

## EXHIBITION

WITH Heba Y. Amin Vikrant Bhise Cana Bilir-Meier Kasia Fudakowski Daniel Greenfield-Campoverde  
Hien Hoang Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju KMRU Moses März Tuli Mekondjo Thomas Radin  
Sung Tieu Theresa Weber

## ON VIEW

14.09.-01.11.2024 THURSDAY-SUNDAY 14:00-19:00

## INVOCATIONS

02.11.2024

## SAVVY TOURS IN SAVVY TONGUES

14.09.2024	16:00	ENGLISH	Raisa Galofre & Meghna Singh
21.09.2024	16:00	SPANISH	Raisa Galofre
26.09.2024	17:00	ENGLISH	Meghna Singh
04.10.2024	16:00	ENGLISH	Raisa Galofre
10.10.2024	18:00	GERMAN	Anna Jäger
18.10.2024	16:00	ENGLISH & ESL	Meghna Singh
24.10.2024	18:00	ENGLISH	Renan Laru-an

## TEAM

ARTISTIC DIRECTION Renan Laru-an

CURATION Raisa Galofre Meghna Singh

CURATORIAL ASSISTANCE Kelly Krugman Lili Somogyi

PROJECT MANAGEMENT Grace Baggott

GENERAL MANAGEMENT Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Lema Sikod

COMMUNICATIONS Anna Jäger

GRAPHIC DESIGN Juan Pablo García Sossa

SCENOGRAPHY Nancy Naser Al Deen Sina Ahmadi

PRODUCTION LEAD Waylon D'Mello

PRODUCTION TEAM Nancy Naser Aldeen Henri Cash-Finlay Jessie Omamogho Dušan Rodić

VIDEO & SOUND Bert Günther

LIGHT Shun Perrotta

SAVVY.DOC Sagal Farah

COLONIAL NEIGHBOURS Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Matthew Hansen

& PRESIDENT OF CUTENESS Maya Systemans Galofre, chief heart-melter

& & HEAD OF CUDDLES Inka, the mounting support dog

FUNDING The project takes place in the framework of the 15-months-long programme TRANSITIONS, funded by Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung für Kultur und Medien. The opening of the exhibition takes place as part of Berlin Art Week.



Die Beauftragte der Bundesregierung  
für Kultur und Medien

BERLIN  
ART  
WEEK

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# I N T R O

## SOCIETY: OR INFINITE

REHEARSALS is an invitation to dance through subtle and not so subtle choreographies: drawn, sketched, sculpted, sewn and embodied, built on the base of multiple rhythms, histories and movements that pulsate through societies implicated in and affected by colonialism and its continuities.

With a focus on artistic practices that engage with movement and its many meanings, the project contemplates dance as a methodology and offers choreography as a metaphor for thinking through the reciprocal relationship between societies and their body/bodies. The works in this exhibition trace a variety of choreographies – oppressive, tedious, uplifting, desirable, useless, transgressive, inviting, to name a few – as well as the nodes of their intersections and encounters within the social fabric of our worlds. While highlighting the coercive choreographies imposed on the most marginalised of bodies in any society, the exhibition traces, too, lines of more emancipatory movement(s) created and performed outside of these dynamics. The subtle rituals of everyday life that allow one to both survive and thrive; the physical manifestation of generational and cultural memory stored within the body, connecting individuals to community; the movement of groups, rehearsed and improvised through a negotiation of needs and desires. These movements, dances and choreographies are the undercurrents brought to the surface by SOCIETY: OR INFINITE REHEARSALS, showcasing how multiple rehearsals of each determine and shape the ways in which bodies move, dance, walk or run, cross each other, separate or come together again. Through the lens of movement, the project sharpens its focus on continuities of German and European colonialism and how these manifest today within the West as concerns around “diversity” and multiculturalism, assimilation and integration. The control exerted by the once-colonial nation state over people’s movement and mobility, in the metropole as well as in the interlinked communities of the former colonies, is an attempt to create societies as per the dominant hierarchies of race, class, gender. Other dances and other movements are nonetheless possible and present within these spaces, the exhibition

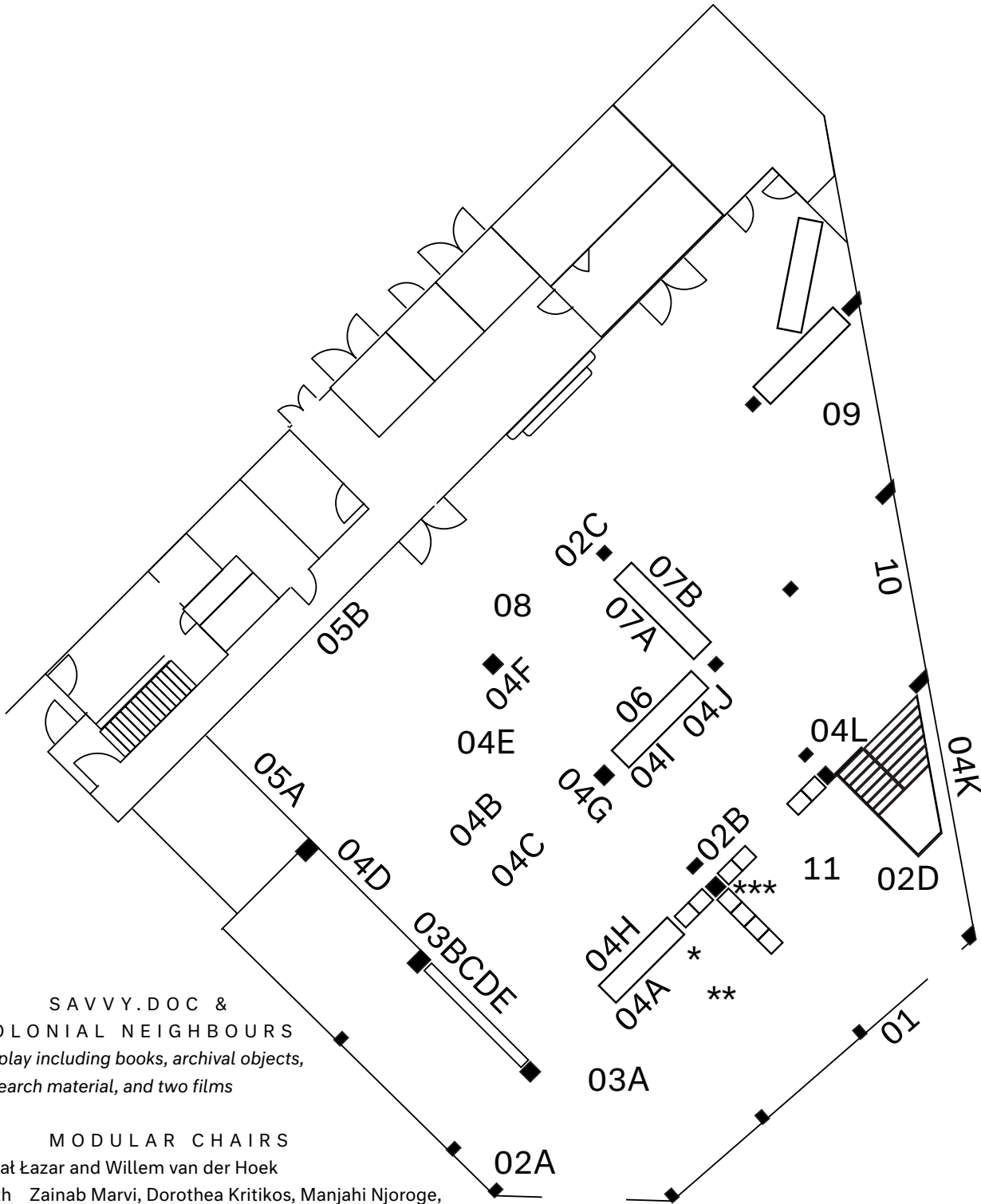
contends, ones that we rehearse infinitely, day in and day out, ones in which different visions of liberation can be felt and found.

## SOCIETY: OR INFINITE

REHEARSALS understands dance as a thinking and feeling process that enables us to identify and read through choreographies that fixate our societies in the steps and gestures of colonial, patriarchal, classist and casteist logic. What more can the act of dance – ever in motion, holding in itself tenses past, present and future – teach us? To move towards articulating liberatory proposals, we return to the knowledge found in the body/in bodies, to movements and motions improvised, rehearsed and learned through an understanding of interdependence, permeability and connection.

The exhibition opens itself via a multiplicity of movements traced through the SAVVY space, inviting an embodied consideration of artworks that themselves are embodiments of movement. SOCIETY: OR INFINITE REHEARSALS brings together artistic and research practices that manifest through film and photography, sculptures using textile, concrete, and metal, sound installations, and painting. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the space will hold a series of performances that move us further towards ourselves and each other. We offer the visitor a few possibilities of rehearsing their movements within the exhibition’s sensorium, inviting, too, new dances, connections and meanings.

# FLOORPLAN



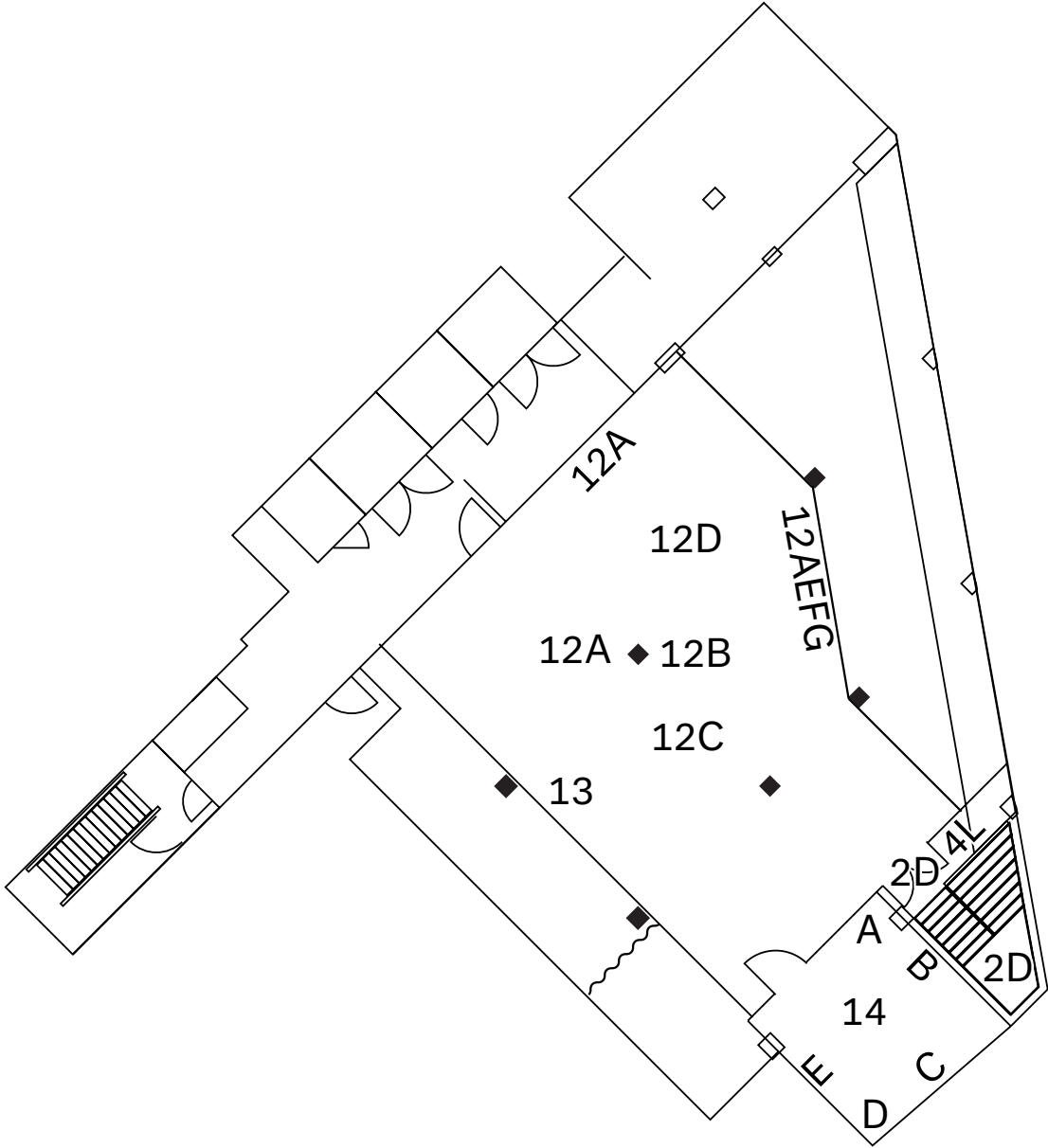
\* SAVVY.DOC &  
COLONIAL NEIGHBOURS  
*Display including books, archival objects,  
research material, and two films*

\*\* MODULAR CHAIRS  
Rafat Łazar and Willem van der Hoek  
With Zainab Marvi, Dorothea Kritikos, Manjahi Njoroge,  
Berta Galofré Pons, Paloma Torréns Muzás, Matthew Hansen,  
Annie Kern, Lena Cramer, and others participating in our wood  
workshop

\*\*\* SHAUNAK MAHBUBANI  
WITH SAVVY.DOC  
*Dis-visible Narratives:  
Non-western Cultural Production around HIV/AIDS  
2024–ongoing, Research commission*

