

E C O L O G I E S  
O F D A R K N E S S :  
B U I L D I N G G R O U N D S  
O N S H I F T I N G  
S A N D S

E X H I B I T I O N

11.01.- 26.01.2019

I N C A N T A T I O N S

25.01.- 26.01.2019

E X H I B I T I O N Hera Chan & Vivian Qin Mandy El-Sayegh Nilbar Güreş Natasha Mendonca Markues  
Beatriz Santiago Muñoz Pallavi Paul Luiza Prado de O. Martins Tabita Rezaire Bahia Shehab Sheida Soleimani  
Ana Vaz Helen Zeru Pamela Z Colonial Neighbours in conversation with Sepideh Rahaa  
I N C A N T A T I O N S Hera Chan Xiaoshi Vivian Vivian Qin Alexis Chan and Nhu Duong Dilar Dirik  
Övül Ö. Durmusoglu Jeannette Ehlers Giovanna Esposito Yussif Karina Griffith Shuruq Harb Juliana Huxtable  
Olivier Marboeuf and Ana Vaz Jota Mombaça Valeria Montti Colque Pallavi Paul Luiza Prado de O. Martins  
Sepideh Rahaa Tara Transitory and Nguyen Baly Airi Triisberg Mikey Woodbridge and Lucio Vidal

C U R A T O R S Elena Agudio Nathalie Anguezomo Mba Bikoro Federica Buetti  
I N C O L L A B O R A T I O N W I T H Kelly Krugman  
P R O J E C T C O O R D I N A T I O N Jörg-Peter Schulze Lema Sikod  
C O M M U N I C A T I O N Anna Jäger and Marleen Boschen  
G R A P H I C D E S I G N Elsa Westreicher  
S O U N D D E S I G N Kamila Metwaly  
L I G H T D E S I G N Emilio Cordero  
A R T H A N D L I N G Abhishek Nilamber with Kimani Joseph and Wilson Mungai  
T E C H Bert Günther  
F U N D E D B Y Hauptstadtkulturfonds

**S A V V Y CONTEMPORARY**  
**THE LABORATORY OF FORM-IDEAS**



# C O N C E P T

## INTRODUCTION

How can we build a common ground upon shifting sands? How do we build tunnels and passages and safe spaces? How do we open channels of transmission? How do we care for a dialogue that resigns from the politics of “emancipation” which are inclusive of some privileged, while excluding and erasing many other voices? How do we create new commons in the name of revolutionary struggles across race, class, age, gender, ability and sexuality? The exhibition *ECOLOGIES OF DARKNESS: BUILDING GROUNDS ON SHIFTING SANDS* brings together the works of fifteen artists whose practices address the existential, ecological, historical and political “intimacies” that sustain the world we live in, bringing into relation spheres of interconnected existences that are in constant motion, while experimenting with poetic figurations of queer futures. The exhibition delves into the question of the possible conditions of the transmission of visibility and the forms of resistance that can emerge when we practice forms of dis-location and dis-identification in art, writing, and in our daily lives. Together, they form an emergent ecology of practices that attempt to navigate complex architectures of power while making rooms for and experimenting with the possibilities of transmission and resonances in darkness, by inventing new poetics, codes, languages, forms of communing and new technologies of healings.

## STATEMENT

The Wall is the thing which separate us [them] but it is also their means of communication.

Simone Weil: *Gravity and Grace*

And I say symphony rather than cacophony because we have had to learn to orchestrate those furies so that they do not tear us apart.

Audre Lorde: *The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism*

James Baldwin: We are behind the gates of a kingdom which is determined to destroy us.  
Audre Lorde: Yes, exactly so. And I’m interested in seeing that we do not accept terms that will help ways in which we destroy each other is by being programmed to knee-jerk on our differences.

Knee-jerk on sex. Knee-jerk on sexuality...I can’t redefine masculinity. I can’t redefine Black masculinity certainly. I am in the business of redefining Black womanness. You are in the business of redefining Black masculinity. And I’m saying, ‘Hey, please go on doing it,’ because I don’t know how much longer I can hold this fort, and I really feel that Black women are holding it and we’re beginning to hold it in ways that are making this dialogue less possible.”

*Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation between Audre Lorde and James Baldwin*

How much longer can I hold the fort?... [I am holding] it in ways that make this dialogue less possible. Audre Lorde makes a disturbing confession about the real anxieties that continue to characterise our positions within identitarian frames which define our existence within racist, capitalist and sexist power structures. The dialogue between James Baldwin and Audre Lorde reveals the need to acknowledge the multiple divergent histories and intersecting struggles for liberation that must be mobilized simultaneously for this dialogue to take place. How long did Lorde hold her fort? And, how long have we postponed our sharing?

Audre Lorde: we have to take a new look at the ways in which we fight our joint oppression because if we don’t, we’re gonna be blowing each other up. We have to begin to redefine the terms of what woman is, what man is, how we relate to each other.

James Baldwin: But that demands redefining the terms of the western world...

Audre Lorde: And both of us have to do it.  
*Revolutionary Hope: A Conversation between Audre Lorde and James Baldwin, 1984*<sup>1</sup>

When hegemonic narratives tend to divide us, producing and reproducing cultures of narration, visibility, and accessibility, and what Baldwin refers to as “kingdoms which we live in”, our locations must be challenged for another kind of freedom that empowers our differences to emerge. By shifting our locations, we inhabit spheres of interconnected existences that are in

<sup>1</sup> Audre Lorde, James Baldwin. "Revolutionary Hope". The conversation took place at Hampshire College in Amherst, MA and was originally published in the magazine *ESSENCE* in 1984.  
<sup>2</sup> Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*. Duke University Press, 2002.

constant motion.<sup>2</sup> As we move and shift in collaboration, we crack the ground, tear down walls, and build new bridges.

