creative process (and dialogues) embodied in an experimental exhibition that fuses past, present, and future.

> 'Ma-mana wuta kitja kitja'
> '*Little by Little*'. (Tiwi)
> Narelle Jubelin, Pedro Wonaeamirri, Salvador García, Ascen Labella, Ainize González

The Art of Hawaiian Quilting

Cissy Serrao, Marenka Thompson-Odlum

In 2020, Marenka Thompson-Odlum began working with Cissy Serrao and the Poakalani Hawaiian Quilting group as part of a contemporary collecting project at the Pitt Rivers Museum. The aim of the project was to challenge the static narratives often presented in museums through contemporary commissions that illustrate how cultural knowledge and practises are continued even though the medium through which they are transmitted may change. The museum commissioned Hawaiian quilts from Poakalani with the simple brief that the quilts should reflect the stories and knowledge that the group would like to share with our audiences. Hawaiian quilting is a perfect example of a cultural group adapting to new circumstances and materials, but continuously caring for their Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies through their practice. The notion of care was a key theme and concern throughout the commissioning process. The quilts represent material forms of care – pieces that provide spiritual care achieved through the understanding of the quilt designs, many of which are linked to Hawaii's environmental history and ways of being. Through conversations around care and Hawaiian quilting, we considered how intangible heritage is conveyed through Hawaiian quilting, Indigenous Intellectual Property, and the limits of Eurocentric forms of preservation when confronted with material culture whose purpose is to provide care through use.

Fig. 1: Nā Mea Ali 'i Wahine. Quilted by Nobuko Nakagawa. Designed by John Serrao. © Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Along with her sister Raelene Correia, Cissy Serrao teaches the traditional art of Hawaiian Quilting at the Higashi Hongwanji Mission in Honolulu. Continuing the Hawaiian Quilting Class Poakalani Hawaiian Quilt Designs that was originally founded by her parents John and Althea Serrao in 1972, Cissy lives by her family's mission statement to preserve and appreciate the cultural legacy of Hawaii's quilting tradition and to teach it to anyone who want to learn. In conversation with Marenka Thompson-Odlum, Research Curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum, she shares her thoughts on the cultural significance and symbolism of quilting in Hawaiian culture, why it is so important to keep the patterns and tradition alive, and how she teaches this art form.

Fig. 2: Kukui 'o Hale Ali 'i. Quilted by Yuko Nishiwaki. Designed by John Serrao. © Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford.

Marenka Thompson-Odlum (MTO): Tell us about Hawaiian quilting, how did it come to the island?

Cissy Serrao (CS): Hawaiian quilting is one of my passions. It started over forty years ago with my parents, who wanted to share this amazing art and tradition with anyone who wanted to learn. The history of Hawaiian quilting itself began when the first missionaries came over to Hawai'i. In 1820, the brig *Thaddeus* brought the first missionaries to the islands and within a few days with the Royal women in attendance, the first quilting circle was held on the *Thaddeus*. The missionaries taught us how to appliqué and how to quilt, but their style of sewing and quilting as well as their designs had very little meaning to the Hawaiians. The missionaries had a patchwork style of hand sewing and the Hawaiians wouldn't adapt to that style of sewing. They didn't like cutting fabric into pieces only to sew them back together again. So eventually the smart and ingenious Hawaiians were able to find a new technique to create patterns that not only reflected Hawai'i, their island home, but also their traditions and culture. The Hawaiian quilt patterns are cut by folding the top design fabric to an eighth or quarter fold. It doesn't matter what colour fabric

you use, the pattern was always cut out in one piece using the eighth or quarter fold that opened to a beautiful symmetrical design, similar to making paper snowflakes. The tradition included not only the fold but also the design and the story it told and that is why my parents wanted to stay with that tradition and it is why we teach this style of quilting. Some people say that the Hawaiian quilt motifs that we see today on Hawaiian quilts may have come from the kapa – the old fabric that the Hawaiians used, and the designs that were printed on them. Between the 1820s and the 1840s, patchwork style quilts were more common. Around the 1860s, as new fabric arrived, the traditional Hawaiian quilt style that we see today was beginning to appear across the Hawaiian islands. Hawaiian quilts are so unique that you can go anywhere in the world today and you will recognize a Hawaiian quilt and hopefully also what it means and its tradition.

MTO: What does Hawaiian quilting mean to you, and why do you quilt?

CS: For me, Hawaiian quilting is a traditional art that was handed down to me through my parents from their parents and so forth, spanning over four generations. It's not just a generational tradition that I can now pass on, but it's also part of Hawaii's culture. The designs tell the story of Hawaii's people, and some quilt patterns that my father designed even tell my story. The Hawaiians today are still trying to preserve, recapture, and pass on many of their traditions that have been lost. If I can add even a small part to preserving that part of Hawaii's culture and tradition that comes from my ancestors, then we as a family and as a people will never be forgotten and will live on. The number one thing about Hawaiian quilts that makes them so unique are the stories. All Hawaiian quilts tell a story. The stories are embedded in the pattern and even the fabric that is chosen. Who is it for? How long did it take you to make it, six months or twelve years? What significant events took place when you made the quilt? It takes us a long time to make a Hawaiian quilt, you can't just make it in a day, or two days, or three days. It takes time. It's passing on a tradition – we really need to keep this going. It frightens me that if you go out into Hawai'i there are fewer people who teach the Hawaiian style of quilting as we do. It is a very small group. It is a very small niche. We don't want this tradition to stop and die; we want to keep teaching and passing it on. For us, by telling you these stories – it's not just about tradition or culture, these are actual beliefs in the Hawaiian system that the spirit is part of the quilt. When you make a quilt, your spirit becomes part of the quilt and with that we believe that it heals and soothes you. Every time a quilt is given to someone you love; you are giving love. You are absolutely giving love because it takes so much time to make a quilt. Another important factor of the quilt is the community of quilters. Hawaiian quilting guilds or classes bring people together. When you make a quilt, you put your mana, your spirit, into the quilt, and I think that's part of the community, too, that energy.

MTO: What is the cultural significance of Hawaiian quilting today?
CS: The cultural significance of the Hawaiian quilt today is that it keeps some of Hawaii's old traditions alive. Some quilts speak of old legends, there are some traditions on not only how to make a quilt but even how and why we display them. Some quilt patterns are still inspired by the traditional use of meditation of prayer and spiritual inspiration.

Here are some examples: When you finish your full-size quilt, you sleep with it for one night to seal your love into that quilt, because there are thousands and thousands of stitches in there and each stitch was sewn with love. A quilt made with love and given with love is love in its purest form. Another tradition are the echo quilting lines: In quilts that encompass a border lei, for every quilt line that comes out from the centre of the quilt, there's a line that comes in from the lei border of the quilt. Eventually, these quilting echo lines meet, and many people believe that it's the love coming out from the centre, from you, from Hawai'i. And it goes out into the world, and then it is returned.

Another tradition we have is that you don't sit on the quilt, and this is out of respect for the quilter. So, if you are in a house where there is a quilt on the bed, then you lift the quilt and sit on the corner. Another tradition is that if you are having a party in the house, you display all the quilts on the beds: your family members who own or made the quilts are there at the party with you. And so every time we would have a party, we would say, 'We've got to get out the quilts, so our family who have since gone will also be with us celebrating at the family gathering!'

I don't think many people realize that the older quilts, the vintage quilts, some of these quilts that we inherited tell the stories of old Hawaiian legends, such as one quilt that tells the story how the Hawaiian people may have originated from India, and that's why we have the Indian breadfruit pattern called the 'Ulu Elekini – the Indian Breadfruit has larger leaves and smaller fruit than our own 'Ulu Tree.
MTO: How do you feel about the fact that some of these historic designs are available through the internet, and museums, and that people are maybe copying them but they are doing so without thinking about Hawaiian tradition or respecting the kinds of things that you teach in your quilting school?
CS: I think that's one of the reasons why Mom and Dad started the quilting class. They wanted to teach others that Hawaiian quilting is not just sewing a quilt but that it also has its tradition, restrictions, and boundaries. They themselves would not have taken any historical patterns unless it was from their family's collection, or if they knew the designer. They wanted to keep within the old tradition of the quilt-making but still add their own family tradition as well. They never touched or copied historic patterns. We, who were raised in the Hawaiian culture, we know better and unless we share our knowledge with others about it, it is hard to tell them that they may be stealing. Just because the designer or family member is no longer with us,

that doesn't mean the quilt patterns those people created are available for others to use. For us, the legal law doesn't supersede years of tradition.

I always think that those who work with museum collections are in a very fortunate situation where they have visual and physical access to the collection – to the museum. That way, they can see the objects up close while also caring for them. I sometimes feel extremely emotional looking at quilt. It's just that as a cultural artist you also connect to artists, weavers, quilters on a very emotional level. Every stitch is so wonderfully made, and so beautiful. And you know that is when your imagination takes you to what they were thinking when they were creating the quilt. But obviously it's extremely important that not only do we have that level of empathy, but that we can also collect these stories to bring them to life and share them with museum visitors so that people respect the tradition.

MTO: Tell us about the quilts that have been made for the Pitt Rivers Museum.

CS: The quilts took over two years to complete. One reason of course was Covid, which completely shut down our fabric shops, where we needed to purchase our supplies. Second, we were originally commissioned to create only one 90 x 90 inch quilt complementing a feather ahu that is in the Pitt Rivers Museum. After several conversations with Marenka, however it seemed that one quilt couldn't really tell the story of Hawai'i. So, we decided that we would make 5 smaller 45 x 45 inch quilts, but when word got out to our quilting classes about the commission many of our quilters wanted to be part of this amazing project. That is why we decided to open the project to all the Poakalani quilters who wanted to participate. Therefore the Pitt Rivers Museum will have fourteen new Hawaiian quilts in their collection. All fourteen quilts together tell an even broader history of Hawai'i. It reflects who we are as a people, our culture, and traditions, but the quilts themselves also tell the personal stories of the amazing quilters who created them. While some of quilts are being made in Hawai'i, others are being quilted in the various regions of Japan. One quilt was even sewn on the ocean in the region of Papahānaumokuākea.

Reflections on *A Collection in Turmoil*. A Three-Day Workshop Held in September 2022 at MUCIV

Adelita Husni Bey

In September 2022 the artist Adelita Husni Bey held the public workshop *A Collection in Turmoil* at Museo delle Civiltà. This workshop was curated by Sara Alberani and Marta Federici together with Valerio del Baglivo (of the project LOCALES) and in the framework of the Hidden Histories Project. The workshop was co-produced with the Museo delle Civiltà. In the words of curators Sara Alberani and Marta Federici, 'Hidden Histories 2022' acted through the practices and discourses of the artists involved, who opened paths of reappropriation and re-signification of places in the city from which communities have been removed. In different ways and manners, the interventions detected and analysed processes of invisibilization and tracked down marginalized stories and voices in order to bring them out into the public space.
LOCALES is a curatorial platform founded in Rome that aims to inspire a reflection on the public sphere through artistic practices. Through a series of site-specific programs, LOCALES addresses the complexity of contemporary urgencies starting from the political and social history of symbolic places in the city and their local communities.
During *A Collection in Turmoil*, the organisers experimented with creating a safe space for participants to think through what it might mean for museums to be harmful and non-caring spaces and about possible methodologies and strategies museums can adopt to becoming a caring and careful space.

A Collection in Turmoil was an intensive workshop to explore the possibility of instituting a 'permanent laboratory' practice as part of the internal decision-making processes of the museum. It ran over three days in September 2022, was co-commissioned by Locales/ Hidden Histories, was open to external participation and, crucially, included the museum staff. The workshop was focused on the intersection of transfeminism and decoloniality and invited a wide array of people with both formal and informal types of knowledge to participate. Trans writers, students, artists, botanists, film-makers, and researchers focused on the museum's collection and on decoloniality took part in the workshop. This allowed for an openness towards the topics, and an approach that was less centred on discipline and academic conven-

tions and relied more on cross-pollination between fields and ways of knowing (embodied, lived, doctoral, etc). This format proved successful in generating unexpected conversations and connections. It certainly required more patience, as some members knew the collection intimately, while others were seeing it for the first time.

Trans theorist and philosopher Paul Preciado's work inspired the workshop's conceptual framework. According to Preciado, we live in transfeminist times. Instead of seeking to re-identify the museum and 'fix' it in a new guise, I argue, following Preciado's reflections, that processes of perpetual dis-identification are necessary. What happens if we treat the museum like a body? If we become aware of its constant metamorphoses, some of which we can guide?

The Workshop's Structure and Tools

Fig. 1: Workshop participants engaging in image theatre, developing a group image for the word 'rename'. Photo: A. Husni Bey.
Fig. 2: 'Guide object' chosen from the collection depicting a vase with fruit indigenous to Cyrenaica used to showcase the region's agro-commercial capacity, with the phrase 'A story of uprooted food', a play on uprooted and rootless. Photo: D. Palmieri.

Embodied Knowledge

The workshop relied heavily on 'image theatre', a type of theatre developed in the 1970s by Augusto Boal as part of his Theatre of the Oppressed. It is a tool that allows participants to shape and experiment with 'embodied knowledge', meaning ways of knowing that are produced by the interaction of bodies, often in silence. The participants began by working on three themes, making group 'statues' that represented three possible, interlacing pathways for the collection: Rename, Repair, and Resist. The pathways alluded to objects in the collection being returned as reparations (Repair), histories attached to the objects being reevaluated and retold, objects renamed and re-semantisized (Rename) and finally, resisted – as a refusal of the museum's own mechanisms and meanings (How does this collection exist at all? Is it possible to work with it/within the museum as an institution?). None of the possibilities excluded the other. As groups developed and performed their 'statues', we used a technique called the 'multiple gaze of others' to explore possible meanings, many unintended by the originators of the statues.

'What do you see in this image?'

The responses to this question allowed us to make free associations based on the 'sculptures' (called 'images' in this method) by using the processes described above, exceeding what conversation alone can generate.

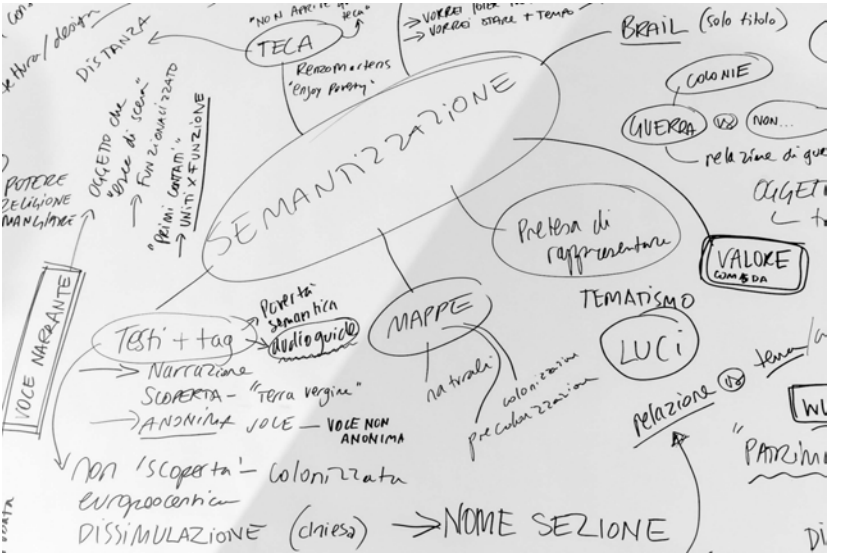
Guide Objects

Another tool piloted by the group was the use of 'guide objects'. Picking guide objects from the collections of the former colonial museum allowed us to a) form a bond with the collection and understand the ways researchers were exploring the objects (it was very interesting to see the index they inherited, bare and elementary in its description, making it hard to establish provenance) and b) to extrapolate an object and study it in depth, helping us derive meaning from 'instances' rather than what is commonly used to create taxonomies, assumed 'groups', or 'wholes'.

Each participant was instructed to pick one or more objects and reflect on how the object 'spoke' to them, taking into account that their interpretation would be guided by their subjectivity. We then discussed how these objects would have been used originally by the colonial enterprise: to signify dominance, to showcase craft and agriculture as possible exports, to acquaint locals with busts of the Italian monarchy and fascist generals as 'organizing' figures, and to reassure colonists at home and abroad of the 'sanctity' of empire. We explored exploding these narratives

by creating different taxonomies that spoke differently about these objects, undoing their 'patrimonial' use.

Fig. 3: Detail of the scroll used to record reflections during the workshop. Photo: D. Palmieri.



Workshop Scroll

From our very first workshop activity, we used a ten meter long paper scroll to record our conversations. One participant at a time was invited to write notes in real time when the group was called to participate in discussion during the exercises. The scroll became a central element of the workshop and elicited fascination, as it recorded – in different handwritings and different styles of note taking – the process of our coming together. At the end of the workshop, the scroll was unfurled on the floor and read out loud by participants who were invited to pick phrases to recite from it as they walked around the room.

