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Noemi Alfieri, Nuno Silas

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Noemi Alfieri, Nuno Silas

Curatorship:
Nuno Silas, Noemi Alfieri

Graphic Design:

Nuno Silas, Noemi Alfieri

mafambanecollective@gmail.com
www.mafambanecollective.com

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Editorial Note: On Opening Breaches and Subverting Categories

Mafambane Collective

MAF Journal is a project born from the Mafambane Collective Platform. In Changana, Mafambane recalls the idea of journey, of movement and border-crossing: "MAF" is a shortcut to our aim of discussing narratives of migrations, resistances and decolonizations through artistic creation, under visual, sonic and poetic perspectives.
Our contribution for nº1 attempts at tracing a possible path, starting from a hint in reaction to growing political and intellectual calls to closeness, repression and fear.

In *Poétiques de La Rélation* (Poetics of Relation), Édouard Glissant recurs to errantry as a critical possibility, a process of being physically, ontologically and poetically on the move, refusing the violence held in the idea of universality, but also being aware of the possibilities and dangers of closing solely to the local. Such as the platform it relates to, *MAF Journal* stands at the intersection between different geographies, knowledges and linguistic realities, questioning borders and hierarchies of artistic and social imagination.

We are a space for experimentation and debate, promoting critical thinking and discussing collective forms and methods. With this in mind, we understand artistic creations in their wider sense (in, out, and beyond institutions, practices, geographies and temporalities), not as mere tools or cultural products, but as a path, a shared practice which can open breaches, a critical possibility.

This idea of refusing pre-conceived ideas and beliefs about our identity and social relations is, of course, not unique to Glissant and has featured contemporary thinking and artistic creation in different geographies. Paulina Chiziane underlined, in her essay *Eu, mulher…Por uma nova visão do mundo* (I, woman… for a new vision of the word), how artists continue to be, in contemporary societies, regarded as marginalized members.

For this reason, being a woman and being an artist "becomes a true scandal" as far as, Chiziane explains, it counteracts gender stereotypes and assumptions about one's role in society, dictated by its most conservative areas. Goliarda Sapienza wrote, in *L' Arte della Gioia* (The Art of Joy), that her life as a reader was marked by a turning point: then, she started extrapolating the words she encountered in books from their context, to find other meanings, but - most of all - to find the lies hidden beyond them. She refers to this effort of recontextualization, of displacement, and to the acknowledgement of having been exposed to fake, misleading concepts.

Poetics, arts, and creation are, then, a non-defined place where to build critical ways out of neoliberalism and capitalist social relationships, spaces for decolonization, but also our so-much-needed spaces of freedom. As Stefano Harney and Fred Moten also argue in *The Undercommons*, wandering and being fugitive, avoiding institutional tricks, is often the strategy to escape domestication.
For all these reasons, we are a multilingual journal, as we believe this can be a way to open an undisciplined channel of communication between different languages and realities, investigating contemporary societies through the lenses of arts and cultures.

"Re-Imagine, Now!"

Essays

To Practice the Forbidden: Sex in Morocco as a Collective Space in Graphic Novels by Leila Slimani and Zainab Fasiki

Kamelia Sofia El Ghaddar (Italy & Spain)

Introduction

The primary objective of this contribution is to investigate how Moroccan writers and artists open collective conversations on sexuality within a socio-cultural context in which sexual discourse is heavily regulated, silenced, and moralized. Approaching sexuality from a feminist standpoint, this article examines how sex, desire, and bodily autonomy are negotiated, represented, and made speakable in a society where sexual practices outside marriage are criminalized, discussions of sex are considered hshouma (shameful), and women are disproportionately tasked with preserving the moral and symbolic honor of the community.

Rather than framing sexuality solely as a private or individual matter, this contribution explores how artistic and narrative practices transform sexual experience into a shared terrain of political, affective, and relational engagement. Drawing on a brief literature review of sexual behaviour studies in Morocco, the article situates its analysis within the legal, religious, and social framework that governs sexual conduct, including the criminalization of pre-marital sex under Article 490 of the Moroccan Penal Code.

While these regulations aim to enforce “moral order”, they do not eliminate sexual practices; instead, they produce a culture of silence, secrecy, and double standards, particularly affecting women. Sexuality thus becomes a site where individual desires collide with communal expectations, and where shame functions as a powerful technology of control. This contribution argues that it is precisely within this tension that feminist writers and artists intervene, not simply by transgressing norms, but by opening spaces for collective reflection and conversation.

Moving away from an exclusive focus on graphic novels as an aesthetic genre, the essay engages with graphic narratives as political and relational tools that enable critique, resistance, and connection. Moroccan feminist artists such as Leïla Slimani, (and French artist Laetitia Coryn) and Zainab Fasiki mobilize narration, drawing, and visual fragmentation to reclaim sexuality as a legitimate dimension of life and knowledge. Their work does not

merely "represent" sexual experiences but actively participates in the production of shared affective spaces where taboo topics—such as virginity, sexual violence, abortion, and sex work—can be collectively named and negotiated. In doing so, these narratives challenge the neoliberal tendency to isolate sexual experience within individualized trauma or empowerment. discourses, instead foregrounding sexuality as relational, contextual, and socially produced.

Central to this process is the identification of a language of critique and resistance. Reclaiming sexuality entails more than speaking openly about sex; it involves confronting the moral economies that regulate bodies through shame. Drawing on Sara Ahmed's cultural politics of emotion, the article examines hshouma not simply as a feeling but as a circulatory affect that disciplines bodies, structures social relations, and enforces compliance. Shame operates as a mechanism of control precisely because it is collective: it binds individual behavior to communal judgment. Feminist interventions that challenge shame, therefore, do not aim at individual liberation alone but gesture toward collective forms of release and reconfiguration. This perspective resonates with Saba Mahmood's reflections on agency, piety, and the right to opacity. Rather than measuring feminist resistance solely through visibility, transgression, or emancipation as defined by Western liberal paradigms, the essay argues for a decolonial understanding of feminist praxis—one that recognizes refusal, ambivalence, silence, and partial disclosure as meaningful political gestures.

By resisting the imperative to fully "expose" or "confess" sexuality, these works assert a right to opacity that complicates dominant expectations of feminist transparency and legibility. The graphic novel emerges, in this framework, as a privileged medium for opening transnational feminist conversations. Its hybrid language—situated between text and image, intimacy and collectivity—allows for the circulation of affects and stories across borders without flattening cultural specificity.

These narratives do not invite the reader to grasp, consume, or master the experience of Moroccan women's sexuality. Instead, drawing on Édouard Glissant, Peter Sloterdijk's (Ford, 2020) relational thinking, the essay conceptualizes the graphic novel as a practice of "giving on-with": a mode of relation that privileges proximity, resonance, and co-presence over comprehension or appropriation. Speech bubbles, visual gaps, fragmented bodies, and unfinished narratives function as assemblages that invite readers into a shared yet non-totalizing space of encounter. Finally, the essay situates these collective conversations within an affirmative politics of desire, drawing on Rosi Braidotti and

Deleuze and Guattari. Desire is approached not as lack or transgression but as a productive force capable of generating new social relations, forms of belonging, and communities of care. By narrating sexuality beyond guilt and repression, Moroccan feminist artists do not simply oppose moral norms; they reconfigure the very terms through which desire becomes thinkable, speakable, and livable. In this sense, challenging hshouma is not only an act of resistance but a generative political practice that opens the possibility for collective liberation grounded in relation rather than rupture.

The Graphic Novel and its Collective Character

The graphic novel, through its hybrid formal and aesthetic qualities, offers a particularly effective space for opening collective conversations on sexuality. By combining text and image, it enables forms of expression that exceed the limits of discursive language alone, allowing sensitive experiences to circulate without requiring full exposure or confession. Its visual immediacy broadens access—especially among younger audiences—and can operate as a flexible strategy for navigating censorship. At the same time, illustration and irony function as affective mediators, easing the weight of traumatic or taboo narratives and transforming personal testimony into a shared space of resonance rather than spectacle foregrounding the right to opacity. This potential is exemplified in *Paroles d'honneur* by Leïla Slimani, her first graphic novel, developed from the essay *Sexe et Mensonges*.

Conceived as an educational and vindicatory project, the book reworks interviews conducted in Morocco with women from diverse social, cultural, and religious backgrounds, preserving anonymity while foregrounding lived experience. The graphic form allows these stories to circulate beyond elite readerships and transforms private encounters—often held in informal, semi-public spaces—into a collective narrative infrastructure. In this sense, the graphic novel does not merely transmit stories; it stages the very conditions under which speech becomes possible.

Comic theory helps explain why this medium is particularly suited to such work. As Scott McCloud (1993) argues, comics rely on juxtaposition, sequencing, and what he calls "closure": the reader actively completes meaning across fragments. The simplification of drawing enables identification by stripping images down to their essential forms, creating what McCloud (1993) describes as a "vacuum" that the reader inhabits. This dynamic is especially significant in a context where the body and sexuality are culturally

taboo, fragmented, or unspeakable.

The reader's participation becomes an ethical and political gesture: meaning is co-produced rather than delivered, and narration unfolds as a collective process rather than a unilateral act of representation. This participatory logic resonates strongly with the experiences narrated in *Paroles d'honneur*, which visually retraces Slimani's encounters with Moroccan women during the promotion of her novel *Dans le Jardin de l'Ogre*. These meetings generated temporary, non-judgmental spaces where women could articulate experiences usually relegated to silence.