- 01 DANIELLIS HERNANDEZ CALDERON  
*Reencountering Ourselves as Working Class?*  
*A Cultural Worker's Question*  
2024, Participatory Research Display  
With photographs by Jürgen Henschel, courtesy of the archive of the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, and by Das feministische Archiv FFBIZ as well as shared family archives by Martin Hyun
- 02 K M R U  
*WA18 I and WA18 II*  
2024–2025, sound installation, 2024  
A *We Move While We See*, WA18 I, 2024, Track 4, 08:05 mins  
B *“Condense Reminder”*, WA18 I, 2024, Track 6, 04:05 mins  
C *“Diagonals”*, WA18 II, 2025, Track 1, 11:40 mins  
D *“Will Still Remain”*, WA18 I, 2024, Track 8, 6:10 mins
- 03 THERESA WEBER  
A *We Suddenly Discover To Be Ours*  
2024, sculpture, fabric, rope, foam clay, filling material, clips, rings, beads on chain, variable dimensions  
B *We Create our own Landscapes*  
2024, wallpaper print, 670 x 420 cm  
C *Rhizomatic Thought*  
2024, resin work, root, glass, coral, shell in resin with hooks, 25 x 30 cm  
D *Archipelago Flow 1*  
2024, painting, silicone, foam clay, prints, acrylic paste, beads, glass, clips, acrylic nails, mosaic stones, resin on wood, 30 x 30 cm  
E *Archipelago Flow 2*  
2024, painting, silicone, foam clay, prints, acrylic paste, beads, glass, clips, acrylic nails, mosaic stones, resin on wood, 30 x 30 cm
- 04 MONILOLA OLAYEMI ILUPEJU  
*Gymnasia*  
2022–2023, installation, canvas cutouts, iron, ladder of rope and iron, dimensions variable  
A *Untitled Figure (Cross and Uncrossed Legs)*  
2023, cut out painting, oil on canvas, 98.5 x 156 cm  
B *Iron Ladders*  
2023, iron, rope, 105 cm, 770 cm, 570 cm  
C *Untitled (Singlet Series No. 2)*  
2023, cutout painting, acrylic, coloured pencil and spray paint on canvas, 31 x 109 cm  
D *Body Builder*  
2023, cutout painting, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 190 cm  
E *warm gloves for the way home*  
2022, cutout painting, oil, coloured pencil, graphite on paper, 154,5 x 71 cm  
F *Untitled*  
2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 95 cm x 72 cm  
G *Clown*  
2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 47 x 215 cm  
H *In the Light of Day*  
2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 45 x 200 cm  
I *Helter Skelter*  
2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 106 x 194 cm
- J *Untitled Figure (Forward Fold)*  
2023, cutout painting, acrylic on canvas, 65 x 155 cm  
K *Truce*  
2023, cutout painting, oil and coloured pencil on canvas, 96 x 168 cm  
L *Blue*  
2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 56 x 213 cm
- 05 HEBAY. AMIN WITH THE BLACK ATHENA COLLECTIVE  
A *Nowhere is a Place*  
2019, artist book, digital print on Hahnemühle paper, 384 x 23,88cm  
B HEBAY. AMIN  
*As Birds Flying (Kama Tohalleq al Teyour)*  
2016, video, 7:11 mins
- 06 VIKRANT BHISE  
*Archival Historicity/Dalit Panther Series*  
2022–2023, paintings, gouache, watercolour, ink and inkjet print on paper, variable dimensions  
Courtesy of Anant Art Gallery
- 07 THOMIAS RADIN  
A *Till Infinity II*  
2023, painting, oil and collage on linen, artist frame, 152 x 127 x 4,3 cm  
B *Between Body & Mind*  
2024, painting, oil on linen, 155 x 155cm
- 08 TULI MEKONDJO  
*Ousie Martha (1–9)*  
2023–2024, image transfer on cotton napkins, linen fabric, cotton crochet yarn, stitched onto cotton aprons, variable dimensions
- 09 CANA BILIR - MEIER  
*This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past*  
2019, digital projection, super 8, 4:3, b/w, 16:00 mins  
Germany, Austria
- 10 SUNG TIEU  
*Alekhine's Defence*  
2020, 31 pencil drawings on 31 documents in 31 parts, each: 32,1 x 23,4 cm  
Courtesy Henriette Leimer
- 11 KASIA FUDAKOWSKI  
*Raised in Surprise, Lowered in Disbelief*  
2016, sculpture, stained pine wood, steel, brass, nylon, motor, 140 x 530 x 10 cm

# FLOORPLAN





12 HIÊN HOÀNG

*Across the Ocean*

2021, multimedia installation, featured works from the projects “Asia Bistro” and “Made in Rice”

A *Made in Rice*

2021, film, full HD, colour, stereo, 19 min

Performer: Soon-Hwoa Jeong, camera: Rike Malottke, Robert Thomann, lighting: Peter Würzer, costume Design: Sanja Phillip, editing: Oona Braaker, sound: Marcela Leon Espinoza, Max Gausepohl, composer: Tam Thi Pham

B *Collected Photo and Letter*

Letter and photo sent back home from the artist’s late aunt Sent in 1986, collected 2021, 12 x 9 cm (with frame: 20 x 15)

C *The Next Pacific*

2023, photography, UV-Print on bent plexiglass with soy bottles, 60 x 90 x 33 cm

D *Salty Skin*

2023, photography, UV-print on plexiglass, bent, soy bottles, 60 x 80 x 35 cm

E *She Sang a Song*

2023, photography, UV-Print on bent plexiglass with soy bottles, 40 x 60 x 17 cm

F *Smooth Silk*

2023, photography, UV-Print on bent plexiglass with soy bottles, 60 x 90 x 13 cm

G *Still Life With Black Jelly and Passport*

2023, photography, UV-Print on plexiglass, bent, soy bottles

13 DANIEL GREENFIELD - CAMPOVERDE

*My Absent Body(ies) II*

2024, 6 sculptures, concrete, magazine cutouts, coloured pencil, 31,5 x 45 cm each

14 MOSES MÄRZ

*The Texture, the Weave: Maps for Movement and Movements*

2024, installation, print on canvas of original maps, video and sound

A *(De)Colonial Overview Map*

2023, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, ca. 140 x 200 cm

B *Creolising German*

2022, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, ca. 140 x 280 cm

C *Africa Unite*

2024, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, ca. 140 x 200 cm

D *Multidirectional Movements*

2023, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, 140 x 200 cm

E *Charting Oyoyo*

2023, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collage, 140 x 280 cm

# CHOREOGRAPHIES THROUGH THE EXHIBITION

With this notation we invite a movement to come together, and a prediction more to come.

No singular current ever fully connects step to step or gesture to gesture. Movement is the possibility of it leading us to another place, somewhere new – "between riot and choir". While the movements we may rehearse are infinite (and the rehearsals themselves infinite, too), we offer here a set of proposals that – within the greater choreography of the exhibition – annotate some of the more subtle undercurrents that connect the works in the space.

With performances that will animate the exhibition in the following weeks, we build on these proposed choreographies by physically manifesting their annotations in the space. We invite you, our guests, to visit and revisit the exhibition, rehearsing these movements and inviting new, other proposals as well.

## BY THE WATER'S EDGE

03D & 03E (*Archipelago Flow 1 & Archipelago Flow 2*)  
07A (*Till Infinity II*) 12 (*Across the Ocean*)

## THE BODY, FRAGMENTED AND INTEGRATED

12C & 12D & 12G (*The Next Pacific, Salty Skin, Smooth Silk, Still Life With Black Jelly and Passport*) 03B (*We Create Our Own Landscapes*) 06 (*Archival Historicity/Dalit Panther Series*) 11 (*Raised in Surprise, Lowered in Disbelief*)

## CARTESIAN ANGULARITIES

10 (*Alekhine's Defence*) 05A (*Nowhere is a Place*)  
09 (*This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past*)

## LIMINALITY & LIMBO

02 (*WAI8 I & WAI8 II*) 08 (*Ousie Martha*) 04 (*Gymnasia*)

## SHADES OF GREY

13 (*My Absent Body(ies) II*) 09 (*This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past*) 05A (*Nowhere is a Place*)

## CURVATURE AND ELLIPSES

03A & 03C (*We Suddenly Discover to Be Ours & Rhizomatic Thought*) 14 (*The Texture, the Weave: Maps for Movement and Movements*) 04 (*Gymnasia*) 03B (*As Birds Flying*)

## ACROBATICS OF EXHAUSTION

04 (*Gymnasia*) 08 (*Ousie Martha*)  
10 (*Alekhine's Defence*)

## MIRRORING RESILIENCIES AND RESISTANCES

02 (*WAI8 I & WAI8 II*) 06 (*Archival Historicity/Dalit Panther Series*) 07A & 07B (*Till Infinity II & Between Body & Mind*) 09 (*This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past*)

## RENDERING STORIES

09 (*This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past*)  
12A (*Made in Rice*) 14 (*The Texture, the Weave: Maps for Movement and Movements*)

# WORK DESCRIPTIONS & BIOGRAPHIES

01 DANIELLIS

HERNANDEZ CALDERON

*Rediscovering Ourselves as a Working Class?*

*A Cultural Worker's Question*

2024, Interactive Research Display

With photographs by Jürgen Henschel, courtesy of the archive of the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum, and by Das feministische Archiv FFBIZ as well as shared family archives by Martin Hyun

"Class isn't just about how much money you make, and it's certainly not about cultural traits or your level of education. Marxists argue that anyone who must sell their ability to work for a wage and can't produce their life necessities for themselves is part of the working class." – Hadas Thier: *A People's Guide to Capitalism: An Introduction to Marxist Economics*, Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2020.

The situation of informal labour, temporary employment, unregulated forms of work, lack of social security, and multi-employment has long been the reality of the life and practices of artists. However, the serious problem caused by the social paralysis generated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Mauro, 2020), cuts in budgets for education and culture, the political conditioning of access to funds, and privatisations have made visible not only our fragility, like in other sectors, but also our condition as salaried workers.

This rediscovery of ourselves as wage-labourers will not be free of tensions and complexities. It is these situations of urgencies, of crisis of art institutions that will reactivate class identities and affinities. They will fluctuate and rearrange themselves depending on how well or badly the art institution is doing and the position we are occupying within its structures (Castillo, 2024).

But even when such recognition is born under tension, this common class position creates objective conditions that connect and unite us with other working sectors. As we seek a radical and conscious change of the state of things, where our demands and struggles cannot be integrated into capitalist strategies, we, cultural workers, need to dialogue, recognize, learn, and share struggles, ways of organising, and demands of other workers. It is crucial that we join forces to combat divisions and other forms of oppression (ethnicity, "race", gender, religion, nationality) within the same working class to which we claim to belong. Just as the Medu Art Ensemble got involved in the struggles of the

Durban brick and tile workers, it is our task to articulate participatory practices of liberation that support and are part of the struggles of domestic workers in Spain, maquiladora workers from the Indochinese peninsula to Honduras, health and care workers in Berlin, sex workers in Mexico, seasonal migrant workers in European fields, and millions of other working people.

But how to establish from contemporary art spaces those connections, interactions, and alliances in the struggle against imperialism and colonialism and their military, economic, social, and cultural forces? How to overcome the misunderstandings and stagnant conflicts historically inherited with other working-class sectors? But above all we need to ask some fundamental questions: Who are our working class comrades? How do they live and how do they work? What are their victories? What are their histories? How close are they to us? Can we recognize them in the streets? Are they our neighbours?

These are questions that motivate us to propose this small interactive photographic installation "in progress". On our windows, we exhibit ten images by the photographer Jürgen Henschel, taken in the 1970s in Berlin and shown now courtesy of the archive of the FHXB Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg Museum. With them, we thematize the experiences of the working class(es), their protests, alliances and learned lessons, organisational strategies, disenchantments, and hopes. These photographic materials will be the starting point for informal conversations with you, our visitors and neighbours. We invite you to bring your photographs and documents evidencing your or your family's life as workers. The photographs you share with us will be gradually incorporated into the exhibition and will expand, challenge, and complexify it from different perspectives.

Jürgen Henschel (1923–2012) was born in Berlin. He took part in many left-wing protests in West Berlin and was repeatedly sent to prison for several days. In 1967, he turned his passion for photography into a profession as a press photographer for the daily newspaper "Die Wahrheit" of the Socialist Unity Party of West Berlin (SEW) – at the time probably the most controversial press product in the half-city.

References:

Hadas Thier. "The Working Class Is the Vast Majority of Society", *The Jacobin*, 13.09.2020: jacobin.

com/2020/09/working-class-peoples-guide-capitalism-marxist-economics

Karina Mauro. (2020), "Arte y trabajo: indagaciones en torno al trabajo artístico y cultural." *Revista Latinoamericana de Antropología del Trabajo*, Vol.4, n°8, 1-17: <https://www.redalyc.org/articulo.oa?id=668070944001>

Phone conversation with Cuban historian Mario Castillo Santana

DANIEL LIS HERNANDEZ CALDERON lives and works in Berlin as artist, activist, and curator. In her work she explores possibilities of reinvention of the past and takes as sensitive material to build her work those memories produced and nourished in the coexistence, solidarity, struggles and resistance of migrated, diasporic and discriminated, but not defeated, bodies. She earned a BA in Sociology from the University of Havana. In 2007 she graduated from the International Film and television School of San Antonio de los Baños, Cuba as Documentary filmmaker. She holds a Master in Art in Context by University of Arts, Berlin. Daniellis is part of the SAVVY Contemporary team.

02 KMRU

*WAI8 I and WAI8 II*

2024-2025, sound installation, 2024

A "We Move While We See", *WAI8 I*, 2024, Track 4, 08:05 mins

B "Condense Reminder", *WAI8 I*, 2024, Track 6, 04:05 mins

C "Diagonals", *WAI8 II*, 2025, Track 1, 11:40 mins

D "Will Still Remain", *WAI8 I*, 2024, Track 8, 6:10 mins

What lies within the interstices and the in-between of movements and stillness? What possibilities emerge from that liminal space of what has been and what is to come?

Positions of liminality are brought to the surface, rendered by enveloping dissociative sounds, field recordings, and noises as actual events experienced by the body through the sonic work by KMRU. In this exhibition, we are taken on manifold journeys as invitations to experience the artist's inner and physical movements through deep listening.

The sonic pieces resounding from different spaces in the exhibition are excerpts from *WAI8*, an 8-hour duration performance, in which KMRU configures spatial-temporal unmappings by negotiating movement, body, time, and space. This fractured timeline offers listeners' the ability dwell in the liminalities of the uncertain and the possible.

JOSEPH KAMARU AKA KMRU is a Nairobi-born, Berlin-based sound artist whose work is grounded within the discourse of field recording,

noise, and sound art. His work posits expanded listening cultures of sonic thought and sound practices, a proposition to consider and reflect on auditory cultures beyond norms. KMRU holds an awareness of surroundings through creative compositions, installations, and performances. He has earned international acclaim for his performances in locales such as the Barbican, Berlin Atonal, CTM Festival, Dekmantel, Le Guess Who and Tramway. Additionally, his releases on labels like Editions Mego, Subtext, Seil Records, and his own imprint OFNOT. 2022 saw him supporting Big Thief in the UK/EU and touring with Fennesz in the US. He is a SHAPE artist, received an honorary mention at Prix Ars Electronica 2023, and has an MA in Sound Studies and Sonic Arts. KMRU has carved out significant space among names of essential authors in *ambient* experimental music, as a prolific and innovative artist in his field.