Guidelines: Integration and Implementation

This section responds to questions of implementation and where this experience might lead with the prospect of the 'permanent laboratory' as a feature of the museum. What is a 'permanent laboratory'? And what would it mean for the 'perma-

nent' laboratory model to become 'structural'? We have established that some of the methods developed for the inaugural workshop were: *Political theatre in order to foster embodied knowledge, the use of 'guide objects' as single 'portals' into the collection, using the museum itself as a reflexive site – observing its displays collectively, recording the workshop on a scroll/ through material that can be shared publicly.*

Political theatre is a guided experience led by a practitioner. It can be used to explore a) broad themes in line with the museum's programming, b) personal narratives – the staff reflecting on their work, and therefore **the institution reflecting its practices, and their implications**. Its outcome is a progressive unpacking of assumptions and a forging of new connections through a practice that gathers people into intimate interaction. **The museum could be said to be employing this strategy 'structurally' if it continued its commitment to engage staff in this practice as part of their paid working hours**.

For this to work, it is necessary that the museum trusts this practice, and experiences it as generative, so that those who participate in workshops are offered time to develop ways to integrate their findings into their work.

The development of guidelines from this experience and from the use of guide objects should be used in developing taxonomies, displays, and labels. As work in this area is intimately linked to processes of re-semantization and the workshop itself cannot offer enough time to develop precise models, **part of the 'permanent laboratory' could be a working group tasked with developing and experimenting with in-depth methodologies, using the guidelines as a starting point.**

Importantly, the institution of a 'permanent laboratory' within the museum should be accompanied by ways of **sharing the results and processes of the lab with the general public.**

Curators As Mediators Between the Community and Museum

Michel D. Lee, Aoife O'Brien

The curators from the National Museums of World Culture, Sweden, Michel Lee and Aoife O'Brien, hoped to collaborate with a source community related to a part of the museum's collections, and therefore invited members of the Seediq community of Taiwan to work with them. 'Source community' here was defined as present-day groups that can trace their lineage to the groups of people who are mentioned in the archival material related to the objects explored in the project. While the curators acknowledge the complexity and unresolved questions that the term source community may raise, they believed in what this term and the associated practices can provide as part of acts of caring. They create possibilities of caring for specific cultural traditions, knowledge, and practices; they also facilitate community access to ancestral memories and to heritage. In this sense, source community work in museums was part of caring for a kin and community.

The invitation to work with the Seediq, an indigenous community from Taiwan, was framed within the *Designing Sustainable Futures* work package of TAKING CARE. The curators were interested in combining the broad concepts of care and sustainability, to explore different ways in which they could work with communities through discussion, engagement, and co-curation. This would lead to an experimental exhibition, which the curators envisaged as the starting point for long-term engagement with the community. Caring and sustainable methodologies influence decision-making processes, but also the use of resources, and how objects are displayed.

Having been a colonized people for over one hundred years, the Seediq have undergone a process of cultural revitalization relatively recently. It was hoped that the TAKING CARE Project, with its emphasis on care, could contribute to this process in some ways: cultural revitalization as care.

Fig. 1: Seediq celebration of the opening on an exhibition in Wushe, Taiwan of reproductions made based on the historic objects housed in the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm, 16 December 2022. Photo courtesy of the Seediq National Assembly.

Within the TAKING CARE project, The National Museums of World Culture, Sweden (NMWC) has worked on an experimental exhibition in collaboration with the Seediq National Assembly and the Indigenous Cultural Heritage master's degree programme at Providence University in Taiwan. The Seediq are one of sixteen Indigenous communities currently recognized in Taiwan. They were invited to become partners as they are a source community represented in the collections at the Museum of Ethnography (currently part of the National Museums of World Culture, Sweden), which manages three collections of Taiwanese Indigenous material that were all collected around the early 1900s during the Japanese colonial period of Taiwan (1895–1945). The name 'Seediq' had not previously been recorded in the museum archives or collections database. This is because the Seediq had been grouped together with the neighbouring Atayal people, another related Taiwanese Indigenous group during Japanese rule. The Seediq did not receive official recognition until 2008. It was a result of much communication with various people in Taiwan that the authors of this text realized some of the material in the collections came from Seediq communities. Having been a colonized people since around 1914, when the Japanese first established a police station in Wushe to control the 'raw barbarians' (生番)[1] liv-

1 The terms 生番 and 熟番 can be translated as 'raw/unripe barbarians' and 'cooked/ripe barbarians' respectively. They were vague terms used in China to describe how accul-

ing in the area, the Seediq, along with other Indigenous groups in Taiwan, are today taking steps to reclaim their cultures and voices.

The official invitation to cooperate was sent to the Seediq National Assembly on 17 September 2021, and a positive response was received on 22 September, after an internal meeting of the Assembly in Taiwan. Providence University in Taichung, Taiwan was also included in the cooperation, as they have an Indigenous Cultural Heritage master's programme with a focus on Seediq culture. The Seediq Youth Association subsequently also joined the project group with much enthusiasm. For people working on the museum's side, it was humbling to understand that this cooperation is only one small part of what the Seediq community have already achieved in attempts to reclaim their heritage and voices. For example, over recent years, some within the Seediq community have worked hard to revive their cultural identity, language, songs, and dance, culminating in the establishment of the Indigenous Cultural Heritage MA at Providence University. Much of their education and knowledge exchange is based on multi-generational learning. As course director Iwan Pering explained, the elders are professors and the villages are their classrooms. It is the hope that the experimental exhibition can contribute to that cultural revival work.

In this project, the curators aimed to co-create, from a foundational level up, a digital exhibition; paying attention to Seediq voices and attempting to address issues of power imbalances using experimental methodologies, from the perspective of current organizational practices. For example, the budget from the European Union for the project was transparent for all partners, and the Seediq also had influence on how the funds were used. The decision to make the exhibition digital was decided upon in order to address questions of accessibility of the final results for the community in Taiwan. All of the information, images, films, etc., that result from the project will be handed over to the Seediq partners, so that they are able to keep the information for their future use.

One of the most important endeavours of this project has been to develop a sustainable relationship between the organization and the Seediq community that can continue even after the TAKING CARE project. As this relationship develops and there is a deeper mutual understanding for the different parties involved, further projects might be developed around the needs of the parties and the collections. It is therefore extremely important that the working methodologies are transparent in order to cultivate a relationship based on trust between the organization and the community.

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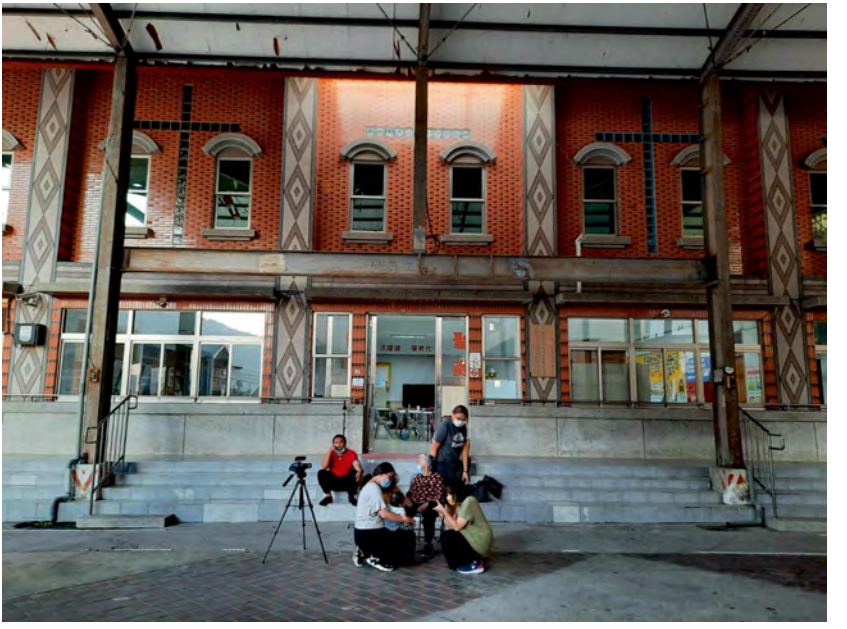
turated another group was to Han Chinese culture and whether they submitted to the Chinese state. Those that were raw/unripe did not submit politically and/or culturally. Cooked/ripe peoples were more acculturated and/or submitted to the state. Use of these terms was later continued by the Japanese on Taiwan during the Japanese colonial period.

Fig. 2: A short break during the traditional Seediq music and dance course of Providence University's Indigenous Cultural Heritage MA programme held on the grounds of Meixi Shan Church of Our Lady (眉溪山地聖母堂), Ren'ai Township, Nantou County, Taiwan. Professor Obin Nawi seated in the center, 20 November 2022. Photo by Michel D. Lee.



There were various challenges while working on this project. Like many museum organizations, the NMWC endeavours to constantly update exhibitions and spaces in the museum. The organization, through the steering committee that is composed mainly of the heads of the different internal departments, decided there should be a physical exhibition to run in conjunction with the digital exhibition. Contributing funds from NMWC were allocated for this part of the project which amounted to a much larger budget than that from the EU. This raises questions and challenges about the priorities of the organization, as well as power imbalances. The original intention was to focus on the digital exhibition, as that is what the Seediq community has the best access to. In addition, some of the (experimental) methodologies that were stated at the beginning of the project changed for various reasons. In some cases, certain methods were not efficient, which was due to the difference in working methodologies between the museum organization and the community. Due to the nature of the organization, the normal exhibition process is entangled with bureaucracy that can be difficult for people working externally to understand. The community has a consensus-driven method that involves much discussion within their group, which can be more time-consuming. There were further challenges from the

museum's side as most members of the original project team had to be replaced during the course of the project for various reasons. New members had to be informed about the nature of the project and why certain methodologies are used. The change of staff within the project also sometimes resulted in unclear roles, conflicting visions, and more significantly, a privileging of individual or institutional voices over those of the Seediq.

The museum curators within this project had the role of maintaining the dialogue with the Seediq partners, acting as mediators between the community and NMWC. This role itself presented many challenges, including trying to balance the needs of the community and the needs of the museum. The curators tried to ensure that the motivations and ambitions of a state organization did not undermine the voice of a community. For the more long-term ambition of creating a sustainable relationship with the Seediq, the curators in this project needed to maintain the trust of the partners. The impacts of such mediation work undertaken by curators, and its toll both professionally and personally, can occasionally be undervalued within museums. However, such work is necessary and vital in order to ensure that openness and transparency can be achieved, as well as ethical obligations fulfilled. It is to be hoped that the trust built between the Seediq and NMWC curators will safeguard that future collaborative projects can emerge out of the TAKING CARE project.

Seko Na Seko *(Forever)*

François Mutamba Tshibwabwa

In his work, François Mutamba Tshibwabwa (also called Nada Tshibwabwa) engages with waste from the industrialized world in relation to planetary precarity. Especially interested in mobile phone waste, he explores society's failings to think about our inability to bring new things to life as compared with how much waste we produce.
Tshibwabwa's project is an invitation to think about the *temporality of care*, how caring for the future is inextricably bound to what we do in the present, and, moreover, how the past, including its objects and ancestral knowledge, can provide inspiration for us to imagine and fashion different, better futures. His message around the notion of care, then, is not one of lamentation but one of (artistic) actions, rooted in traditions, some of which are at risk of being lost today.
Between February and May of 2022, Tshibwabwa was an artist in residence at the Royal Museum for Central Africa (Tervuren, Belgium). Working with the museum's collections of Luluwa culture, he explored the role that art and knowledge from his ancestors can play in addressing our current ecological crisis.

Bua tshiyi ditunga dietu. Kadiena di chintuluka tii nimpidiewu? Katshia pa bankambwa too ni lelu? Mwa dianvita wani nga kengi nibanewe. Tshiakumune mandelena. Chantez, chantez. On m'avait dit, ne partez pas dans la forêt. Pillez le maïs. Et le manioc. Ah! Mwa dianvita wani nga kengi nibanawe.

Fig 1: Performance by Nada Tshibwabwa. The picture was taken in the museum in April 2022 by Elsa Westreicher.

These are parts of the lyrics of a song that my grandfather wrote in the 1950s. It's not easy to determine the exact time, but he must have recorded the piece some time before independence. This song was part of my upbringing, as my mother as well as my siblings sang it often. He mentions the daily life in and with his environment, but underneath it runs a current that addresses power relations, resistance, and resilience. During my residency at RMCA (Royal Museum for Central Africa), it was what I experienced and found in the museum that set off my desire to work with the fragmented memories that I have of this song and to reinterpret it with three musicians I met in Brussels (Diego Higueras [guitar], Francis Kappé [drums], Lezin Mpoutou [likembe]). We played it live at the TAKING CARE workshop at RMCA, next to a painting and a series of masks that I had also created during the residency.

Being at RMCA for three months was an important experience. Having access to the archives and being allowed to stay for a good amount of time was a privilege I would like more artists from the D. R. Congo and elsewhere to have – not least because much of what we can find and sense there is directly related to us and adds to the stories and memories we have. I say privilege, because so far, we are denied this right of access in general terms.

Starting from my practice to work with debris of mobile phones, questions around the exploitation of resources and communication that I often translate into costumes, masks, or sculptures, my perspective in the collection was specifically geared towards artefacts that talk about the relation between people and their

environment as well as the spiritual dimension between both. I was also interested in the collection of raw materials that directly relate to the mobile phones I use in my work. The performance with *Homme Tshombo* and *Mwasi Tshombo* (cellphone man and woman) that we organized at the RMCA on 10 April 2022 aimed at many things at once and speaks to the idea of relating: I wanted to create links of communication with the objects and raw materials, but also with the public and the invisible, meaning a spiritual dimension that is also present in the way things inspire me. I wanted to put forward the representation of a woman and a man to go beyond differences, in the sense that I see life as symbiotic and double, as a kind of wedding. I am myself a twin, so this doubling always plays a role for me, even though my sister died at birth.

I also created a large format painting, which is a reflection and brings together symbols and visual metaphors that I was confronted with in the museum as well as those that I had brought with me. All different creations I made during the residency are actually part of the questions outlined above, they are linked.

As we know, an artist doesn't work like a scientist. We come in with different needs and different questions, different ways of working and interpreting what we find. The museum and the collection, despite showing many forms of art, still form a scientific space, which we artists automatically challenge. I think many questions as to how artists are meant to come into this space remain unanswered. As RMCA has no designated working spaces for artists beyond musicians, its walls are limited. **A continued cooperation with a space that is used to accommodate artists and that could provide necessary infrastructure for creating works would be helpful.** Personally, knowing some artists from Brussels and the Congolese diaspora helped me access some such spaces without the direct support of RMCA, but the museum could give more forethought to these kinds of collaborations. I also admit that working with the archive is no easy task and continued assistance and indications would have been helpful – many interesting aspects have probably escaped me and keywords that seemed rather obvious led to no results in the cataloguing system. The question of access is a continued issue and to actually dig into the collection profoundly would require a designated assistant or collaborator who learns to understand the artists' paths as well.

Apart from that, the museum might want to consider how works that are created during the residencies might be shown to the public beyond one-day events. Maybe there could be a designated space that is accessible for temporary displays that converse with the permanent collection. It would allow the questions of the residency and the overall project to reach a wider public.

I thank the museum and the staff for having found solutions that worked for me; for having introduced me to some great external creators, like the musicians I worked with as well as the film team Federico Arie and Armand Bayala. Many thanks go to Jacky Maniacky, Isabelle Van Loo, Muriel Garsou, Christine Bluard, Françoise

Deppe, François Makanga, Salome Ysebaert, Rémy Jadinon, Gabristo. I am glad to know that an online exhibition of the masks will be created on the website. I am also extremely honoured that the mask *Tonga* from the series *La face cachée du coltan* (2018 – ongoing) was acquired for the permanent collection.

As for me, upon returning to Kinshasa, I shared some of the experiences as well as the film. It was made during the residency and given a public screening in Matonge, at Studio Mwano, a gathering space I recently created, as well as in the village of Sao on the Bateke Plateau, where my second base is found. Since then, Homme Tshombo has also taken to the streets again and has been part of the sixth edition of KINACT – Rencontre Internationale des Artistes Performeurs.

Translation into English: Elsa Westreicher

gathering, weathering

Sybille Neumeyer

Sybille Neumeyer is an independent artist and researcher who was artist-in-residence at the MARKK in Hamburg throughout 2022. As a focus for the residency, the MARKK chose the topic of 'Water, Climate, Materiality'. The museum was looking for an artistic or (social) design project that explores strategies at the intersection of knowing and imagining, and who would engage with the museum's holdings as a storehouse of ecological knowledge in the face of water-related effects of the climate crisis. Neumeyer was especially interested in the museum's climates and conservation measures, and how these mute the potential atmospheric and ecological knowledges embedded in the artefacts.