I am a builder  
Sometimes I have built well, but often I have built  
without researching the  
Ground  
Upon which I put my building  
I raised a beautiful house  
And I lived in it for a year  
Then it slowly drifted away with the  
Tides  
For I had laid the foundation  
Upon shifting sand  
Maya Angelou: *Letter to My Daughter*, 2008

Are we ready to abandon the fort and lay the foundations for this dialogue upon “shifting sand”? In Angelou’s poem, sand returns us to the messiness of reality, life, the body, and to the realities of suffering which teach us the transformative power of compassion. Sand as a repository of feelings and experiences links us, as Vanessa Agard-Jones notes, “unswervingly to place, to a particular landscape that bears traces of both connection and loss...”<sup>3</sup> How can we build a common ground upon shifting sands? How do we build tunnels and passages and safe spaces? How do we open channels of transmission? How do we care for a dialogue that resigns from the politics of “emancipation” which are inclusive of some privileged, while excluding and erasing many other voices? How do we create new ‘commons’ in the name of revolutionary struggles across race, class, gender, ability, age and sexuality? Chandra Talpade Mohanty challenges us and says:

Undoing ingrained racial and sexual mythologies within feminist communities requires...  
[becoming] fluent in each other’s histories,...  
seeking unlikely coalitions...and clarifying the meaning of its dialogue. What are the conditions, the knowledges, and the attitudes that make a noncolonised dialogue possible?<sup>4</sup>

We want to question our own unquestioned adherence to hegemonic feminist narratives by working to expose the intersecting forms of oppression that very often are blindly perpetuated by dominant discourses. We want to shift our individual and collective locations perpetually – making and re-making ourselves in collaboration.

To engage in this dialogue on shifting sand, we resign from the politics of neoliberalism’s enchantment in which “difference”, as Sara Ahmed argues, is a

neoliberal branding, a commodity, a compromised concept that, instead of enhancing, disallows the very possibility of talking to each other<sup>5</sup>. Our resignation marks a refusal. Our first refusal: to be complacent with the ideologies that actively reproduce existing modes of sociality, of power relations and the relations of social reproduction. In working together, building grounds on shifting sands through frameworks of practice and theory, we interrogate the work we do and where we and do it. We ask ourselves if it is possible to use existing inclusive heteronormative emancipatory feminist politics when very often many of these politics of “women’s liberation” and “solidarity” may have not kept many of us [queer women and men, gay, trans, migrants, nonbinary and LGBTQBI] safe.

We call for a disidentification with toxic forms of representation; a disidentification that enables politics. José Esteban Muñoz describes disidentification as a strategy used by people of colour to survive in a white supremacist society, “a mode of dealing with dominant ideology” that neither identify or try to oppose such structures, but “works on and against.” He writes:

Instead of buckling under the pressures of dominant ideology (identification, assimilation) or attempting to break free of its inescapable sphere (counter-identification, utopianism), this ‘working on and against’ is a strategy that tries to transform a cultural logic from within, always laboring to enact permanent structural change while at the same time valuing the importance of local or everyday struggles of resistance.<sup>6</sup>

We are aware that disidentification is not always an adequate strategy of resistance for everyone. But, for some of us, disidentification is a survival strategy.

We practice disidentification in collaboration.

Solidarity rests in changing our will to shift our positions, thinking against ourselves, acknowledging and undoing our complicity with the very systems of oppression which we contest; remaining vigilant and aware that each one of us has the capacity to harm and oppress. As our colleague Giovanna Esposito Yussif observes, our form of resistance is neither anti nor oppressive of others; it is a poetry as a space in which a new sociality can be imagined, a “we” which is neither singularly inclusive nor exclusive in terms of place, region, identity. To be a sister, to be a mother, to be a woman, to be Black, to be indigenous, to be poor: we navigate through these positions and states to enable a way for our thinking and practice to queer the spaces of the visible, dismantling what we know, to repair and make anew.

Poetry investigates new ways for people to get together and do stuff in the open, in secret<sup>7</sup>.

As women and cultural practitioners, we are deeply inspired by a politic that is invested in the power of imagination, in the poetic as the ‘the open secret’ that allows us to invent new codes of transmission and silent forms of communication and resistance. Our poetry is darkness. In the dark, in that space beyond the realm of the visible, we experiment with forms of communing and solidarity, and look for common strategies. In darkness, we form alliances and a community which, as in his analysis of resistance and peripheral movements in France, Olivier Marboeuf describes as, “briefly reveals itself before returning to its anonymity. The ghostly body... that abnormal body which warns us that another world exists, beyond the visible. (...)”<sup>8</sup> This community of rioters, Marboeuf reminds us, must remain invisible within the capitalist and colonial politics of visibility, in order to work to alter our perception of the world as it has been given to us to be consumed. In darkness, the periphery creates its own form of visibility, demanding the repatriation of cultural roots.

In darkness, we listen and narrate. We focus on the elusive, unclear, the uncertain looking for deeper correspondences and attend to the visibility work necessary to end white supremacists’ politics of obfuscation. We invoke darkness as that which forms the possible condition of transmissions’ visibility. Darkness as a repository of experience and feelings, emotions and histories, but also as a space of resistance. To be in darkness is to be part of it, it means to be able to see your people while the others, in the light, cannot see you. It means negotiating a physically demanding task, not from a position of contemplation, but one of active collaboration. To activate this decentralization of knowledge, we must create our own tools in collaboration.

“We become with each other or not at all”. The task is to set things in motion, produce cracks, forms of refusals; developing together strategies that trouble our acquired truths.

We come together to make troubles.

urgent times, many of us are tempted to address trouble in terms of making an imagined future safe....staying with trouble does not require such a relationship to times called the future; it requires learning to be truly present (...) as mortal critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters and meanings.<sup>9</sup>

By transmitting knowledges and shifting our locations, we decide to remain with the trouble of engaging in this difficult, yet not impossible, dialogue, forming alliances in the darkness to work together towards the elaboration of new forms of sociality.

In this stark and murderous present, we want to make an appeal for a dialogue which reorients our visions toward “unfinished configurations of places, times, matters and meanings” – toward alliances in unknown futures.

The dark room held them.

We Who Are Not The Same

<sup>3</sup> Vanessa Agard-Jones, “What the Sands Remember” in: *Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjunction*, Duke University Press, 2012, p.325.

<sup>4</sup> Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*, Duke University Press, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Sara Ahmed, “Resignation, Disenchantment and Reenchantment”, (panel discussion), *Colonial Repercussions: Planetary Utopias – Hope, Desire, Imaginaries in a Post-Colonial World*, 23.06.2018, Akademie der Künste Berlin.