Transposed into graphic form by illustrator Laetitia Coryn, these conversations are neither privatized nor fully exposed; instead, they circulate relationally, inviting readers into a shared affective space. As a Moroccan woman researching sexuality from a feminist perspective, engaging with these voices is methodologically and politically central: the invisibility of women's experiences is precisely what sustains sexual double standards and prevents collective articulation.

Slimani herself captures this shift from object to subject through the figure of Scheherazade—not as a symbol of seduction, but as a narrator who reclaims authority over the story. Storytelling here becomes a relational practice that challenges patriarchy not through rupture alone, but through persistence, circulation, and shared meaning-making. In this sense, the graphic novel moves beyond "grasping" experience and toward "giving on-with" (Ford, 2020) it: a mode of feminist narration grounded in relation, opacity, and collective imagination.

Virginity, Shame, and the Making of Collective Conversation on Sexuality in Morocco

Sexuality in Morocco is structured by a dense assemblage of gendered socialization, legal prohibitions, moral economies, and affective disciplines that converge in the regulation of women's bodies. Abdessamad Dialmy (2014) describes gender formation through two axes: boys are shaped along a "vertical" trajectory that distances them from femininity and legitimizes risk, violence, and public life; girls, by contrast, follow a "horizontal" trajectory that keeps them "women" from birth, oriented toward domestic duties, prudence, and maternal respectability.

This unequal socialization is sustained by a patriarchal logic in which female sexuality becomes the site upon which community value is secured. As Fatima Mernissi famously states, "honour and virginity locate prestige of a man be-

tween the legs of a woman" (1982:183). The paradox, as Mernissi also notes, is that women are charged with guaranteeing the "success" and legitimacy of sex (including defloration), even though sexual acts always involve two subjects. In this sense, virginity functions simultaneously as symbolic capital, moral obligation, and social currency; it also becomes the hinge through which women are made responsible for communal stability. This regime of sexual governance is not only ideological but also juridical and punitive. Premarital sexual activity is criminalized under Article 490 of the Moroccan Penal Code and framed as zina, producing a climate in which sexuality circulates widely but cannot be publicly named without risk. Against this backdrop, Moroccan writers and artists open collective conversations by narrating, drawing, and staging sexuality in ways that render visible both the everyday life of taboo and the structural violence that taboo conceals.

In *Paroles d'Honneur,* the narrative scenario—a conversation between Leila and Nour in a bar after a public event—matters as much as the content: a semi-public, informal space becomes an infrastructure for speech, where experience can circulate beyond private secrecy but without being fully absorbed by institutional discourse. Nour's story foregrounds how sexual socialization is transmitted intergenerationally, particularly through maternal pedagogy that equates women's self-fulfillment with marriage and treats premarital sexuality as an impossibility. Nour recalls growing up with the belief that "love and tenderness automatically lead to sex to the point that it became a taboo in our house" (Slimani, 2017:12), revealing censorship as an intimate mechanism of governance.

This domestic censorship connects to broader cultural logics described by Obermeyer (2000): men are often expected to separate love from conjugal sex, and tenderness may be read as weakness or feminization. Public expressions of affection threaten to legitimize female sexual power—precisely because female sexuality is framed (in Mernissi's earlier work) as a potent force that can lead to fitna (chaos). Nour's account thus dramatizes a central Moroccan contradiction: the desire to "liberate oneself from the constraints of the collective" coexists with fear that such liberation would rupture the very traditions that constitute identity (Slimani, 2017:13). Leila's response names this tension through hshouma (shame), a concept internalized from childhood and often equated with decency, responsibility, and proper citizenship.

Reading hshouma through Sara Ahmed's "cultural politics of emotion" (2020) clarifies how shame operates as a social technology rather than a private feeling. Shame circulates: it attaches women's sexual conduct to family reputation and community morality, producing self-surveillance and silence.

Obermeyer notes that hashma/hshuma/hya(modesty/bashfulness) is central to evaluating women's worth and sexual propriety, with women scrutinized far more than men. Nour's recollection of being caught kissing by the police and having to pay a bribe reveals how law and shame work together: even when arrest is avoided, shame remains a disciplinary residue. Crucially, this affective discipline does not simply prevent sexuality; it reorganizes it into secrecy and "conflict management," what Cheikh and Miller call savoir-taire / non-dire—a social competence that allows boundary-crossing while preserving appearances. Yet this mode of silent dissent blocks collectivization: it keeps structural issues (violence, coercion, reproductive injustice) individualized and isolating. The narrative then links shame to sexual violence and reproductive politics.

Nour recounts a childhood episode of attempted abuse by a cousin and highlights the absence of a language for consent, pointing to the limits of sex education. Tabatabaie (2015) explains how sex education is often framed as "dangerous knowledge" that threatens Islamic identity, rooted in assumptions about children's vulnerability and the invisibility of adolescent sexuality and agency. In the graphic narrative, however, the personal scene becomes a bridge to broader public cases: Nour and Leila discuss Amina Filali, the teenager raped and forced to marry her rapist under Article 475 (later contested), whose roots are traced to French colonial civil law.

This is a key decolonial node: the regulation of sexuality is not reducible to "tradition" but is partly shaped through colonial legal inheritances. Amina's suicide becomes legible as the only decision left to her—an extreme form of agency produced by a state that claims to protect honor while enabling abuse within "legal" marriage.

The point is not spectacle, but structural exposure: communal priorities repeatedly supersede individual rights. Abortion further condenses the contradictions of Moroccan sexual governance. Nour tells the story of Malika, a doctor who becomes pregnant out of wedlock and pays for an abortion, while another woman is priced out through escalating costs. The criminalization of abortion (through Penal Code articles 449, 454, 455) produces a stratified economy of risk in which class determines who can access safer procedures. Slimani cites AMLAC's estimate of hundreds of illegal abortions daily and underscores the public health consequences (sepsis, infections, suicides, honor crimes, abandonment, infanticide), while Capelli (2019) critiques "conditional legalization" for reinforcing a moral hierarchy of abortion and aligning with neoliberal logics that grant care only to those who can prove they deserve it. In other words, the problem is not only illegality but the moral-bureaucratic apparatus that converts reproductive rights into conditional privileges—again foreclosing collective claims.

Within this system, virginity is preserved through contradictory practices that reveal the sexual double standard: non-penetrative sex and anal sex can be widespread yet remain unspoken, while men's sexual initiation may occur through sex work and older partners.

Bakass et al. (2013) show how men may combine penetrative and non-penetrative "debuts," while women face stigma, annulment risks, and even consideration of hymenoplasty, since "damaged" women can be socially marginalized and assigned lower marital value. Women's bodies are treated as collective property: their chastity secures familial honor, and transgression stigmatizes entire kin networks. Nour's encounter with Asma Lamrabet, a Moroccan Islamic feminist, introduces another decolonial pathway: rather than equating emancipation with secular rupture, Lamrabet's reading insists on the Qur'an's emancipatory message obscured by misogynist selective interpretation.

This enables a transnational feminist consciousness built through relational dialogue across discursive traditions—religious feminism, secular critique, and lived experience—rather than through a single normative model. The conversation expands to sex work through the controversy surrounding Nabil Ayouch's film *Much Loved*, censored for "tarnishing" Morocco's respectable image. Here, taboo becomes a mirror: "when we show you your reflection, you break the mirror." Orlando (2019) reads Ayouch's focus on prostitution as a critique of state hypocrisy and economic failure, pointing to structural unemployment despite GDP growth. Sex workers appear not only as victims but as agents negotiating power through economic survival; the body becomes a palimpsest of social meanings and also a site of disruption that breaks the boundary between private and public in a political economy of gender and sexuality.

This is where Zainab Fasiki's Hshouma becomes pivotal as a graphic intervention explicitly designed to provoke Moroccan introspection and shift societal norms. As Garraton Mateu (2020) explains, the book's stark visual language (black-and-white illustrations against red) and its mix of French with Arabic expressions constructs an aesthetic of urgency and accessibility. The cover image of a bare-chested Berber woman with facial tattoos can be read as both celebration of Amazigh heritage and a critique of imported fundamentalism that condemns such traditions—again complicating simplistic binaries between "modernity" and "tradition." The work's structure (body representations, then sexuality) makes visible how the female body is coded simultaneously as temptation, reputation, seduction, and maternal sacrality—hence requiring concealment in public and reverence in private.

Fasiki's use of nudity aims to de-sexualize the naked body and undo censorship, joining a longer lineage of art that mobilizes nudity for protest, vindication, and political speech.

The collective dimension of conversation is also linguistic. Fasiki's code-switching, and especially her use of Darija, confronts the problem that Moroccan Arabic often lacks neutral vocabulary for sexuality and tends toward insult, vulgarity, avoidance, or violent phrasing—reflecting how women's bodies are culturally linked to dirt, fitna, and threat. Cheikh and Miller (2009) note the scarcity of neutral terms for body parts, while El Aji shows how intercourse is often named through euphemism ("do your business," "we do it") or domination ("he grabbed her," "he fucked her").

In this context, choosing Darija is not merely stylistic: it is a transgressive redistribution of knowledge. As Garraton Mateu argues, French is often associated with freedom and secular critique, while Darija expands access to working-class audiences and shifts power away from elite language regimes. The graphic novel thus opens a collective conversation not only by depicting taboo, but by retooling the very semiotic infrastructure through which taboo becomes speakable. This is also where Saba Mahmood's (2001, 2006, 2011) critique becomes methodologically crucial.