During her residency, Neumeyer focused on the restoration of multispecies relations in weather(ing) worlds. Listening to the muted (hi)stories of animated water embodied by pre-Columbian Peruvian pots, she reflected on stor(y)ing biocultural relationships in weather(ing) worlds. Across our planet, conflicts arise due to competing claims for access to water, its use, and management. The responsibility for, and effects of water-related climate crisis are unequally distributed; Indigenous and formerly colonized people are disproportionately burdened by its acute consequences.

Fig. 1: Archival material © Museum am Rothenbaum (MARKK), Hamburg; Collage 'Vessels of Water' © Sybille Neumeyer, 2022.

collection climates

While visiting the MARKK, the Natural History Museum and the archives of the DWD – Deutscher Wetterdienst (German Meteorological Service) in Hamburg, I find myself in temperature- and humidity-controlled storage spaces and exhibition halls monitored by conservation teams that serve to prevent archives and collections from withering.

In 1912, the MARKK was moved from a building it had shared with the Natural History Museum to a new facility, allowing for the expansion of both collections: so-called 'Naturalia' on one side, and masks, tools, garments, pots, and human remains on the other. Searching for traces of water in these 'seasonless' spaces, I am looking at the diversity of containers on display at the MARKK – much like those still used today all over the globe – just to find them empty.

gathering(s)

In her discussion on human evolution, Elizabeth Fisher claims that 'the earliest cultural inventions must have been a container to hold gathered products'[1] like pots, baskets, or nets that served to collect, carry, and store grains, seeds, berries, fruit, shells, and water. Earthenware replaced containers made from bottle gourds, which were also utilized as moulds for early pots. Eventually, the potted containers stimulated social gatherings for sharing food and stories. Considering these origins of bio-socio-cultural interrelations makes me ponder about the relationships created, or disrupted, by modern modes of collecting.

drought

At the MARKK, I walk along a corridor that houses vessels from pre-Columbian Andean cultures. In spite of a pending silence, I feel vibrancy around them. My friend Imayna Carceres explains to me that some of them are whistling vessels that make a variety of sounds when liquid is poured out of them, giving them voices of birds and animals. I try to imagine them whistling and soon realize that, beyond lacking water and sounds, they are muted in other ways. The labels provide limited information: dates, numbers, and short iconographic descriptions mirror the interests of the collectors rather than unveiling lived cultural values. I am looking at a troubling display of items violently extracted from sacred places, and still, despite being drained from both their fluid content and cultural and environmental context, these vessels invite me to ponder about water, drinking, and distributing liquids, and thus about life.

carrier bags

In the library I browse books full of narratives on political upheaval, bloody sacrifices, and warriors. These stories were dug up by many male archaeologists who gained fame with their souvenirs from adventurous journeys.

Referring to Fisher's discussion in her 'Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction', science fiction author Ursula LeGuin examines how stories *of* and stories *as* bags, pots and nets offer grounding alternatives to heroic narratives focused on weapons and mastery. They offer more inclusive stories that hold 'things in a particular relation to each other and us'.[2] Which stories do these pots convey beyond those about leaders, invaders, priests, collectors, and archaeologists?

1 LeGuin 1989.

2 Ibid.

stor(y)ing hydrological cycles

While contemplating the shapes of Moche pots I sense something hopeful and activating: there are animals, human portraits, fruit, vegetables, and assemblages or hybrids of all of these. Trying to understand interactions with these vessels, my imagination starts animating the water flows. Both as containers for distributing liquids – such as *chicha*, a maize beer – and as portraits of living bodies that contain, circulate, ingest, and excrete liquids, these pots narrate watery relationships. Stories of blood, rain, floods, tears, mountains, rivers, and seas come alive, in this miniature world of what Astrida Neimanis calls 'bodies of water'[3]. Humans and nonhumans alike are embedded in 'webs of physical intimacy and fluid exchange' that create and sustain life on our planet.

multispecies weather worlding

The Moche inhabited the coastal deserts of today's Northern Peru, an area between the mountains and the sea that experiences drastic shifts in climatic conditions during irregular monsoon events. In the phenomenon known today as *El Niño Southern Oscillation (ENSO)*, heavy rains and floods precede extreme and prolonged droughts, destroying villages and crops.

Drawing on contemporary scientific papers, I study how such events lead to drastic changes in terrestrial and marine ecologies. *El Niño* causes the Peru Current to warm, which results in an influx of species from tropical regions like *Argopecten purpuratus*, while at the same time threatening other species like the *Engraulis ringens* who is at home in cooler waters, and the local *Pelicanus thagus*, who exclusively feeds on the former. The autochthonous *Scutalus sp.*, on the other hand, thrives in the continuous rain, becoming a food supplement in times of scarcity.[4]

All these creatures are informed by water streams, temperatures, rains, and humidity that fluctuate in and around them.

For local communities, shells, fish, snails, birds that herald the torrential rains must have informed fears, hopes, rituals, and survival strategies. I find them carefully embedded as comrades, gods, and cohabitants within the potted worlds. Moreover, as the vessels were integrated in rituals as well as in daily life practices, the boundaries between stories and lived environment became fluid, too. In a cosmovision attentive to interdependencies of cycles of life and water and attuned to multi-

3 Neimanis 2017.

4 Wolff 2011; Passuni, et al., 2016.

species kinships that emerge within 'weather worlds'[5], pots and beings are likewise carrier bags of liquids and carrier bags of storied *biosociocultural* relations.

It remains unclear whether the demise of the Moche people was caused by ecological disasters such as a three-year super *El Niño* or by political upheaval. What we do know is based on interpretations from distances of time, space, and culture. However, the vessels of succeeding cultures, like Huari and Chimu, continue the multispecies motifs, indicating that local modes of dwelling *with* rain, mountains and rivers, plants and animals created habitability despite the harsh conditions.

weathering knowledges

Today, some Peruvian/Andean highland farmers called *arariwa* (Quechua for 'guardians of the fields') still rely on the nesting of *huacana* and *totorelo*, the call of *atuq*, and flowering of *sancayo,* amongst many other weather voices, as signals for upcoming rain or seasons. This helps them take decisions on planting and harvesting, and to carefully choose their crop from a diversity of plants, providing modes of resistance in difficult climate circumstances.[6]

However, such local ecological knowledges in rural communities all over the world, which stem from accumulated experience and provide an ability to respond to extreme weather events, are eroding amid collapsing climates. *ENSO* events are likely to become more frequent by 2040, exposing biodiversity and people to tremendous threats.[7] In Peru, colonization by the Spanish in 1532 was the onset of an increasing and continuous extraction and translocation of beings as/and resources, and of disruptions of local modes of cultivating the land. Local (hi)stories and cosmovisions were muted in atmospheres of ongoing separation of cultural tools, animals, plants, and weather phenomena through disciplines, classifications, and collections. Despite such discerption of nature-cultures, these pots conserved biocultural values, multispecies politics, and environmental knowledge. They mould an eco-logical way of living with and learning from non-human and meteorological beings. And, as carrier bags for stories of relationality in ever dynamic weather worlds, the vessels also hold time. By stor(y)ing what indigenous scholar Kyle Whyte recounts as kinship time,[8] a relational time eluding imposed chronologies and concepts of past, they invite us to remember our futures.

5 Ingold 2010.
6 Claverías 2000.
7 Ying et al. 2022.
8 Whyte 2021.

forecast

July 2022: As I am leaving the MARKK, my body starts sweating in the shimmering air of an early heatwave. I notice the withering leaves on the bushes. With increasing extreme weather events all over the world, what stories are needed to reconnect biological and cultural worldings? How can we weather the climate crisis by altering troubled bio-socio-cultural atmospheres? Listening to the voices of marginalized holders of knowledge, and to the songs of our ecosystems as living archives, creates grounds for restoring relationships between humans and nature, and amongst us. Thinking with Moche pots is an invitation to remember ourselves as carrier bag bodies, gathering (around) relational stories.

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The Cursed Land of Lustful Women

Kanika Gupta, Tina Palaić

Art historian and artist Kanika Gupta was artist in residence at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in Ljubljana between July and September 2021. During her residency, she conducted research on the collection of Indian objects at the museum and presented new works based on this research. Gupta was also involved in a series of public discussions on environmental preservation and folklore related to it. Kanika Gupta was first introduced to the Indian collection at the Slovene Ethnographic Museum in 2018. As part of the residency, she documented the collection, which was then made accessible for a broader public. This collection raises questions about colonialism and hierarchies that continue to operate not only in the context of Europe but also within Indian society, where issues of caste and gender remain stubbornly persistent categories of difference and hierarchy. Far from representing a frozen past, the collection portrays a cultural continuity with phases of slow transition.

For Gupta, the Indian collection is potent with traditional ideas, many of which need to be questioned and some of which address the pressing concerns of our times. The recurring theme of trees and nature within this collection and in Indian art more generally became a compelling motif for Gupta's performance *The Cursed Land of Lustful Women*.

Gupta sees museums as spaces of care, not simply in their educational roles or as guardians of heritage; it is also their role to reconnect people with their roots, with love for nature, and to engage with the world along with its forests, rivers, and deserts as a family. Gupta's performance, which has also culminated in a book with the title *The Cursed Land of Lustful Women and the Power of Storytelling* delves into the idea of care as universal and a love for nature that is not bound by caste, race, and nationality.

Fig. 1: Kanika Gupta, performance The Cursed Land of Lustful Women. Photo: Mojca Račič. Gupta's personal archive.

Fig. 2 + 3: The images are part of the Slovene Ethnographic Museum's collection from India.

Once upon a time ...
They say it was a woman
who discovered the secret of making wine
She used to worship trees ...
Or perhaps, she was ...
The tree Goddess herself!

'What shall I do with these discourses of yours?
I have gone over like the first of Goddess Uṣā.
Go back to your destiny.
I am as hard to get as the wind.'
Rig Veda 10.95.2

Tina: Our rapidly changing world is filled with ambiguity and instability, a world devoid of deep roots that provide a sense of belonging. Climate change, which exposes

us to unpredictable environmental phenomena, adds significantly to our sense of insecurity. Turning to the past and drawing on our heritage is thus often a way of attempting to explain our current circumstances while also considering what kind of future we would like to live in. These concerns were also raised by art historian Kanika Gupta, who has been collaborating with the Slovene Ethnographic Museum (SEM) for several years. SEM decided to invite Kanika for the project residency because she skilfully connects Indian mythologies and traditions with the topics of climate change and social justice, especially in relation to gender equality.

Kanika: I first worked with the SEM in 2018 when I documented the modern Indian Bazaar art in the museum's collection. A large section of objects in the Indian collection were yet to be investigated. This was a component of the residency organized by the TAKING CARE project, which had been moved from spring 2020 to the summer of 2021 because of the pandemic. With a brand new year, we had the opportunity to prepare the residency program in advance and set up an online pre-program with three dialogues about my work. The residency became a platform for me to create a discourse around trees and the importance of preserving nature. I was also keen to hear the voice of Slovenia and thus announced a poetry contest which had to be original, handwritten, and on the theme of trees. Much of what I received left me in tears.

Tina: Kanika's own experience of rapid environmental change and loss of natural diversity in and around Delhi and north India, as well as her desires and expectations for the future, motivated her to share with us a very personal story of the destruction of her family's home and the garden that surrounded it to make way for more concrete and cement-based construction. In her film *It was in Spring,* Kanika's inability to save the plantation is made subtly but unmistakably apparent, as was also discussed at the screenings.

Kanika: My documentary film *It was in Spring* subtly touches upon the changing landscapes in urban spaces from the point of view of my personal experience. It has been argued that the film comes from a privileged point of view (since the family in the film is able to afford the reconstruction of the house), but it does also point to the fact that an artificial face of luxury based on concrete, necessarily away from nature, is being sold to every caste and class across the world. From the contemporary profit-oriented perspective, cars and multi-storey constructions with cement are the only way to a better and happier life. This myth is so well absorbed by its consumers that we forget that nature, along with clean air, water, and climate are being compromised.

Tina: In her performance *The Cursed Land of Lustful Women,* Kanika relies on Indian stories from Buddhist, Jain, and Brahmanical traditions to tell the story of India at a time when profound social and environmental changes were taking place. These traditions intertwine issues of nature and attitudes toward it with gender inequalities and power dynamics between various social groups. Using the dance movements of the Indian dance tradition Kathak together with her vivid narrative, Kanika aimed to transcend romantic views of Indian culture and invite people into a dialogue about the environmental and social crises that humanity must deal with together, in solidarity.

Kanika: The residency was also a chance for me to indulge in a conversation around big old trees in urban spaces, which I did through my performance *The Cursed Land of Lustful Women*. As a child I would cherish the patches of forestation on the outskirts of Delhi which I witnessed being lost to commercialization and encroachment. The sense of loss I felt only deepened the depths of deprivation I experienced as a single woman in a tremendously patriarchal part of the world (every second day was a lesson in how unsafe the world is for a woman and what I must NOT do to protect myself). I always found solace in the trees; alas I witness these perishing, everyday. As a performer practising Indian dance, I always felt the need to tell my own stories and nature myths through it. This led to the creation of my performance after a long internal struggle and the completion of my Ph.D. on the theme of female tree deities.

Tina: The story of a fight for the environment is inextricably linked to the story of a fight for women's rights. Two independent Indian artists, Gauhar Jaan, a bold singer and dancer, and Zubeida Begum, a fearless film actress, both living life on their own terms, and Kanika Gupta herself performing *The Cursed Land of Lustful Women*, all mark out this entry. Kanika has used art to assert her right to express her own interpretation of the world and to pursue her dreams and inspirations rather than living a life based on social expectations, as was also the case with the two artists depicted.

Kanika: During the residency, and especially my performance, I learnt to express myself, which I had often found so difficult. I hope to be able to create more such stories and share them; it might prevent disaster.

When disaster strikes
Spring shall be the first to leave us …

Turning the Gaze Outside-In – Exploring Danish Pasts in Graphic Storytelling

Martin Petersen

Sarah Santangelo and Ancco, graphic storytellers, were invited to the National Museum of Denmark to participate in the workshop *Turning the Gaze Outside-In – Exploring Danish Pasts in Graphic Storytelling*. This workshop took place from 12 to 18 September 2022 and was part of TAKING CARE's line of inquiry *Different Pasts – Sustainable Futures*, which explored the role(s) museums might play in highlighting, showcasing, and supporting the resilience and adaptability of traditional knowledge systems. Beyond anthropocentric models, this workshop was conceived to support the museum in its exploration of what it means when care work in the museum is not just part of practices of preservation, but also about caring for people. How might the museum rethink its role to becoming a space of cultural encounters that continues to believe in the importance of preserving the collections it holds, but, importantly, also mobilizes these collections for innovative co-creation in the making of other, better, futures for both humans and non-humans?

Turning the Gaze Outside-In investigated native Danish lifestyles and practices by inviting an international graphic storyteller to explore how to create new narratives of these traditions for a Danish and global community.

As part of the project, we brought together the South Korean graphic novel artists Ancco (Choi Kyung-jin) and Sarah Santangelo, a student of Graphic Storytelling at The Animation Workshop in Viborg, Denmark. Often employing a humorous and auto-fictive oeuvre, they interrogate issues of personhood, of gender, and of identity. Together, the artists met with museum researchers and with professionals for conversations in object-oriented sessions related to animism and shamanism, from a primarily archaeological perspective. They also visited an open-air museum with reconstructed Danish Stone Age, Iron Age, and Viking Age exhibits. These experiences formed the basis for their graphic storytelling. The focal point of the workshop were Nordic (in particular Danish) aspects of animism and shamanism not only as beliefs and practices in the past, embedded in archaeological and ethnographic objects, but also as a way to understand how communities today strive to revitalize these facets of traditional lifeways.

For this project, Ancco worked on the collections and used expertise from within the National Museum of Denmark related to pre-Christian Scandinavian practices such as animism. Sarah Santangelo documented Ancco's encounters with museum objects, researchers, and storiesSee here a sample of Sarah's documentary illustrations (*figs*. 1–3) and Ancco's museum object sketches (*figs*. 4–5). Ancco's illustrations are not necessarily representative of her graphic novel on the topic. This graphic novel is still a work in progress at the time of writing.

1. FOR A POLARBEAR, A MEN IS A POLAR BEAR

Getting back to the reality through what we like to tell or think to know about animism.
1000 years ago they tought everybody was equel.
Large structurse of stone or fire so each family woued have the same.
Prominent shamans woued travel through long distances, with rare items, Iron. They could easily have became a important figure. They had to share, those were the ceremonies. The bears in the structures are like "brothers". Stripping in order to be like every other being.