03 THERESA WEBER

A *We Suddenly Discover To Be Ours*

2024, sculpture, fabric, rope, foam clay, filling material, clips, rings, beads on chain, variable dimensions

B *We Create our own Landscapes*

2024, wallpaper print, 670 x 420 cm

C *Rhizomatic Thought*

2024, resin work, root, glass, coral, shell in resin with hooks, 25 x 30 cm

D *Archipelago Flow 1*

2024, painting, silicone, foam clay, prints, acrylic paste, beads, glass, clips, acrylic nails, mosaic stones, resin on wood, 30 x 30 cm

E *Archipelago Flow 2*

2024, painting, silicone, foam clay, prints, acrylic paste, beads, glass, clips, acrylic nails, mosaic stones, resin on wood, 30 x 30 cm

Commissioned by SAVVY Contemporary for this exhibition.

Over the course of time and the multiplicity of his-, her-, their-stories, the Caribbean and its peoples have enacted and embodied all kinds of collective and individual elasticities, that is, combinations of inner and physical movements for the sake of transforming, rethinking and reinventing themselves against the backdrop of violent, oppressive, extractivist and dehumanising interventions from the West.

Every movement or sequence of movements comprises ancestral codes – information, knowledges – which are awakened and updated every time they are played or rehearsed, engendering new ones. These sets of movements find their manifestations and expressions on the surface of the islands and the continental

Caribbean – in the cultural, social, political and economic aspects –, but also subaquatically creating an intergenerational rhizome of resistance, creativity and resilience expanding to the diaspora and beyond.

In her soft sculpture *We Suddenly Discover To Be Ours*, Theresa Weber follows the currents of these movements negotiating the Caribbean cultural body as an infinitely transforming body that dwells within an unfixed and fluid state of existence. A body that is infinitely rehearsing the possibilities of elasticity. Made of fabric, beads, clips and modelling mass, this anti-hierarchical and anti-monumental soft sculpture carries materials that reference Carnival traditions within the islands, the continental Caribbean and its diaspora. As representations of resistant traditions within the Caribbean diaspora, they also become traces of the resilient body.

The Caribbean as a geographical space is also reinterpreted in this work. The wall arrangement *We Create Our Own Landscapes* negotiates deterritorialization, dislocation and cartography fusing the shapes of the island landscape (*Archipelago*), the double helix, the mosaic, and the root network on a wallpaper in which the forms and shapes are continuously repeating themselves, creating everytime new patterns. Inspired by Édouard Glissant's œuvre and in particular on his work *Poetic Intention*, from which the titles of these works are cited, Weber creates a rhizomatic network of life and ancestries communicating and influencing each other. The paintings include mosaic elements with marbles, acrylic nails, beads and clips, making it an archive of the intersectional resilient body that reflects on individuality and belonging.

THE RESA WEBER was born in Düsseldorf in 1996 and lives and works in North Rhine-Westphalia and London. Through multimedia installations, sculptures, paintings, and collaborative performances the artist seeks to challenge existing power hierarchies and fixed categorizations. With a dynamic approach, she refers to ancient mythologies and historical research through collaging cultural materials from an anti-colonial lens. Her perspective as a German born artist with Jamaican, German, and Greek background influences her artistic approach.

In 2014, Theresa Weber completed her studies at Kunstakademie Düsseldorf, where she studied with Katharina Grosse and Ellen Gallagher, from whom she received the Meisterschüler title. She then moved to London for a two-year postgraduate master's degree at the Royal College of Art in sculpture, which she successfully completed in summer 2023. Weber was part of New Contemporaries UK in 2022 and won several awards and scholarships in Germany and the Netherlands. Her first institutional solo shows took place at Dortmunder Kunstverein in 2021, followed by several

institutional and international shows, as for example at Ludwig Forum Aachen, Philara Collection Düsseldorf, Z33 Belgium, South London Gallery, and her first public commission at Somerset House in London in 2023. This year she had her first gallery solo show at ChertLüdde Berlin, as well as her first museum solo at Kunstmuseum Bochum which is running until the 13th of October.

#### 04 MONILOLA OLAYEMI I LUPEJU *Gymnasia*

2022–2023, installation, canvas cutouts, iron, ladder of rope and iron, dimensions variable

##### A *Untitled Figure (Cross and Uncrossed Legs)*

2023, cut out painting, oil on canvas, 98.5 x 156 cm

##### B *Iron Ladders*

2023, iron, rope, 105 cm, 770 cm, 570 cm

##### C *Untitled (Singlet Series No. 2)*

2023, cutout painting, acrylic, coloured pencil and spray paint on canvas, 31 x 109 cm

##### D *Body Builder*

2023, cutout painting, acrylic on canvas, 60 x 190 cm

##### E *warm gloves for the way home*

2022, cutout painting, oil, coloured pencil, graphite on paper, 154,5 x 71 cm

##### F *Untitled*

2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 95 cm x 72 cm

##### G *Clown*

2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 47 x 215 cm

##### H *In the Light of Day*

2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 45 x 200 cm

##### I *Helter Skelter*

2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 106 x 194 cm

##### J *Untitled Figure (Forward Fold)*

2023, cutout painting, acrylic on canvas, 65 x 155 cm

##### K *Truce*

2023, cutout painting, oil and coloured pencil on canvas, 96 x 168 cm

##### L *Blue*

2023, cutout painting, oil on canvas, 56 x 213 cm

The bodies painted on loose canvases, part of Monilola Olayemi Ilupeju's installation *Gymnasia*, stretch, bend, fold, fall, stand, and rest throughout the exhibition space, interacting with its architecture and the iron-made sculptures, that resemble gym apparatuses from old and modern times. While these figures embody

postures and gestures, as well as mental and physical states, alluding to those experienced in a gymnasium, they are also exemplary of conditions experienced by marginalised life across societal arenas. The exhaustion resulting from being pushed beyond limits of physical, mental, and spiritual exertion; the instants of brief pause, perhaps for only one or two deep breaths; the distortions projected on the self and communal, pushing individuals into a manufactured expression as a way of passing into and through an imposed societal frame.

In societies, like ours of Germany, the continuities of colonialism, facism, and nazism are still deeply embedded in the structures of many of its institutions. Forms of racism, violence, and discrimination such as anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim, anti-Black, anti-Arab xenophobia and prejudice, to name a few, stand as transmutations of a still-broken past, in motion. Marginalised beings within these structures, as in *Gymnasia*, are set to perform acrobatics of many kinds: moving within, across, parallel to, and below these systems in an attempt to find and forge creative, and less harmful, ways to live, survive, and thrive. Contortions, twists, and turns of the psyche and body are enacted – dancing in atmospheres of smoke and mirrors, bringing us to ask which movements are of our own desire, and which are absorbed obtrusions of intimidations from the outside.

While making us reflect on the logics that are at the core of these institutional structures imbued with varied forms of oppression, in which these acrobatics have to be performed, the reconfiguration of this work within this exhibition, simultaneously brings us to confront European constructs of “assimilation” and “integration”, which are considered to be “achievements”, rather than cultural violations, expected of individuals and communities with migration histories. In strength, in fear, in shame and in pride, these beings lay on the ground, perch tall on the walls, and climb around the space, together and with others, holding one another, or finding themselves in solitude. In this sense, the malleability of these cut-out beings functions both in their favour and to their disadvantage. It provides them with the flexibility and imagination needed for engaging in such stunts; at the same time, it grants the power of breaking free from their form of inflicted order, to gain tools and methods to be able to play their game so to hack, resist, and ultimately, propose ways to reject them.

MONILOLA OLAYEMI ILUPEJU is a Nigerian-American artist and author based in Berlin. She graduated with distinction from New York University, where she studied studio art and social and cultural analysis. She is also an alumna of the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Through painting, writing, performance and installation, she balances intimate experiences of connection, violence, and healing against broader observations on cultural distortion and identity. She has done curatorial and

editorial work with S A V V Y Contemporary and Archive Books, among others. *Earnestly* (2022, Archive Books) is her debut collection of writing.

Recent solo exhibitions include *BloodLetter*, PSM, Berlin (2024), *Saint V.*, Tarte Vienna, Vienna (2023), *Gymnasia*, A plus A Gallery, Venice (2023), *Hands Full of Air*, Galerie im Turm, Berlin (2020); and *Eve of Intuition*, The Institute for Endotic Research (TIER), Berlin (2020). Ilupeju has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including *non playable character*, School for Curatorial Studies Venice & The Fairest, Venice (2022), *my whole body changed into something else*, Stevenson Gallery, Johannesburg (2021), *where will i be buried*, Flux Factory, New York (2020), and *Queer Intimacy and States of Emotions*, Human Resources, Los Angeles (2019). Monilola's latest show *BloodLetter* is currently up at PSM in Berlin, and is running until the end of October.

05A H E B A Y . A M I N W I T H T H E  
B L A C K A T H E N A C O L L E C T I V E  
*Nowhere is a Place*

2019, artist book, digital print on Hahnemühle paper,  
384 x 23,88 cm

The zig-zag unspooling of the Black Athena collective's accordion book is a visual metaphor for the interweaving of migratory trajectories, in which what migrates or moves are bodies as much as forms of knowledge, ideologies, aesthetics. Drawing from images found in archives and libraries of Italian geographical surveys, histories of colonial architecture, as well as studies of nomadic architecture and space in North and East African landscapes, the book offers visual compositions that juxtapose architectural principles of stability and permanence (such as those in Italy's colonial landscapes) with those of nomadism and variability (in North and East African landscapes). The relationship or tension between this stasis and motion is what shapes the land, what shapes history and the contemporary moment.

As bodies travel and move, ideas and images do as well. Black Athena Collective here speaks of “a migration of images”; while some images stay rooted, others might move. *Nowhere is a Place* is a stretched offering of new kinds of movements, new notations for new imaginations of places – and concordant ideologies, aesthetics.

05B H E B A Y . A M I N  
*As Birds Flying (Kama Tohalleg al Teyour)*  
2016, video, 7:11 mins

What might prompt movement or migration for communities of people is allegorised through images of migrating storks in Heba Amin's *As Birds Flying*, a short film that alludes to the consequences of the 2011 revolution in Egypt as well as in the broader “Middle East” region. The film departs from an incident

in September 2013 when the Egyptian government detained a migratory stork that flew into the country from Israel, suspected it of espionage because of an electronic device attached to its leg (later discovered to be a tracking device placed by European zoologists). Amin captures the surrounding media and state paranoia by mixing found footage from drones, aerial views of storks over Israeli settlements and audio from the 1995 film *Birds of Darkness* which critiqued government corruption in Egypt.

While the film crystallises around a specific moment of historical absurdity, Amin's choice of image and sound references a longer trajectory of political instability and militarised conflict in "the Levant". Drone footage of birds and aerial views of the land are immediately suggestive of militarised surveillance and aerial bombing, ongoing today. With the title, Amin alludes to the British general Edmund Allenby, who in 1917 said he was inspired by a biblical prophecy in his aerial offensive on Ottoman Jerusalem – sparking over a century now of "birds flying" over the region.

HEBA Y. AMIN is a Cairo-born artist, engaging with political themes and archival history and using mixed-media including film, photography, lecture performance and installation. Her artistic research takes a speculative, often satirical, approach to challenging narratives of conquest and control. Amin is a Professor of Digital and Time-Based art at ABK-Stuttgart, the co-founder of the Black Athena Collective, curator of visual art for the *MIZNA* journal, and currently sits on the editorial board of the *Journal of Digital War*. She was awarded the 2020 Sussmann Artist Award for artists committed to the ideals of democracy and antifascism, and was selected as a Field of Vision Fellow, NYC (2019). Amin's work has been shown in numerous exhibitions including The Mosaic Rooms, London (2021), the Böttcherstrasse Prize Exhibition, Bremen (2018), Eye Film Museum, Amsterdam (2020), Quai Branly Museum, Paris (2020), MAXXI Museum, Rome (2018), Liverpool Biennial (2021), 10th Berlin Biennale (2018), 15th Istanbul Biennale (2017), and 12th Dak'Art Biennale (2016), to name a few. Her latest publication, *Heba Y. Amin: The General's Stork* (ed. Anthony Downey) was recently published by Sternberg Press (2020) and her works and interventions have been covered by *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *the Intercept*, and *BBC*, among others. Furthermore, Amin is also one of the artists behind the subversive graffiti action on the set of the television series *Homeland* which received worldwide media attention. She lives in Berlin.

THE BLACK ATHENA COLLECTIVE is a research and artistic laboratory for experimentation that engages political discourse and territorial logics connected to the Red Sea region from Eritrea to Egypt. It looks specifically at archival documents and a re-writing of historical narratives on the various frameworks of space, in relation to errant bodies in

the region. Through multi-disciplinary perspectives including geography, sociology, and history, the Black Athena Collective raises the question of migration as a crucial principle for imagining new conventions of territory. Central to their investigations are the reconstitution of political spaces and the various architectures and forms of reterritorialization, the collective draws from challenges posed by Martin Bernal's thesis which questions methodological assumptions embedded within Western historiography. The Black Athena Collective was founded in 2015 by artists Heba Y. Amin (EGY) and Dawit L. Petros (ER/CA).

06 VIKRANT BHISE

*Archival Historicity/Dalit Panther Series*

2022–2023, paintings, gouache, watercolour, ink and inkjet print on paper, variable dimensions

Courtesy of Anant Art Gallery

In twenty frames of gouache paintings on paper, *Archival Historicity/Dalit Panthers* offers rehearsal, repetition, revolution as the steps needed to move towards liberation – specifically, anti-caste liberation as envisioned by social movements led by Dalit, Bahujan and Adivasi communities. Vikrant Bhise brings into image the history of the Dalit Panther movement – which, in the early 1970s in the Indian state of Maharashtra, took its cue from the Black Panthers, a radical leftist, black power organisation active in the United States – through scenographies and symbologies that index multiple sites of anti-caste struggle.