Rather than measuring feminist politics by visibility, confession, or transgression alone, these works stage a politics of agency that includes negotiation, partial disclosure, strategic silence, and embodied ethics—a "right to opacity" that resists voyeuristic demands for total legibility. Graphic narrative supports this ethic formally: panels, gaps, speech bubbles, and the interplay of text and image create a mode of address that does not require mastery or full comprehension by the reader.

In Glissant's terms, (Ford, 2020) the encounter is not about transparent access; in Sloterdijk's terms (Ibid.), it produces "bubbles" and "foam"—relational micro-spheres in which experience circulates and aggregates into social assemblages. The graphic novel therefore becomes a tool that moves beyond "grasping" toward "giving on-with": it invites co-presence and affective attunement rather than consumption. This relational mode is where transnational feminist conversations can emerge without flattening Moroccan specificity into Western feminist templates. In this sense, challenging hshouma becomes both critique and production: an affirmative politics of desire (Deleuze and Guattari 1983, 1987; Braidotti, 1996) that seeks not only to denounce repression

but to create conditions for collective liberation—where desire is treated as a productive force capable of generating new relations, solidarities, and forms of life.

Conclusion

This article has argued that feminist Moroccan writing and visual storytelling do not simply "represent" women's sexuality; they build the conditions for collective conversation in a context structured by shame (hshouma), legal constraint, and patriarchal surveillance. By following the narratives staged in Paroles d'Honneur and Hshouma—and placing them in dialogue with sociological and feminist scholarship—I have shown how topics commonly relegated to secrecy (premarital intimacy, virginity, sexual violence, abortion, and sex work) become speakable as shared social problems rather than individualized moral failures. What is politically decisive here is not only what is said, but how these works circulate speech, affect, and relationality. Graphic narration turns private experience into a public-yet-protected space: panels, speech bubbles, and visual gaps generate a form of address that can hold contradiction, ambivalence, and partial disclosure.

This enables what Saba Mahmood helps us conceptualize as a right to opacity: an ethics of feminist articulation that resists the demand for total visibility or confession as the only sign of agency. In this sense, the collective conversation opened by these texts is decolonial not because it "rejects tradition" in favor of a universal liberal script, but because it disrupts the very terms through which sexuality is rendered legible, governable, and morally policed—while refusing voyeuristic consumption. At the same time, these works open transnational feminist conversations without flattening Moroccan specificity.

Their hybrid language (visual/verbal, Darija/French/Arabic) redistributes access to sexual knowledge and exposes how classed and linguistic hierarchies shape who can
speak about sex and in what terms. The graphic novel thus functions as a medium that moves beyond "grasping" toward "giving on-with": it invites co-presence and affective attunement rather than mastery. In doing so, it contributes to an affirmative politics of desire, where challenging hshouma becomes not only critique but a generative practice that imagines collective liberation through relation.

It is fitting, then, to return to Fatima Mernissi—whose work persistently traced how women negotiate and cross the limits imposed on them. If graphic narratives give space to the forbidden, they do so by making the "limits" visible as historically produced, affectively enforced, and therefore contestable. "From within the harem, the possibilities to make life enjoyable seemed infinite – the walls were going to disappear and houses with glass ceilings were going to replace them. Imprisoned behind the walls, women walked around dreaming of frontierless horizons." (Mernissi, 1995:179)

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Synthetic Vestiges: Artificial Intelligence as an Instrument of Cultural Repair and Resistance in the Formation of Collective Memory

Alice Marie Genevieve Gallouin **(Italy & France)**

Introduction

The rapid development of generative artificial intelligence has profoundly transformed the status of images within contemporary culture, destabilizing long-established assumptions about photography, memory, and truth (Ritchin, 2024). For over a century, photography has been understood as an indexical medium, a visual trace anchored in a real past, serving both as documentary evidence and as a foundation for collective memory (Barthes, 1980). Today, however, AI-generated and AI-modified images challenge this epistemological framework by producing visuals that are increasingly detached from any historical referent, yet capable of exerting powerful cognitive, emotional, and political effects.

This article examines the consequences of this shift through a critical and interdisciplinary lens, drawing on visual studies, media theory, digital humanities, and contemporary artistic practices. It explores how generative AI undermines photography's traditional function as proof, while simultaneously opening new possibilities for images as political, affective, and countercultural tools. By engaging with concepts such as synthetic archives, algorithmic postmemory, and the insubordination of signs, (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025) the text situates

AI-generated imagery within broader debates on collective memory, historical erasure, and reparative visual practices.

At the same time, the article addresses the ethical and social risks inherent in generative technologies, particularly the reproduction of hegemonic visual codes and structural biases (Villa, 2022). Through the analysis of artistic case studies and theoretical frameworks, it argues that AI imagery should not be understood solely as a site of deception or loss, but also as a contested terrain in which memory, power, and representation are actively negotiated. Ultimately, this study seeks to articulate conditions under which AI-generated images may contribute to more inclusive, critical, and socially grounded forms of visual memory.

I. Beyond visual truth: photography in the age of Artificial Intelligence

The rise of generative technologies is reshaping the relationship between images and reality, calling into question photography's long-standing role as a reliable record of truth. A recent study by Pataranutaporn et al. (2024) shows that AI-edited images and videos can implant false memories in viewers, leading them to recall events that never occurred or that were significantly altered. The findings reveal that exposure to such content substantially increases the formation of false memories, with participants often expressing high confidence in these inaccurate recollections, especially when static images are transformed into AI-generated videos.

This shift represents a clear break from Roland Barthes' notion of photography as the "that-has-been" (1980), understood as an indexical trace of a past presence. In response to this transformation, Geoffrey Fowler (2023) asks what photography becomes once it can no longer function as proof, arguing that it should no longer be treated as equivalent to memory itself. In an interview for LensCulture (2023), artist Phillip Toledano echoes this position, noting that contemporary technologies enable the creation of persuasive visual narratives about events that never happened. According to Toledano, we are entering a historical moment in which the idea of visual truth is increasingly accepted as obsolete.

If images no longer serve to attest to truth, what role can they play? Instead of functioning solely as records of the past, images should be understood as tools capable of generating a "new distribution of the sensible". By this, Ritchin (2024), drawing on Jacques Rancière, means the capacity to disrupt the established order of perception, challenging who and what is allowed to be visible or audible in our society. This shift creates a space of possibility for new forms of shared experience, so long as the images remain open rather than imposing fixed or predetermined meanings.

II. Image and Collective Memory: the Image as a political act of countercultural Practice

Artistic practice can be understood as a process of "insubordination of signs," one that disrupts dominant cultural structures by introducing ambiguities and fractures that challenge the stability of hegemonic narratives (Richard, 1994). Instead of passively recording history, media art functions as a tem-

poral interface that reshapes the relationship between past, present, and future. In this sense, memory becomes an active terrain of struggle against the "total design" of institutionalized forgetting (Jelewska, 2024).

By treating memory not as a fixed archive but as a dynamic postdigital ecosystem, these practices address inherited and transmitted trauma through the visualization of what has historically been deemed "unrepresentable." This approach prevents the past from settling into inert historical residue (Jelewska, 2024; Richard, 1994). Today, this framework finds expression in artistic practices that employ generative artificial intelligence to create what have been described as "synthetic archives." These techno-aesthetic systems produce "hypothetical memories" that function as a form of "affective symbolic documentalism," capable of repairing fractured identities and making visible histories that have been systematically erased from official records (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025).

III. Synthetic Vestiges and Algorithmic Reparation: The Affective Archive in Contemporary Art

Within the field of digital humanities, the concept of the "synthetic archive" marks a shift away from positivist models of documentation toward what Bañuelos Capistrán et al. (2025) define as an "affective archive." Unlike traditional archives grounded in scientific data, these archives foreground emotion, political positioning, and marginalized perspectives. Drawing on Didi-Huberman's theoretical contributions, AI-generated images are described as "synthetic vestiges": although they lack indexical authenticity, they retain a symbolic imprint imbued with affective and historical significance, maintaining a meaningful relationship to the past (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025).

The notion of "algorithmic postmemory," adapted from Hirsch (2012), further frames these technologies not merely as tools for storage, but as active agents of reparation. In contexts where dominant narratives have suppressed traumatic histories, AI can facilitate intergenerational transmission by generating visual forms that reconnect communities with silenced experiences (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025).
Artists increasingly use these methods to confront historical erasure and

restore collective memory for communities rendered invisible. A representative example is Mayara Ferrão's Álbum de desesquecimentos (2024), which employs generative AI to create "hypothetical memories" of lesbian histories among Black and Indigenous women in Brazil (ZUM, 2025). By producing realistic, vintage-style photographs depicting intimate moments that were excluded from colonial archives due to racism and homophobia, Ferrão challenges what Derrida describes as the "archontic violence" of official history (1995).

Violent beceause the act of preserving the past is inherently violent, as it determines which elements become visible and significant within the archive. In doing so, the archive establishes what is deemed worthy of remembrance. Her project does not seek to deceive viewers, but rather to offer an "affective symbolic documentalism" that fills historical absences with plausible visual narratives, restoring dignity and presence to subjects denied by the dominant gaze. Through these "synthetic vestiges," the AI model becomes a techno-aesthetic apparatus capable of repairing fractured social memory (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025).