<sup>6</sup> José Esteban Muñoz, “Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics”, University Minnesota Press, 1999.

<sup>7</sup> Fred Moten, B Jenkins, Durham: Duke University Press, 2010

<sup>8</sup> Olivier Marboeuf, “The Rioter and the Witch”, 2013

<sup>9</sup> Donna Haraway, “Stay With the Trouble”. *Making Kin in the Chthulucene*, Duke University Press, 2016.

# W O R K S

01 N U M B E R 3 Sound piece 1997

P A M E L A Z

The featured piece is a live recording of an improvised duet with choreographer Jo Kreiter from a 1997 performance at Dancer's Group Footwork in San Francisco. The only predetermined element was a bank of samples of the artist's voice. As the artist writes, "in the performance, I triggered those samples with the BodySynth™ (a gesture-based controller that used electrode sensors to translate muscle movement into MIDI information for manipulating sound), and I processed my live voice with digital delays, as Jo moved through the space. (If you listen carefully, you can occasionally hear the sound of her feet jumping.) I believe this short, improvised performance was my third collaboration with Jo, thus the title Number 3. The other collaborations were much longer, evening-length dance works for which I composed."

P A M E L A Z is a composer/performer and media artist who works primarily with voice, live electronic processing, sampled sound, and video. A pioneer of live digital looping techniques, she processes her voice in real time to create dense, complex sonic layers. Her solo works combine experimental extended vocal techniques, operatic bel canto, found objects, text, digital processing, and wireless MIDI controllers that allow her to manipulate sound with physical gestures. In addition to her solo work, Pamela Z has been commissioned to compose scores for dance, theatre, film, and chamber ensembles including Kronos Quartet, the Bang on a Can All Stars, Ethel, and San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Her interdisciplinary performance works have been presented at venues including The Kitchen (NY), Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (SF), REDCAT (LA), and MCA (Chicago), and her installations have been presented at such exhibition spaces as the Whitney (NY), the Diözesanmuseum (Cologne), and the Krannert (IL). Pamela Z has toured extensively throughout the US, Europe, and Japan. She has performed in numerous festivals including Bang on a Can at Lincoln Center (New York), Interlink (Japan), Other Minds (San Francisco), La Biennale di Venezia (Italy), Dak'Art (Senegal) and Pina Bausch.

02 M E D I U M S Three channel video installation 2018 A N A V A Z

The video-work in the exhibition titled *Mediums* (2018) is part of Vaz's recent research-project called *The Voyage Out* (2018), a film installation that, between documentary and speculative fiction, imagine a post-apocalyptic scenario inhabited by a community of "resilient beekeepers, caring marine biologists, workers of radioactive de-contamination, utopian gardens,

radioactive flowers, dolphin divers and mutant species." Woven together the diaries of Japanese author Yoko Hayasuke and fragments from a cathartic ritual in the tsunami-ravaged coast of Sendai, north of Fukushima, *Mediums* imagines the possibility of earthly survival, calling upon writing and healing in processes of transformation and planetary renewals.

A N A V A Z b. 1986, Brasília is an artist and filmmaker whose films, installations and performed texts explore complex relationships between environments, territories and hybrid histories pushing the boundaries of our perception. Her films have been shown internationally in film festivals and institutions such as the Tate Modern, Palais de Tokyo, Jeu de Paume, LUX Moving Images, New York Film Festival, TIFF Wavelengths, BFI, Cinéma du Réel, TABAKALERA, Courtisane, amongst others. Recent exhibitions include *The Voyage Out at LUX Moving Images* (London), *The Voyage Out: Mediums at Centre d'Art Ange Leccia* (Oletta, Corsica), *Eco-visionaries* at MAAT (Portugal), *What are the Clouds?* at WKV Stuttgart and Videobrasil at SESC Pompéia (Brazil). Ana is also a founding member of the collective COYOTE along with Tristan Bera, Nuno da Luz, Elida Hoëg and Clémence Seurat, a cross-disciplinary group working in the fields of ecology, ethnology and political science through an array of cross-cutting platforms. In 2015, she was the recipient of the Kazuko Trust Award presented by the Film Society of Lincoln Center in recognition of artistic excellence and innovation in her moving-image work.

03 J A N V I L L A Tapestry of images 2010 N A T A S H A M E N D O N C A

After the monsoon floods of 2005 that submerged Bombay, filmmaker Natasha Mendonca returns to her city to examine the personal impact of the devastating event. The result is the film *Jan Villa* (2010), a tapestry of images that studies the space of a post-colonial metropolis but in a way that deeply implicates the personal. The destruction wreaked by the floods becomes a telling and a dismantling of other devastations and the sanctuaries of family and home. In its structure, *Jan Villa* is a vortex, drawing to its center all that surrounds it.

N A T A S H A M E N D O N C A is an award-winning filmmaker and interdisciplinary artist from Bombay, India. She holds a B.A from St. Xavier's College, Bombay in Sociology and Anthropology and a Masters in Film and Video from the California Institute of the Arts. She works with 16mm film, video, sound, photography and performance around themes of food, gender, sexuality, censorship & music. Her work has shown at the Museum of Modern Art PS1, (USA), Centre Pompidou (France), Tate Modern (U.K), Instituto Tomie

Ohtake (Brazil), Los Angeles County Museum, (USA), Kochi Muziris Biennale, India Art Fair, NGBK (Germany), Locarno Film Festival among others.

04 NOTIONS OF PEACE,  
SILENCE Installation 2012/2019  
HELEN ZERU

As the artist says, “The question of displacement and Isolation are factors keep on impending in my work. On this specific work silence, the seclusion of the space tries to provide a Fraction of this moment of displacement of a space and the displacement of the mind. The work is allocated with a physical experience through interaction and sensations.” The installation is made of twelve meters of coloured fabric and light which cuts across the exhibition space of SAVVY Contemporary, creating new spaces and relations.  
HELEN ZERU b. 1987, Addis Abeba works with photography, video, performance, painting and charcoal drawings. Her works often start as reflections of personal and emotional themes, and enters a broader social context, touching upon relevant and pressing issues in society. She studied economics at Bahir Dar University before enrolling at Addis Abeba University of Fine Art from where she achieved her BFA in 2008. After her graduation she studied photography with DESTA for Africa foundation for one year. She is an active member of Netsa Art Village, works as a studio artists and freelance photographer, and as an art-therapist for several local NGO's. She is currently artist-in-residence in Vienna, Austria.