Against the repeating motif of the panther, which the Dalit Panthers used as the letterhead of their newsletters and pamphlets, we see bodies at work and bodies in motion, a line of legs walking together. Arms and legs, hands and feet appear both as integrated parts of these bodies and as separated, dismembered – a reference to the integrity of the labouring body as well as to caste-based violence and oppression. Visibilised in these images is also Dr B R Ambedkar (1891–1956), a revolutionary social reformer and leader of the anti-caste movement, whose vision of the annihilation of caste animates contemporary struggles until today.

Comprising over 100 paintings, this series is a visualisation of a movement denied or sidelined by hegemonic narratives of history. Each scene traces an arc, adds a step, each increments and accumulates; each scene both presents the past and offers a choreography for the future.

VIKRANT BHISE is a visual artist who lives and works in Mumbai, India. He is an alumnus of the L. S. Raheja School of Art (2010) and The Sir J. J. School of Art (2011) in Mumbai. Vikrant's artistic practice iterates his commitment to the revolutionary spirit inherent in the Ambedkarite consciousness. At the forefront of the struggle against caste-based domination and its vertiginous implications on land, liberty, and labour,

he is committed to the expression of social justice, the realisation of enduring reform through activism, and the remembrance of struggles against class, gender-based oppression, and caste. He works across monumental scrolls and multi-panelled paintings incandescent with the light of resistance that once illuminated the murals of post-revolution Mexico, as well as smaller works with ink on paper, which hold the urgency of proximate witnessing of the human condition. In the veins of Somnath Hore, Vikrant's iconography is informed and deliberate in its radicality. His selected solo exhibitions include *Human*, curated by Katharina Domscheit-D'Souza, Jehangir Art Gallery (Mumbai, 2019), and *Sense and Sensibilities: A Reflective Realisation*, curated by Dr. Y.S. Alone, Anant Art Gallery (Noida, 2024). He is the recipient of a National Award by Lalit Kala Akademi for the series *Impressions*, in 2018. Vikrant Bhise is represented by Anant Art Gallery, Noida, India.

#### 07 THOMIAS RADIN

##### A *Till Infinity II*

2023, painting, oil and collage on linen, artist frame, 152 x 127 x 4,3 cm

##### B *Between Body & Mind*

2024, painting, oil on linen, 155x155cm

How many movements are contained in a single movement?

A movement can be hundreds, and even millions, of years of individual and collective movement and yet, each specific body and action counts across time in order to make the possibly ephemeral become real and physical, again. Perhaps there is not such a thing as a single movement, but variations of the same, generating endless inner and outer placements and displacements. They all converge in an act of simultaneous coding and decoding of information and knowledge while dwelling in a state of constant reinvention. A movement echoes in infinity and returns to the body through which it finds its material manifestation.

Between body and mind is the rhythm. Rhythm is the door, said Trinh T. Minh-ha, it is the threshold. Rhythm is the architecture of being, wrote Léopold Sédar Senghor, it is the force that, through the senses, strikes us to the root of our being. Rhythms of his native Guadeloupe and his youth in France give form to the works of Thomas Radin. Inspired by Guadeloupean Gwo Ka dance, Caribbean literature, critical influences from the history of European painting, Hip-Hop and Afro-Caribbean diasporic lifestyle, Radin explores questions of identity and cognition creating collages of cultural references. In his two paintings in this exhibition, *Between Body & Mind* and *Till Infinity II*, as in his overall artistic practice, dance plays a crucial role: it not only informs them, but it is also the vehicle that enables a vital exchange for reciprocal influence.

How many movements are in a single movement?

Radin's paintings remind us of inner shifts and moments of quietness, of trembling but not falling, of the individual and the multitudes it contains. They remind us to keep on moving.

THOMIAS RADIN creates collages of cultural references with which he explores questions of identity and cognition. He describes his paintings and objects as representations of „inner life“ and within them depicts a double consciousness: one that is shaped by the intellect and another that is at home in the physical experience of the Black body. Elements and memories of everyday life in his native Guadeloupe home are combined with urban culture informed by practices of Hip-Hop, Afro-Caribbean diasporic lifestyle, and critical influences from the history of European painting in his multi-material works. The wood craftsmanship from his family's tradition forms the material basis of his works.

Thomas Radin is also a trained dancer, which provides him with important impulses for his artistic work: physical memories from his dance sessions flow directly into his paintings, and the confrontations in his paintings influence his choreographies. In keeping with his approach to art, there is no separation of disciplines in his work: all forms of expression mutually converse in his work across expressions.

#### 08 TULI MEKONDJO

##### *Ousie Martha (1-9)*

2023–2024, image transfer on cotton napkins, linen fabric, cotton crochet yarn, stitched onto cotton aprons, variable dimensions

The clothing line of Tuli Mekondjo's textile works materialises both stillness and movement through the manifestation of its relationship with colonial choreographies. Channelling the lives of women who were domestic workers during the colonial and subsequent Apartheid era in Namibia, Mekondjo uses photo transfers and embroidery on cloth to reference and reclaim a maternal ancestral line that was subjected to multiple delimitations and segregations during this time. The forced labour extracted from these ancestors is both highlighted and transformed by Mekondjo's photo transfers, which move images of Namibian women – images often sourced from colonial-era archives – into the fabric objects that symbolise and make visible this same labour: in the domestic space, in the kitchen.

The extractive relationship that colonial-era photography projects had with their “subjects” in the German colony of “South West Africa” is presented here in direct relationship with the site of extracted (female) labour. Where such photo archives might force Mekondjo's ancestors into fixed positions of anonymity, by transferring images of these women onto cloth Mekondjo insists instead on a multilayered contextualisation of their lives – a movement that is a refusal to accept the



borders of colonial-era identity-formation.

T U L I M E K O N D J O is a self-taught Namibian artist whose work explores the construction of identity in the shadow of Namibia's violent past, as both a German and later South African colony. She uses a variety of media and material including natural silks, embroidery, photo-transfer, soil, paint, resin and mahangu (millet) grain, a staple food in Namibia, to reframe imagery from historical photographs from both the German colonial period (1884–1919) and the subsequent occupation by South Africa. Mekondjo's multilayered works result from a process of both literal and figurative burial and retrieval, and draw heavily on photographic representations of Indigenous Namibian people from varied ethnic groups.

Mekondjo also has a performance practice which extends her archival research and interventions, and locates her personally in the context of Namibian history. The presence of female ancestors is particularly important for Mekondjo, whose connection to her mother and grandmother are the beginning of a cycle of connections to female ancestors. This ties her performances to her two-dimensional works, which often have images of wombs and fetuses embroidered onto them, metaphorically connecting the beginnings of life to the soil and to women.

Mekondjo, whose name means "we are in the struggle", was born in Angola to Namibian parents who joined SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples' Organisation) in exile in the early 1980s. She has exhibited widely in Namibia, South Africa, France, the United States, Hong Kong and Germany. In 2022, she became the first Black Namibian woman ever to exhibit in the United States, where she is co-represented by Hales. In 2023, her work was shown at Frieze London, Art Central Hong Kong, EXPO Chicago, ARCO Lisboa and Art Joburg. She is represented in multiple international collections.

#### 09 C A N A B I L I R - M E I E R

*This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past*

2019, digital projection, super 8, 4:3, b/w, 16:00 mins  
Germany, Austria

A rehearsal is, on the one hand, a revision of the past. Because the past is revisited, a rehearsal can also function as a prediction of what happened and of what might happen. On the other hand, a rehearsal also offers the possibility of modifying the course of the sequences of movements rehearsed and therefore, the outcome of the rehearsal itself. In the film *This Makes Me Want to Predict the Past* by Cana Bilir-Meier, the camera follows and portrays two teenagers as they spend their time in a shopping centre, walking around its different areas, trying out lipsticks, going up and down the escalators, having fun. The backdrop of this casual wandering is revealed to us when we see flowers, candles and

portraits around a memorial sculpture in front of that shopping mall, that is the Olympia shopping centre in Munich. On July 22nd, 2016 in this mall nine immigrant youths were murdered and many people severely injured as a result of a racist attack by a right-wing extremist. Only in 2019, and thanks to the collective effort of the families of the victims and engaged supporters, this right-wing, racist as well as anti-Roma and anti-Sinti racist attack was recognized by the state as such.

Over the course of the film, we witness Sosuna and Aleyna's wanderings in a place that once was and continues being the reminiscence of a crime scene, where people like themselves were murdered. Their wandering includes and embodies a revision of that past. Nevertheless, it is not one made out of fear and victimisation, on the contrary, with their wandering they are physically and emotionally reclaiming a space that is also for them to navigate freely, joyfully, hopefully. Their rehearsal is one that aspires towards a present and a future in which people with migration histories don't have to be afraid anymore and have the right to tell and own the narrative of the stories that concern them.

In the film, fiction and reality are mixed. Scenes from the theatre play *Düşler Ülkesi* from 1982 by Erman Okay, are shown in the form of photographs, and then rehearsed and reenacted by the two protagonists of the film. The theatre play addresses unfulfilled longings, broken promises, prejudices, and misunderstandings in the life of so-called guest workers. With its title, the film also seeks to thematize the continuous intersectional experience of racism that the youths of the 1980s share with those of today.

Protagonists:

Sosuna Yildiz, Aleyna Osmanoğlu, Berfin Ünsal

Camera: Lichun Tseng

Casting/Research: Zühal Bilir-Meier

Production: Liesa Kovacs

Text: YouTube comments from users on the song

"Redbone" by Childish Gambino

Research Material: Erman Okay, Zühal Bilir-Meier, *Düşler Ülkesi*, Turkish Theatre Munich, (Theater der Jugend in München) 1982

C A N A B I L I R - M E I E R lives and works in Munich (DE) and Vienna (AT). She studied digital media/ art, film, and art education at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna and at Sabancı University in Istanbul (TR). She describes herself as a storyteller and works in art, film, and cultural educational projects. In 2018, she co-founded the Initiative in memory of the writer and activist Semra Ertan, who was her aunt. In 2020, she co-edited, with her mother Zühal Bilir-Meier, Semra Ertan's poetry book, entitled *My Name is a Foreigner – Benim Adım Yabancı*.

## 10 SUNG TIEU

### *Alekhine's Defence*

2020, 31 pencil drawings on 31 documents in 31 parts, each: 32,1 x 23,4 cm Courtesy Henriette Leimer

Thirty-one moves of a historically renowned game of chess are traced on the backdrop of thirty-one official government documents in this work, in which a grandmaster competes against an amateur while state apparatuses assess non-citizens. Movement here is a charged, risky endeavour. To move is to win or survive, and to achieve that a player must be able to predict not only the step that comes next but the one after that, the one after that, and so on – that is, one must move strategically, with planning, foresight, skill.

The chess board's Cartesian angles allow for little organic movement and stage a loaded negotiation of power. Set against bureaucratic forms related to different streams of migration – asylum, residency, naturalisation – Tieu's drawings emphasise the potential costs of what it takes to “play the game”.

SUNG TIEU is an artist born in Vietnam and based in Berlin. Her multidisciplinary exhibitions merge sculpture, drawing, text, sound, and video to interrogate control mechanisms and their psychological effects. She juxtaposes extensive research with autobiographical elements to explore both personal and institutional structures.

Tieu's forthcoming exhibitions will take place at venues like KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (solo); the 14th Gwangju Biennale (group); and the Harvard Art Museums (group). Her solo exhibition *Without Full Disclosure* is currently on view at the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen (2024). Further solo exhibitions were presented at Kunst Museum Winterthur; MIT List Visual Arts Center, Cambridge; Amant, New York; Neuer Berliner Kunstverein, Berlin (all 2023); Mudam, Luxembourg (2022); Kunstmuseum Bonn; Galerie für Zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig (2021); Nottingham Contemporary; and Haus der Kunst, Munich (2020).

Her work was included in the 14th Shanghai Biennale and the 34th Bienal de São Paulo, and has been exhibited at Museion, Bolzano; Kunsthalle Basel (2021); Museum Angewandte Kunst, Frankfurt; GAMeC Museum, Bergamo; and Hamburger Bahnhof, Berlin (2020). Tieu is the recipient of the Schering Stiftung Award for Artistic Research 2024 and the Rubens Promotional Award of the City of Siegen (2024). She also received the audience award for the Preis der Nationalgalerie, Berlin (2021) amongst others.

## 11 KASIA FUDAKOWSKI

### *Raised in Surprise, Lowered in Disbelief*

2016, sculpture, stained pine wood, steel, brass, nylon, motor, 140 x 530 x 10 cm

There are choreographies performed with subtle corporal gestures: the slight contraction of the face muscles followed by a slow movement of a hand or the raising of the eyebrows followed by a short but fierce tilt of the face. Oftentimes all it takes is a look to unleash a chain of events with consequences for the one who is subject to that bodily gesture. They are nuances that turn to be decisive especially if directed to migrant and racialized bodies.

These types of subtle expressions and choreographies of gestures find, in this exhibition, a great or rather over-dimensional presence. Perhaps to an extent that the magnitude of their dimension can turn the exhibitionary situation into a comical one with the potential of releasing the tension they actually evoke. In Kasia Fudakowski's 5 metre long sculpture *Raised in Surprise, Lowered in Disbelief* deep, dark black wooden forms hover menacingly, resembling the shape of eyebrows waiting to pass judgement. Despite the relatively small size of the wooden eyebrows, the hanging system that sustains them enlarges the overall sculpture resulting in them taking and occupying much more space. The dimension of the sculpture as opposed to the area their movement takes in “real life” might inform us about the actual and crucial dimension that gestures of approval or disbelief can have over a person's destiny in immigrant societies, such as the German: a society among many in the West that resist accepting that they are shaped by communities of migration.

KASIA FUDAKOWSKI was born in the UK, and lives and works in Berlin. She studied at the Ruskin School of Drawing and Fine Art, Oxford University, where she graduated in 2006.