ANIMISM
(SEE IN CHRISTIANITY)
9 WORLDS
SQUARES
GATES
11. SAVE THE
WORD THAT
A V.
VISITS GREENLAND
AND THE FARMER
IS KIND AND RAISES
A THRONE FOR HER
ELEVATED TO GET IN
CONTACT WITH SPIRITS
SHE WOULD NEED TO
ABSORB THE ANIMALS.
(FOR FUTURE REFERENCE)
PRIESTS
MONOTONE CHANTS
TO ENTER THE STATE
TO TALK TO
ANIMALS
ODIN WAS
ASHAMAN,
FEMININE,
HE BECAME
A WOMAN; HE HAS 2
RAVENS
862

Material Memories for Future Worlds

Wood, Ivory, and Palm Nuts: A (Dis)Continuation of an Old Sengele Story

Guy Patrice Dkamela, Tine Huyse

Fig. 1: Collection: Royal Museum for Central Africa, Tervuren; Object number: EO.0.0.2037-1; Name: Eoka, wooden mortar and ivory pestle; Place & Community Details: Sengele? Ngongo Basengele, DRC; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: wood, ivory; Collector: Léon E. J. Van den Broeck, District commissioner of Lake Leopold II; Date collected: 1910. Collectie KMMA Tervuren; Photo J.-M. Vandyck © KMMA Tervuren.

The wooden mortar and ivory pestle were collected from Ngongo Basengele, Mai-Ndombe province. By recording their main function[1] and the local name of the mortar (*eoka*), the donor provided leads for what could be termed a Sengele story

1 There are different types of mortars among groups from the same cultural area with diverse uses, including crushing palm nuts and sugar cane, pounding cassava leaves, and kneading clay for pottery (see Hulstaert 1957, 583).

featuring three species: the *bososa* tree,[2] the African forest elephant, and the palm tree. In this text, we will use this object in order to discuss questions of exploitation and extinction, as well as affective relationships of care, especially in relation to gender.

The first part of the story, as it might have been told in the early 1900s, is connected to the three species, and more specifically on the preparation of the popular *mosaka* sauce made from oil extracted from palm nuts. Following earlier ethnographic studies,[3] the mortar and pestle epitomise different components of Sengele society and the division of labour. Male labour would be visible in wood carving, elephant hunting, and climbing trees for harvesting palm fruit bunches. Women take up their roles in palm nut processing, food preparation, and distribution. As Vieira would put it in her ethnographic work on palm oil among the Yoómbe,[4] the products shared within and among households – like *mosaka* sauce – entail relational flows involving affection and care. The fact that mortars and pestles belonged to women suggests their important role in providing such care to the community.

More than a century later, we propose the next chapter to this story. Though *mosaka* remains an important part of the Sengele diet, the ancient mortar and pestle no longer play a role in its preparation. External pressure on the Sengele community compromise access to the basic components that make up this mortar and ivory pestle. Since 2021, the African forest elephant has been listed as Critically Endangered on the Red List of Threatened Species of The International Union for Conservation of Nature.[5] Apart from habitat fragmentation, the main factor behind its decline is the ivory trade, which intensified during the colonial era. Ivory featured among the three key resources – together with wild rubber and copal – extracted from Mai-Ndombe, which was listed as the private property of King Leopold II before being handed to Belgium in 1908. The international commercial trade in ivory was forbidden in 1989, so even if the forest elephant was still numerous, the Sengele community would not be able to hunt elephants or use ivory as a raw material.

Though also involved in the colonial trade, the fate of the palm tree is different from that of the elephant. In 1911, the British Lever Brothers[6] and the Belgian Congo signed a convention that contributed to making Congo the first African ex-

2 *Bososa* is the Kisengele name for *Staudtia kamerunensis*, also known through its commercial name *Niové*. Species identification was performed on anatomical sections using an optical microscope by Sofie Dierickx and Kévin Liévens from the RMCA's Service of Wood Biology.

3 See Engels 1910, 468–477 and 482–484; Everbroeck 1961, 212; Vieira 2021, 228.

4 Vieira 2021, 237.

5 <https://www.iucnredlist.org/> accessed 28 Feb 2023.

6 It is worth noting that the current UNILEVER multinational was formed in September 1929 by merging NV Margarine Union and Lever Brothers Limited. This was described by the *Economist* as 'one of the biggest industrial amalgamations in European history'.

porter of palm oil in the 1950s.[7] This led to the creation of vast plantations and thus large-scale deforestation. In the shadow of the colonial agro-industry aimed at export, national artisanal palm oil production had developed to nourish the growing population. With independence, the colonial agro-industry collapsed and oil export ceased at the end of the twentieth century[8] while the artisanal sector remained active. Although the colonial administration did not select Mai-Ndombe as a priority area for palm oil development, the region was nevertheless influenced by colonial oil processing techniques. A new artisanal production system was born, named '*malaxeurs*', which requires physical strength to operate it, thereby initiating a new labour organisation that intensifies the role of men in palm oil extraction.[9] The commodification and commercialization of palm tree products impacted the underlying gender roles in the ancient production of *mosaka*. Vieira used a catchy formula to explain why palm nuts ceased to belong exclusively to the female cooking domain: because the triptych of palm tree, wine, *mosaka* has been joined by another one, namely palm tree, oil, money.[10] Finally, the *bososa* tree that was used to construct the mortar might still occur in the forests customarily owned and managed by the Sengele land chiefs (*nkumu lè mbotu*), but access might be currently constrained by Wildlife Works Carbon's REDD+ concession. Forests are protected through this scheme developed by the United Nations, providing financial compensation for the Congolese government and carbon project developers, but it conflicts with local needs for agricultural land and forest products. Since 2011, Ngongo Basengele has been resisting this forest carbon project, with several episodes of lethal violence.

This wooden mortar and ivory pestle would appear strange to a twenty-first century Sengele woman who buys palm oil in the market or processes her *mosaka* differently. However, through interviews[11] we know that some old models of the mortar remain part of the possessions that a few older women have inherited, though they are no longer used. As such, these few old Sengele women and the RMCA are the only ones with a link to this wooden mortar and ivory pestle. They are the keepers of the untold Sengele story; how external pressure on nature, rooted in colonial capitalism, disrupted the multispecies interaction that was at the heart of a Sengele delicacy. Hopefully it will feed the much-needed conversation about the future of the Sengele and their land, about ownership and nature conservation.

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7 Nicolaï 2013.

8 Ibid.

9 AGRER S.A.& EARTH GEDIF. 2005–2006.

10 Vieira 2021, 254.

11 Marc Mputungolo, resident of Ngongo Basengele, personal communication, 22 July 2022.

Marc Mputungolo and Rachel Isomi from the village Ngongo Basengele; Julien Volper, Els Cornelissen, Jacky Maniacky, Hans Beeckman, Sofie Dierickx, and Kévin Liévens from the RMCA.

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Climate Crisis – The Decline of Biodiversity and an Over 140-Year-Old Necklace

Katharina Nowak

Fig. 1: Collection: Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK), Hamburg (DE); Object number: E 709; Name: Maremare; Place & Community Details: Majeļ, Marshall Islands; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: Spondylus, coconut shell, white shells; Collector: Carl Wilhelm Lüders; Date collected: Before 1879, accessioned 1879. © MARKK, photo: P. Schimweg.

The *maremare*, a necklace from Ṃajeḷ, Marshall Islands, is made of spondylus shells, coconut shells, and white shells, threaded on a cord made from pandanut leaves. The MARKK collections hold several similar spondylus necklaces from the Marshall Islands from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; this one is registered with the inventory number E 709. The previous owner, who is listed in the inventory book as the donor as well as seller, is Carl Wilhelm Lüders (1823–1896). He appropriated the necklace before 1879. The merchant from Hamburg was head of the former museum (today MARKK) as the director from 1 January 1879 until 1 October 1896, and integrated his private collection into the museum collection.[1] For over a decade, his salary included a payment for his collection. No further details on the acquisitions from Lüders are known to this date.

The shell *Spondylus* is found in warmer seas worldwide. Spondylus has played an important cultural and economic role in the Marshall Islands, and necklaces made of spondylus are still of great relevance in the region today. They are a piece of jewellery, an object of value and a status symbol that, when worn today, serves as a proud expression of Marshallese identity. I first came across the necklace during an object viewing at a meeting with members of the international Water Think Tank, who advised the planning process for the exhibition *Wasser Botschaften* (Water Messages) which opened at the Museum am Rothenbaum – Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK) in February 2023. Within the framework of the exhibition, the curatorial team examined how ecological knowledge comes to exist in the collections via the theme of water.

With rising sea levels, dying coral reefs, tsunamis, and water pollution, oceans play a central role in the unpredictability of the climate crisis. Rising sea levels threaten to swallow coastal areas and island nations, while heavy rains flood cities and rivers.[2] Livelihoods, particularly those which are subsistence-based, are at risk, as are water and food security, health, indigenous knowledge, and cultural identity.[3] Rising sea levels are becoming a major problem in the Pacific Island countries – these volcanic islands and atolls are sinking into the ocean. As a result, in 2015, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, committed to achieving CO_2 neutrality by 2050.

On the Marshall Islands, the spondylus shells, fishhooks, and other marine goods were historically exchanged for breadfruit and arrowroot. The value of necklaces made of spondylus highly correlated with the rarity of the shell. The more consistent the colouration of the processed discs, the more the necklace was worth. Its value was deeply connected to the elaborate processing techniques of the material. Tools that came to the islands through trade with people of the Global North, nations with a privileged position due to centuries of exploitation of the Global

1 Kokott 2018, 181–2.

2 Thomas et al. 2020, 6.

3 Thomas et al. 2020, 10.

South, displaced previous manufacturing techniques and the necklaces ceased to be produced in this way. In the early 2000s, the Marshallese Cultural Center on Kwajalein[4] initiated a revival of original techniques.[5]

Climate activists from the Pacific Islands wear necklaces made of shells which are contemporary interpretations of the historic one that is found in the MARKK's collection. Various Indigenous peoples of the Pacific who are committed to fighting for climate crisis awareness have joined forces under the name Pacific Climate Warriors. The Pacific Climate Warriors use the strategy of wearing the clothing, jewellery, and other material culture of their respective islands in their impactful public campaigns, staging themselves as 'warriors' who stand up to climate change rather than slipping into the role of passive victims.[6] Activists' clothing varies but is visually coherent because it is made from ecological materials. The raw materials used, such as pandanus and coconut fibres, shells (such as the spondylus), feathers, and tapa bark, occur naturally in the Pacific. By dressing with materials sourced from their environment, the Pacific Climate Warriors highlight the very biodiversity that is in jeopardy due to the climate crisis. They advocate a self-determined, carbon-free future that remains closely connected to their ancestors, cultures, and environments.[7]

The people living on the islands recognize a decline in biodiversity from the decreasing numbers of shells, coral, and fish. Increasingly warmer oceans, heavy precipitation, and droughts are affecting the occurrence of spondylus even further.[8] As a result, the inhabitants of the islands and atolls in the Pacific Ocean will have fewer (or different) resources available to them in the future.[9] The necklace, as well as other expressions of material culture from the regions that are preserved in the MARKK's ethnographic collections, are witnesses to a declining biodiversity today. Necklaces, ear and arm jewellery, as well as clothing, mats, weapons, houses, and outrigger canoes were made from the materials that were available in the environment. The Global North is both responsible for colonial displacement and a primary contributor to the climate crisis. The presence of this necklace in the Global North is a reminder of these two facts, especially considering that the necklace is held in an ethnographic collection closely linked to a colonial project. Today, this could serve as a starting point for dialogues. Exchanges about the ecological knowledge contained in this material heritage, and the responsibility of this museum and ethnographic

4 Established in 1998 on Kwajalein. <https://www.facebook.com/marshalleseculturalcenter/about/?ref=page_internal> accessed on 11 Aug 2022. Website (currently not accessible): <http://www.marshallese-cultural-center.org/>.

5 Lindborg and Lindborg 2006.

6 Farbotko and Kitara 2021.

7 Steiner 2015, 149.

8 Titifanue et al. 2017, 135.

9 Titifanue et al. 2017, 142.

museums in the Global North in general, can serve to address the current climate crisis. This, combined with the bold campaigns of the Pacific Climate Warriors, could constitute the first steps towards a more self-determined future.

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The Doum Palm Between Colonial Exploitation and Collecting

Rosa Anna Di Lella

*Fig. 1: Collection: Museo delle Civiltà; Object number: 6488–1964; Name: leaf cellulose fibres of doum palm (Hyphaene thebaica) in glass vase; Place & Community Details: unknown provenance, presumably Eritrea or Somalia.**

**The Hypheane thebaica, with common name doum palm, is called akat in Tigrigna, zembaba in Amharic; Materials: Vegetable fibre, glass; Collector: Unknown; Date collected: Late 19th century/early 20th century.*

Part 1

This glass vase with fibre of doum palm (*Hyphaene thebaica*) is part of a larger collection of around 2000 botanical, mineral, zoological, and commercial samples on shows in the Mostra Campionaria Section of the former Italian Colonial Museum of Rome (1914–1971).

The Colonial Museum of Rome was an institution promoted by and related to the Italian Ministry of Colonies (1912–1937). It was founded in 1914, and opened for the first time in 1923 in the presence of Benito Mussolini. The main purpose of the Colonial Museum was of a propagandistic nature: knowledge of the Italian colonial expansion was to be shared with the Italian population, which, through the museum, was to acquire a 'colonial awareness' and become well acquainted with Italian colonial enterprises as well as cultural, geographical, and economic aspects related to the territories occupied by Italy since the late nineteenth century.

In the 1930s, the museum was moved to a larger purpose-built exhibition space. In parallel with the proclamation of Italian East Africa (*Africa Orientale Italiana – A.O.I.*) by Benito Mussolini on May 9, 1936 after the Italian conquest of Ethiopia, the institution was given a new name, the Museum of Italian Africa.

The Museum closed for stocktaking in 1938, and remained closed during World War II to reopen only in 1947. In the 1950s it was renamed the 'African Museum'. The essential exhibition framework remained unchanged, presenting, indeed, strong continuities in mission and museum display concerning the colonial period, ambiguous rhetoric and narratives, and nostalgic approaches to the Italian presence in Africa that led to its gradual decline. It was eventually closed in 1971.

The collections of the former Coloniale Museum of Rome were included in the Museo delle Civiltà in 2017, after a long and complex institutional history marked by opacity and documentary omissions, propaganda missions and ambiguous purposes, openings and closures, relocations within the city of Rome, fragmentation of collections and documents. When the collections arrived at the Museum of Civilisations in 2017, they had been inaccessible since the early 1970s.A vehement claim was made by multiple researchers, the museum staff, and citizens interested in the collections to find out more about their history and the objects which had long been hidden: to to start a journey of knowledge, acknowledgement, new accessibility and interpretation of the collections.

Part 2

In the context of this colonial institution, the Mostra Campionaria section, opened in 1929, represented what must have been (in the eyes of the Italian colonizers) the most attractive commercial aspects of the Italian colonies, exalting the resources

that the conquered territories offered both in terms of environment and human labour. Raw and processed materials, merchandise samples, seeds, oils, wood, furs, and minerals from Italian colonial domains were gathered in Rome for propaganda aims: to 'educate' about and 'raise awareness' of the economic potential for Italian companies operating in Libya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia, and to justify the human and financial losses related to military campaigns in East Africa and Libya between the late nineteenth century and the 1930s.

Among the autochthonous botanical species represented in the Mostra Campionaria section, the importance of materials related to the doum palm stand out in both the quantity and the variety of items collected. These range from seeds and leaf fibres to a large amount of finished products and discards garnered during processing stages.

During the late nineteenth century, in the early stages of the occupation of Eritrea, the doum palm was subject to extraction for local exploitation or export. Considered the most important plant of the local flora for Italian enterprises, it was harvested as early as 1907 by the Società Cotonieri Milanesi (Society of Cotton Manufacturers of Milan) and exported to Italy for domestic production of buttons. Italian industrialists subsequently set up sawmill or button factories in Eritrea, and tried to grind the nut and the leaf of the doum palm to obtain flour for animal feed, fibres, cellulose, and alcohol.[1]

The plant and its components were the object of attention of Italian industrialists, politicians, and also scholars for its many uses. The famous Florentine botanist Odoardo Beccari (1843–1920) published taxonomic treatments[2] on the doum palm in 1908 and (posthumously) in 1924. He had probably seen doum palm in 1870 while taking part in an expedition in Eritrea, alongside the explorer and zoologist Orazio Antinori (1811–1882), two years after the purchase of the port of Assab that determined the beginning of the Italian colonisation of Eritrea. Several articles and books on the doum palm were published until the 1930s, with the aim of popularising its uses.[3] Several colonial exhibitions also devoted attention to this plant, starting with the International Exhibition held in Turin in 1911, one of the initiatives that celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Unification of Italy. On this occasion, the Eritrean Colonisation Directorate's exhibition showcased the colony's local products: the doum palm was among the main attractions and described as a 'providential', 'beneficial' plant that 'offers precious resources, varied and remunerative uses…. Today, the existing doum palm forest in Eritrea appears to be vast, but not long from

1 Puglisi 1950.

2 Beccari 1908; Beccari 1924.

3 Including 'La palma dum della colonia Eritrea e la sua utilizzazione' (1931) by Isaia Baldrati.

now its limitations will be lamented, and its renewal and growth more carefully attended to."[4]

Today, addressing how objects like a glass vase containing cellulose fibres come to be part of Italian heritage may foster reflection on the processes of despoiling of ecosystems perpetrated by the colonial apparatus. Now, the doum palm materials from the collection of the former Colonial Museum represent materially the imperialistic predatory behaviour toward colonies, and illuminate the propaganda context that characterized the museum, inviting thought on the colonial connections still alive in our museums (and societies) and the possible forms of remediation through the objects.