05 NET - GRID 15 Oil on linen 2018  
DESIGN FOR TIGHTS Oil and paper on  
linen and steel frame 2018  
PASSENGERS 2018 Oil on linen and artist  
steel frame  
SELECTION OF THE ARTIST'S  
VITRINES Mixed media sculptures 2018  
MANDY EL - SAYEGH

Though El-Sayegh's processes are deeply invested in systems, she simultaneously questions and rejects the systematic, particularly in relation to the construction of meaning. Layered compositions deliberately obfuscate, with fragments of newsprint and text subsumed within the dense *Net-Grid* paintings, El-Sayegh remains mindful of the potential for systems of categorization to tip over into violence; the regulation and management of human beings under certain regimes; and the pathologization of space difference. Therefore, her work is equally indebted to the anti-taxonomical, the non-sensical. Interested in the Lacanian tradition of free-association, El-Sayegh is interested in creating works as spaces where nonsense can occur, where the dominant modes of creating meaning can be broken down, and new forms of meaning can materialize. Featured in the exhibition are a mixed-media paintings from El-Sayegh's *Net-Grid* series and the oil and paper on linen *Design for*

*Tights and Passengers*, 2018, as well as a selection of the artist's table vitrines and sculptures containing manipulated objects, images and found ephemera.

MANDY EL - SAYEGH b. 1985, Malaysia Making extensive and varied use of focused research and carefully selected written material alongside layered diagramming and found imager, El-Sayegh approaches her practice from a consciously fragmented perspective. Adapting elements of psychoanalysis to a formal aesthetic that merges minimalism, pop, and figuration, she occupies a quasi-paranoiac worldview as an experimental yet creative response to societal alienation. From this shifting standpoint, she launches a complex investigation of the body as signifier in the context of shared cultural trauma, linguistic entropy, and the endless mutability of meaning itself. “My practice is preoccupied with part-whole relations,” explains the artist, “and with ‘procedural thinking’ that allows for observable growth and decay.” Mandy El-Sayegh received her B.F.A. in 2007 from the University of Westminster, London, followed by her M.F.A. in Painting in 2011 from the Royal College of Art, London. El-Sayegh has exhibited with *The Mistake Room*, Guadalajara, Mexico, (2018); Carl Kostyál, London (2017); Sharjah Biennial 13: Tamawuj, Sharjah, UAE (2017); Carlos/Ishikawa, London (2016), among others.

T E X T Anna Piggott

06 DEEP DOWN TIDAL Video  
2017 TABITA REZAIRE

*Deep Down Tidal* excavates the power of water as a conductive interface for communication. From submarine cables to sunken cities, drowned bodies, hidden histories of navigations and sacred signal transmissions, the ocean is home to a complex set of communication networks. As modern information and communication technologies become omnipresent in our industrialized realities, we urgently need to understand the cultural, political and environmental forces that have shaped them. Looking at the infrastructure of submarine fibre optic cables that transfers our digital data, it is striking to realize that the cables are layered onto colonial shipping routes. Once again, the bottom of the sea becomes the interface of painful yet celebrated advancements masking the violent deeds of modernity. *Deep Down Tidal* navigates the ocean as a graveyard for Black knowledge and technologies. From Atlantis, to the ‘Middle Passage’ or refuge seekers presently drowning in the Mediterranean, the ocean abyss carries lost histories and broken lineages while simultaneously providing the global infrastructure for our current telecommunications. Could the violence of the internet lie in its physical architecture? Like countless African and Indigenous traditional sciences, research in physics now suggests that water can memorize and copy information disseminating it through its streams. What data is our world's water holding? What messages are we encoding into our waters? Beyond historical sorrow, water is a

portal to other realities as its mysterious sea life of mermaids, water deities, and serpent spirits celebrated in many cosmologies remind us. *Deep Down Tidal* enquires the intricate cosmological, spiritual, political and technological entangled narratives that sprung from water as an interface to understand the legacies of colonialism.

TABITA REZAIRE b. 1985, Paris is based in Cayenne, French Guyana, with part of her heart in Johannesburg, South Africa. She is infinity incarnated in this lifetime as a French — of Guyanese and Danish descent-agent of healing. She uses arts and sciences as healing technologies to serve the shift towards heart consciousness. Rezaire's work is cross dimensional and aims at reaching the soul. Navigating architectures of power — mental, online and offline — her work tackles the pervasive matrix of coloniality, the protocol of energetic misalignment and their effects on our body-mind-spirits. She is particularly interested in the time-spaces where technology and spirituality intersect. Through screen interfaces, her digital healing activism offers substitute readings to dominant narratives decentering occidental authority, while her energy streams remind us to (re)connect and nurture our soul. She has a Bachelor in Economics (Paris) and a Master in Artist Moving Image from Central Saint Martins College (London). Tabita is a founding member of the artist group NTU, half of the duo Malaxa and mother of the energy house SENEb.

07 THREADS OF FABRIC, CARPET,  
MY HAIR Mixed media 2018  
WATCHING YOU ON A CLOUDY  
DAY Mixed media 2018  
WAITING IN THE MIDDLE OF A  
DESERT Mixed media 2018  
FROZEN ZEBRA Mixed media  
collage 2018 Courtesy of Galerie Tanja  
Wagner NILBAR GÜREŞ

Based on long-term research and cultural observation, Güreş creates staged theatrical narratives that are often humorous in their examination of relationship and representation, with a strong critical/political undertone. For the exhibition, Güreş presents two recently produced works. The mixed-media on paper triptych *Threads of Fabric, Carpet, My Hair, Watching you on a cloudy day* and *Waiting in the middle of a desert*. They humorously depict the everyday life realities that influence the formation of cultural identity: its material and symbolic system of references. Her works contain symbols and meanings of resistance disguised by the playfulness and humour of the representation. In the mixed media collage *Frozen Zebra*, 2017, the chained animal has lost its stripes to the background. A large male figure in the upper right corner is wearing a bridal veil, blowing air towards male and female body parts hidden within the bars. The characters that inhabit Nilbar Güreş's work are often communities and individuals who have found ways to exist outside social norms.