Her diverse and playful practice, which includes sculpture, film, performance, and writing, explores social riddles through material encounters, surreal logic, and comic theory. In 2020, she co-founded The Association for The Palliative Turn, a loose collective of professionals who describe themselves as “palliatively curious” and interested in finding ways of applying palliative approaches to cultural production. Fudakowski's work has been exhibited in venues such as Palazzo Grassi – Punta della Dogana, Venice; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Sprengel Museum Hannover; LOKremise – Kunstmuseum, St.Gallen; Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden; 15th Istanbul Biennial; SALTS, Basel; Kunstverein Braunschweig; Kunstverein für die Rheinlande und Westfalen; Museo Marino Marini, Florence; 1646, The Hague; Futura Centre for Contemporary Art, Prague; GAK, Bremen; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; the Künstlerhaus

Bethanien, Berlin and Leopold-Hoesch-Museum, Düren.  
12 H I È N H O À N G  
*Across the Ocean*  
2021, multimedia installation, featured works from the projects “Asia Bistro” and “Made in Rice”

A *Made in Rice*  
2021, film, full HD, colour, stereo, 19 min  
Performer: Soon-Hwoa Jeong, camera: Rike Malottke, Robert Thomann, lighting: Peter Würzer, costume Design: Sanja Phillip, editing: Oona Braaker, sound: Marcela Leon Espinoza, Max Gausepohl, composer: Tam Thi Pham

B *Collected Photo and Letter*  
Letter and photo sent back home from the artist’s late aunt Sent in 1986, collected 2021, 12 x 9 cm (with frame: 20 x 15)

C *The Next Pacific*  
2023, photography, UV-Print on bent plexiglass with soy bottles, 60 x 90 x 33 cm

D *Salty Skin*  
2023, photography, UV-print on plexiglass, bent, soy bottles, 60 x 80 x 35 cm

E *She Sang a Song*  
2023, photography, UV-Print on bent plexiglass with soy bottles, 40 x 60 x 17 cm

F *Smooth Silk*  
2023, photography, UV-Print on bent plexiglass with soy bottles, 60 x 90 x 13 cm

G *Still Life With Black Jelly and Passport*  
2023, photography, UV-Print on plexiglass, bent, soy bottles

*Across the Ocean* is a multimedia installation that dances between fixity and movement through an interplay of seemingly divergent images and textures, mediums and meanings. Between the softness of fabric and the hard surface of acrylic glass in Hien Hoang’s work, frames are created and snapped, warped, transformed; identity is questioned, twisted apart, braided together.

In her acrylic glass sculptures, Hoang breaks the straight angles of the rectangular frame. Using her body, she morphs the surface of the sculptures, adding organic texture and dimensionality to the medium of photography that might otherwise just flatten or fix. Critical of the exotification and fetishisation of immigrant identities and bodies – specifically, here, East and Southeast Asian women’s bodies – Hoang makes works that recreate this fragmentation in visuals with a bite, distorted and disturbed. Alongside are videos of her performance piece *Made in Rice*, in which rice paper acts as a materialisation of a fetishised identity while simultaneously enacting an opacity for the performer’s body, moving between

invisibility and hyper-visibility with each’s accordant risks. The heart of *Across the Ocean* is perhaps its smallest frame, in which Hoang shares a letter from her aunt on one side and a family photo on the other. Hoang’s aunt was the first in her family to arrive in the GDR as a contract worker; her correspondence with the family in Vietnam, which preface and predict the artist’s own move to Germany, connects movement across oceans, roles, societies.

H I È N H O À N G is a Vietnamese born interdisciplinary artist based in Hamburg, Germany. Her work delves into cultural narratives, human-nature relationships, and the complexities of identity. Utilising diverse media such as photography, installation, performance, film, VR, and object art, Hoang’s artistic practice is marked by an exploration of perception boundaries. Her creations range from experimental films to immersive installations, inviting viewers into emotive landscapes and introspective experiences.

Hoang has been honoured with prestigious awards, including the FOAM Paul Huf Award 2024 and the S+T+ARTS Grant from the European Commission. Her exhibitions have been showcased at renowned venues like Rencontres de la Photographie d’Arles, CAPA Center in Budapest, and Centro Cibeles in Madrid, among others.

13 D A N I E L G R E E N F I E L D -  
C A M P O V E R D E  
*My Absent Body(ies) II*  
2024, 6 sculptures, concrete, magazine cutouts, coloured pencil, 31,5 x 45 cm each

In this work, absence is given presence through being cast in concrete: Daniel Greenfield-Campoverde’s sculptures sample images from *Physique Pictorial*, a US-American quarterly publication (1951–1990) that camouflaged soft gay pornography with imagery of bodybuilding and classical art. Greenfield-Campoverde traces a lineage of queer sexuality and its relationship with criminalisation or criminality. Absenting the bodies of gay men here invites a closer look, an assessment of the gestures and movements of these bodies. The line between what might be erotic or sexual is visibly entangled in these pieces with what might be read as violent or aggressive. The scale of the concrete tablets references archaeological materials and contrasts them with the contemporary scenes found in the magazines – a temporal tension that nonetheless gestures towards the continuing, ongoing rehearsals of queer or gay liberation movements.

D A N I E L G R E E N F I E L D -  
C A M P O V E R D E {he/him} is a Venezuelan-American visual artist currently living and working in London, UK. Exploring themes of identity and place, he contests notions of cultural belonging through an

expanded video, drawing, and sculpture practice. His research has led him to create performative walks along contested borders, embody nonsensical choreographies amidst war bunkers, as well as create diaristic pieces which speak to queer experience.

His work has been exhibited and screened internationally in venues including: The Bronx Museum of the Arts, New York, LUX, London, Hua International Gallery, Berlin, Iklectic, London, PS120, Berlin, Momenta Art, Brooklyn, Art Exchange, Colchester, The Centro Cultural Chacao, Caracas, and *POLIN*, Warsaw.

He has participated in various residencies including ZK/U – Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik, Berlin, The Watermill Center, Watermill, The Wassaic Artists' Residency, Wassaic, and Hangar Centro de Investigação Artística, Lisbon. His work has been reviewed in *Hyperallergic*, *Artnet*, *Art Observed*, *Architizer*, *El Nacional*, and *ArteFuse*.

Daniel holds an MFA in Fine Art from Goldsmiths, University of London, and degrees in Architecture from Yale University and Pratt Institute.

#### 14 MOSES MÄRZ

*The Texture, the Weave:*

*Maps for Movement and Movements*

2024, installation, print on canvas of original maps, video and, sound

#### A *(De)Colonial Overview Map*

2023, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, 140 x 200 cm

#### B *Creolising German*

2022, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, 140 x 280 cm

#### C *Africa Unite*

2024, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, 140 x 200 cm

#### D *Multidirectional Movements*

2023, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collages, 140 x 200 cm

#### E *Charting Oyoyo*

2023, canvas print of drawings on paper, crayon, pencil and collage, 140 x 280 cm

Mapping and cartography have a reciprocal relationship with movement – in that they have been, historically, created as a result of movement and in that they can predict and chart movement as well. Where maps may be used as tools of surveillance, exploitation and the creation of social divisions, Moses März's experimental cartographic work seeks instead to employ the medium for opposite purposes. März's maps create relations;

they experiment with conceptions of time, space and subjectivity outside of modern Western thinking; they identify structures of oppression and exploitation, charting, too, how these influence movement.

The maps shown as part of this exhibition critique the tendency of modern nation-states to homogenise, segregate, and construct hierarchies within the societies they are supposed to protect. Moving on from this critique, the maps trace decolonial individual and collective movements that operate outside the Euro Liberal paradigm to chart pathways towards alternative forms of being together.

Among the historical and spatial frameworks in which the maps explore this dynamic are resistance movements to systematic settler colonial violence, the Pan African struggle towards the creation of a United States of Africa, and contemporary cultural movements invested in creolising the German language in the process of establishing parallel societies.

Original dimensions of the maps:

(De)Colonial Overview Map, 150 x 180 cm

Africa Unite, 250 x 350 cm

Multidirectional Movements, ca. 210 x 250 cm

Creolising German, ca. 175 x 300 cm

Charting Oyoyo, ca. 210 x 410 cm

MOSES MÄRZ is a researcher, writer and mapmaker based in Berlin. After studying political science at Free University Berlin, and African Studies at the University of Cape Town, he joined the editorial team of the *Chimurenga Chronic* in Cape Town in 2014. In 2018, he co-founded the independent publication project *Mittel und Zweck (MUZ)* in Berlin together with Philipp Hege. He received a PhD from the University of Potsdam in 2021 for a dissertation titled *Édouard Glissant's Politics of Relation: Mapping an Intellectual Movement of Marronage*. His research maps were first exhibited in *Chimurenga* publications and library installations. In 2022, a series of his large-scale, hand-drawn maps, titled "*Karten zur Kreolisierung der Welt*", were exhibited as part of the 12th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art. Since then, his maps circulate between academic, art, and activist contexts; among them, several events organised by the *Dekoloniale Memory Culture* in the City project in Berlin.

\* SAVVY.DOC

& COLONIAL NEIGHBOURS

*Choreographing Settlements*

Display including books, archival objects, research material, and two films

*German Town*

By CTPC Productions

1990, 27:00 min

Echoing the exhibition's theme of choreographies, *S A V V Y .doc* and *Colonial Neighbours* present an installation looking into the radical shift of how communities and individuals can create significant change both in the space they inhabit and within community. The installation and book selection delves into these ideas of historical and cultural shifts that occur when people migrate, settle or move through different places.

The film *German Town* tells the story of German settlers in Jamaica: In 1834, following the abolition of slavery in Jamaica, over 200 Germans were brought as indentured labourers from Bremerhaven to settle in what is now called Seaford Town in Jamaica. "German Town" was built on 500 acres of land donated by Charles Ellis, baron of Seaford whose family was financially compensated by Britain when their over 1800 slaves were emancipated in 1834. The choreographed labour migration put five acres of land into the hands of each German who arrived on the island regardless of their age.

Lord Seaford's intention in bringing German settlers to Jamaica was not only to address the labour shortages caused by the end of slavery but also to ensure that the land remained in the hands of a white population. He hoped to counterbalance the growing influence of the newly emancipated Black population and maintain the racial and economic hierarchy central to Jamaica's colonial structure. This move reflected a broader strategy among colonial elites to preserve their power and control over the island's resources and social order.

#### *German Remnants in Kpando*

By Rosemary Esinam Damalie and Chris Parker  
Edzordzi Sefogah (MEGBORNA)  
2024, 03:34 mins

The German protectorate Togoland (1884–1914) included present-day Togo and most of Ghana's Volta Region. After Germany's defeat, Togoland was divided into western and eastern portions, with the western part, now part of Ghana, undergoing a plebiscite and later becoming the Trans Volta Trust Territory, forming what is now known as the Volta Region.

German colonial policy in Togoland centred on direct rule, often exacerbating divisions among the Voltarians. However, certain towns, such as Ho, Kpando, and Amedzofe, and their chiefs, gained prominence due to their cooperation with colonial and missionary policies. With the establishment of mission stations by the North German Missionary Society (Bremen Mission) in 1847, Kpando saw rapid development under German rule.

Focusing on Kpando, formerly known as Kpandu/Akpini, the film *German Remnants in Kpando* showcases a collection of aged and deteriorating structures in Ghana's Kpando District, a town and capital of the

Kpando Municipal District in the northern Volta Region of Ghana, originally built by the German Society of the Divine Word (SVD) Missionaries.

*S A V V Y . D O C* is *S A V V Y Contemporary's* library archive and documentation center. The radical archive aims to encourage and therefore to enable access to rare, unnoticed or ignored documents. Our shelves are home to a multitude of written texts spanning from critical theory to literature, from art magazine to political analysis, from exhibition catalogues to poetry collections. The *S A V V Y .doc* archive is constantly growing in its diversity and complexity as it accompanies the research of all projects and exhibitions that we undertake. Being conscious of the responsibility of the traditional archives as an instrument of the state in order to perform that act of "chronophagy" which leads some pasts to be commemorated and some forgotten (Mbembe), we aim our radical archive to be a space where archivists, artists, researchers and objects actively interact in a performative process of archiving.

*C O L O N I A L N E I G H B O U R S* is *S A V V Y Contemporary's* participatory archive and research project investigating the colonial history of Germany, including its ongoing impacts upon the present. The long-term project aims to address gaps in Germany's politics in order to question dominant knowledge structures and historical narratives. The archive serves as a platform for discussion, exchange, and collaborations with actors from various fields.

Today, knowledge of this history and its impact is hardly present in the German public sphere. Official German "collective memory" actively displaces, silences, or denies this history. Many schoolbooks, media outlets, and politicians ignore this period, downplay its importance, or portray it as if it evolved in isolation from an alleged "core" of "German history." As a consequence, colonialism is often seen as part of the "distant" past. However, we cannot understand Germany without understanding its role as a colonial power. Germany's colonial past is a history of ignorance and *Verschlossenheit*. But: The "periphery" as well as the "metropole" have been influenced strongly by the colonial encounter.

The city of Berlin, with its long history of migration, plays a crucial role in the history of colonialism. Its representatives in power chose the capital to host the famous Berlin Conference, also known as the Congo Conference, in 1884–1885 where the African continent was divided between European rulers. Berlin consolidated the process of global European expansion, as it was here that the political rules which would install formal colonial power over African territories were established. Colonialism is connected to the history of racism, and that racism haunts us still today.

The open display format where objects from the archive gather alongside research materials is an invitation to sit with the past, connect and add towards the fragmented map of collected memories.

## \* \* \* M O D U L A R C H A I R S

Rafał Łazar and Willem van der Hoek  
With Zainab Marvi, Dorothea Kritikos, Manjahi Njoroge, Berta Galofré Pons, Paloma Torréns Muzás, Matthew Hansen, Annie Kern, Lena Cramer, and others participating in our wood workshop.

The concept behind these modular chair designs stems from a profound reflection on the challenges artisans and workers face in an era of mass industrialization. It was inspired and influenced by the poster of "Culture and Resistance Conference, Botswana, 1982", that was exhibited in the previous S A V V Y exhibition L A B O \* R . A N I N V I T A T I O N T O A C T I O N ... A B A S I S F O R H O P E .

As an artisan, it can be difficult to stand up against the tide of large-scale industrial production, where furniture and textiles are often produced cheaply, consumed rapidly, and discarded just as quickly. This project that took shape as a workshop is a statement against this cycle of consumption. By using discarded and found materials, we reclaim and repurpose what would otherwise be wasted, creating a culture that values sustainability and craftsmanship. The act of re-appreciating these materials is not just an artistic endeavour but a cultural one, pushing against the disposable nature of modern consumer goods.