The work of researching the colonial connections between Italy and the former colonial countries, starting with objects now preserved in the collections of the Museo delle Civiltà, aims to deconstruct the narratives and make explicit the purposes that allowed the objects to be collected. Thus new narratives on the relationships between individual objects and their early contexts of production can be written, initiating collaborations with scholars, artists, and activists who bring alternative visions, backgrounds, and knowledge. The doum palm is an exemplary case in the Mostra Campionaria section, which we may consider a problematic database of biodiversity collected during Italian colonialism. The information in this repository could make it possible to initiate interdisciplinary research, considering that the Hyphaene genus is still poorly understood and evaluated and, moreover, the doum palm is subject to constant decline due to habitat destruction, drought, and overharvesting, which might inevitably lead to the loss of its gene pool.[5]

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Native Hawaiian Kapa: Rebuilding a Sustainable Future

Page Chang (Kumu Kapa)

Fig. 1: Collection: Pitt Rivers Museum, University of Oxford; Object number: 1886.1.1214.1; Name: Kapa, bark cloth; Place & Community Details: Hawaiian Islands; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: Wauke tree (Broussonetia Papyrifera); Collector: Frederick William Beechey; Date collected: 1825 – 1828.

As a modern Native Hawaiian Kapa maker, I am sad for the Wahine (the Native Hawaiian woman) who laboured over this piece of Kapa cloth, whose work has been reduced to a catalogue number and a description that is sorely lacking in information. I don't blame the cataloguer or the collections manager for not knowing more. Kapa making is a practice that was almost completely lost in Hawai'i after American missionaries brought woven fabrics from America and Europe. Hawaiian women were then taught to weave using imported foreign fibres, tools, and protocols. Kapa making is one of many examples of our brilliant Native Hawaiian practices being put away, locked in a drawer by the proverbial 'colonist'. The practice of Kapa making, a practice that partners with nature, holds far-reaching life lessons that could and should be re-examined, re-learned, and re-implemented in today's injured world. Here, I attempt to give you an opportunity to see this object from a different point of view, to see this piece of Kapa as a symbol of a promising future.

What is Kapa

Hawaiian Barkcloth, Kapa, or Tapa, is the fabric of Hawai'i. It is made primarily from the inner bark of the paper mulberry tree, or *Broussonetia Papyrifera*, a plant that has travelled the world and has been used in many cultures for similar purposes. In Hawai'i the plant itself is called *Wauke* and was brought to Hawai'i by Polynesian voyagers over a thousand years ago. It was cultivated to grow in tall, skinny stalks, successfully propagating itself through underground runners.

Kapa cloth was used for trade, clothing, bedding, decoration, ceremony, and any other fabric needed in daily life. Hawaiian Kapa cloth was considered the highest form of textile design and finery in all of Polynesia. Kapa making creates a deep partnership with the 'Āina (land), resulting in a physical creative expression of that connection. It represented ancient Hawaiian fashion, art, and the cultural practice of *Aloha 'Āina* (to love the land).

How Kapa is Made

This piece of Hawaiian Kapa cloth is easily recognized as Hawaiian due to its surface decoration that brilliantly uses a combination of carved 'Ohe Kapala (Bamboo stamps), an exclusive Hawaiian practice. At first glance it looks like a checkerboard. A closer inspection reveals the artist having thoughtfully inked and placed a narrow stamp of 'zig-zags' in rows of five to create one rectangle, and then repeating this process 150 times on this small sample piece, always using cultivated or gathered dye-materials.

Looking past the surface design, we see the slightly raised watermark in the Kapa, created as the artisan beats the material with her own custom carved wooden I'e Kuku (Kapa beater). The four-sided beater has three sides of long straight grooves called *Pū'ili*. The fourth side has a distinct pattern carved into it, called the watermark, of crossing lines creating squares or lozenges, unique to each Kapa maker. As she pounds the fibres with the I'e Kuku, moving them across her Kua La'au (carved wooden anvil), the fabric becomes thinner and wider with each pass. She finishes with the watermark, leaving her personal mark within the Kapa. Because no other barkcloth-making society used this watermarking technique, we know that this piece is Hawaiian.

The watermark is visible because the material went through a natural fermentation process, another exclusively Hawaiian practice. Fermenting the material before its final production into a sheet of Kapa made it very pliable, even dough-like, allowing it to be felted into a solid sheet that could be very soft, but also very strong. It gives the Kapa a beautiful, smooth finish, diminishes the rough, fibrous quality commonly seen in other barkcloth traditions, and allows for a clean watermark impression.

There's more to making Kapa than these few steps mentioned, including: cultivating the Wauke trees, harvesting and stripping the outer bark from the trees, peeling off the Mo'omo'o (inner bark) and beating the Mo'omo'o initially on a Kua Pōhaku (wooden anvil) with a Hohoa (round wooden mallet). When we see this piece of Kapa, we are seeing the daily habits of the maker.

Restoring Nature through Indigenous Practice

Sadly, Kapa making in Hawai'i was another of many casualties of colonialism. Now is the time to focus on revitalizing and reimplementing these native practices that can bring solutions to the global environmental crisis.

My Kapa practice is a subsistence farming lifestyle. It is a practice of sustainability, of exercise, of experimentation, of cultivation, of propagation and fertilization, of creativity, and most of all, of discovery. If we build on the Kapa research of our ancestors, there is a cornucopia of discoveries to be made or inventions created from the practice, the Wauke, and all the other lau (plants) involved. If we reconnect with and re-build our unique local natural environments that support these plants and practices, we can continue to grow and to thrive in creative balance and harmony with nature.

I believe that we can find balance through Indigenous practices, which are rooted in cherishing the natural world. We can find balance with the 'Āina and all that she has to offer, and in the community, working together to live in sufficiency,

sustainability, and regeneration. We can find balance in ourselves as we regularly, rhythmically tend to the many tasks involved in our life practices.

If everyone incorporated even a small part of a Native practice specific to their location, practices which were painstakingly developed over millennia, there would be a shifting of environmental consciousness that would surely be of global benefit.

This piece of Kapa represents the possibility of a better, different world than the one we now occupy, the one we were meant to inherit and must fight to reclaim.

As a Kapa maker, the rhythmic tapping of my I'e Kuku is the call to fight.

A World in a Box: Education and/or Extraction in a Dutch Colonial School Collection

Esmee Schoutens

Fig. 1: Collection: Museum of World Cultures, Amsterdam; Object number: TM-4108-815; Name: unknown; Place & Community Details: Indonesia and Suriname; Maker's Name: assembled by het Koloniaal Instituut (Amsterdam), box made by N.V. Ultrajectina (Utrecht); Materials: among others, tropical woods, gold ore, manganese, coal, petroleum, different rice varieties, sugar molasses, cinnamon; Collector: returned to the Tropenmuseum by the Royal Archives of the Netherlands; Date collected: 1967.

Waroe, coconut, bamboo, and sisal hemp fibres rest next to a piece of rope from Java, Indonesia, a dried piece of fruit, and a dried root. Neatly tied together in bundles, these are the objects, the products of colonialism, with which you are confronted on opening the first drawer of the richly carved wooden box (inventory number TM-4108-815) from the collections of the Nationaal Museum van Wereldculturen (NMVW). The other five drawers, below, contain small jars and round cardboard pillboxes filled with different materials and products in random order. They contain edibles such as sugar molasses, corn flour, and spices, natural resources like raw and processed petroleum, ore containing gold, and copal.

This box was a special edition, no. 2000, of the 'school collections' (in Dutch: *schoolverzamelingen*) issued by the Colonial Institute in Haarlem. This institute was the predecessor of the Royal Tropical Institute, Amsterdam which included the Tropenmuseum until 2014. The Tropenmuseum subsequently merged with Museum

Volkenkunde, Leiden and the Afrika Museum, Berg en Dal, to form the NMVW. School collections were distributed to primary schools across the Netherlands to promote greater knowledge of the natural world in general, and in particular of the natural resources of the colonies: the then-Dutch East Indies and Suriname. But what are we to take from this *object lesson*? Were the collecting and packaging of these materials and their circulation simply intended to be part of teaching children about specific natural worlds as part of the museum's commitment to social advancement? Or might we see this as entangled with imperial education, with the teaching of empire? And, as a museum for world cultures today, might these objects be mobilized in the telling of different stories, planetary histories, telling the overlapping histories of colonialism, planetary precarity, and racial capitalism?

In the early twentieth century, the Colonial Institute sent many similar collections of materials to schools in the Netherlands. However, this 2000th edition was made specifically in 1915 for then-Crown Princess Juliana (1909–2004) who had started primary school in the same year. Like the regular school collections, the box contained around seventy cardboard pillboxes, twenty small jars with liquids, and about thirty loose materials and objects. In contrast to the regular collections, however, this beautifully carved box, made from various tropical woods, was created for this jubilee edition to hold all the samples neatly together. Generally, the individual pillboxes and jars were kept in one of the school cabinets in Dutch primary schools. It seems that many were discarded over the years. Queen Wilhelmina accepted the gift for her daughter, but the royal house's archivist *returned* the school collection to the Tropenmuseum in 1967.

The Colonial Institute, which officially opened in 1926 but was already active since 1910, consisted of three departments: ethnology, tropical hygiene, and a trade museum. It had the ambition of being a national repository of colonial knowledge. The distribution of school collections was in line with their mission: to collect information about the colonies, its people and nature, and employ this strategically to maintain control from Europe. The Colonial Museum in Haarlem, the precursor of the Colonial Institute, had laid the foundation for this mission with its focus on trade and business opportunities.[1] Since 1870, private companies had been allowed to start businesses in Indonesia, the biggest colony of the Netherlands. In the museum, raw materials and finished products were exhibited to inspire Dutch entrepreneurs in the Netherlands, ranging from plantation crops to printed textiles. The focus on the abundance of natural resources in the Dutch colonies and teaching children about them at a young age is therefore not surprising, and the school box is a prime example of an education system that integrates the extractive and exploitative nature of colonialism. The school collections educate children into empire and into the imperial attitudes of taking and extracting motivated by self-

1 Wijs 2017, 122; 129.

interest but promoted as an ethical undertaking. The inscription on the wooden front of this box that reads 'Het lichtet overal' (There's light everywhere) references Dutch medieval verses, employed here to highlight the Netherlands's imagined role as a 'deliverer of light', spreading Christian values, civilization, and progress.[2] The same citation would later be part of the facade of the new building of the Colonial Institute in Amsterdam.

The mode of presentation of the pillboxes and jars in its well-crafted wooden box suggests a certain convenience and untaintedness in contrast to how the actual materials were obtained, the arduous labour of those who harvest them elided. The fifth drawer, for example, contains 31 boxes with varying natural materials, from resins to seeds and tannins to ores. The minimalist, white boxes contain a short description on the cover of their respective contents, which are presented as ready-to-consume materials, without making visible the exploitation of both people and nature to obtain or harvest these products. Metals such as gold and manganese or coal rocks were harvested by underpaid workers in often dangerous working conditions, next to the toxicity of some of these materials or their production processes. By means of the school collection, Dutch children were taught about the earth's resources. They were also taught that there were plenty of opportunities in the colonies to make profit from the natural world. The portability of the school collections, and of this box in particular, demonstrates a certain ambition to spread knowledge about the natural resources of the colonies beyond the walls of the Colonial Institute.

Within the walls of the present-day Tropenmuseum, this object and the specific history of the institution open up possibilities to think of the ethnographic museum as a site for the planetary, to move beyond any singular focus on 'ethnos' and bridge the historically formed separation between natural history and ethnographic collections. But how have the school collections and this specific box worked thus far in teaching children about the natural world? Did the school collections stimulate a certain curiosity for nature, or was it the children's first engagement with what it means to have the right to extract from the planet? Following Dipesh Chakrabarty's provocation about toy tractors,[3] are these simply objects of education or play, or are they intended to nurture the imperial right to the planet and to labour, the racialized labour of others required to harness the resources of the planet? Do these school collections nurture young people's complicity in the ongoing destruction of the planet? If this other reading is also possible then what might it require of the ethnographic museum to nurture greater planetary interspecies care? This may require that ethnographic museums move beyond the now stubborn divide between nature and culture, to think more critically about how planetary precarity, colonial-

2 Lelijveld et al. 2022, 44–46.

3 Chakrabarty 2020.

ism, and racial capitalism are inextricably connected. This school box may be one object that could help in such a rethinking.

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Hundred-year-old Seediq Stories in the Swedish Collection

Awi Nokan (吳永昌 Wu Yongchang)

Fig. 1: Collection: Museum of Ethnography, National Museums of World Culture, Sweden; Object number: 1910.05.0029; Name: Slmadac/Hlmadac, headhunting knife; Place & Community Details: Puli, Nantou county, Taiwan. Seediq or Atayal peoples; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: steel, wood, bamboo, human hair, rattan, ramie; Collector: Folke Cronholm Collection; Date collected: accessioned in 1910, likely collected in 1908. Photo: 高政賢 Cheng-Hsien Kao (Pihu Abu).

On the morning of 28 February 2022, after flying a distance of more than 8,000 kilometers, an official research team representing the Seediq people, who have been traditionally centred in Nantou County, Taiwan, travelled to the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm. Before starting research on the collections, the team members first performed the *Dmahun* ceremony (the traditional Seediq reconciliation ceremony) to the objects of the ancestors within the museum. On the one hand, the ceremony comforts and prays to the *Utux* (spirit) of the ancestors in the collection so that we, the younger generations, can successfully learn their knowledge of life. On

the other hand, the purpose of the ceremony was also to 'reconcile' with the Swedish National Museums of World Culture, thanking the organization for their willingness to open this kind door to us so that we, who are the people considered to be the **descendants** of the people that made the objects, may have first-hand access to traditional knowledge that has long been lost or is on the verge of disappearing in our contemporary lives.

After the ceremony, we went to the collections study room in the basement of the Museum of Ethnography, where museum staff had gathered various cultural objects for the delegation to research. Two people's eyes knowingly fell in unison on a knife, which had a lock of human hair tied to the end of the sheath, identifying it as a knife used for headhunting. It was the first time in my life that I had touched the most important social symbol for Seediq men.

Headhunting was an exclusively male activity. The owner of a headhunting knife generally did not allow others to touch it, especially women. According to oral descriptions from the elders, headhunting knives were specialized knives. Hair from the head that was taken was attached to the sheath, and their spirit was associated with the hair. A headhunting knife that has been used has not only spiritual significance, it also contains the power to heal illnesses.

Seediq people undertook 'headhunting' as part of male coming of age ceremonies and in order to counteract disasters that occurred in the tribe. Headhunting was also needed to defend and prove personal reputation. Because headhunting in other territories was a dangerous operation, it was usually a group activity, and the rules of Waya/Gaya (Seediq people's laws of life) were strictly followed during the whole process of the ceremony. The head represents the spirit. When it was brought back to the tribe, it was welcomed and fed like a person. The head was placed on a specially designated outdoor rack within the village. The spirit protects the tribe, preventing disasters and keeping evil away. It promotes the health of the tribe.

Looking back on our two-week stay in Stockholm and the survey of the hundred-year-old cultural heritage left by our ancestors, I felt deep admiration for their wisdom and traditional knowledge, as well as connecting with the mind-set of our ancestors. Looking at our people after a century of being colonized by others and subject to the environment of modern life, there are more doubts about how much of our culture we can keep. How much can be passed on to the future?

Note on the Folke Cronholm Collection by Michel D. Lee

The headhunting knife[1] described above was accessioned by the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm in 1910 and came from a Swedish diplomat named

1 While we do not know precisely when the practice of headhunting started in Taiwan, records of its practice can be found from the time the Dutch were there in the 17th century. We are aware that the practice stopped altogether by the beginning of the 20th century.