IV. The Risks of Generative AI: From Algorithmic Bias to the Erosion of Shared Reality

Generative AI plays a central role in the construction of synthetic archives, producing images whose realism can convincingly simulate reality. However, this capacity also entails serious risks, particularly regarding the reproduction and amplification of bias. As Villa (2022) argues, these systems operate through a process of "heterozygous cloning," generating "visual pastiches"
by recombining vast datasets rather than producing genuine novelty. The result is a form of "hyporealism": an aesthetic that conceals its artificiality while presenting a seemingly plausible version of reality that ultimately reinforces dominant visual codes and stereotypes.
Because AI systems favor statistically probable outcomes, they tend to reproduce the most consolidated patterns within their training data, standardizing perception around what Villa (2022) describes as a "flat falsification" that mirrors existing social biases, thereby reflecting and perpetuating the structural prejudices of society itself, including misogyny, homophobia, racism, fatphobia, and other forms of discrimination embedded in dominant cultural representations. To counteract these tendencies, researchers and artists have developed strategies such as the "minority

prompt," used in projects like Un archivo queer inexistente to disrupt normative outputs and produce counter-archives that challenge dominant visual narratives (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025).

Yet technical interventions alone cannot fully address the deeper issue of human prejudice. In many cases, AI functions as a mirror of societal impulses, shifting the ethical question from the machine to its users. A relevant example can be found in the early and widespread use of generative AI for the production of pornographic content. As Ritchin (2024) observes, the internet has increasingly functioned as a "black hole" in which images are endlessly consumed, while reports indicate that thousands of celebrities and private individuals have been targeted by low-cost services capable of generating explicit material (Maiberg, 2024; Badshah, 2024). Empirical evidence shows that the victims of non-consensual deepfake pornography are predominantly women, pointing to a systematic instrumentalization of images that undermines female privacy. controlling women's bodies and identities. These practices demonstrate how this misuse of AI generative reflects and reinforces existing patriarchal structures in which women's bodies and identities continue to be subjected to control and exploitation.

Finally, Ritchin (2024) draws attention to another critical issue. As photography gradually loses its role as a "referent" of truth—once understood as a trace of what actually existed, it becomes, through generative AI, a "desiderent," an image shaped according to personal desire. This shift grants individuals unprecedented power to reshape the visual world. However, such control carries the risk of erasing alterity. When AI is used primarily to generate images that align with individual preferences while excluding what is unfamiliar, contradictory, or unsettling, it may lead to a lived form of "filter bubble", a condition in which individuals are increasingly exposed only to content that reinforces their existing views, tastes, and expectations. In this context, shared experiences that sustain collective life are threatened by increasingly individualized and synthetic realities. Images thus risk becoming a form of visual cherry picking, in which selective representations are favored while inconvenient or dissonant aspects of reality are systematically excluded

V. The Co-Creation Triangle: Artist, AI, and Community

To address the ethical and representational risks of algorithmic image pro-

duction, such as bias, misrepresentation, and the reinforcement of hegemonic narratives, co-creation emerges as a crucial methodological approach. This model demands active co-creation, where communities are not treated as passive sources of data but as agents with ownership over their own representation. By anchoring the design process in the lived experiences and diverse voices of these groups, the resulting images cease to be hollow algorithmic fabrications; instead, they become tools for community resilience, ensuring that digital memories serve to validate cultural identity rather than erode it.

A notable example of this approach is Rogelio Séptimo's Exhumar la Memor. IA, which combines generative AI with community-based practices. Instead of extracting data to produce images in isolation, Séptimo organizes "barter tables" where participants exchange oral testimonies and personal photographs. This process creates a participatory feedback loop through which AI-generated images are continuously evaluated against collective memory. Similarly, the Synthetic Memories project employs iterative interviews and prompt refinement to translate oral histories into visual form, prioritizing emotional resonance and participant agency over strict photorealism (Martín Prada, 2025). Here, the focus of "reportage" shifts from the final image to the collaborative process of negotiation and meaning-making .

"Humanizing the algorithm" therefore requires more than technical refinement; it demands the intentional integration of human experience, resistance, and imperfection into algorithmic logic. By embedding these subjective and political dimensions, artists can transform AI from a supposedly neutral tool into a "deforming mirror" that reveals and critiques hidden structures of power (Menlibayeva, 2023). Through this critical use, AI becomes a means of producing "insubordinate signs" that challenge official histories and render visible what has long been excluded (Bañuelos Capistrán et al., 2025). In this way, the co-creation triangle acts as a safeguard against "archontic violence," ensuring that digital archives remain inclusive, dynamic, and reparative spaces for collective memory.

Conclusion

By examining the concept of synthetic archives and the production of "synthetic vestiges," the article has shown how AI-generated images can oper-

ate as forms of affective symbolic documentalism, particularly in artistic practices addressing historical erasure and marginalized memories. When embedded within critically informed and culturally situated frameworks, these images do not aim to replace historical truth, but to contest its exclusions, exposing the violence inherent in archival selection and visibility. At the same time, the analysis underscores that AI technologies are not autonomous agents of harm or repair. Their social impact is shaped by the intentions, values, and power structures that govern their use. Without ethical vigilance and community-centered co-creation, generative AI risks reinforcing patriarchal, colonial, and normative modes of representation. Conversely, when artists and communities actively intervene in the design and use of these systems, AI can become a techno-aesthetic apparatus for resistance, memory work, and collective reimagining.

In this sense, the future of photography and AI-generated imagery does not lie in the restoration of visual truth, but in the critical negotiation of meaning, responsibility, and shared experience. Images, no longer guarantors of what has been, emerge instead as sites of struggle over what can be remembered, imagined, and collectively sustained.

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Where Borders Dissolve: The Western Borderlands of Belarus between Memory and Identity

Volha Aniska (Belarus)

> To give a territory a name is to master it in the terms of a particular ideology, to inscribe it into a certain symbolic matrix and into the political game.
> (Almira Ousmanova, Eastern Europe as a New Subaltern)[1]

Over the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the western territories of contemporary Belarus repeatedly changed their state affiliation and political status. These transformations involved not only the administration of populations and lands, but also the symbolic appropriation of space, as each political regime sought to rename, redefine, and reimagine the territory within its own ideological and cultural framework. For local inhabitants, these shifts often meant dislocation – both physical and existential. Many were forced to move across newly drawn borders, carrying with them fragments of memory and identity that no longer fully belonged to any single political entity. In this sense, the borderland became not merely a geographical zone but a lived condition, where belonging was constantly negotiated through remembrance, displacement, and adaptation.

This article brings together an analysis of the artistic practice of contemporary Belarusian artist Anastazja Palczukiewicz with an exploration of the borderlands' history of repeated colonization, considering the border as a field of intersecting historical narratives and processes of identity formation.

History in Motion: The Borderland as a Form of Experience

After the Third Partition of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth in 1795, these territories were incorporated into the Russian Empire as part of the administrative structure of the "Northwestern Krai" (Russian: Западный край, literally Western Land). In imperial discourse, they were constructed as a "Northwestern Krai" – a space subject to political integration, cultural unification, and disciplinary control. The Riga Peace Treaty of 1921 led to another redistribution of sovereignty, and the region became part of the Second Polish Republic. Renamed "Eastern Borderlands" (Polish "Kresy Wschodnie"), these lands were once again inscribed into a hierarchical "center–pe-

riphery" model, functioning as a symbolic and political resource for the newly reconstructed Polish nation-state. The Polish authorities intended to develop a European civilization that would connect these Borderlands with the West and separate them from the East, and to strengthen Poland's position in the region. The internal cultural policy, concerning the eastern territories, was focused on the promoting of Polish culture to the widest circles of society, since, it was believed, the main cities of the "Eastern Borderlands" were seen as territory threatened by Russian propaganda. The "Eastern Borderlands" were depicted as socially and politically immature and culturally backward, which was intended to justify the Polish state's condescending and paternalistic cultural policy.

A new phase of transformation began in 1939, in the context of the non-aggression pact between Germany and the Soviet Union (the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact). According to the secret supplementary protocol, the "eastern outskirts" of Poland were included in the Soviet sphere of influence and rapidly incorporated into the USSR. The subsequent processes of forced Sovietization also had the character of internal colonization: they implied a radical restructuring of political institutions, social structures, and cultural regimes of representation, accompanied by the suppression of alternative identities and the imposition of a standardized Soviet model of subjectivity.
This region is characterized by pronounced historical complexity and internal heterogeneity, manifested primarily in its multilayered linguistic and confessional structure. In everyday practices, Polish, Belarusian, Russian, Yiddish, Tatar, and various local dialects intersected and interacted, creating a dynamic space. The confessional map was equally diverse: Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Judaism and Islam coexisted in proximity, forming a framework for sustained polyconfessional hybridity.

The complex historical dynamics of the region were reflected, among other things, in the fact that in the first half of the 20th century, its population repeatedly experienced large-scale displacements and forced migrations. One of the most traumatic episodes was the mass evacuation – The Bieżeństwo – of 1915, which primarily affected peasants from the western governorates of the then Russian Empire. The flight was triggered by the defeat of the Russian army and the rapid advance of German forces, prompting authorities to initiate a propaganda campaign urging citizens to evacuate immediately. The process was most extensive in the Grodno Governorate, which also included lands of present-day Podlaskie Voivodeship in Poland.