The framing of the chairs is found in patterns from nature – imagine slicing an orange in half and observing the intricate design within. This natural pattern creates the modular nature of the chair frames. The decision to make each chair frame connectable allows for various configurations, from complete circles to adaptable S-shapes, emphasising both flexibility and unity in design.

The choice of colours and textiles for the chair bottoms was a collaborative effort, shaped by the workshop participants. The idea was to encourage participants to bring in their own broken or found chairs and textiles, infusing personal stories and materials into the creation process. This collective improvisation added a rich layer of community and individual expression to the final pieces.

This project and the workshop was a collaborative endeavour between Rafał Łazar and Willem van der Hoek. The participants of the workshop were Zainab Marvi, Dorothea Kritikos, Manjahi Njoroge, Berta Galofré Pons, Paloma Torréns Muzás, Matthew Hansen, Annie Kern, Lena Cramer, among others.

## \* \* \* S H A U N A K M A H B U B A N I W I T H S A V V Y . D O C

*Dis-visible Narratives: Non-western Cultural Production around HIV/AIDS*

2024, Research commissioned by S A V V Y Contemporary

The installation was designed by Pablo Santacana López. The font used for questions was designed by Amélie Dumont.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic is not a thing of the past. In 2022, UNAIDS estimated 39 million people around the globe live with HIV. Although we have made enormous leaps in awareness and medical research since the peak of the epidemic in 1995, 1.3 million people became newly infected with HIV in 2022, and 630,000 died due to AIDS related-causes, a statistical snapshot of how much further we must go.

Since the early days of the epidemic artists living with the virus and artists who lost loved ones to it have been visualising its complexities. However, most of this cultural production has been and continues to be concentrated in the USA and Europe, even though a majority of new infections now occur outside these regions. Dis-visible Narratives – initiated as an intervention into S A V V Y .doc and guided by curator Shaunak Mahbubani – probes the reasons for this asymmetry, imagining models of archiving and display that centre the specific social dynamics of living with HIV in the Global South, towards creating an archive hospitable to published and unpublished narratives.

Building on Mahbubani's articulation of the wounded archive (2023), dis-visibility is proposed as a form of epistemological wounding caused primarily by structural stigma. The prefix "dis-" locates its tactics within the realm of disablement, or the enactment of restrictions "by the political, economic and cultural norms of a society which takes little or no account of people who have impairments and thus excludes them from mainstream activity" (Mike Oliver, 1990). In the case of cultural production around HIV/AIDS in the Global South, this dis-visibility sits atop the wider effects of neo-colonial structures that advantage white creators and those located in the Global North. It is aggravated by social, material, and in some locations, legal discrimination against those who speak publicly about their positive HIV status, as well as increased costs of survival for PLHA without arts infrastructures that can support this, amongst other factors. Rooted in the shame attached to HIV via its deplorable early labelling as GRID, as a condition caused by deviance and hedonism, compounded by the nascent nature of movements for queer equality across the South, dis-visibility is often enacted through self-censorship, hindering the very creation of artwork and as well as its emergence into the public realm.

T R I A G E , the first of four research phases, seeks to understand and organise the impact of external factors in making artwork around delicate subjects public. Which questions of structure, of safety, of visibility and opacity must we ask ourselves – as researchers, archivists, curators – in the process of assembling and exhibiting a wounded archive? Alongside broader considerations, we also survey the conditions under which art around HIV/AIDS is made public, challenging us to create measures of agency, mutability, and reciprocity as part of making these dis-visible narratives cautiously visible. The project will grow iteratively across each exhibition chapter of S A V V Y 's new artistic programming, it began with C U R E S : C H R O N I C P R O M I S E S and, after L A B O \* R , will be followed by exhibitions on S O C I E T Y , and H I S T O R I C A L C H I L D R E N .

S H A U N A K M A H B U B A N I is a curator-writer based between Berlin and Mumbai. They explore possibilities of co-visioning futures grounded in the pursuit of non-duality, striving to hold complexity, fluidity, ambiguity, and mutability in investigating the boundary between the self and other. Their work focuses on practices that foreground personal and ancestral lived experiences, towards the resuscitation of wounded archives. They are currently working on *Wrapped in the Shadow of Freedom* (Prishtina, Aug 2024). Recent projects include *The Albanian Conference* (initiated by Anna Ehrenstein) at the 4th Lagos Biennial (2024), *When the Moon was Nine Months Full* by Seema Kohli (Tao Mumbai, 2024), *Parag Tandel: Archipelagic Archivist* (TARQ Mumbai, 2023), *AUTOPOIESIS* (2022–ongoing, Mexico City, New Delhi, Berlin), *Party Office* at documenta fifteen (co-curated with Vidisha-Fadescha, Kassel 2022), *DANCE TRANS\* REVOLUTION* (Curated by After Party Collective, New York 2021), *Entre Sures* (Co-curated with Eli Moon, Mexico City, 2021), and *Saavdhaan: The Regimes of Truth* (New Delhi, 2018). Their art writing has appeared in *NO NIIN*, *Hyperallergic*, *Artforum*, *Critical Collective*, *Mezosfera*, *ifa Biennale stories*, and other platforms.

# SOCIETY: OR INFINITE REHEARSALS

CONCEPT NOTE CO-REOGRAPHED BY  
RAISA GALOFRE AND MEGHNA SINGH

*The sun hasn't come up yet and she is still holding her, carrying, swinging, feeding. After a while, she lays down next to her, so close that both can feel the warmth and smell of each other's bodies. Once again, holding, carrying, swinging, feeding. She sits, a little head resting on her shoulder. A brief silence, a deserved pause. She continues holding, carrying, swinging, feeding. Even though they have already danced together, every day feels like an infinite rehearsal.*

## RHYTHM, OR AN INTRODUCTION

Before we learn to talk, even before we learn to walk, we dance.

This intuitive ability might have evolved to a large extent from contact with the very first rhythm we ever felt: The heartbeats resounding in our first home, our mother's womb. Then rhythm is indeed, as the poet, philosopher and politician Léopold Sédar Senghor puts it, "the architecture of being, the internal dynamics that gives it form, the system of waves it gives off toward Others, the pure expression of vital force."<sup>1</sup> He continues: "Rhythm is the vibratory shock, the force that, through the senses, strikes us to the root of our being and expresses itself in the most material, sensual ways: lines, surfaces, colours, volumes and architecture, sculpture and paintings, accents in poetry and music, movements in dance."<sup>2</sup> From the pulsing of our blood and the contractions of our muscles to the streets we walk, the spaces we choose to enter and even the ones in which we are not allowed to; the rituals we follow everyday; the way we relate to one another, the conditions that determine those ways – in other words, ourselves and the societies we live in, all of this is infused by and built on the base of rhythm and rhythms. As Henri Lefebvre puts it: "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is a rhythm."<sup>3</sup>

In **SOCIETY: OR INFINITE REHEARSALS**, we begin from this sense of rhythm, that which drives our bodies and minds to build the environments and relationships constituting the societies we live in. If societies are built on the base of rhythms (Lefebvre), these rhythms propose and invite movements; the sequences of these movements – their organisation, pattern and repetition – generate dances and choreographies. In that sense, societies are networks

of multiple choreographies designed and danced by collectivities as well as solo-dancers, happening simultaneously and generating all kinds of relations.

It is through the prism of dance that we look at society and societies, engaging with an investigation of their organisation and arrangement, their logics and histories, their values and ethics. For this, we give a twist to the dynamics and the place that has been historically designated to dance in the social sciences as an object of study – with the colonial connotations it has had and still has. Instead, we let its forces guide our moving/ sensing/feeling/thinking. As beings with recent migration histories, we position ourselves within the intricacies of the German colonial enterprise and its persistent resonances in everyday life while we move, observe, read through the architecture and the inherent possibilities of dance. In this respect, this project is also an attempt to sketch and rehearse that movement, that turn, with dance as methodology – both as a form of knowledge and a medium for knowledge production beyond its own discipline.

## SOCIETY: OR INFINITE

**REHEARSALS** understands dance as a thinking and feeling process that enables us to identify and read through choreographies that fixate our societies in the steps and gestures of colonial, patriarchal, classist and casteist logic. What more can the act of dance – ever in motion, holding in itself tenses past, present and future – teach us? To move towards articulating liberatory proposals, we return to the knowledge found in the body/ in bodies, to movements and motions improvised, rehearsed and learned through an understanding of interdependence, permeability and connection.

*The sun is already fierce in the early hours of the morning. At the gates to the pool, IDs are checked, tickets are scanned. The bodies standing in line elicit or provoke subtle changes in the bodies of those observing them: A tightening of the mouth, a downturn of the eyebrows. Tiny movements that coexist here alongside other, greater ones that a body can do. In the blue of the pool, three bodies swim laps in perfect tandem: six arms, six legs and three heads moving in and out of the water in what looks like easy, rehearsed harmony.*

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in: Souleymane Bachir Diagne. "Senghor, Bergson and the Idea of Negritude", *Art Africa Magazine*, 2017, <https://artafriomagazine.org/african-art-as-philosophy-2>.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> See Henri Lefebvre. *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*, translated to English by Stuart Elden and Gerald Moore, London: Bloomsbury, 2013 (1992), 5–6.



## DANCE, OR A METHODOLOGY

To engage with dance as a methodology, it requires first and foremost an awareness of our own physicality. Secondly, but not less important, it demands from us that we move: physically but also mentally. It requires us to move from the notion of static, fixed, invariable identities and societies and get closer to a more organic and dynamic notion of permeable and malleable narratives of selfhood and societal bodies, both in motion and grounded in histories and ancestries that are in constant conversation with the present and future. Then, dance has the unique capacity of opening portals that connect all tenses in one sequence of movements – whether we are conscious about it or not. In this sense, societies are as well moving bodies or bodies always in motion hosting other bodies in motion, in which dances, rehearsals and choreographies take place in various forms.

That the body is knowledge is something our ancestors have always known. Before the predominance of written and spoken language and the separation between body and mind that colonialism perpetuated, the body and its language were fundamental means for communication, knowledge preservation and transmission.<sup>4</sup>

Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung reminds us of the potentialities of the body and bodily knowledge by planting the seeds for what is and could become *Corpoliteracy*. Inspired by the proposal of filmmaker and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha to consider “rhythm as the door between the body and mind”<sup>5</sup> which she later elaborated as the concept of the “embodied mind”, Ndikung describes *Corpoliteracy* as “an effort to contextualise the body as a platform, stage, site and medium of learning, a structure or organ that acquires, stores and disseminates knowledge. This concept implies that the body, in sync with, but also independent of, the brain, has the potential to memorise and pass on/down acquired knowledge through performativity – the prism of movement, dance and rhythm.”<sup>6</sup> Ndikung elaborates his proposal by drawing on different expressions or uses of dance as a means for communication, as a method of historicity, as embodiment and portrayal of social realities, to name a few.

**SOCIETY: OR INFINITE REHEARSALS** is inspired by these ideas and the understanding that engaging with dance as a

methodology involves other ways of knowledge production and transmission. These move beyond the Western paradigm and Cartesian notions of the dominance of the rational mind as the sole knowledge producer as well as their non-verbal manifestation through bodily language or “form of [corporeal] communication” (Glissant).<sup>7</sup>

*There is no longer a sense of time. There are lines drawn by bodies, put into a kind of boomerang movement crossing the city. They are sent to one place, where a sitting body is expecting them, only to be sent back to another sitting body. Every coming destination comprises a rehearsal. Every sequence: move, sit, place documents on a table, pick the documents from the table, be told to go to another place; sit, place documents on a table, pick documents from the table, be told to go back to the first place. Tedious dances of bureaucratic choreographies forced to loop in infinite rehearsals.*

## DANCE AGAIN, OR COERCIVE CHOREOGRAPHIES

The philosopher Enrique Dussel, for example, explained that there is no concept of Europe as we understand it without the colonies [...]. The conditions for Europe to become the dominant model civilization cannot be separated from its colonial expansion. Europe constituted itself in a relation of negation to the other. The decolonial is a response to that.

— Rolando Vázquez, “The End of the Contemporary”<sup>8</sup>

We write this curatorial note from within the European metropole of Berlin, Germany, where questions of identity, belonging, society are danced around and through on the street as much as in the legislatures. Germany’s and, by extension, Europe’s imagination of itself and its social essence has consistently been defined by a dialectic that reduces being to a binary: a line drawn between the self and other, between “white” and “coloured”, between “Biodeutschen” and people with “Migrationshintergrund”. While denying that the “Other” has, to a large extent, always been present within the outline of the self, the maintenance of that line (the border) is as much of an identity-building project for the German state as it is a socioeconomic one. Policy decisions at the level of the nation state sometimes slacken that line, as during the 2015 “migrant crisis”, allowing for the continuation of migratory movement into German society. At other times the border hardens, constricting movement, cutting off trajectories traced by migrant and refugee bodies, enacting choreographies that attempt to keep control over the essence of the “self” and “society”. The increasingly policed and armed outline of the EU

<sup>4</sup> For an exemplary and extensive read on this topic, see: Mamadou Diouf and Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo (eds.), *Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World: Rituals and Remembrances*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010, 11.

<sup>5</sup> Trinh T. Minh-ha. “On Fourth Dimension”, lecture at HAU Hebbel am Ufer, Berlin for SAVVY Contemporary’s project That Around Which the Universe Revolves. On the Rhythmanalysis of Memory, Times, Bodies in Space, 3 December 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung. “Corpoliteracy: Envisaging the Body as Slate, Sponge and Witness”, in: Nick Aikens & Yolande Zola Zoli van der Heide (eds.) *I Think My Body Feels, I Feel My Body Thinks: On Corpoliteracy*, Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven, 2022, 14.

<sup>7</sup> Mamadou Diouf and Ifeoma Kiddoe Nwankwo (eds.), *Rhythms of the Afro-Atlantic World: Rituals and Remembrances*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2010, 11.