Folke Cronholm (1873–1945). He was stationed in Tokyo, Japan, from 1907 to 1911. Evidence in his photography collection shows that he may have attended the inauguration of the opening of the Taiwan Trunk Railway (臺灣縱貫鐵路) in Taichung Park, Taichung, Taiwan on 24 October 1908.[2] Judging by the photographs, the event was also attended by various Taiwan Indigenous groups, including people from the Truku dialect of Seediq people (Seejiq Truku).[3] It is possible the Taiwan objects from the Folke Cronholm collection were collected at this time.

2 Unpublished research by 黃維君 (Wei-chun Huang), National Taiwan University. Correspondence 28 September 2021.

3 Conclusion from a workshop held with Seediq individuals that took place at the office of the Seediq National Assembly Puli, Nantou county, Taiwan on 25 November 2022.

Yeil koowú – A Raven's Tail Ceremonial Robe

Mille Gabriel, Sgendootan George, Matthew J. Walsh

The National Museum of Denmark houses a very rare ceremonial robe from the Tlingit people of Alaska – a Raven's Tail robe or *'Yeil koowú'*, which means 'the raven's tail' in the Tlingit language. The robe is of a design archetype referred to as a 'Lattice Band robe' for a series of lattice-patterns employed in its design. It is comprised of four primary design elements as well as alternating solid outer bands of (faded) yellow, black, and white.

This robe came to the National Museum of Denmark in 1862 by exchange with the Russian Academy of Sciences in St Petersburg, today the Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology. This was just five years prior to Russia's sale of Alaska to the US in 1867 following a series of costly conflicts between the Russian colonists and the local Indigenous Tlingit tribes. However, the robe is much older, probably dating to the mid- or late eighteenth century. It was most likely collected by one of the early Russian expeditions; perhaps by I.F. Lisianskii during his visit to Sitka, Alaska in 1805. It is one of only eleven or twelve authentic pre-Colonial Raven's Tail robes known. Much more than merely an object, this magnificent ceremonial *at.óow* – a Tlingit term designating not only a clan 'crest' or symbol of ownership, but also denoting a sacred cultural possession – is helping to bridge contemporary worlds and forge new and sincere connections.

Fig. 1–3: Collection: National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen; Object number: Kc.119; Name: Yeil koowú, A Raven's Tail Ceremonial Robe; Place & Community Details: Tlingit people, Alaska; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: mountain goat wool; Collector: unknown; Date collected: 18th/19th Century. ***Top****. Yeil koowú Raven's Tail ceremonial robe; Object photo: Roberto Fortuna, Nationalmuseet.* ***Bottom left.*** *Shgendootan George's well-used copy of Cheryl Samuel's The Raven's Tail book; Photo: Mille Gabriel, Nationalmuseet.* ***Bottom right.*** *Shgendootan takes a selfie with the robe; Photo: Shgendootan George.*

Raven's Tail Weaving

Ceremonial robes like the Raven's Tail robe were (and are still today) important and highly symbolic garments worn during ceremonies and celebrations among the Tsimshian, Tlingit, and Haida peoples of the northern Pacific Northwest Coast. When danced during traditional ceremonials, the Raven's Tail robes were believed to aid in healing, and in contemporary practice, they reflect the revitalization and strength of traditional Native cultures of the Pacific Northwest Coast. Ceremonial robes like the Raven's Tail and the subsequent Chilkat robes were (and are still to some extent) hand-woven from mountain goat wool. They were produced exclusively by female weavers using a unique form of hand-twining. Raven's Tail designs comprise contrasting white, yellow, and black geometric patterns and motifs, as seen in the 'Lattice Band' style exemplified in the robe discussed here. Most of the surviving robes also possess edge-fringes and tassels applied as relief features onto the geometric motifs, both of which would add dynamic aspects of movement and shadow-play when worn and danced during ceremonial events. Little is known about the traditional manufacture of Raven's Tail robes, as they fell out of use in the early 1800s when the form-line style so iconic of the later Chilkat designs became the ubiquitous style of choice among the local elite. The design and manufacture of the Raven's Tail tradition would have been entirely lost had it not been for just eleven or so surviving specimens that remain scattered across museum collections worldwide.

Tradition Lost and Found

In the late 1970's, American anthropologist and weaver Cheryl Samuel began what would become a lifelong project to revitalize the traditional weaving techniques and styles of northern Pacific Northwest Coast weaving. This journey led to her two landmark monographs, *The Raven's Tail* (1987) and *The Chilkat Dancing Blanket* (1990). For each, she painstakingly reconstructed the traditional manufacture and design techniques of these amazing expressions of material culture, utilizing samples housed in various museums around the world. Her work on rediscovering the Raven's Tail weaving tradition included careful study of the Raven's Tail robe hosted at the National Museum of Denmark, among others. These fundamental works would begin a cultural heritage revitalization effort that has at present spanned generations and continues to breathe new life into two nearly extinct weaving traditions from the Pacific Northwest.

One weaver who took up this call to reignite interest in Native weaving was Shgendootan 'Shgen' George. Shgen was raised in the Tlingit village of Angoon, Alaska, in her clan house *Kéet Ooxhú hít*, the Killer Whale Tooth House. She is

Dakl'weidí (Killer Whale clan) and the child of the *Deisheetaan* (Raven/Beaver clan). Shgen retired from her calling as a schoolteacher in 2020 and is now a full-time practising artist, dividing her time between Juneau and Angoon, Alaska. Her primary art forms are Raven's Tail and Chilkat weaving, which she learned from Clarissa Rizal and the above-mentioned Cheryl Samuel, and Tlingit beadwork, which she learned from her grandmother Lydia George.

The Circle is Complete

In September of 2022, the authors convened in Copenhagen and Brede, Denmark, as part of a workshop organized at the National Museum of Denmark under the auspices of the TAKING CARE project.

The meeting would mark the first time that Shgen would come face-to-face with the Raven's Tail robe housed at the National Museum. However, as it turns out, this was not the beginning of their story. During the authors' time together with the robe, Shgen shared with the research group a worn and very used copy of Cheryl Samuel's pivotal book *The Raven's Tail*. Serendipitously, it had been from photographs of this very robe in Samuel's volume that Shgen had first learned to weave the Raven's Tail technique! During the workshop, she regularly consulted her copy of *The Raven's Tail*, setting it down beside the ancient robe, revealing a series of dog-eared and heavily worn pages, each with underlined passages and notes in every margin. Devotedly inscribed notes included arrows pointing to various images and hand-written personal sketches, sections circled, and points of reference scribbled, all detailing various aspects of the technical manufacture of the particular robe under examination.

Describing the experience, Shgendootan George explains:

> I don't have the words to express the overwhelming emotions that come with visiting that robe. The power and connection that I felt being in its presence were immense. Knowing that it had been danced by our ancestors hundreds of years ago, it felt like a bridge between times. When we bring these types of objects out in ceremony we talk about them as holding the spirit of those who wore them, it is as if the previous people who used the objects are right there with us. This brings so much comfort and support to those who are looking on at it. I truly felt as if I was visiting a relative when I got to visit that robe.

Overall, this meeting was a powerful one for all involved. The experience drove home the value and utter necessity for ethnographic museums to actively collaborate with and facilitate descendant communities and stakeholders to enable them to actively engage with museum collections. We are truly grateful to have had this opportunity to share this experience together and collectively look forward to many more such prospects in the future.

Cotton Cultivation in Togo Through the Lens of Europe's Periphery

Tina Palaić

Fig. 1: Collection: Slovene Ethnographic Museum, Ljubljana; Object number: D 8066; Name: A man weaves on a handloom, photograph on a glass; Place & Community Details: Kamina, Togolese Republic; Photographer's Name: Leo Poljanec; Materials: slide; Collector: Leo Poljanec; Date collected: 1912–1914.

Baron Anton Codelli, an Austro-Hungarian from Ljubljana, arrived in the then-German colony of Togo in 1911. He was hired by the German telecommunications company Telefunken of Berlin to build a radiotelegraph station that would wirelessly connect Berlin and the German colonies in Africa. At that time, international cables laid on the seabed facilitated wired communication between continents, but

this means of communication was unreliable in the event of an international conflict.

Together with German engineers, Codelli surveyed the area and decided on Kamina near the town of Atakpamé as the best location for constructing a radiotelegraph station. Plans had to be made for the transportation of construction elements and equipment for the buildings from Germany, and hard work was required on the site, which relied on local labour. This involved clearing forests, as well as building roads and a railway. Approximately 300 locals worked on the construction site at the start of the project, but this number later decreased. They were paid poorly at first, and the Germans eventually forced them to work under the guise of having to pay taxes for a project they had neither conceived nor desired.

The first telegram from Germany arrived in Kamina successfully at the end of 1913. The project was halted when the First World War broke out in 1914. Togo was surrounded by English and French troops and Germans were forced to defend themselves. In August 1914, the Kamina radio station received an order from the supreme military headquarters in Berlin to destroy the complex, which took only five hours.

The construction of the Kamina station was extensively documented. Nearly 800 photographs, negatives, and slides depicting the progression of the station's construction, as well as daily life in nearby villages, can be found in the Slovene Ethnographic Museum and the National and University Library in Ljubljana. Some were taken by Anton Codelli, others by his colleague Leo Poljanec, also from Ljubljana, and some very likely by locals. However, the authorship of many remains unknown. In 1959, SEM purchased 82 slides in Poljanec's collection, including the one that is the subject of this paper, from his sister Ana.

The photograph shows a man weaving cotton thread fabric on a simple loom. This was one of the scenes that Anton Codelli and Leo Poljanec often came across. The images in the collection also show the storing of cotton in sacks for export to Germany, the spinning of thread and the sale of cotton at the local market. These shed some light on cotton production and the manufacture of cotton fabrics in Togo around the turn of the twentieth century. More importantly, they illuminate how this plant connected the distant corners of the world through the movement of people, raw materials, and capital.

With the abolition of slavery in 1865, the American Civil War resulted in a global recasting of commodity production, including cotton cultivation, which was no longer dominated by the slave-driven plantations of the American South. Europe was left with a scarcity of raw cotton supplies, and many European countries turned to their colonies for replacements. This was also true for Germany, which sought a reliable and inexpensive source of cotton in newly acquired African colonies after 1884. As part of the German policy to increase cotton production in Togo, James N. Calloway, John Robinson, Allen Burks, and Shepherd Lincoln Harris, the sons of formerly enslaved people from Alabama connected to Tuskegee Normal and

Industrial Institute, were invited to instruct German colonialists and locals on how to grow cotton for export. They stayed in Togo from 1901 to 1909; cotton production and export increased during that period.

However, Togo's social and economic conditions differed from those in the American South. Togolese farmers owned the land and the material resources, so the Germans could not force them to grow cotton. Furthermore, the raw cotton prices offered by German colonial administrators and merchants were too low to persuade farmers to abandon other crops in favour of monoculture. The prices were even lower than what local spinners and weavers were offering.

When Codelli and Poljanec arrived in Togo (in 1911 and 1912 respectively), the German project with Tuskegee experts had already ended. The two men were nevertheless able to photograph vivid local activities related to cotton cultivation. Codelli and Poljanec had the opportunity to photograph locals and their activities as a by-product of their involvement in establishing wireless communication between Germany and Togo. This photograph offers an insight into the many connections and exchanges of knowledge and skills that also involved the Slovenian territory as a semi-periphery of Europe. Their photographs can also be read as a contribution to the production of knowledge of the Other made possible by colonialism.

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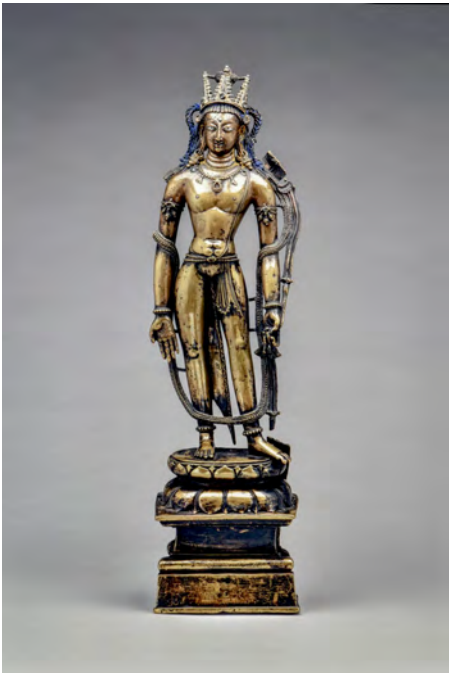
Gentle Glory: Loss, Exile, and Survival in an Eleventh Century Tibetan Bodhisattva

Nandini Thilak

Fig. 1: Collection: Linden-Museum Stuttgart; Object number: SA 00863 L; Name: 'Jam dpal or Mañjuśrī; Place & Community Details: 11 CE, West Tibet; Maker's Name: unkown; Materials: brass with copper and silver inlay, traces of colour, and fragments of inlaid semi-precious stones. Cast using the lost wax method; Collector: N. G. Ronge; Date of Acquisition by the Museum: 1990.



This text is an attempt to read a Tibetan Buddhist statue from the Linden Museum's collection against the grain of the uneasy category called 'Tibetan art' which has been used to domesticate[1] Tibetan cult objects housed in Western museums, aiming to read this object instead through the prism of (cultural) loss and (cultural) survival.

Close to a thousand years ago, unknown artist/s in West Tibet crafted this majestic brass statue, a 'master piece' in every sense, depicting 'Jam dpal, a Bodhisattva who is also known by his Sanskrit name Manjushri. The name Manjushri (gentle or sweet glory) is short for Manjushrikumarabhuta and refers to a Buddhist deity who takes the form of a young prince (*kumara*). A Bodhisattva is an enlightened being on the cusp of Buddhahood who delays their own spiritual liberation in order to help all sentient beings achieve salvation. Bodhisattvas are moved to make this sacrifice by their boundless compassion. 'Jam dpal is the Bodhisattva of learning and wisdom.

The eleventh century sculptors who created this figure were likely commissioned to do so by an elite patron who wished to accrue religious merit by sponsoring this figure. Once completed, statues of Tibetan Buddhist deities, both large and small, metal or clay, usually undergo a consecration ceremony that transforms them into living beings in the eyes of believers. In this process, hollow statues are filled with sacred texts, relics, amulets, and other consecrated or purifying substances and then sealed. Senior monks subsequently conduct a blessing ceremony inviting the deity to inhabit the figure. For the last four to five hundred years at least, it has also been a tradition to paint the face and neck of a brass figure with a mixture of gold powder and glue and other pigments.[2] A consecrated statue is usually placed on an altar. Worshippers venerate it by offering bowls of water, lamps, incense sticks, scarves, and food, just as one would a living being. Traditional food offerings include barley flour cakes called *torma*, but chocolates, cookies, and fruit are all lovingly offered. Taking care of a sacred statue by regularly cleaning, repairing, and polishing it as well as renewing the gold paint on its face and neck is also considered an act of worship.

When it entered the museum's collection in 1990, this statue was catalogued as the Bodhisattva Padmapani, an attribution that has recently been corrected.[3] The earlier misidentification is not surprising. At the time of acquisition, the figure was missing a crucial part of the original composition that might have helped a curator correctly identify it, namely a water lily bearing a manuscript that the

1 Harris 2012, 71–72.

2 Schroeder 2008, 26–31.

3 The Linden-Museum thanks Dr. Christian Luczanits, Senior Lecturer in Tibetan and Buddhist Art at SOAS, University of London, for correctly identifying the figure through comparisons with other known depictions of Manjushri.

Bodhisattva once held in his left hand (only the stem and some leaves remain today). The main identifying mark of standing depictions of Manjushri, the water lily and manuscript, had disappeared by the time the figure had arrived at the museum, along with other important features such as an aureole that once encircled the whole figure, and many semiprecious stone inlays that once made up its jewels.

If one approaches this Bodhisattva as a living being who was once lovingly cared for by a community, the losses it has since suffered register starkly. They tell of a murky period of displacement that saw this figure move from a West Tibetan monastery or shrine where it was likely worshipped at an altar until around the middle of the twentieth century to a dimly lit museum space where it has stood since 1990. The exact details of this statue's removal from Tibet remain unclear: no provenance information was presented or demanded when it was purchased by the museum from a Tibet-born artist and art dealer who reported that the statue had originated in Tholing in West Tibet and that he himself had purchased it in Nepal.[4]

Though the specific circumstances remain unknown, this Bodhisattva likely followed the same path as a majority of Tibetan 'art objects' that now reside in the West. Many of the earliest Western collections of Tibetan objects date back to expeditions and armed raids in the early twentieth century. However, a much larger number arrived via a predatory international art market in Tibetan antiquities that developed following the Chinese annexation of Tibet. A flood of such objects reached dealers, and subsequently museums and private collections, in the aftermath of the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s when monasteries across Tibet were ransacked and destroyed. All too aware of the ravages of the decades before, the Linden Museum at the time of purchase described this Bodhisattva as a 'homeless/displaced (German: *heimatloses*) object' that had been uprooted due to the Chinese occupation of Tibet.[5]

Invisible to a casual observer, the Bodhisattva hides yet another loss sustained during its turbulent journey out of Tibet: much of the consecrated viscera of objects that were once sealed inside it, too, had disappeared by the time it entered the museum. This, along with the other losses, have rendered what was once a living deity into a mere statue – no longer consecrated or alive, no longer complete and inhabited by a deity.