NILBAR GÜREŞ b. 1977, Istanbul lives and works between Vienna and Istanbul. Güreş's work explores the notions of gender, identity, culture and oppression through the use of a range of media such as pencil, watercolour, cut fabric and spray paint, photography, painting and video. She has exhibited at museums internationally including The Istanbul Museum of Modern Art, Istanbul, Turkey; Schwules Museum, Berlin, Germany; Malmö Konstmuseum, Malmö, Sweden; National Museum of Contemporary Art, Lisbon, Portugal; Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art, Porto, Portugal; Guangdong Times Museum, Guangzhou, China; Museum of Modern and Contemporary Art, Strasbourg, France. Selected exhibitions include the 20th Biennale of Sydney, Cockatoo Island, Australia (2016); Artspace Auckland (2015); SeMa Biennale Mediacity Seoul (2014); EVA International Ireland's Biennial, Limerick City (2014); The 31. Bienal de Sao Paulo (2014); MAK, Vienna (2013); 6th Berlin Biennial (2010); Secession Vienna (2010); and 11th International Istanbul Biennial (2009). Güreş is the recipient of the 2018 De'Longhi Art Projects Artist Award. She received the Hilde Goldschmidt Prize in 2013, the Otto Mauer Award of 2014 and fifth edition of the BC21 (Belvedere Contemporary) Art Award 2015 in Austria.

08 THE SIREN TOLD YOU SO Mixed  
media installation 2019 HERA CHAN &  
XIAOSHI VIVIAN VIVIAN QIN

As the artists write, “Before we begin, let us not forget who have already warned us about the current condition of things. This is for those who provided just cause, and for those who did not have the capacity to read the signs. Drawing from the real lives of female journalists who perished in search of a true story — who always knew that those in the room were not the most important ones, but those who were not allowed to enter — *The Siren Told You So* acts as a conduit for these guiding spirits. A sculptural body of information, it seeks to provide a framework for feeling your way in the dark.”

HERA CHAN is a curator and writer based in Kowloon. She currently curates public programmes at Tai Kwun Contemporary. Committed to sustaining networks of solidarity and building Videotage in Hong Kong from 2017 to 2018. She is co-founder of Atelier Céladon in Montreal, speaking with diasporic peoples to socially engineer a future that is already possible. Otherwise, she has worked as a researcher for the SEACHINA Centre and community journalist. She has curated exhibitions and public programmes at Para Site, Spring Workshop, the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, and SBC Gallery of Contemporary Art. In collaboration with Xiaoshi Vivian Vivian Qin, she is the recipient of the *All the Way South* exchange programme as hosted by the Times Museum, to investigate ‘bad sound’ and everyday sonic warfare in Havana and Guangzhou.

XIAOSHI VIVIAN VIVIAN QIN

is an artist based in Guangzhou. In 2015, she earned an MFA in Visual Arts from Columbia University following a BA in Studio Art and Communication from Denison University in 2012. She has hosted high school debates on contemporary art world issues, designed a phone app to find alternate ways to talk about gender issues, organized meetings between scientists, artists and philosophers to address the possibility that we live in a simulation, and organized fictional panels that took place in the future. She is currently devoting her time to researching “Boy’s Love” (BL) culture and writing a BL novel about doomsday prepping in Shenzhen.

09 T O O B L I V I O N Mixed media 2017 Courtesy of Gallery Edel Assanti S H E I D A S O L E I M A N I

The series expounds on the photographic traces of women unlawfully imprisoned and executed by the state in Iran. Low-resolution images, drawn either from the victims’ lives or from government archives, are printed on three-dimensional effigies, collaged and assembled within elaborately constructed sets. The surreal, colourful spaces are populated by the victim’s repeated faces, evoking a fragmented digital landscape in which images that should have disappeared, permeate and replicate; blurring the distinction between physical object and reproduction. The figures are accompanied by disparate objects and imagery relating to the circumstances and detention of each individual. Soleimani undertakes extensive research in order to unearth each victim’s narrative, communicating with journalists within Iran or via the dark web, finding photographic material ranging from passport photos to images of torture. The stories and images are often buried by the Iranian government in attempts to elude human rights organisations and international media. The pixelation of the images printed upon the dolls reasserts their web origins, lending permanence to a lost portrait. The bulbous fabric figures appear both in the images and independently, as free-standing hand-sewn sculptures on whose surface the photographic portraits have been printed, reaching the height of a kneeling adult. They reference Albert Badura’s 1961 “Bobo Doll” experiment; Badura established the ease with which children apprehended violence by recording their aggressive behaviour towards inanimate dolls after they were shown a video of an adult punching one. Women condemned to death in Iran are frequently executed publicly, in forums in which children are encouraged to bear witness and participate; Soleimani employs the Bobo Doll to elucidate upon the learnt apathy toward these disappeared victims and their suffering, as well as state-endorsed, systematised violence towards women. The bulbous fabric figures appear both in the images and independently, as free-standing hand-sewn sculptures on whose surface the photographic portraits have been printed, reaching the height of a kneeling adult. They reference Albert Badura’s 1961 “Bobo Doll” experiment; Badura

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S H E I D A S O L E I M A N I b. 1990 is an Iranian-American artist who lives in Providence, Rhode Island. The daughter of political refugees who were persecuted by the Iranian government in the early 1980s, Soleimani makes work that melds sculpture, collage, film, and photography to highlight her critical perspectives on historical and contemporary socio-political occurrences in Iran and the Greater Middle East. She focuses on media trends and the dissemination of societal occurrences in the news, adapting images from popular press and social media leaks to exist within alternate scenarios. The artist’s research and work critically references the Eurocentrism that pervades the study of art and art history. She is specifically interested in the intersections of art and activism, as well as how social media has shaped the landscape in current political affairs and uprisings.