Primarily Orthodox and mixed-confession villages moved deeper into the Russian Empire: the majority of refugees were Belarusians and Ruthenians. The Catholic population left their homes much less frequently, as the Catholic Church urged believers to remain. The process of returning from The Bieżeństwo, which took place between 1918 and 1921, proved no less painful than the evacuation itself. Repatriation was accompanied by significant human and material losses, long periods of waiting, and tense attempts to rebuild destroyed livelihoods. Between April 1921 and April 1924, roughly 1.1 million people were able to return to their lands.[2]

Only two decades later, another population movement began. On September 9, 1944, the Polish Committee of National Liberation signed an agreement with the BSSR on population exchange, which stipulated the relocation of Poles living in the BSSR to Poland and Belarusians to the BSSR. Parallel processes involved Lithuanian and Ukrainian populations.[3] Formally, the relocation was declared voluntary, but in practice it often occurred under pressure from the police, local armed groups, and organizations. The relocation continued into the late 1950s, when a new wave of Polish emigration from the BSSR took place.

Taken together, these displacements and experiences of disruption and instability left a deep imprint on collective and family memory. For tens of thousands of families, changing state borders became not an abstract political act but a personal loss of home, disruption of familiar routines, severing of family ties, and the need to rebuild their lives from scratch. These processes reinforced feelings of instability and vulnerability and contributed to the cultivation of a special memory of "displacement" as a regional condition. Memories of flight and return, of forced concealment of national or confessional identity in public spaces, became part of family archives and histories, often left unspoken publicly.

Thus, throughout the twentieth century, the western territories of contemporary Belarus functioned as a peripheral space of historical liminality, situated between imperial and national forms of governance, between Polish and Soviet politico-ideological projects, and between centers of power and local communities. These processes demonstrate how practices of naming, symbolic appropriation, and institutional control reproduced power and ideological hierarchies, defining the region's experience as a space of perpetual "in-betweenness."

Tracing Memory through Form and Material: Anastazja Palczukiewicz's Artistic Practice

The artistic practice of Belarusian artist Anastazja Palczukiewicz operates at the intersection of the history of this region and family memory. This experience becomes the starting point for her project *Displaced*, which intertwines with the history of the Polish town of Nowa Ruda. At first glance, these territories are separated geographically, yet their historical destinies resonate: both were drawn into intensive processes of displacement and cultural transformation. Until 1945, Nowa Ruda was part of Germany; after the Second World War, it became part of Poland. The Polish administration relocated the former population to Germany and resettled people from central and eastern Poland in the town. Some of the areas from which Poles moved to Nowa Ruda are now part of modern Belarus.
For Anastasia, this process is directly connected to her family history: in the 1950s, some of her relatives moved to western Poland under a repatriation program, while her great-grandmother and great-grandfather prepared to relocate but ultimately remained on their native lands. This family experience serves as a methodological tool for the artist's reflection, enabling dialogue between the regional context and personal narratives.

The second narrative in this project concerns an apple orchard purchased by the artist's great-grandfather from neighbors relocating to Poland in the 1950s. It illustrates how family stories intersect with historical events. According to the artist, her grandmother recalled that, when she was five years old, she witnessed how the daughter of the resettled family bid farewell to the young apple trees she had planted: she hugged them, cried, as if leaving a part of herself in the orchard. Words engraved on a wooden board in Belarusian – "Памятаю, як яна плакала, калі смутна развітвалася з маладымі яблынямі" (I remember how she cried sadly, saying goodbye to the young apple trees) – become a point of contact with the intimate experience of the past, where personal feelings, family history, and the fate of an entire region converge in a single image.

In the project, this episode transforms into a metaphor for memory and time. The central element of the sculptures is the apple tree roots - forms both material and symbolic. Concrete, a solid and durable material, is transformed by the artist into a fragile substance, reflecting the vulnerability and fragility of memory, its ability to preserve and simultaneously destroy.

The apple tree roots fix the presence of the past, becoming lines of connection between generations, between personal and collective experience, between loss and continuity. The sculptures invite the viewer to rethink memory as a fluid and ambiguous space: at once material and ephemeral, strong and fragile, personal and universal. In this project, memory appears not as a fixed reality but as a form capable of transformation, intersecting with other histories and contexts, reflecting the complexity of human experience.

In the process of working on the project *Clotho*, Anastazja Palczukiewicz consulted archival materials of residents of the western Belarusian territories from the early 20th century, belonging to various national and cultural groups - Polish, Belarusian, and Russian. By analyzing personal documents and stories, the artist observed different perspectives on historical processes, influenced by ethnic background, affiliation with particular traditions, and family structures.
The theoretical framework for this Palczukiewicz's research is Zygmunt Bauman's concept of Liquid Identity[4]. According to Bauman, identity in modernity and subsequent globalization ceases to be a fixed entity: it is not "carved in stone", but dynamic, formless, mobile, adaptive, and continuously reconstructed, like a liquid. In this sense, identity is unstable and fragmented. Borderland territories, such as the western Belarusian lands, represent a special laboratory for such dynamic forms of self-identification. Historically functioning as zones of competing influences and objects of internal colonial practices by European states, they inevitably produce hybrid cultural models and multiple forms of belonging.

In artistic interpretation, the concept of liquid identity is reflected in the work with material and form. The choice of steel as the primary medium is crucial: despite its apparent stability, this metal can transition into a liquid state under external processes such as heat or electricity, and it can undergo alloying, changing its properties - becoming stronger, more brittle, or more flexible. In this way, steel embodies the mobility and contingency that Bauman describes as a characteristic of identity under conditions of instability and structural change
The steel cable, intertwined, deformed, and subjected to multiple tensions, becomes in the Clotho project a metaphorical equivalent of the thread of fate. It is intertwined, deformed, stretched, and resistant – much like a human biography formed under constant external influences.

Just as identity, according to Bauman, is shaped in the field of external impulses, social pressures, and historical ruptures, steel records the traces of each impact, preserving in its form the memory of experienced transformations. Contemporary reality once again demonstrates that the experience of resettlements, "displaced" identity, and borderland issues is not confined to the past, but retains its relevance amid ongoing migration flows and the reevaluation of belonging boundaries. In this context, the discussion of such issues and their artistic reinterpretation acquire particular significance: through visual practices, historical experience is not only preserved but also transformed, subjected to interpretation and rethinking, opening new horizons for understanding human memory and collective identity.

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~~Poems~~

State Anthem

Volha Kastsiuk (Aotearoa, New Zealand)

Вольга Касцюк

Гімн

Мы крычалі, беларусы — дзе вашыя мірныя людзі, дзе вы,
з Сэрцам на далоні, адданыя госпаду-богу без роднай зямлі,
ці Шчыра сустракалі вы суседзяў з мяккім «ч»?
ці называлі вы іх сябрамі, хуем, сілы жадалі?
ці казалі на ненармальном языке слова «гартуем»?
што вы рабілі, калі
Мы лямантавалі ў пустых кватэрах працавітай айцішніцы,
вольнай мэнэджаркі без сям'і?

Слаўся апошні дыктатар Еўропы, з-пад балотнай зямлі нашай хай
светлае сонца струбіць тваё імя,
крычыце:
«Слаўся!» як «ура!» на памінках з парадам для народаў,
якія забыліся пра «холопов» і «Северо-Западный край»,
крычыце: «браты, бэтэры, без коскі саюз!»
Наша сіла ў праўдзе, любімая, дарагая, адзіная,
вось табе паштоўка на восьмае сакавіка ад маці з няправільным адрасам -Радзіма,
жыві!
Вечна жыві, доўга, і квітней як на злінялых рэкламных плакатах
у цэнтры кантынента, у краіне з нікому не вядомай назвай — Беларусь!

Разам пойдзем на плаху, з братамі ад брацкага народу,
што мужна нас абаранялі вякамі ад НАТА, ААН, БНР.
Мы адчынялі дзверы ў хату,
калі суседзі за плотам баранілі поле, саджалі зерне роднай мовы.
мы запрашалі злодзеяў як родных на збіты сапогами парог,
У-у-у! — былі што ваўкі, якія шлі па-за намі ў бітвах за цукар і соль,
волю-алену шанавалі, у бітвах з драўлянамі за сяргея долю,
за
Свой фестываль пісьменніцкі, здабывалі сабе рэпутацыю тых,
хто ўзнімае сцяг на плошчы перамог!

ЗаСлаўе, дзе сын заступіўся за маці, Радзіму, бяз зямлі,
нашай зямлі бяз рускага дыялекту,
за светлае добрае імя,
Слаўся, сын народаў, у жылах якога цячэ варожая ці братэрская кроў і саюз!
Наша няша, любімая маці- без сыноў і дачок,
якія раскіданы тараканам па іншым Радзімам,
калі скончыцца Вечна гаручыя слёзы вечнага агню?
калі мы скажам сабе «жыві», толькі не квітней,
бо квітнеюць пачвары сучаснай Беларусіі, блядзь!

1

нафтаправод Дружба народаў — гэта як пульсуючая пупавіна,
па якой да цябе паступае кроў і сіла невядомых народаў —
праглынутых усходняй імперыяй.
а Наш-та, наш крывасмок сілкуецца газам з запаветных часоў 1994 года;
сонечны шлях такі ж цяжкі як і ў нас:
па балотам галактыкі, скрозь чарнобыльскія зоны.
з Горда паднятай галавой зайсці ж у краму ў Польшчы і не страціць прытомнасць;
узвіся, аператыўна-тактычная
балістычная
ракета, ў бурае неба над Драздамі
і ўпадзі ў ясныя басовыя высі,
і тады кожны з нас дастане з бабуліных скрынь
Сцяг, пераможна уздымець — загалосіць ад радасці вецер,
і сцяг вытра слёзы яму!