From another point of view, however, one could also see the Bodhisattva as a survivor. In spite of the many losses he has suffered, it is not inconceivable that he could one day be fully restored and re-consecrated for a new community of believers. His survival holds out hope for varied movements led by Tibetans in exile to ensure that Tibetan culture, both religious and secular, will be transmitted to new generations raised outside of Tibet – a process that museums in the West with Tibetan collections

4 Linden Museum: Acquisition files for SA 00863 L (1990–1991). These claims cannot be verified.

5 Linden Museum: Acquisition files for SA 00863 L (1990–1991).

are well-placed to support. Such community initiatives remind museum practitioners of the urgent responsibility we bear to treat objects such as this Bodhisattva as alive in every sense – perhaps most importantly by clearly connecting them in our practice to contemporary transnational Tibetan communities and ongoing cultural and political processes instead of treating them purely as artworks or as relics of a culture and a nation, which, even as it fights for survival, is sometimes presumed dead in the way it is presented in museums.

This Bodhisattva's story of loss, exile, and survival can perhaps also remind us of the responsibilities that museums bear towards all communities in exile, significant chunks of whose material heritage now reside in or are mainly accessible through museum collections. How might we contribute to movements for cultural survival? How might we bear witness to and document a culture as it transforms and adapts to survive in extended exile?

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Skin and the Archive: Reading Ecology and Colonial Legacies in a Kuria Drum

Ayesha Fuentes

Fig. 1: Collection: Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology (MAA), University of Cambridge; Object number: 1931.137; Name: drum; Place & Community Details: Kuria, Kenya/Tanzania; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: skin & wood; Collector: John Junius Osmonde Beven; Date collected: 1923/1930. Photo: MAA/Eleanor Beestin-Sheriff.

What makes something or someone characteristic of its place in space or time?

This drum is made from the skin of a Grant's zebra, known by the Kuria as *machage* and zoologically as *Equus quagga boehmi*. An unfussy herbivore whose numbers have steadily declined over the past century due to overhunting and habitat encroachment, the Grant's zebra is nevertheless common enough to be familiar to most res-

idents and visitors to the wildlife-rich regions of Kenya and Tanzania. And while there have been several theories about the purpose of the characteristic markings of a zebra – each pattern unique to the individual animal – a recent study suggests the alternation of light and dark deters the smallest rather than the largest of dangers. These stripes can confuse pests like tsetse flies and prevent insect bites capable of transmitting harmful diseases.

The black and white zebra skin that was used to make this drum had been hunted or acquired by the Kuria peoples sometime before 1930. Many Kuria families speak a Bantu language – one of several within a region of linguistic use that extends across the plains and mountains of sub-Saharan Africa – while others claim a heritage from areas of the Nile. Known historically within the region for cattle theft and raiding, the Kuria are now a minority group who keep livestock. Cow and goat skins are more common to Kuria objects and the use of zebra hide is extremely rare, suggesting a unique value or function for this drum within its community of origin. Patterns of wear and polish on the drumheads indicate it was likely played at some time; drums such as these have been used in living memory by the Kuria during day-long festivals and celebrations.

This drum was brought to the museum by way of its collector, John Junius Osmonde Beven, a medical officer born in 1889 in Sri Lanka who travelled across east Africa during the early twentieth century as part of the British colonial administration. Educated at Cambridge, this drum and a small number of other items were donated to the Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology after his death at the age of 41. Based on these objects – weapons, food storage containers, baskets, and household items – it seems Beven's interest was in the everyday lives of people in the region rather than the aesthetic or commercial value of their material heritage. Though we are uncertain of his personal views or actions, Beven worked as a medical professional in a political and professional environment remembered by descendants within the region as being characterized by eugenicist thinking, with both British and Kenyan 'race improvement' societies being established between the years 1926 and 1933.

The legacy of colonial knowledge production shapes the historiography of this drum just as benign neglect in the museum environment has created its condition, with surface damage resulting from unchecked pest infestation during its century of storage at MAA. This drum – now silently on display, for better or worse – can be understood as an expression of the ways in which bodies or objects are shaped by their natural, social, and intellectual environment. Further, it suggests the complexity of a taxonomic project common to several forms of knowledge production including zoological study, museum practice, the application of material skill, and (colonial) government. Yet, while some distinctions can be beneficial like the stripes of the zebra, others – like those between human and non-human animals or cultural

groups with unequal access to practices of self-determination – can have dangerous and disruptive consequences.

Thanks to JC Niala, Head of World Collections at Cambridge University Libraries, and Katia Nyangi, Kuria community member, for their insights on this object and its various contexts.

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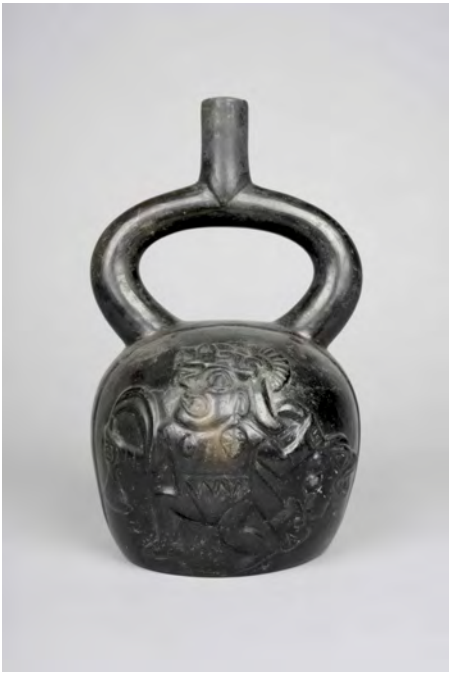
Rethinking Worldviews Through the Moche Blood Ceremony Ceramic Vessel: Lessons from the Past for an Environmentally Just Future

Elena A. Ritschard

Fig. 1: Collection: KHM-Museumsverband, Weltmuseum Wien; Object number: 90970; Name: unknown; Place & Community Details: Piura, Peru; Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: pottery; Collector: Eduard Wickenburg; Date collected: 1908–1910. © KHM-Museumsverband.



The Moche people lived on the arid northern coast of what is today Perú around 1,500 years ago, where they constructed villages with elaborated irrigation systems for agriculture and ceremonial centres. The north of Perú has been periodically affected by the El Niño-Southern Oscillation (ENSO), a natural event that occurs every two to seven years in the Pacific Ocean. During an El Niño ('little boy' in Spanish) event, warm currents arrive at the coast of Perú and raise the surface temperature of the ocean, causing heavy rains and, in extreme cases, flooding for months. After El Niño, there follows a La Niña ('little girl') event that is characterized by cold surface temperatures and intense droughts along the South American coast, ultimately affecting food security and the availability of potable water. Although the Moche had adapted to such climate fluctuations, they probably vanished due to the precarious conditions that followed an extreme El Niño event around the eight century CE.[1]

As part of their material culture, the Moche created painted ceramic vessels depicting portraits, mostly of warriors and religious figures, as well as plants and animals from their environment. These vessels also illustrate scenes from everyday life, including battles and ceremonies. Such fineware ceramics were used, besides for domestic purposes, in ritualistic and funerary contexts such as, for example, mortuary offerings upon a death. One of these vessels can be seen in the showcase display entitled 'Sacrifices in precarious times: from the Moche culture to the current climate crisis', exhibited at the Weltmuseum Wien between March 2022 and January 2023 as part of the TAKING CARE project. This rounded ceramic vessel is black in colour and shows a human-bodied being in relief, holding in its right hand a decapitated head and in the left a crescent-shaped blade knife (*fig*. 1). These scenes are not rare in Moche iconography, as they refer to the Blood Ceremony, a human sacrificial ritual in which the throat of a victim was cut, their blood collected and drunk by specific elite individuals. Through these rituals, the Moche offered human tribute to their higher powers in honour of nature, seeking to mitigate climatic and ecological disasters caused by severe El Niño events.

Human sacrifice rituals were central to the Moche's collective understanding of their physical and spiritual world, also termed *cosmovision*. The ceramic vessels related to these ceremonies frequently depict animals and plants whose ecological interactions were affected by the El Niño phenomenon, revealing not only the knowledge the Moche had of their environment and its disturbances, but also the close connection they established between ecological changes and human sacrifice. Human and non-human beings were also often portrayed as hybrids. Such faded boundaries between life forms might reflect the relevance that the respective relationships within nature had in their cosmovision. Human sacrifices can be thus understood in the Moche context as acts performed for a 'common good'; as acts of taking care of the environment and, by extension, all lives within. Following this

1 Bourget 2016.

reasoning, the Moche Blood Ceremony ceramic vessel makes me reconsider my own preconception of this sacrifice as a violent act *against* a human life, something that can even be judged by modern secular laws as murder. This reflection is, however, associated with a feeling of discomfort for me, as I touch on a sensitive topic I do not promote: the ending of human lives.

The word *sacrifice* can take up other meanings once it is deprived of its religious significance. One example for this are so-called *sacrificial zones*, hazardously contaminated areas adjacent to extractive industries where the health of people is constantly under risk.[2] This term dates back to the Cold War, when neighbourhoods in the USA populated by racial minorities and low-income communities had to suffer radioactive pollution from nearby mining and uranium processing for the development of nuclear weapons. Nowadays, these sacrificial zones exemplify the social inequality that characterizes the adverse effects of the current climate crisis.[3] Human sacrifices can be understood in this context as part of the negative consequences on human lives that are imposed unfairly on entire communities and their environments. This strongly contrasts with the conscious decision made by the Moche to make sacrifices for the benefit of the community, the latter being understood as all interconnected life forms. In the here and now, acting for the benefit of all entities that compose the natural world without ending human lives could be a valuable lesson to learn from the Moche cosmovision and their rituals.

All in all, the Blood Ceremony vessel reminds me of the importance of acknowledging that there is no single, true worldview. It reminds me that one can learn from different cosmovisions without having to fully dissociate from a learned way of understanding reality. Such acts of self-reflection take on an even more important role if we remember that the Western worldview, one based on human dominance over nature, has historically been established around the world as the norm. This worldview has minimized other knowledges and has ultimately taken us to a point of no return in these current times of climate crisis.

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Maize Deity or Spirit in the Andean Worldview

Sirley Ríos Acuña

Fig. 1: Collection: Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món de Barcelona; Object number: MEB 16–695; Name: bridge and spout vessel with maize divinity; Place & Community Details: Northern coast, Peru, Chimú culture (Late Intermediate Period 1000 -1476 CE); Maker's Name: unknown; Materials: ceramic, made from a mould and then cut, smoothed and polished; Collector: Leopoldo Gómez Alonso; Date collected: 1952.

> This piece was chosen for the study by the museum not just because of the uniqueness of its formal characteristics, but also because it includes several ears of maize. This is, in fact, the main reason it was chosen. More specifically, it might be considered the contemporary evocation of maize, which is one of the cornerstones of nutrition in Indigenous communities, and which inevitably brings to mind both the crisis facing our planet as a whole and the plundering of resources such as water and Indigenous lands, in particular. Just like land and water, maize plays a crucial role in food sovereignty and is a true symbol of Indigenous autonomy, as well as of the Indigenous peoples' way of interacting with the Saramama, including agricultural rituals.
> (Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món de Barcelona)

In the Peruvian Andes, maize ('Sara' in Quechua) is the main food of humans and sacred beings. For this reason, farmers need to obtain an abundant maize harvest with the help of the deities. Through rituals, communication is established with the life-giving forces of nature for the continuity of human and non-human life.

One concrete example at the Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món de Barcelona is a whistling bottle from the Chimú culture (1000–1476 CE), which represents the maize deity or spirit and a hybrid being (feline-serpent-bird) known as a 'lunar animal'. As to the first, in the Andean world the Saramama (Mother Maize) is responsible for the protection and abundance of the maize harvest. She was represented in the northern cultures of ancient Peru in the shape of a large, anthropomorphized corn cob, surrounded by her children, who are small corn cobs.

In colonial times, Christian evangelizers destroyed stone Saramamas because they were highly revered by the Indigenous people. The Saramamas' idea of maternity is repeated with other natural beings, such as Cocamama (Mother Coca), Papamama (Mother Potato), Cochamama (Mother Lake), Yacumama (Mother Water), and many others. Pachamama (Mother Earth) is the mother of everything and the giver of life.

Another common belief is that if the cobs are joined at their base, they are twins. This is a form of Saramama. The biggest fruit becomes Saramama, Waka (sacred being) and Illa (a kind of amulet). In the same way, creatures with a physical defect, twins, or those struck by lightning are special and sacred, as they are the children of the lightning. In this case, if they are maize cobs, they are Saramamas.

For the farmer it is good luck to have Saramamas that are corn cobs or those manufactured from stone or other materials. They receive offerings of food and drink because they are living beings who are hungry and thirsty like people. According to the principle of reciprocity, one must return or 'pay' an offering to the Wakas for favours received, but the 'payment' is also given before receiving a favour, so that 'permission' is first requested from Pachamama to sow and cultivate.

The second representation in this object, the image of the 'lunar animal', was associated with the mythical animal Qhoa, or the flying feline, the creator of rain that controls the weather. The 'lunar animal' is also related to Mamaquilla (Mother Moon), who at the same time has a great influence on the cultivation of maize and is linked to water. Furthermore, Saramama is symbolically fertilized by the life-giving liquid, water or chicha de jora (corn beer) that circulates inside the whistling bottle to produce sounds connected to the deity.

Andean societies developed a complex system of beliefs and values, which were expressed through the rites held for the community's main deities and other beings of power in order to maintain or re-establish the balance of harmonious coexistence, respect, and fair treatment among all the inhabitants of the cosmos, or as Josef Estermann calls it, the cosmic house (in Quechua Wasi). This set of rituals is shaped by agriculture and water, as the agricultural cycle of maize helped build the Andean worldview. The pursuit of a continuity of existence generates a system of relationships between all human and non-human beings. As everything is interconnected in some way and nothing can exist on its own or in isolation, any change to one of the parts will affect all parts. Thus humans become interrelated with the Saramama through agricultural rituals.

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Corona Puppet

Emilie Girard

Fig. 1: Collection: Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations – Mucem, Marseille; Object number: not accessioned yet; Name: 'Corona' puppet; Place & Community Details: France, Val de Marne, Chevilly-Larue; Materials: recycled materials; Collector: Mucem; Date collected: 2020. *© Sylvian Maillet – Mucem.*

On 20 April 2020, France was locked down for a month, and Mucem (the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisations) launched a call for donations of objects during the lockdown period. The participatory collection entitled *Vivre au*

temps du confinement ('Living through lockdown') invited people to send in 'objects or documents that symbolize, embody, or express what lockdown means for you every day. What objects do you feel represent the situation in which you are living, working, spending time, or teaching your children? What objects reflect how you organise your outings and relationships with others, near or far, at home or outdoors, in France or overseas? Mucem is looking for objects that have become central to our lives in lockdown, whether expected or unusual, official or homemade, build connections or express isolation, show the remarkable solidarity and support expressed or, on the contrary, movements of rejection and fear…', as phrased in the official invitation published on the Mucem website and spread on social networks. Proposals were required to include one or more photograph(s), including some, if possible, of the object in the environment in which it was used or made, and a few lines explaining the reason for the donation and the importance of the object in the context of the time. By the summer, the museum had received over six hundred proposals. They are still being analyzed, and some of them will enter the museum's collections.

One of these donated objects includes this home-made puppet made from recycled materials, which might serve as a mascot for the collection. Its donor, a father locked down with his wife and 3-year-old boy, presented it as follows: '[This puppet] has gone through different versions so far and will no doubt continue to evolve or find new uses before the end of the lockdown… Initially, it was headless, and one of its arms was used to hold a Corona beer bottle cap for a head. So I called it Corona […]' He explains how the puppet, in the hands of his son, ended up needing multiple repairs and improvements with whatever was available (like a short-lived eggshell head which was ultimately replaced by a rather more solid pebble). The wooden figure also became an educational tool for the little boy who couldn't go to school, and carried a small sign with the day's date, little messages for the household or others when photographs of the puppet were taken, or when it was exhibited via a video conference. The puppet thereby entered the homes of friends and family from whom the family was separated by lockdown. 'For me, this object will always be a symbol of my lockdown. In normal times I would never have "wasted" time making something like this because I like to go outside in the woods or countryside when I have free time.'