10 C Y N T H I A K E S A P N E / T H E D R E A M S O F C Y N T H I A Video 2017 P A L L A V I P A U L

The film chases the inner life of its primary protagonist, Cynthia, who is at once imagined as a literary character, a measure of time, a form of experience and a landscape. She also bears witness to the lives of two people – an executioner and a trans artist whose destinies are intertwined within a small town in North India and with each other through an informal history of labour, violence and death. In an conversation with a contemporary Hindi poem of the same name by poet Anish Ahluwalia, the work levitates on the surface of language, identity and memory. Freed from the imperatives of producing experience as evidence, Cynthia uses poetry as atmosphere. At once an accidental encounter and a long deferred meeting, she invites you to a world where nothing is to be found out, but much is to be discovered. Another name for the moon, Cynthia is sometimes spotted outside the window as stories of a city slowly tumble in.

P A L L A V I P A U L b. 1987, New Delhi Her practice is about speculating the stake of poetry in the contemporary. She works primarily with video and the installation form to test the contours of fantasy, resistance, politics and history. The ambition of her work is to create an imaginative play field where historical combustion can be extricated from the languages of deficiency and mourning, to become a playful critical interface. Paul’s primary influence is the chaos of the contemporary and the dizzying tessellations that sprout from it. A graduate of AJK MCRC, New Delhi

Pallavi Paul is currently a PhD student at the School of Arts and Aesthetics, JNU. Her MPhil thesis titled *The Trouble of Testimony* looked at the independent political documentary in Post Emergency India with a special emphasis on the use of video technology. Her first independent video works Nayi Kheti and Shabdkosh have shown at Tate Modern Gallery London (2013), 100 years of experimentation a festival by Films Division (2013), MAMI (2013) and KHOJ, New Delhi (2014), Experimenta (2014).

11a L A C A B E Z M A T O A T O D O S / T H E H E A D T H A T K I L L E D E V E R Y O N E Video 2014 B E A T R I Z S A N T I A G O M U Ñ O Z

The film on view is a mixing of indigenous mythologies with present-day characters, geographies and culture in Puerto Rico. The title refers to how a shooting star was, in local mythology, interpreted as a head without a body, crossing the sky, signaling the arrival of chaos and destruction. The actor in the video, Michelle Nonó, is herself a hybrid creature, mixing male/female traits, in touch with native plants—she’s a medicinal botanist but also a cultural activist. She hosts cultural events in her house, in a section of primarily Afro-Caribbean and post-industrial area called Carolina. Cats are very common on the island of Puerto Rico, and in this video, the cat is cast as a mythological entity, capable of world-altering transformations. The soundtrack further blends time and space as it alternates between a track from the Peruvian punk band, Los Psychos, and the chirping and croaking music of the coquí frog that populate PR’s wet landscapes.

11b L A C U E V A N E G R A / T H E B L A C K C A V E Video 2012 B E A T R I Z S A N T I A G O M U Ñ O Z

*The Black Cave (La Cueva Negra)* explores the Paso del Indio, an indigenous burial ground in Puerto Rico that was discovered during the construction of a highway, and eventually paved over. Drawing on interviews with local residents and with archaeologists involved in the excavation, Beatriz Santiago Muñoz’s video offers a reflection on the origins and meanings of the site, which becomes in the process an allegory for the island’s convoluted history. The camera tracks two teenage boys wandering through the area, their freedom of movement and sense of curiosity symbolizing the romantic but ultimately misguided desire to find and preserve paradise.

B E A T R I Z S A N T I A G O M U Ñ O Z ' s work arises out of long periods of observation and documentation, in which the camera is present as an object with social implications and as an instrument mediating aesthetic thought. Her films frequently start out through research into specific social structures, individuals or events, which she transforms into performance and moving image. Santiago Muñoz’s recent work has been concerned with post-military land, the sensorial unconscious of the anti-colonial movement, and feminist speculative fictions. Recent

solo exhibitions include: Nuevos Materiales at Museo Amparo, Song Strategy Sign at the New Museum, A Universe of Fragile Mirrors at the Pérez Art Museum of Miami, MATRULLA, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros, México City. Recent group exhibitions include: 2017 Whitney Biennial, Prospect 4 New Orleans, Under the Same Sun, Guggenheim Museum of Art; Her work is included in public and private collections such as the Solomon Guggenheim Museum, Kadist, Whitney Museum and the Bronx Museum. She received the Creative Capital Visual Art Award (2015) and the Louis Comfort Tiffany Foundation Award (2017). Beatriz Santiago Muñoz lives and works in San Juan. Her solo exhibitions include Espacio 1414, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2008); CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Arts, San Francisco (2008); Telic Arts Exchange, Los Angeles (2010); and Gasworks, London (2013). Her work has also been included in a number of important group exhibitions including *Bienal del Caribe*, Museo de Arte Moderno, Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (2003); El Museo’s Bienal: *The (S) Files*, *The Selected Files*, El Museo del Barrio, New York (2005); *Infinite Island: Contemporary Caribbean Art*, Brooklyn Museum, New York (2007); *Careos/Relevos*, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico, San Juan (2010); the *Trienal Poli/Gráfica de San Juan*, Puerto Rico (2011); and *Materia Prima*, Centro de Arte Contemporáneo, Quito (2013). Santiago Muñoz’s honors include the first prize from Certamen Nacional de Artes Plásticas, Museo de Arte Contemporáneo, San Juan, Puerto Rico (2002).

12 A D H A N / C A L L T O P R A Y E R Sound piece 2014 B A H I A S H E H A B

For the past 1400 years, the voices of men have emitted the call to prayer in minarets all over the Islamic world. In this piece, Adhan challenges this age old tradition. As the artist writes, “I decided to have the call for prayer raised by the voice of a woman instead of a man. Mezzo soprano Mai Kamal from the Cairo Opera House was 21-years-old at the time of the recording. For the past 1400 years only men have been raising the calls for prayer all over the Islamic world; I felt that it was time for the feminine to raise their voices with the same chant calling for people ‘to hasten to worship and to hasten to success’ using Mai’s melodious young strong voice. This is also a call for peace, equality and understanding.”