Слаўся, Заслаўся ад зямлі без сахі,
нашай бацькаўшчыне не патрэбна светлае будущее,
нам патрэбна толькі імя, белару**С**,
Беларусь ўся, без народаў, але з людзьмі.
не брат ты мне, гнида, эсэсэсэрскі скляты саюз!
вось яна,
Наша каханая, не любімая.
маці-баба-прабабка-прапра казала: Радзіма,
жыве Вечна,
ты жыві
і чалавек, якому з 20-га года не падабаўся слоган «квітней»,
жыве Беларусь!

We yelled, Belarusians, where are your peaceful people, where are you
with The Whole heart on the Open Palm[1], cowedly
devoted to our god without the Motherland.
did We welcome our neighbours[2] barely faithfully?
did we call them friends, with the soft *r*?
did we wish them to grow fucking up and be strong?
or we just lamented Living in the empty apartment
of a hardworking IT specialist and an independent manager without a family.[3]

Glory to the last dictator in Europe[4], blessed your name of our swampland,[5]
yell from *Glory!* to *Hooray!* at the funeral with a parade
of the brotherly union of peoples! who forgot about *the serf* and *the Northwestern Krai*[6].
Our strength is in the truth, dear, absolutely beloved.
here is your postcard for the eighth of March[7] from Mother with the wrong address —
…land,
May you live long and prosper, like on the faded posters
in the centre of the continent, in a country with an unknown name to anyone —
Belarus!

Together we will go to the guillotine with our brothers from the brotherly union,
who were weaponshowing for centuries,
who Courageously defended us from NATO, UN, BNR[8].
we've been opening the doors to our home's,
we were welcoming the thieves, as our relatives,
on the threshold, knocked down by their boots.

---

[1] The Heart on the Open Palm – a novel by Belarusian writer Ivan Shamiakin.
[2] Refers to Russia.
[3] Before the 2020–2021 Belarusian protests against the 2020 presidential election, in which Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko sought his sixth term in office, Belarus had a significant and advanced IT sector, driven by government support through initiatives like the High-Tech Park (HTP) and a highly educated population with strong technological skills. Following the protests, many highly qualified Belarusian IT specialists left the country.
[4] Belarusian president Alexander Lukashenko is labelled as "Europe's last dictator".
[5] Vast swamplands historically covered the country, and currently, there are around 2.5 million hectares of wetlands in Belarus.
[6] Northwestern Krai was a part of the Russian Empire (unofficial subdivision) in the territories of the former Grand Duchy of Lithuania (present-day Belarus and Lithuania).
[7] Since the USSR, 8th March in Belarus is a public holiday to celebrate International Women's Day.
[8] Belarusian Democratic Republic (Biełaruskaja Narodnaja Respublika) was a state proclaimed by the Council of the Belarusian Democratic Republic on 9 March 1918 during World War I. The government of the Belarusian Democratic Republic never had power over the whole territory of Belarus.

Ooo-ooo-ooo! howled the wolves who were following us In battles for
sugar and salt[9], freedom
was respected,
and in the battles with the Drevlians[10] for their writers,
for our writers' festival[11],
we were getting the lot of reputation of those people,
who We have elected and who won our flag and banners
on the square of victory![12]

Glory to the son who stood up for the blessed motherland
without the name of russia[13],
for our land,
without the russian dialect,
Glory to the son of the people with the enemy's blood or brotherly blood
and the blood of the union of our peoples![14]
Our dearly beloved Mother, without sons and daughters
who was scattered by the cockroach[15] around other lands[16],
when will the eternal tears of eternal fire stop?
when we tell ourselves May you live long and do not prosper,
because the monsters of modern Belarussia prosper, fuck!

the Friendship of peoples oil pipeline[17] is like a pulsating umbilical cord,
through which the blood and strength of unknown peoples come to you,
swallowed by the Eastern Empire.
And it is ours, our bloodsucker, fed by gas since the sacred times of 1994[18].

[9] Refers to the 2011 Belarus financial crisis.

[10] The Drevlians were a tribe of East Slavs between the 6th and the 10th centuries, which inhabited the territories of Polesia and right-bank Ukraine, west of the eastern Polans and along the lower reaches of the rivers Teteriv, Uzh, Ubort, and Stsviha.

[11] Refers to the 2022 Belarusian writers' festival Pradmova, when organisers invited the Russian speakers, and a lot of Belarusians stood against it because they viewed it as inappropriate due to the Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022.

[12] Victory Square, Minsk.

[13] Refers to the fact that Russians still call Belarus by its old Soviet name — Belorussia.

[14] Refers to the Union State — a supranational union consisting of Belarus and Russia, with the stated aim of deepening the relationship between the two states through integration in economic and defence policy.

[15] In 2020, prior to the protests, businessman and blogger Sergei Tsikhanovsky made a reference to the children's poem "The Monster Cockroach by Korney Chukovsky. The original story, published in 1923, concerns a dictatorial yet fragile insect and his brief, chaotic reign of terror over all the other animals. In his reference, Tikhanovsky compared Lukashenko to the cockroach in the story.

[16] Refers to the immigration of a large number of Belarusians (from 0.5 to 1 million) after 2020, driven by fear of being charged for participating in protests.

[17] The Druzhba pipeline, also referred to as the Friendship Pipeline and the Comecon Pipeline, is one of the world's longest oil pipelines and one of the largest oil pipeline networks in the world. It carries oil over 4,000 kilometres from the eastern part of European Russia to points in Ukraine, Belarus, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Germany.

[18] Alexander Lukashenko is a Belarusian politician who has been the country's first and only president since the office was established in 1994.

the sunlit path is as complex:
through the swamps of the galaxy,
through the Chernobyl zones,
with your Proudly held high head, we go to a store in Poland and do not faint,
we fly an operational-tactical ballistic missile
in the clear blue skies over Drazdy[19]
and fall into the clear bass heights,
and when each of us will take out of our grandmother's coffers
The banner of victory and sigh — the wind will howl with joys
and the flag of sunshine will wipe away the tears!

Glory to the land without a plough[20]!
Our homeland does not need a blessed future;
we only need the name of our land, Belarus,
Glory to Belarus, without the brotherly union of peoples,
but people!
you are not Our dearly beloved brother[21],
you are a nit, the SS, the damned union!
mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, great-great-grandmother said, *The Motherland,*
May you live forever!
you live,
a person who has not long liked the slogan and motto prosper,
long live Belarus![22]

2023-2025

[19] A microdistrict in north-west Minsk where many top state officials lived during the Soviet times and today, including the President of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenko.
[20] Refers to Belarus as an agricultural country.
[21] Refers to Russia.
[22] A Belarusian patriotic motto and proposed former national anthem, widely used by members of the Belarusian democratic and nationalist opposition, as well as by members of the Belarusian diaspora.

Ría

Laura Beaujour **(Guadalupe)**

No quiero que sonrías
Quiero que al sentarte frente a mí
estés AQUÍ
Bien atento a lo que dice mi cuerpo

Mi boca cuenta, sí
Derrama palabras que naufragan en tus playas

Se adentrarán algunas
Orillarán otras
Ojalá te embriague su espuma
Te toquen los ritmos de este lenguaje ajeno

Quiero que aquí
bien sentado
sientas el peso de tus huesos
de tu omisión
de tu silencio
Quiero entintar tu permanencia de duda
Tomar tu soledad desprevenida

ARRINCONADO

Devolverte lo incómodo

Que se seque tu garganta
Que se agriete la coraza de tus creencias
Que de niño bueno te vuelvas ES-PE-JO

Y que palpes
ni siquiera una vez
las réplicas de tu narrativa

Lo que quiero yo
es mandarte a casa
con cuestionamento
con programa de estudio
Sacudir lo conveniente de tu ignorancia

Sin cargarme la pregunta
Sin pedirme la enseñanza

Que sientas el dolor en carne propria

Qué no dejes caer la conciencia al pasar la puerta
Que siga rebotando entre las paredes de tu casa

Que descanse
Que decante

The Unfulfilled Promise: A Poetic Examination of Immigrant Labor and Precarity in American Academia. / We who were asked to go

Kole Odutola **(Nigeria & USA)**

"Only those who have experienced the weight of forced disengagement would understand the duality of American universities as places of both opportunity and exploitation for immigrant scholars. This contribution revisits a time one of the universities laid off a number of tenured and nontenured faculty. It dives into how institutional rhetoric of "diversity" and "globalization" often masks a reality of disposable labor, economic exploitation, and a profound sense of psychological and professional displacement."

We Who were Asked to Go

The notice like a deadly cargo arrived
with name and address intact
The facts well laid out like a clean sheet
on the deathbed of an innocent soul.
The message, though mixed, was not unclear;
Paths now marked to the unemployment market
with or without tenured packets
and empty pockets filled with pictures of good will.
How the wheel has turned, upturning a promised future
Budget cut is the shortcut to shortchange migrant workers
Who labored to add new tongues to monolingual lips
and lift the veil that covers unknown worlds beyond.