This example shows how people who participated in the collection also ended up sharing their feelings and some of their personal stories when describing the objects they proposed to the museum and their reasons for doing so. From the very first proposals we received, we were struck by the very intimate nature of what was being said. This phenomenon, undoubtedly facilitated by the relatively anonymous character of the museum to which people were writing, was almost universally observed as proposals arrived. It repeatedly gave rise to honest discussions with those making the proposals as they added to their initial words. In an undoubtedly modest, yet tangible, way, the museum played its social role through a very tense period, which

created a new kind of relationship with the public. The arrival of the Corona puppet at the museum was an opportunity for further communication. When I opened the package, I found a little letter with it saying that the little boy had grown attached to Corona and that he would love to receive a photograph of it in its new environment. So, I quickly took a picture of the little chap on my desk next to a pile of books and sent the image with a brief comment: 'Corona has arrived safely. He hasn't been able to enjoy the sea or the city, but he is doing very well in the comfortable offices of the Mucem Conservation Centre. He has even found something to read.'

Beyond the anecdote, this object and the Vivre au Confinement collection represents a new way for Mucem to connect with its audiences and a profound shift in our way of working. The collection helped us become a more *caring museum* by testing a more *inclusive* acquisition procedure. The museum tried to implement a form of *cultural mediation* suitable for the crisis we were experiencing by leaving space for expression and discussion. The project aimed to add to the museum collection while also helping participants *feel better*, and still remaining aligned with the means and objectives of a museum of society – investigating contemporary life, gathering testimonies, and collecting the tangible heritage of our time.

Fig. 2: Corona on arrival at the Mucem; July 2020; The sign says: 'I'm having a great holiday in Marseille. Love to all, Corona'; © Mucem.

Biographies of Contributors

Ian B. Baucom is the executive vice president and provost of the University of Virginia (UVA). Baucom came to UVA after serving 17 years in Duke University's Department of English as professor and director of the John Hope Franklin Humanities Institute. Baucom is the author of *History 4° Celsius* (2020), *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire and the Locations of Identity* (1999), and *Specters of the Atlantic: Finance Capital, Slavery, and the Philosophy of History* (2005). Baucom earned his undergraduate degree in political science from Wake Forest University and his master's degree in African studies and doctorate in English from Yale University.

Aoife O'Brien has recently been appointed curator for the World Cultures/Ethnography collections at the National Museum of Ireland. She was curator for the Oceania collections at the National Museums of World Culture/Världskulturmuseerna in Sweden from 2017 to 2022, and also worked as co-curator for the *TAKING CARE* exhibition. She has held fellowships at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, Washington University in St. Louis, and the Saint Louis Art Museum. Aoife received her Ph.D. in Anthropology/Art History from the Sainsbury Research Unit for the Arts of Africa, Oceania and the Americas at the University of East Anglia in England, where her doctoral research focused on material culture from the Solomon Islands during the early colonial period.

Page Chang is a Native Hawaiian practitioner, artist, designer, and educator. She is dedicated to re-claiming and re-introducing the ancient practice of Hawaiian Kapa in her Hawaiian community and beyond. Page has shared her practice with hundreds of school children and at the University of Hawaii, and conducts Kapa making workshops for adults and fellow educators. In 2023, Page taught a Kapa workshop as part of the *TAKING CARE* project at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

Guy Patrice Dkamela is a socio-anthropologist by training and is currently working as an independent consultant on natural resources management with a focus on the Congo basin. He completed a scientist residency in RMCA in 2022 as part of his PhD

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Mayanthi L. Fernando is Associate Professor of Anthropology at UC Santa Cruz, where she is also Provost of Kresge College, a living-learning community. Her research interests include Islam and secularism; multispecies worlds; bodies and senses; liberalism and law; and gender and sexuality. She is the author of *The Republic Unsettled: Muslim French and the Contradictions of Secularism* (2014) and the co-editor of *Trouillot Remixed: The Michel-Rolph Trouillot Reader* (2021). She is currently writing a book on nonsecular ecologies, the secularity of post-humanism, and the capacious possibilities of multi-species world-making.

Ayesha Fuentes is an objects conservator and material historian, currently Isaac Newton Trust Research Associate in Conservation at Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, University of Cambridge. She has a PhD from SOAS, University of London. Her current research focuses on access and the ethics of care for archaeological and ethnographic collections.

Mille Gabriel is the Senior Researcher and Curator of the North and South American collections at the National Museum of Denmark. She holds a PhD in Anthropology and a MA degree in Archaeology, both from the University of Copenhagen. Her research centres on cultural heritage and identity issues with a particular focus on the relationship between museums and originating communities.

Shgendootan George is a Tlingit Chilkat weaver from the Native village of Angoon, Alaska. She has been weaving both Raven's Tail and Chilkat since 1993 when she took her first class with Cheryl Samuel. She has also studied with Clarissa Rizal, one of the most prominent Chilkat weavers of our time. Shgen continues to pass on this cultural knowledge with her teachings in the community.

Emilie Girard is the Scientific Director and Head of Collections of the Mucem (Musée des civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée) and Chief Curator. She joined the Mucem team in 2006. From 2008 to 2019, she managed the museum's collections department, where she led, among other things, the project to transfer all the collections and holdings from Paris to Marseille and to set up the Mucem's Conservation and Resource Centre. Since August 2019, she has been the Head of the scientific and collections team at Mucem. She regularly curates exhibitions at the Mucem (such as *Galerie de la Méditerranée* in 2013, *Food* in 2014, *Un génie sans piédestal, Picasso et les arts et traditions populaires* in 2016, *On danse?* and *Les reliquaires de A à Z* in 2019, *Jeff Koons Mucem* and *Le Désir de regarder loin* with the artist Ilaria Turba in 2021).

Ainize González García. PhD in Art History and Musicology (Doctoral Thesis Prize) from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. She is in charge of the temporary exhibitions and the temporary exhibition catalogues, as well as coordinating special projects and public program activities at the Museu Etnològic i de Cultures del Món, Barcelona.

Kanika Gupta is an art historian, a trained dancer and a filmmaker. She holds a masters degree in Art History from the Faculty of Fine Arts, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Baroda, Gujarat and a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi on the ancient Indian motif – the female and the tree. She has co-authored a book titled *Lupadakhe – Unknown Master Sculptors of Ancient India* in 2019 and has authored several research papers on Ancient Indian sculpture, aesthetics, painting, and mythology.

Nora Haas is a cultural educator and communicator. She has worked for several cultural institutions such as the Wiener Konzerthaus, the Sigmund Freud Museum, Vienna and the Abu Dhabi Music and Arts Foundation. Nora is communication officer for the TAKING CARE project and was one of the co-creators of the museum's experimental exhibition *Extinctions!?*

Adelita Husni Bey is an artist and pedagogue interested in anarcho-collectivism, theatre, law, and urban studies. She organizes gatherings and produces workshops and exhibitions using non-competitive pedagogical models through the framework of contemporary art. Working with activists, architects, jurists, schoolchildren, spoken-word poets, actors, urbanists, physical therapists, athletes, teachers, and students across different backgrounds she focuses on articulating the complexity of collectivity under capitalism.

Tine Huyse is senior researcher at the Royal Museum for Central Africa. She previously worked at the University of Leuven, the Tropical Institute of Medicine in Antwerp and the Natural History Museum in London. She is also the scientific commissioner of 'Landscapes and Biodiversity' in the new permanent exhibition of the museum.

Michel D. Lee is a curator working with the China, Korea, and Sven Hedin collections at the National Museums of World Culture, Sweden. He received his first degree in anthropology at the George Washington University, Washington, D.C. and later worked in the Department of Anthropology at the National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution. Mr. Lee received his MA in the History of Art and Archaeology at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London after which he became the curator and acting director at the Museum of East Asian

Art in Bath, UK. He served as the Museum Director of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, National Museums of World Culture, Sweden from 2013 until 2015.

Rosa Anna Di Lella is a cultural anthropologist with a specialization in museum studies and North African collections. She has collaborated with several public and private institutions in participatory museography projects. At the Museo delle Civiltà, she is curator of the collections of the former Colonial Museum of Rome and responsible for Educational Services.

Sofia Miorelli is an Italian MA student based in the Netherlands. She obtained her BA in South and Southeast Asian Studies from Leiden University in 2020. From January 2022 until February 2023, she worked at the National Museum of World Cultures as curator-in-training as part of the Dual MA Curating Art and Cultures.

Audra Mitchell (she/her, they/them) is professor and Canada Research Chair in Global Political Ecology at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, Wilfrid Laurier University, Canada. Mitchell's work addresses multi-scale eco-political violence. It focuses on the knowledge and perspectives of marginalized communities. Mitchell's work also challenges narratives of 'the' future, striving towards possible futures in which plural communities can thrive.

Sybille Neumeyer is an interdependent artist and post-disciplinary researcher focusing on environmental issues and planetary relations. Her current projects explore the intersections between media ecologies, more-than-human sensing, and forms of (re)membering and how these can recalibrate the way we are in dialogue with the world. As part of the *TAKING CARE* project, she focused on multispecies relations in (weathering) worlds as a guest artist at Museum am Rothenbaum. Kulturen und Künste der Welt (MARKK).

Awi Nokan (吳永昌 Wu Yongchang) 願為Sediq(賽德克族)奉獻之螻蟻 I am but a humble person who is willing to dedicate myself to the Seediq people.

Katharina Nowak studied cultural anthropology, communication and media studies in Bremen as well as museum and exhibition studies in Oldenburg. Since September 2019, she has been a PhD student at the Department of Anthropology and Cultural Research at the University of Bremen. Her research focuses on collaborative forms of ethnographic knowledge production and decolonization of knowledge. She has a regional interest in Papua New Guinea. Since April 2021, she has been working as assistant curator for the Oceania collections at the MARKK in Hamburg, Germany.

Fernanda Olivares is a Selk'nam woman, member of the Selk'nam Community Covadonga Ona in Chile. Nowadays she is CEO at Fundación Hach Saye, an organization with headquarters in Porvenir, Tierra del Fuego, which focuses mainly on promoting, strengthening and protecting both Selk'nam culture and the Great Island of Tierra del Fuego.

Tina Palaić is a cultural anthropologist and museum curator who leads the *TAKING CARE* project at the SEM. She explores different modes of decolonial museology in East-Central Europe with the focus on collaborative practices. She pursues the idea that decolonisation of museum practice should set out from the museums' geographical and historical contexts.

Juno Salazar Parreñas is an associate professor of science and technology studies and feminist, gender, and sexuality studies at Cornell University. She is the author of *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation*, which received the 2019 Michelle Rosaldo Prize from the Association for Feminist Anthropology and an honourable mention for the 2020 Harry Benda Prize from the Association for Asian Studies. She is also the editor of the reference book *Gender: Animals*. Her work has appeared in such journals as *American Ethnologist, Anthropology and History, Environmental Humanities, History and Theory, Tapuya: Latin American Science, Technology and Society, and positions: asia critique.*

Martin Petersen is senior researcher and curator of the East Asian collections at the National Museum of Denmark. His research focuses on East Asian popular culture and ethnographic museums. Recently, he has published on North Korean comics, Danish ethnographic expeditions and the Korean collection in the National Museum of Denmark. As museum curator he works on exhibitions, events, podcasts, collection catalogues, and more. He is also a comic book writer.

Sirley Ríos Acuña is an art historian from the Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos (Peru), with postgraduate studies in Anthropology, and a master's degree in Management of Cultural Heritage from the Universitat de Girona (Spain). She has been curator and responsible for the management of collections at the Museo Nacional de la Cultura Peruana (currently Ministry of Culture of Peru) for more than ten years.

Elena A. Ritschard is a Colombian biologist with a PhD in cephalopod (octopus, squid and cuttlefish) evolution and comparative genomics from the University of Vienna and is currently a science communicator at the Natural History Museum in Vienna. There, she is working on a citizen science project with high school students,

researching the museum's relationship with colonialism and the consequences of this past on modern-day society.

Esmee Schoutens works as a researcher and project assistant at the National Museum for World Cultures in the Netherlands and as an independent researcher and curator. She holds an MA in Critical Studies in Art and Culture from VU University Amsterdam and has worked for several modern and contemporary art institutions such as Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, Amsterdam Museum, and Marres. Schoutens is specialized in art/technology collaborations and artistic responses to the rise of digital technology in the 1960s and 1990s. She is a member of the board of Platform BK.

Cissy Serrao is the founder of Poakalani & Company, Hawai'i. Cissy and her family have been creating Hawaiian quilts for many generations. In 2020, the museum commissioned fourteen Hawaiian quilts 45" by 45" designed by the late John Serrao and quilted by selected Poakalani Quilting teachers and students, which are now part of the collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford.

Amie Lindiwe Hanan Soudien is a researcher and art writer based in Johannesburg. Soudien's research concerns the use of art, performance, and the performing arts in the commemoration of slavery in Cape Town, the history of Cape Town, archival studies, popular media, gender and sexuality. She is the editor of *Lesser Violence: Vol. 1* (2022) published by MaThoko's Books. As an art writer, she has contributed to *ArtThrob*, *ArtAFRICA*, the *Mail & Guardian*, and *Frieze*, among others. Soudien is currently a PhD candidate in the department of Art History at Wits University, Johannesburg.

Nicolás Spencer's work focuses on ways of understanding nature in all depth and complexity. His installations mix the massiveness of its components (rocks, metals, gravity, wind, etc.) with the fragility and immateriality of sound.Spencer's artistic practice is contaminating (and contaminated by) other areas of knowledge as a way of generating alternative epistemological and aesthetic perspectives.

Nandini Thilak is an art historian and junior curator in the Department for East, South-East, and South Asia at the Linden-Museum Stuttgart. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of Heidelberg, Germany, and a master's degree from the Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi, India.

Marenka Thompson-Odlum is Research Curator (Critical Perspectives) at the Pitt Rivers Museum. Her doctoral research at the University of Glasgow explored Glasgow's role in the trans-Atlantic slave trade through the material culture housed at Glasgow Museums. At the Pitt Rivers Museum, she is the lead researcher on the *La-*

belling Matters project, which investigates the problematic use of language within the Pitt Rivers Museum's displays and thinking through ways of decolonisation through re-imagining the definition of a label. Marenka is also leading an *ArtFund* project to commission new objects for the Museum's collections, build new relationships with indigenous communities, and enhance the Museum's displays.

Miriam Ticktin is Professor of Anthropology at the CUNY Graduate Center. She received her PhD in Anthropology at Stanford University and the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris and an MA in English Literature from Oxford as a Rhodes Scholar. Ticktin's research has focused on what it means to make political claims in the name of a universal humanity, although her current research is more engaged in imagining and opening the way to new political formations. She has written on immigration, humanitarianism, border walls, and the decolonial commons in Europe, North Africa, and the US, with a focus on gender, race, and inequality. She is currently finishing a book on, and against, racial innocence.

François Mutamba Tshibwabwa, also known as Nada Tshibwabwa (b. 1990, Lubumbashi, D.R. Congo) is a multidisciplinary artist from Kinshasa, working in painting, performance art, sculpture, and music. His practice deals with the violence inherent in contemporary power relations, entangled with his own biography, addresses environmental issues and sets out to create counter narratives. Nada Tshibwabwa also initiated a wide range of community projects, transferring his knowledges to younger generations. In 2020, Nada Tshibwabwa partly moved to Sao, a village on the Plateau Bateke, outside of Kinshasa, where he created a meeting point for people, discussing environmental issues, practising agriculture and several arts. In 2022 he founded Studio Mwano, a recording studio and space for exchange in Kinshasa's vibrant Matonge quarter.

Matthew J. Walsh is an American anthropological archaeologist. His research interests are broad but tend toward a focus on cultural evolution and cultural transmission studies using comparative and cross-cultural perspectives and methods. He is a senior researcher in Native American studies with the Modern History and World Cultures section at the National Museum of Denmark.

Kathryn Yusoff is professor of inhuman geography in the School of Geography at Queen Mary, University of London. Yusoff's research examines how inhuman and nonorganic materialities have consequences for how we understand issues of environmental change, race, and subjectivity. Most recently, she wrote and published *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None* (2018), 'Geosocial Formations and the Anthropocene' (with Nigel Clark) in *Theory Culture and Society*, 'Epochal Aesthetics', 'The Mine in E-flux', and 'The Inhumanities' in *The Annals of American Geographers*. Her forth-

coming book, *Geologic Life: Inhuman Intimacies and the Geophysics of Race* (DUP) addresses the racial geologies of rocks. Yusoff is recipient of the Association of American Geographers 2022 Award for Creativity in Geography.