<sup>8</sup> Rolando Vázquez. “The End of the Contemporary”, Interview in *ContemporaryAnd*, 2017: <https://contemporaryand.com/magazines/the-end-of-the-contemporary>

borders enacts a coercive choreography that seeks to establish, through directed movement and designated steps, a particular kind of social structure, a particular kind of society. Or as Phanuel Antwi writes:

Choreography recalls the Greek khoreia which means dance and graphein which suggests to write/record/describe. The term choreography not only registers the kinesthetic notations of movements in professional dance, it also captures imperceptible corporeal notations of these theatrical movements, giving ways to attend their passing. In writing the futures of bodies in movement, choreography can then also name those often-invisible scripts that direct the actions of individuals much more broadly: the teacher's frown, the social worker's eyebrow, the finger on a trigger.<sup>9</sup>

Antwi here particularises and personifies state policies and attitudes that continue to determine social scripts, that mould and choreograph social currents at the level of the school and education system, at the level of social services, at the level of the police and border control agencies. The disapproving wag of an eyebrow directed at a refugee for not speaking good enough German or the purposeful touch of a police officer's hand to the gun at his side when he speaks to an Arab teenager in Neukölln: these, too, are social choreographies, directing and dictating "correct" social behaviors and movements to the migrant body. For the racialized "Other", true freedom of movement – the ability to create and follow one's own choreography into and through (German) society – never fully arrives.

This direction or orchestration of the social also determines which bodies one comes up against in the dance for space on the U8 subway line, which bodies one passes while moving through the sparkling clean streets of Prenzlauer Berg, which bodies one queues up with while in line at the Jobcenter in Reinickendorf. Residential centres for asylum seekers and refugees are increasingly located in neighbourhoods at the peripheries of the city of Berlin or close to the woods in Brandenburg that are still contaminated by mines from the border strip. This sequences an often-isolating and potentially deadly set of movements through the city and its extended area for newly-arrived migrants. Racial capitalism writes the steps for the dance and marks each person's starting or resting position within the city, with proximity to the center being directly proportional to how much power a subject has to refuse to dance or perform when it is demanded of them.

Such social-scaping and determination of people's movements are modern-day continuations of choreographies put into place under European colonialism – under which the flow of goods and capital, of resources and human beings, was arranged and orchestrated on a global level in the interest of serving the metropole. To look at maps of ship routes from the 15th century onwards, for instance, is to look at an elaborate superstructure

of movements that irrevocably linked the material realities of what today we might call the "Global North" and the "Global South". As Elizabeth Povinelli writes, "Frantz Fanon noted that the colonial world is not only where colonisers go. It is a system that encloses city and suburb, rural and wasteland, and the roads and waterways that provide or are carved to provide transport. All roads lead to Rome, because no matter how far from Rome they are built and toward what unknown territory, they are built to move anything of value in only one direction."<sup>10</sup>

Rome here is a stand-in for the European empire and its extended apparatuses – but it must be said that this purposeful directing of social currents as an attempt to create specific kinds of societies is not unique to Berlin, Germany, Europe, or even to Western cultures that privilege white subjectivity. Military occupation in Kashmir or Palestine arranges and rearranges the lives and bodies of indigenous inhabitants at gunpoint; curfews circumscribe specific movements through the land, army checkpoints necessitate the repetition of specific steps, pauses, gestures. Caste hierarchies in the South Asian subcontinent have for millennia restricted the paths that Dalit and Bahujan communities can trace through a village or city, drawing lines of control that cut off access for "lower" castes to the basic needs of water or food – delimitations that carry into contemporary societies in the subcontinent as well as its diasporas. These coercive choreographies twist and bend those who are most vulnerable into poses and gestures that restrict and bind rather than liberate and untie, all in the name of that amorphous collective ideal: "society".

*At midday there is no one to be seen. Not even the most adventurous lizards dare to defy the inclement sun at that time of the day. The only thing that moves is the thin line of water, reminiscent of the river that used to run in that area. Stone after stone, the flow of water carefully caresses the earth's surface. Stone after stone, still carrying the energy of the once strong current. Stone after stone after stone after stone... As if the water could sense the endurance of its people. And as if both were rehearsing the impossible: living against all odds and the plans of multinational enterprises.*

## THE DANCING BODY, OR DOMAINS OF INFLUENCE

To dance and to move means also to propel energy. Energies and forces are put in motion expanding and opening up spaces around the movement that is being made. Diego Agulló calls this invisible space "domain

<sup>9</sup> Phanuel Antwi. *On Cuddling: Loved to Death in the Racial Embrace*, London: Pluto Press, 2023.  
<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth A Povinelli, 'The Urban Intensions of Geontopower', in *Liquid Utility*, e-flux Architecture, May 2019. <https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/liquid-utility/259667/the-urban-intensions-of-geontopower>

of influence”.<sup>11</sup> These domains of influence can be inviting or excluding. In this project, we work from the unquestionable agency to move rooted in the essence of our being, the capacity of everyone to generate spaces or domains of influence and encounter, the vulnerability that demands opening up those spaces and entering them, the openness to be influenced, permeated by our fellow dancers. But we also look at the domains of influence created by certain dances and choreographies that by a variety of means constrain other movements, controlling and denying their agency to move; we call them coercive choreographies. At the same time, we also engage with transgressive moves and dances that seek to reclaim spaces that have been marked by violent acts of racism and discrimination. Fresh, free-styled dances that hope to inspire and uplift this generation and those to come.

To dance is also the freedom to decide to dance or not to dance. The bureaucratic dance – from one office to the other, getting one document to get the other, filling a form that would lead to another and so on – is for many immigrants and asylum seekers a performance made out of desperation and resignation rather than an act of will and freedom. Within these structures in which tools of raciality and control are used to determine the dance of others, we also reflect on the acrobatics and “performances” that have to be done in order to be considered fit enough for certain dances.

Throughout this research, exhibition and performance project, we will be dancing with further reflections that derive from the physical and embodied mental action of dancing, such as: With dance also comes tiredness, exhaustion. Who can afford to stop the dance and rest? What structures should exist to enable rest and to pass on the dance to others? How can dance be sustained? Within the movements in dances there is also stillness. What happens in these moments in-between? What possibilities emerge in the liminal space of the step done and the one to come? In our societies, who can afford stillness and how is it possible to reclaim it when the agency to stay still is negated?

*In the afternoon, the Platz is already packed. While not everyone gathered knows each other, all carry posters and banners with messages that echo a similar vision. The march begins, a stream of movement through the street. Up and down, up and down. one, two, three. Moving forward, chanting verses, echoing songs. A ghost choreographer directing the mass. Up and down, up and down. one, two, three. Moving forward – sometimes in and sometimes out of sync. Would there be more synchronicity if there had been a chance for rehearsal, or would the group always move with an asymmetrical, experimental rhythm?*

## DESIRE LINES, OR MOVING THROUGH FEELING

[I]n landscape architecture they use the term “desire lines” to describe unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow. Deviation leaves its own marks on the ground, which can even help generate alternative lines, which cross the ground in unexpected ways. Such lines are indeed traces of desire; where people have taken different routes to get to this point or to that point.

— Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*<sup>12</sup>

How groups of people move through space is, in the context of the modern, “Western” city, a choreography that is over-determined and prescribed: by urban planning, by Cartesian grids of streets and roads, by the public transport systems that establish both centres and peripheries. In the metropolises of New York or Tokyo, for instance, a recurrent, everyday choreography that makes its way into iconic visual representations of these cities is that of crowds of people crossing the street at major intersections, at Times Square or in Shibuya. The light turns green, a signal to move forward as a group; the group obeys and surges on. No analogous image exists of cities like New Delhi or Dhaka, for instance, similarly populous but places where crossing a busy road is determined not by a signal that lights green for the pedestrian but by the individual’s particular proclivity for risk; an individual movement or dance, albeit one that is conducted at times in improvised tandem with others standing alongside on the street.

This tension between movement that is prescribed and movement that is improvised – between routes that are determined as though from above, and those that are willed into being because they are felt to be missing and therefore need to be materialised – manifests itself as traces in urban space and the landscape, visible in different ways. Where the paved street represents the former, the latter is, as Sara Ahmed notes, the realm of “unofficial paths, those marks left on the ground that show everyday comings and goings, where people deviate from the paths they are supposed to follow.”<sup>13</sup> A deviation that might come into being as a worn down line of earth in the grass between the entrance of the park and a particularly beloved bench, a line drawn into the ground through repeated movement because it was a path that was desired but not pre-imagined.

Seen another way, any path carved through space by groups of bodies that do not adhere or conform to what a socio-political environment has pre-imagined for them is the carving of a desire line: an unofficial path, a deviation. These desire lines are formed by a football passing between groups of kids who play in parking lots or

<sup>11</sup> Diego Agulló, *Dangerous Dances*, Berlin: Circadian, 2020.

<sup>12</sup> Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

abandoned malls from which they are continually shoed away. They are traced by migrant domestic workers in Hong Kong alighting from buses and subways, moving together to congregate around central train stations on their off days, sharing food and each other's company in the only public spaces available to them. A desire line is the picket line formed by the held hands of striking health workers, is the entangled web of lines formed by university students occupying public space to demand their right to dissent.

And then there is the particular coordination, the loose choreography seen in the movement(s) of people coming together in protest, in rehearsal or spontaneously, along a planned demonstration route or erupting in revolution. When groups of people occupy public space to demand a right or to correct a wrong, it is in service of a line of desire: for another world, another reality, another kind of society than the ones we inhabit. Some of these desire lines are repeated strongly enough and frequently enough that they veer, at a certain point, from the "unofficial" into the "official" – at least as far as the granting of selected rights is concerned. The desire line of the Pride "parade", for instance, traces its history from an uncoordinated, spontaneous protest or riot at Stonewall to now, in many Western countries, a sanctioned and purposefully assembled line through paved streets, carried out with the full blessing of the nation state – in Berlin, sometimes even with the presence of the army. A certain kind of queerness, once outside the realm of the socially accepted, has become a marker instead of a "free society" in the US and across Europe – a co-opting that these states, to point to their own superiority, often mobilise against other societies where these kinds of desire lines might still only seemingly manifest at the fringes.

Nonetheless, protest spaces often come to an understanding of the need to move in choreographies that unsettle and disrupt the singularity of pathways sanctioned by a specific, hegemonic vision of society. The mass protests in Hong Kong in 2019 to 2020, for instance, often echoed "Be water" as a guiding principle, linked to martial arts practitioner and actor Bruce Lee. Artist Eric Siu interprets the philosophical directive as one that emphasised the need for constant transformation during the protests, for "floating, organic behaviour", for a decentralised methodology: "During protests, strategies and decisions evolved organically, there was collective decision making. People protesting in one area would suddenly move to another location. It was so fluid the police couldn't catch them."<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis on fluidity and multiplicity, on organic lines of movement, places these and other protest movements in the realm of non-hegemonic choreographies, ones where bodies collect and collide in service of alternative futures, different societies. The body in the present moment of a protest gathers with other bodies to corporeally manifest a future not yet arrived at, one to move towards at the speed of desire.

*It is 5.29pm and the bus is full. At least three babies*

*in carriages and two dogs, alongside their adult companions, wait with varying degrees of patience to enter the M29 at the stop. The bus tilts, prompting a rushed, often-rehearsed dance: passengers flowing out, wordless negotiations for space at the doors, passengers entering, rearranging themselves in a matter of seconds before the double-decker takes off again. An automated movement taught by the city, by a society invested in the precision of the bus's arrival time.*

## CHOREOGRAPHIC THINKING, OR A MOVEMENT TOWARDS CURATION

Sometimes choreography is useful only in as much as we don't notice it. [...] Another description of choreography could be this: "Something that helps you step back for a moment, enough to see what someone else might see."

– Jonathan Burrows. *A Choreographer's Handbook*<sup>15</sup>

In her essay "On Choreographic Thinking", choreographer and scholar Megan Nicely points out two ways in which choreographies come into being. She identifies two main currents: some choreographies derive mainly from linguistic discourse, in which thought precedes action. Choreographies are for example, the bodily interpretation of ideas, stories or songs. For others, the thinking happens within the movement itself. It is the movement that activates the thought and what enables a choreography to flourish. In this case, choreographies are not necessarily directly connected with rational thinking and sequences of cause and effect, but with the "embodied mind". In this project, we engage with both approaches to choreography by understanding them as the two sides of a coin as well as the forces that produce the tensions that make the coin spin.

By considering societies as networks of choreographies always in motion, we examine the societal patterns, protocols, sequences, architectures, mappings and the logics behind them as they are constantly unfolding and determining relations of effect and affect. We also engage with movements and choreographies that emerge out of the need to draw other parallel or transversal lines – "desire lines" – to the established or dominant line stipulated by the hegemonic one. These movements can be both improvised or choreographed, as well as they might emerge from the somatic intelligence stored individually and collectively in our bodies: for thriving or survival, for living and flourishing, for just being and connecting with others. To think of choreographies as a way of organising social structures and as a practice for transgressing dominant ones means to think of the politics of control and the poetics of desire behind social structures.

<sup>14</sup> Julia Kloiber interviews Joel Kwong and Eric Siu, "Be Water – Insights into the Hong Kong Citizen Protest Movement", *Zeitgeist*, December 2020, <https://www.goethe.de/prj/zei/en/art/22072105.html>

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Burrows. *A Choreographer's Handbook*, London and New York: Routledge, 2010, 33–34.

If in the architecture of societies, choreographies are useful precisely because they are unseen, then, reading them and identifying them as such enables us to unveil their character of being constructed and therefore, modifiable, changeable, editable. This perspective also reveals their permeability – in the sense that by revealing its structure, new elements can be added and hybrid forms can emerge. As Nicely concludes on the work of the choreographer: “If our purpose as artists, scholars and activists is to remain in question – finding new ways of creating, relating, and ultimately living – then choreography might serve not to define our work so much as unground what we think we know so as to think and experiment in new ways.”<sup>16</sup>

And finally, to think of choreographies means also to think of curation. In her essay “Choreography as Curation, Curation as Cure”, artist and choreographer Amanda Piña, references two of her projects in which the fusion between the choreographic and the curatorial can be observed: The School of the Jaguar and the School of Mountains and Water. She describes them as “a form of rehearsal of an Ecology of forms of knowing, a diversity of voices. A place for counter- and alter-worlds of sensing and meaning to exist and to be practised collectively.”<sup>17</sup>

Piña continues elaborating the idea of choreography as curation writing that:

When one choreographs a dance or a situation, one starts by gathering people together, and in this way pre-proposing a living texture or environment from which the work-world will emerge. Curating people who come together is then a very common practice embedded in choreography, proposing a possibility of arranging relations and relationships by attuning to the emergence of a particular kind of collective.<sup>18</sup>

Because it comprises the coming together as collectives with the aim of generating different flows of movement and structures of support and exchange that are lacking in the dominant structures of a society, from this perspective and looking beyond the spectrum of dance and curation as practices and disciplines, the act of choreographing can also be embodied as a form of community building.