B A H I A S H E H A B is a multidisciplinary artist, designer and historian. Her artwork is concerned with identity and preserving cultural heritage. Through investigating Islamic art history she reinterprets contemporary Arab politics, feminist discourse and social issues. She is associate professor of design and Egyptian uprising was released in 2015. Her work has founder of the graphic design program at The American University in Cairo. Her work has been on display in exhibitions, galleries and streets in over during the Egyptian uprising was released in 2015. Her work has received a number of international recognitions and awards; BBC 100 Women list (2013), TED Senior

fellowship (2016), Shortlist for V&A's Jameel Prize4 (2016), and a Prince Claus Award (2016). ). Her publications include *A Thousand Times NO: The Visual History of Lam-Alif* (2010). She is the first Arab woman to receive the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture.

### 13 ALL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE GIF essay 2019

LUIZA PRADO DE O. MARTINS

Her work engages with material and visual culture through the lenses of decolonial and queer theories. For her contribution to the show, Luiza Prado has conceived an intervention for the space of the bar titled *All Directions At Once* (2019). This GIF essay, part of a larger body of work titled *A Topography of Excesses*, engages with practices of herbal birth control and transmissions of indigenous and folk knowledges as acts of radical, decolonizing care. It starts by invoking ayoowiri, a plant that grows abundantly in the tropical areas of the Americas; during European occupation of the continent, an infusion of this plant was often used as a contraceptive (and, in stronger doses, as an abortifacient) by enslaved Indigenous and African peoples as a strategy of resistance. Through the stories of ayoowiri and other contraceptive and abortifacient plants, the essay nurtures the idea of radical decolonising care and unravels the poetic dimensions of excess as a fragmented, fast-paced pluri-verse, meshing together perceived pasts, presents, and futures; a disjointed collective, moving to all directions at once.

LUIZA PRADO DE O. MARTINS

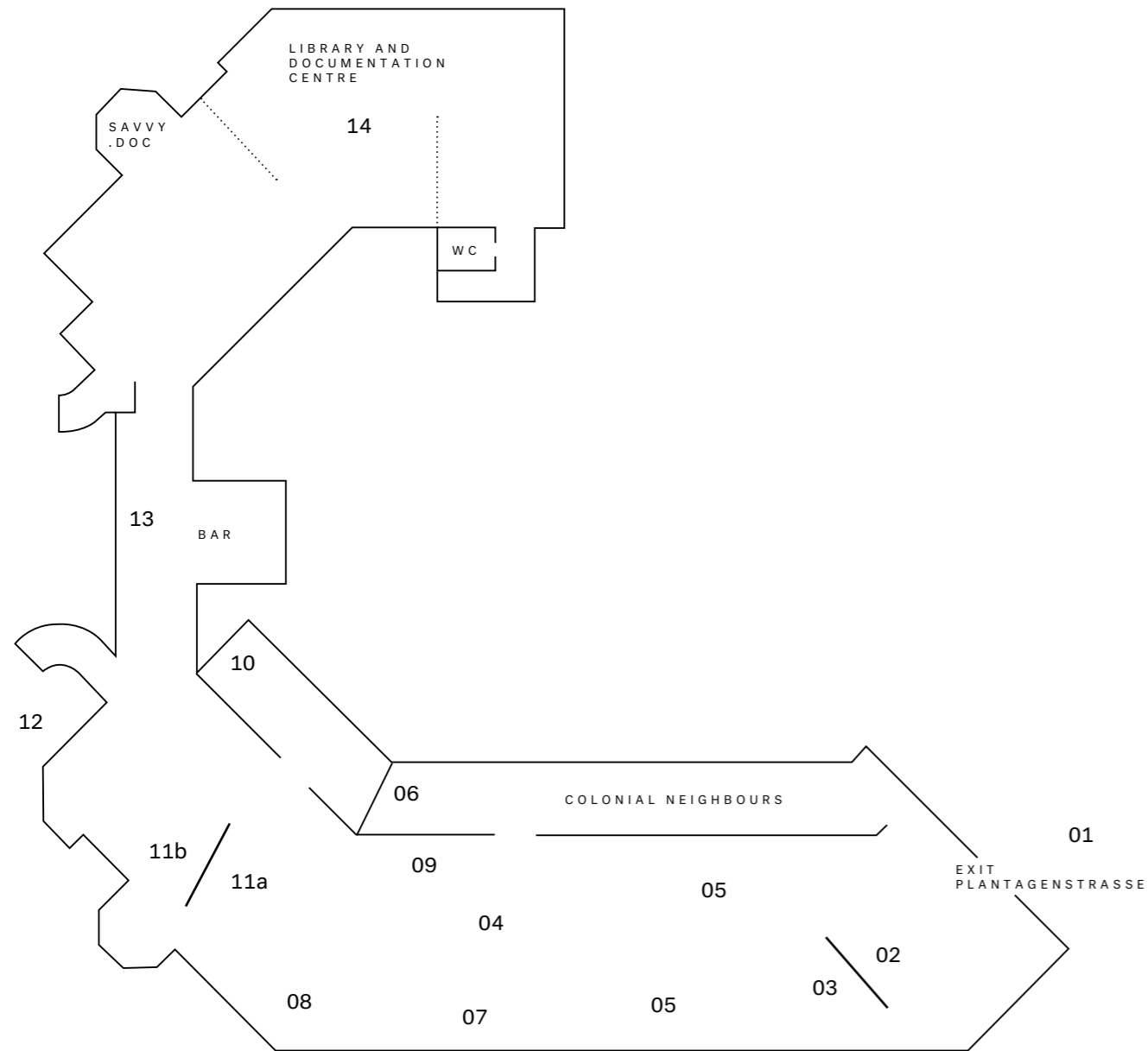
b. 1985, Rio de Janeiro is an artist and researcher born in Rio de Janeiro in 1985, four hundred and eighty-five years after the Portuguese first invaded Pindorama, the land currently known as Brazil. She holds an MA from the Hochschule für Künste Bremen and a PhD from the Berlin University of the Arts. In her doctoral dissertation, she examined technologies and practices of birth control and their entanglements with colonial hierarchies of gender, race, ethnicity, class, and nationality, offering the idea of 'technoecologies of birth control' as a framework for observing and intervening in these biopolitical articulations. Her current artistic research project, titled *A Topography of Excesses*, starts from a call to re-appropriate the perception of excess attributed to gendered and racialized bodies in the modern/colonial gender system. Through installation, video, performance, and text, the project looks into the transmission of indigenous and folk knowledges about herbal birth control as decolonising practices of radical care that allow communities to forge new paths by accessing the poetic dimensions of the pluriversal. She is a founding member of the Decolonising Design collective and the research duo A Parede.