Now I know there is no cover for the din
in the market place of pain
When it rains pins and needles.
All actions are covered in history
since Kings who turned the forest into cities
will be remembered, we teachers of new words
and phrases will not forget the king who turned

our cities into frightening forests.
We are sent to rest before our limbs are tired
Told to tie our carry-all into hired U-hauls.
As know-all files register our divorce from its labor force,
Those who market calculated pain for others

Exchange complimentary cards at posh restaurants.

(c) Kole Odutola published 2019

The American university is often portrayed as a beacon of intellectual freedom and opportunity, a place where minds from all corners of the globe can converge to pursue knowledge and build a better future. For many immigrant scholars, this promise is the very reason they leave their homes, families, and cultures behind. They arrive with a deep sense of purpose, hoping to contribute their unique perspectives to the academic community. However, this idyllic image often masks a far harsher reality of economic exploitation and professional insecurity. The poem, "We Who were Asked to Go," serves as a poignant and powerful testament to this experience. It is a micro-narrative that speaks to a broader, systemic issue: the institutional precarity faced by foreign-born academics. Through vivid metaphors of loss and betrayal, the poem illuminates how the rhetoric of globalization and diversity often conceals a cold, corporate logic that views immigrant labor as expendable. This paper will argue that "We Who were Asked to Go" is more than just a personal lament; it is a critical document that exposes the systemic exploitation of immigrant academics in U.S. universities, highlighting the profound psychological and professional displacement that results from being treated as a disposable resource rather than a valued member of the academic community.

The Illusion of Promise and the Reality of Precarity

The opening stanzas of "We Who were Asked to Go" immediately shatter the illusion of a secure and welcoming academic career. The poem begins with a chilling metaphor: "The notice like a deadly cargo arrived / with name and address intact." This framing suggests a devastating finality, where a routine administrative document is equated with a lethal shipment. The term "deadly cargo" conveys not just the end of employment, but the destruction of a professional identity and a future built on years of labor and sacrifice. The subsequent lines reinforce this sense of bureaucratic cruelty: "The facts well laid out like a clean sheet / on the

deathbed of an innocent soul." Here, I portrayed the cold, clinical efficiency of the institutional decision, presenting it as a final judgment on a life that had done no wrong. The "innocent soul" represents the scholar's faith in the university's mission and the belief that their hard work would be recognized and rewarded. Instead, the path forward is marked not by tenure, but by a forced departure: "Paths now marked to the unemployment market / with or without tenured packets."

This poetic narrative directly reflects the academic concept of contingent labor. Universities have increasingly come to rely on a flexible, low-cost workforce of adjuncts and lecturers, many of whom are immigrants. These institutions use the promise of a full-time position to attract highly qualified scholars, only to trap them in a cycle of short-term contracts with low pay and no benefits. As the poem suggests, this reliance on contingent labor is often framed by a neoliberal university model, where financial efficiency takes precedence over the welfare of its faculty. The immigrant scholar, who may have fewer professional networks and less institutional knowledge, becomes particularly vulnerable in this system, serving as an easily discarded resource when "budget cuts" are deemed necessary. The poem's opening, therefore, is not merely a personal expression of grief; it is a powerful critique of an economic model that treats people as commodities and turns the dream of an academic career into a nightmare of precarity and professional death.

We are still alive many years after this incidence. It was not good reason that prevailed but the fear of loss of income from Federal grants. We all went back to our stations but the scar remains.

Qvir djoi

Elizaveta Kheresh **(Russia - USA)**

perhaps that issue of “Queerography” in Kaliningrad —
air bubbles, Lolita Milyavskaya,
New Year’s address

meetings in Izmailovsky Park,
when I broke off our kiss in horror,
and we leaned our heads against the foliage,
clinged mole nests like brooches,
waiting out the iodine, lying down with our nostrils
in shashlik puddles, guns
pointing to amphitheaters of tinder fungi

the graceful elbows of Kuzmin’s readers,
Shkapskaya’s trimmed nails,
Vladislav-Mamychev Monroe,
standing with Rabin in the Lianozovsky Canal,
while ducks circle above the dam,
and the loaves in their delicate hands
shrink to lipstick cartridges
and are painted like a station whistle

Lia Michelle, or Jake Gyllenhaal,
or Chapelle Roan, who else
will walk through these Khrushchev-era buildings
in latex boots? searching
for the terrible Russian Renaissance,
dragged along by the escalator like shoelaces —
you will forget about the snow until it
gets stuck under your fingernails

involuntary music
among the remaining ice figures,
woven into the October vineyard,
icicles of carcass,
you and I, survivors of our own love
left to this day like piercings —
a pear of blood
in the microdermal crowns

there are very few of us

the wind tears off the burrs

Broadway cannot be heard, and, leaving Tennessee,
i want to count, like chickens,
these perverts, freaks and misfits,
sisters and stepbrothers,
teaching kisses, dreaming
in Berlin and Almaty,
pulling estrogen
from sugar cane

it costs me nothing,
I just want
for us to live to see thirty

***

Now it's hard for me to explain to my twenty-
year-old friends, for whom this is a big
gap, where those ten years went.

Alexandra Tsibulya

To milk that's too fatty
The day Ivan Golunov was arrested
June frosts
Sakharov Avenue, swaying
Like foam

To pulling in your stomach during sex

Mice by the lunar seas of a frozen manhole

To counting calories in food before the rally
How much do you need to run in the snow and walk in circles at the police station
To work off this good?

Wet tubers of the sky
White police vans floating in the rain

vomit with red spots
May Day demonstration

to the hungry noise in my head,
such bright, light nights when you drink only beer and hate

the lightened bodies of our dead friends
former lovers

on cheap vegan meals,
checking the ingredients of waffles, New Year's tea

so as never to meet the world at its best
and low weight: feeding on woolly cheeks and wind

girls and the unlucky all over the world,
your body of impeachment,
the body of a coup
stuck in the sandstones

you can lick this cold
the apostille of a good century,
which we imagined

the diet at the end of time changes the cursor,
becoming as gentle as electricity

we are March lecturers with anxiety disorders
monstrations of white flakes are flying above our heads

***

On the fields of Tempelhof, they collect bottles,
like hungry slugs.

A well-known structuralist praises a work about pantomime, unaware of how long his graduate student trained not to purse his lips.

two years after his death, sexologist A. Belkin recounts how he helped hundreds of teenagers from villages change their gender

(in the eighties, when it was already possible to go to bed later)

patients Y. and Sh. wanted to play with toy cars since childhood, and now they breast-feed, well, that's it

another woman goes in search of her awkward niece in the windows of Istanbul

and in the city they love cats, so they can inject estrogen

a twig stuck in the windshield wipers

you can mourn so much love in reality, but then they come up to you, and you don't give away snails with a stomach ache

you have to let someone go through the papers, someone to slide through the night, enthusiastically figure out

the chewed-up canvas, the swimmer from "Envy," named Chudakova bisexual [we have Butler at home],

i.e., already sufficient for all that

***
Fernand Braudel wrote about the sea as a salty lover.
He had so much film that squids followed him on his journey, drying on the tiles like tears.
Li Shu Tong, Tao Li, peaches and wrists, cold as plums, carried a suitcase across the

Atlantic
with the death mask of Hirschfeld, teacher and beloved,
while the forties pinched his legs.

Believe in the shifting oceans that slide
over burnt shoulders, where neither kings
nor Englishmen live, believe
in the carefree cruising of neutral waters,
the uncertain step of memory.
Liberation is brought by anglers in sharp illusions, swallowing eels, do not write the history of the sea,
if it does not drown its kings, tsunamis,
if it does not kiss the shore closely.
Bring to Canada the diary of your life partner, companion, that close friend, Marxist, roommate, and dawn.
Write the history of the sea, where our shoulder blades are clamped, where we are taken by the air by the chest, new right-wingers with matches on the shore, grapes in the sand, like bloated jellyfish, marble garlic heads under the sun, summer, and so much snow!

***
My letter is driven by bird flu and the fear of being left alone.
Recognizing acquaintances in poems, like in a crowd, and sloppily hiding my tongue.
We woke up to the hum of drones, thinking it was lawnmowers climbing across the sky.
I know nothing about surviving betrayal; I can only not experience it again and again.
The rotten boards of the tracks are covered with stains. Fro's sad sides protrude where Platonov didn't make it to the last train.
Lemon trees flutter. Dirty bandages from my eyes.
He takes pictures, hugs her, the incomprehensible sky, bad test results, and I don't understand how this is possible.
(I made up both of them; you can't tell by the washing powder and the fearful heart squeezed between two wars)
Walks through the cemetery — visiting rich guests, it was foolish to think they would tell us anything else.
Autumn, a rhetorical figure for magpies and latecomers, with complicated mobile numbers, flies in a poppy seed bun.
We pretend that all our passions are frosty and unquestionable.

In a Universe Parallel to Africa

Ghazal Baharestani (Iran)

Africa;
I've heard its burning sun and sand and desert and heat are just like those of our Island.
But I don't think anywhere else in the world has our colorful sand and red beach.
How I miss its coastal cliffs and its restless sea.
I've brought the sea with me. Every moment it waves in my heart and the burning heat of the south flames in my head.
Big words. Being a poet when you've only studied three grades? As if.
As Behjat Ma'am used to say "for someone like you who got out of the grave alive, nothing is weird."
"Sister, you talk as if I was dead when I got in the grave." I said.
She gives out her own kind of passionate laughter and says "who else got out

of that grave all right but you? Everyone else came out dead or insane."
She laughs again. I marvel at her. Like every time she laughs like this. My heart feels fuzzy and warm inside.
I've never laughed in my whole life. I'd been happy sometimes; but I don't really know how to open my mouth and crack with laughter.
Now, I'm not even sure if I get happy the same way Behjat Ma'am gets happy.
I don't get how people get over the moon with happiness. But my heart did flutter two times or so.