*It's the post-rush hour lull on the U-Bahn and a boombox enters the carriage. The beat is loud, it immediately gets under the skin of those who hear it. Some feet tap along to the rhythm, a minute and nearly unnoticed rehearsal of a movement that, in the right place and right time, could envelop the entire body.*

## DANCE: RITUAL, REPETITION, METHOD

It is against the tension of these larger social choreographies, between the prescribed and the improvised, that the racialised and marginalised body moves through the abstracted and particular landscapes of our societies. Migration is one such movement, compelled by a variety of social and economic factors, facilitated by a variety of the same. Vietnamese-American writer Ocean Vuong approaches this by describing the migration patterns of monarch butterflies:

*Migration can be triggered by the angle of sunlight, indicating a change in the season, temperature, plant life, and food supply. Female monarchs lay eggs along the route. Every history has more than one thread, each thread a story of division. The journey takes four thousand eight hundred and thirty miles, more than the length of this country. The monarchs that fly south will not make it back north. Each departure, then, is final. Only their children return; only the future revisits the past.*<sup>19</sup>

Analogous triggers for migration that come to mind in the context of human life: The angle of aerial bombing, the change of a river's path and how it feeds the crops, the temperature of the home country's summers, its currency, its government's mood, the life of the mind, heart, spirit, accompanying desires for elsewhere. Different kinds of migratory movements yield different relationships with fixity, fetishization, discrimination. In the case of migration to Germany, “guest workers” and “contract workers” of Turkish and Vietnamese communities, for instance, were fixed for whole generations into specific places and positions, physically as much as socially, within cities, neighbourhoods, residential blocks and buildings. How future generations of these communities move through today's Germany might look different – although choreographing your way through a society that continually marks you as an outsider, of course, remains a constant starting position from which the dance begins.

As Vuong writes about the monarch butterfly: only the future revisits the past. Generational movement often works similarly, across the ocean and continental masses; in creating new or hybrid identities and choreographies, racialised, migrant communities braid cultures of the past home with cultures of the present home. In this way, perhaps the past can revisit the future as well; time runs through each braid, changing the nature of each twist and turn. Rhythm, music, dance are frequent sites of these braidings – the past that is not past is summoned into homes, first maybe through radios and then through TikTok, first perhaps in private gatherings and then increasingly on public dancefloors.

Movements and choreographies of one body are always in dialogue with the movements and choreographies of other bodies: those past, present and future, those

<sup>16</sup> Megan Nicely, “On Choreographic Thinking”, *In Dance*, March 2014, <https://dancersgroup.org/2014/03/on-choreographic-thinking>.

<sup>17</sup> Amanda Piña, “Choreography as Curation, Curation as Cure”, *On Curating*, Issue 55, 2033.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>19</sup> Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous*. New York: Penguin Press, 2019.

near and far. Through its own somatic memory, through culture and tradition, improvisation and innovation, the body that dances, Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung writes, can be a site of ritual, of spiritual connection; it can be a witness to histories of encounters between selves and others, to socio-political realities, traumas and joys: “War or other challenges faced by a group of people take form as dance moves, or are integrated into costumes and music. Battle techniques, loss of life, or moments of victory are re-performed, passed from one generation to another, as with the Mbaya dance or Capoeira.”<sup>20</sup> Like Ndikung, Phanuel Antwi traces lines of coerced, enforced movement (or enforced stillness, as it were) from the Middle Passage into present-day dance cultures:

*Limbo, for example, is typically seen as a trivial dance craze. But the practice originates in a dance in which enslaved people sneaked their weight into themselves, suspended themselves from the constraints of living under deck, by folding their bodies into communion with itself. Imprinted in the folds is a “new corpus of sensibility”, one that embraces bodily appetites, the body’s pain and pleasures, as a possible way to convey one’s acceptance, appeal and rejection of their lot. The utility in this state of limbo, of bones folding on bones to hold one still, from the ground, storing sweet bitter memories in between bones, reassembles and finds release in the flexes and slow staccato progressions of popping and locking, styles inherited by Hip Hop culture that funk dancers know too, too well.*<sup>21</sup>

In the contemporary moment, indigenous and “folk” traditions of performance and dance often do the work of both establishing and continuing cultural memory, through ritual and repetition, for the dancing body alienated from its home context as well as for the body politic. Over the last century, Palestinian dabke, for example, has become as much a matter of cultural heritage and identity as it is a political one, performed by dancers alone and in groups at demonstrations and rallies. In this case, the distinction between the site of the dance and the site of the public protest collapses; the dabke line is a desire line, an assertion of a tradition and identity that continues in the face of displacement and erasure. In these performances and in those from other sites of struggle, as dancer and choreographer Farah Saleh says, “the bodies of the performers act as a living archive, carrying all the political gestures uncovered as a form of self-historization, questioning who creates and owns an archive and ways of delinking from the colonial narrative.”<sup>22</sup>

While an individual dancer might learn a particular choreography through the pace and process of their own body, dance remains a deeply social endeavour, creating its own social space: between dancer and dancer, between dancer and audience. As Ndikung writes: “Maybe most importantly, dance seems to be

about connecting with the other, about communion, a group action. Dance, with all its aforementioned functions, manifests most effectively when one ‘dances the other.’ Dance is a social phenomenon... and needs a community to be lived and experienced.”<sup>23</sup>

*As the day comes to an end, they sit together in a circle. Two of them bring the drums, the rest bring their clapping hands and a few bottles of ñeque. A deep, throaty voice chanting a verse breaks the chatter marking the beginning of the journey. The drummers respond, the chorus follows, the claps accompany the orchestrated rhythm. A rehearsal as we know it is not necessary. It is done while the singing is happening, evoking presences and stories long sung across generations. Past and present converging singing the songs for thousands of years to come.*

## REHEARSAL, OR REHEARSAL & REHEARSAL & REHEARSAL

It is one thing to recognise a movement for its emancipatory potential and another for the body to learn it: the steps involved, the sequencing, the rhythm needed must all be repeated for a choreography to be integrated, for a body to move in line with how it desires. What an audience, witness or co-dancer sees when a dancer moves is the result of accumulation, of muscle memory and rehearsal – work that happens “off stage”, before (but as well as during) the moment of “performance”. Tanya L Shields thinks through the many meanings of rehearsal: “The word ‘rehearsal’ implies several events: (1) repetition until something is mastered, (2) constant reexamination of what has already been done, and (3) the suggestion of orality and physical presence, of the body engaged in rehearsal because of the added inflections, pauses, nuances, and bodily shifts resulting from each repetition or revision.”<sup>24</sup>

It must be said that our concern with rehearsal here is not the pursuit of mastery, expertise, perfection. Rather, rehearsal itself is the work, the true work. Repetition, revision, re-examination: each iteration of a movement is a step forward as much as a step back, an occasion to act and then to revise.

As it is the past that is being revised and revisited, a rehearsal functions as a prediction of what might happen. The past itself is predicted. Nevertheless, the outcome during and after a rehearsal can always vary. This inherent character of rehearsals opens up many

<sup>20</sup> Ndikung, *ibid.*, 91.

<sup>21</sup> Antwi, *ibid.*, 67.

<sup>22</sup> Farah Saleh, Adrienne Hart, Leopold Lambert. “Making Gestures: A Conversation about Dance, Bodies, Space and Anti-Ableism,” *The Funambulist*, Issue 19: The Space of Ableism., 30 August 2018. <https://thefunambulist.net/magazine/space-of-ableism/interview-making-gestures-conversation-dance-bodies-space-anti-ableism-farah-saleh-adrienne-hart>

<sup>23</sup> Ndikung, *ibid.*, 16.

possibilities in and for our societies. A prediction of the past can help us redirect the movements, reinvent the choreography, include other influences, open up the dance towards others.

In this sense, a rehearsal is also a space for experimentation, of trial and error. Guadeloupean dancer, choreographer and scholar Léna Blou, known for her extensive research on Gwo Ka dance<sup>25</sup> and her seminal work developing techni'ka and bigidi, "the dance of the harmony of disorder" as she calls it herself, observes that in Gwo Ka dance there is not such a thing called mistake.<sup>26</sup> Mistakes are the former steps anticipating a new set of movements, that is to say, they are material for inventing other variations, which are most likely unexpected ones. Could one then rehearse a dance like Gwo Ka? What does that tell us about improvisation, trial and error? Rehearsals in this case can work as the vehicle to reflect on one's own flow of movement, that is one's own thinking process.

A rehearsal is never the same for each body; it can be different each time. As such, rehearsal as a process encourages us to rehearse as well an awareness of a plurality of perspectives, experiences and tenses – bringing us closer to not a singular society but multiple societies, an embodied pluralism. Dance is an embodied art form and accordingly it must be a temporal one, too. Each iteration of even the same dance differs from the one that came before and after because each iteration exists in a different temporal moment. The dancer's body has changed, even if minutely; the world the dancer dances in has changed. Time has run through here as well: it has accumulated, it has incremented – increments that lead us forward, sideways, elsewhere, towards or away from each other, into and out of communion. We return here to Tanya L Shields, who writes:

*The conceptual and affective shifts made by rehearsal, which develop empathy and through which communities of consensus emerge, develop from repeated engagements with another's story. In effect, we can all create social change through*

*minute engagements that help us to think critically about our environment. When these incremental moments are compiled, there is transformation.*<sup>27</sup>

Writing within the Caribbean context, Shields theorises here affective belonging as a process of rehearsal through a multiplicity of modalities, imaginations, and histories: "My construction of feminist rehearsal is the process of moving toward an ideal rather than reaching a utopic performance."<sup>28</sup> This mode of orientation towards the utopic – towards a better, more just world – as a trigger for movement also exists within multiple other social traditions and liberatory philosophies, from the Zapatistas to Marxist revolutionaries, from abolitionist organising to anti-caste literature. 15th century Bhakti saint-poet Ravidas, born into an "untouchable" caste in what is today northern India, spoke of "Begumpura" in his verses: the name of this imagined realm, where there would be no taxes or property, translates into a place of no pain or sorrow, no "gham". Begumpura – which remains central to the work of contemporary Dalit artists, writers and thinkers<sup>29</sup> – is a place where "none are third or second – all are one." The poem ends:

They do this or that, they walk where they wish,  
they stroll through fabled palaces unchallenged.  
Oh, says Ravidas, a tanner now set free,  
those who walk beside me are my friends.<sup>30</sup>

Or perhaps, as Eduardo Galeano wrote: "Utopia is on the horizon. When I walk two steps, it takes two steps back; I walk another ten steps, and it recedes ten steps further. As much as I may walk, I will never reach it. So what is utopia for? The point is this, to keep on walking."<sup>31</sup>

And before we learn to talk, even before we learn to walk, we dance.

*It is nearing the midnight hour and only now are the dance floors filling up. The air is thick with the heat of the day. The clock strikes, the music changes; the day's rhythms and rehearsals make way for something else, something that leads us to each other.*

24 Tanya L Shields. *Bodies and Bones: Feminist Rehearsal and Imagining Caribbean Belonging*. University of Virginia Press. 2014. 2.

25 "Gwoka is both a musical genre and a dance performed to the rhythm of a drum known as the "KA". The percussionist, known as the "tambouyé", performs rhythms that can be festive or melancholy, but all are undeniably captivating. Originally, playing and dancing gwoka was a means of resistance and survival, but today it's an integral part of everyday life in Guadeloupe", <https://www.lesilesdeguadeloupe.com/tourism/en-us/culture-and-heritage/gwoka>

26 Léna Blou. "Lawonn and Bigidi: a Mawonaj of Caribbean Thought, the Circularity of the Caribbean World, and Techni'ka", Movement lecture and dance workshop at HKW, Berlin, 04.08.2024.

27 Tanya L Shields, *ibid*, 9.

28 Tanya L Shields, *ibid*, 13.

29 Visual artist and filmmaker Rahee Punyashloka's solo exhibition at Pulp Society in New Delhi, which opened on 14 September 2023, was entitled *Field Notes from Begumpura*. In his note about the exhibition, he wrote, with reference to Begumpura: "The citizens of this city would no longer organise their limits and life-worlds around the fault-lines of caste." <https://pulpociety.in/blogs/exhibitions/fieldnotes-from-begumpura-by-rahee-punyashloka>

Manu Kaur, curator of the exhibition *Dalit Dreamlands: Toward an Anti-Caste Future*, opened in April 2024 at the Oakland Asian Culture Centre in California, also spoke of the centrality of Begumpura in their vision for the exhibition in an interview, saying: ""My family is Ravidassia, and I wanted to create my version of Begumpura which also includes queer, trans, pro-Black, and pro-Indigenous identities, and highlights folks who are marginalized at so many different intersections."

<https://hyperallergic.com/923428/dalit-dreamlands-oakland-asian-cultural-center-redraws-a-map-of-the-south-asian-diaspora>

30 Gail Omvedt. *Seeking Begumpura: The Social Vision of Anticaste Intellectuals*, New Delhi: Navayana Books. 2008.

31 Eduardo Galeano, *Walking Words*, translated to English by Mark Fried, New York: W.W. Norton, 1995.

## MORE INFORMATION

savvy-contemporary.com

S A V V Y Contemporary – The laboratory of form-ideas is an artistic organisation, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality and cultural plurilog. S A V V Y Contemporary is a public and independent organism in perpetual becoming, animated by around 25 members and a network of collaborators, co-creating community and communities it breathes with. Founded in 2009, S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of the West and the non-West to understand their conceptualisations, ethical systems, achievements, and ruins. It develops tools, proposes perspectives and nourishes practices towards imagining a world inhabited together.

The space was founded in 2009 in Berlin-Neukölln by Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, S A V V Y 's artistic director until 2022. From 2023 onwards, the space – located in Berlin-Wedding since 2016 – is under artistic direction by Renan Laru-an alongside the executive directors Lema Sikod and Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock.

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