### 14 PRESSURE ON BOYS Installation 2018/2019 MARKUES

The installation examines the pressure society exerts on young boys. Its sculptural aesthetic draws

from the school gym, a key site of such pressure. The installation consists of a. decommissioned parachutes of the kind used for cooperative games in physical education, in which grommets have been hammered to spell out quotations and, b. gym mats, gymnastic apparatuses, and medicine balls, which provide an opportunity to sit or rest, and a series of curated texts to be read aloud during the course of the exhibition. The combined elements point to the friction between collective identity and moment of individuation. To highlight the collectivity and polyphony of boyhood, the installation can only be perceived in the presence of a public reading that warms up the space as the readings unfold, so do the many associations that broaden the idea of what boyhood could be. The installation creates an immersive atmosphere of looseness and slackness where pressure is temporarily lifted. For Markues, boyhood is not a biological concept but a collective and diverse experience encompassing the different boyhoods of heterosexual and homosexual cis-men; the childhoods of transgender women; the late puberty of transgender men; and also the fetishized boyhood of the twink. In *Pressure on Boys*, these diverse boyhoods become tangible to and shareable by the viewer. The selection of texts include titles such as Hanns Henny Jahn's *Perrudja*, Ursula K. Le Guin's *A Wizard of Earthsea*, Denton Welch's *In Youth Is Pleasure*, and bell hooks's *The Will to Change: Men, Masculinity, and Love*, among others.

# FLOOR PLAN



01 NUMBER 3 Sound installation loop, 6 min 49 sec 2017 PAMELA Z

02 MEDIUMS Three-channel video installation HD and 16mm transferred to HD, colour, stereo, loop, 1 h 9 min 25 sec 2018 ANA VAZ

03 JAN VILLA Tapestry of images 16mm transferred to HD, b/n, stereo, loop, 21 min 16 sec 2010 NATASHA MENDONCA

04 NOTIONS OF PEACE, SILENCE Installation 2012 HELEN ZERU

05 NET-GRID 15 Oil on linen 2018 DESIGN FOR TIGHTS Oil and paper on linen and steel frame 2018 PASSENGERS 2018 Oil on linen and artist steel frame SELECTION OF THE ARTIST'S VITRINES Mixed media sculptures 2018 MANDY EL-SAYEGH

06 DEEP DOWN TIDAL Video essay loop, 18 min 44 sec 2017 TABITA REZAIRE

07 THREADS OF FABRIC, CARPET, MY HAIR Mixed media 2018 WATCHING YOU ON A CLOUDY DAY Mixed media 2018 WAITING IN THE MIDDLE OF A DESERT Mixed media 2018 FROZEN ZEBRA Mixed media collage 2018 Courtesy of Galerie Tanja Wagner NILBAR GÜREŞ

08 THE SIREN TOLD YOU SO Mixed media installation 2019 HERA CHAN + XIAOSHI VIVIAN VIVIAN QIN

09 TO OBLIVION Mixed media 2017 Courtesy of Gallery Edel Assanti SHEIDA SOLEIMANI

10 CYNTHIA KE SAPNE/THE DREAMS OF CYNTHIA Video installation HD, colour, Hindi and English, sound, 42 min 2017 PALLAVI PAUL

11a LA CABEZ MATO A TODOS/THE HEAD THAT KILLEDEVERYONE Digital video, colour, sound, 7 min, Spanish with English subtitles 2014 BEATRIZ SANTIAGO MUÑOZ

11b LA CUEVA NEGRA/THE BLACK CAVE HD video, color, sound, 20 min 2012 BEATRIZ SANTIAGO MUÑOZ

12 ADHAN / CALL TO PRAYER Sound installation loop, 2min 49 sec 2014 BAHIA SHEHAB

13 ALL DIRECTIONS AT ONCE GIF essay 2019 LUIZA PRADO DE O. MARTINS

14 PRESSURE ON BOYS Installation 2018/2019 MARKUES



## DEDICATION

In loving memory of Dr. Alanna Lockward, curator, dancer, journalist,  
decolonial thinker, activist, friend, mother, sister, womanist.

Thank you for your amazing work and spirit.

## MORE INFORMATION

[savvy-contemporary.com](http://savvy-contemporary.com)

[facebook.com/savvyberlin](https://facebook.com/savvyberlin)

S A V V Y Contemporary – The laboratory of form-ideas is an art space, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality. S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions of the West and non-West, to understand and deconstruct them. S A V V Y Contemporary has realized a kaleidoscope of art exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, concerts, readings, talks, dances. S A V V Y Contemporary has established a participatory archive on German colonial history, a performance arts documentation centre, a library, a residency program, as well as educational projects with schools. The art space engages in its neighborhood's history and socio-political realities which are entangled with the reflections and discourses of the project.

S A V V Y Contemporary is Elena Agudio Antonia Alampi Jasmina Al-Qaisi Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Bona Bell Marleen Boschen Federica Bueti Pia Chakraverti-Wuerthwein Olani Ewunnet Irene Fountedaki Raisa Galofre Monilola Ilupeju Anna Jäger Kimani Joseph Laura Klöckner Cornelia Knoll Kelly Krugman Nathalie Mba Bikoro António Mendes Kamila Metwaly Wilson Mungai Arlette-Louise Ndakoze Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung Abhishek Nilamber Jeff Obiero Beya Othmani Elena Quintarelli Marleen Schröder Jörg-Peter Schulze Lema Sikod Lili Somogyi Jorinde Splettstößer Laura Voigt Elsa Westreicher Ola Zielinska

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