Once was when they told me a seed was growing in my womb; which didn't take long and I bled and it turned out to be for nothing.
Turned out nursemaid Zinat had her eye on Mahmoud's mama's gold coins and lied about the seed, telling her the bride is three months pregnant.
She got three of for gold coins too, good for her.
You should get what you can from a stingy person.
We didn't get anything in that house. Everything Mahmoud and his dad and brothers would bring from sea and land and business, would turn into coins in the safe and Bangles on Mahmoud's mama's hand.
Behjat ma'am tapped on my shoulder "Where are you, Island girl? Surfing the waves again?"
I said "I'm right here. Gotta go make rice, kids will be here soon."
"No hurries, you'll make it. They eat it. God bless you." she said.

When my grandmother would tell me the story of the angels coming from the sea, I used to think they had upper halves like human, and legs like fish tail. But this Behjat ma'am has the head and hands and legs like a human, but a heart as fragile as baby fish.
When we were kids, we would dig holes at the beach. The water would rise up in the holes and baby fish would gather there.
So fragile and delicate.
Behjat ma'am says Tehran agrees with me, I've got a rosy skin.
I say "rosy or sunburned, what does it do for me?"
Again, she gives me her sweet laughter and says "Come let's find a husband for
you. This time, Someone from Tehran, a city boy"
"I'm in the kitchen. Gotta make rice. It's late" I say.
She sees me off, laughing

And the first time my heart was happy, I guess, was when my mama said the Captain Asad's son has me as his bride.
I was only 13. But in my thoughts, when you were a bride, you were a fairy. It's all Fun and happy and lucky.
Mahmoud's mama came and approved of me. She asked my mom sneakily "you circumcised her?"
Mama bit her lips and nodded yes.
"They say her twin didn't get out of the circumcision alive?" Mahmoud's mama
said.
Mama said "God save us."
Mahmoud's mama said: "When there's lots of blood and filth in the girls' bodies, even circumcision can't clean it. God save all of us."
I was Mahmoud's third wife. His second daughter was two years older than me.
I had the small chamber in his house.
"You bake the morning's bread, Esmat will make food at noon, and Atefeh cooks at night." Mahmoud's mama said.
"And you'll sweep the whole house from the front door to the hall and all of the rooms, every day.
No rags and dishes on the floor. Wash everything you see."
"At your service" I said.

It'd been four months when nursemaid Zinat showed up. "Lie down. Let me see your belly." she said.
She went out of the room and everyone cheered.
They gave me grilled fish for dinner that night.

The morning after, I got a stomachache and the bleeding started.

Four months became four years and no signs of the baby.
They brought a nursemaid from the upper village. She said “let her sleep in the
cemetery for one night before it becomes five years. Her tubes will open up.
Any woman that spent a night in the cemetery became with child soon after.”
It was no use to cry and shout and scream and beg.
They took me to the grave, all cheering and banging on drums, put an oil lamp
above my head, and left.
Silent, dark, pitch black everywhere.

The only noises were from crickets and the hush of the dead.
Mama used to say the dead would come out of the grave and repent at nights.
I was numb all over my body. I wasn’t cold anymore. I wasn’t even scared anymore.
Or maybe I was so afraid I didn’t feel anything.
Maybe I was dead.
I was near my twin's grave.
We were eleven.
One day nursemaid Zahra came. Mom told us to take turns and lie down in the
bedroom and not to talk.
“If you move and scream the sea demon will get inside your body.” She said.
I went in first.
Samira, my twin, was so scared. She was shaking. “You go” she said.
We were twins but she was so much tinier than me.
“I’ll go.” I said,
I lay down.

The nursemaid took my clothes off. After turning five, we wouldn’t even take our clothes off in front of mama. But I didn’t make a sound so the demon sea would not catch me.

She touched me in a place mama had said not to touch even when cleaning.
Then, too much pain, a horrible and hellish pain took over my body.
She put a piece of wood in my mouth and told me to press on it with my teeth.
My breath was cut off but I didn’t scream because I was fearing the sea demon.
“Done,” she said. “All the filth left your body.

You're circumcised. Congratulations."

I couldn't move because I felt so weak and I was in so much pain.
"Stand up. Go. It's your sister's turn." she said.
"Don't take up my time I have four other houses to go to tonight."
I was squirming with pain in the other room. Samira screamed.
The sea demon got her.
A week later she bled and squirmed with pain and then died.
On the island, the word got around that the dirt and filth in her blood was too much.
I wish I could at least talk to her now.
The time passes so slowly.
When will the morning come?
There was a noise. A woman's voice that kept saying "I can't believe this."
I could hear her quarreling and fighting with the islanders.
A strong light hit me in the eye. I couldn't see.
Then a hand was raised to me.

Behjat ma'am was shaking the dirt off my head and face. She took me to the shore.
Then she gave me water. She washed my face.
I said "where did you come from?"
"The sea." she said.
I blacked out.
When I opened my eyes, I was in the hospital.
The doctors said if she had reached me an hour later, I would have been dead.
My heart was beating too slowly.
Shock and stress and fear.
My hand touched the rice pot.
I just realized Behjat ma'am had been looking at me for a long time with her sweet smile.

She said "Off you went again to the island."
"The island is inside me." I said.
"Did you know they also circumcise women in Africa?" she said.
"I thought women from foreign lands were happy."
Behjat ma'am gave a quick, bitter laugh.
"It's still not easy being a woman in many parts of the world."

The end.

~~Mixed-Genre~~

Diren Demir **(Istanbul- Berlin)**

To speak with doubt, nuance, and openness to complexity, is to sabotage the political economy of escalation, which thrives on deindividualised identities and sect-like political formations. To talk is to step out of the warzone, at least, the ideological one. Talking is a refusal to be rushed into dehumanisation of the other. It is an invitation for reclaiming our affective autonomy from those infrastructures that seek to dictate when, how, and to whom we may or may not listen.

Contemporary platforms of communication (both digital and institutional) reward immediacy and polarity. These conditions produce a synthetic discursive field where language is captured by pre-scripted affiliations. Talking becomes indistinguishable from declaring allegiance. This collapse of language and the possibility of dialogue and communication into tribal signalling is purely infrastructural and inorganic, not cultural. Against this backdrop, conversation must be reclaimed as a deliberative ethic. Not in the sense of consensus-building, rather in the radical sense of holding complexity without collapsing it into enemies. The language of resistance (against genocidal regimes, occupation, systemic silencing, unspeakable atrocities...) became scripted. Within such a landscape, dialogue is the necessary refusal to outsource our political consciousness to polarising scripts.

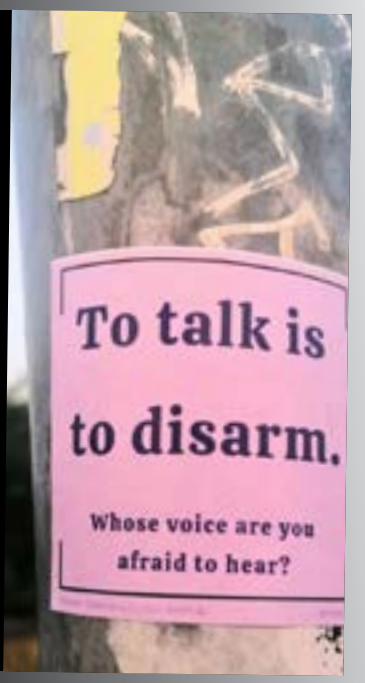
The notion that dialogue is apolitical is a myth promoted by identity-driven factions that rely on bigotry, escalation and militant rage to maintain moral superiority. Dialogue reclaims language as a space of ethical agency; not to neutralise conflict, but to prevent the complete colonisation of meaning by militarised worldviews. Dialogic resistance is not The absence of confrontation; it is confrontation without dehumanisation. In this way, dialogue is an active counter-power.
We must reclaim dialogue as a refusal to be rushed into vengeance, reduced to slogans, or swallowed by identities that serve war machines. It is how we interrupt the demand to dehumanise before we are allowed to mourn, to question, or to understand. In a world where war logic is embedded in language itself — To talk is to disarm.

Counter-Spells for a Divided World, 2025
Public Intervention / Self Published Pro-Peace Manifesto
12 Pieces, 5x5 format

Counter-Spells for a Divided World is a street-based public art intervention composed of peace statements that act as psychic counter-magick against hyper-polarisation, ideological possession, and collective trauma.

These Psychic-Interventions treat language as spellwork, each sticker is a coded sentence designed to interrupt internalized war scripts and reopen the possibility of dialogue, united grief, and self-reflection.

These counter-spells are not neutral; they are rather radically human and radically vulnerable In a landscape dominated by performative outrage. They resist the flattening force of sides, flags and slogans by offering subtler, slower codes for those who still hear beneath the noise.



To talk is to disarm.

Whose voice are you afraid to hear?

Counter-Spells for a Divided World #2 @diren.art

Reclaim your grief.

Counter-Spells for a Divided World #1

Abismos de Aguavientola
Radha Madhava (Colombia)

Umbral

Siempre fui isla sin reconocer que lo era. Perdida entre movimientos incesantes de la mar, creyendo que eso era la vida. Con el tiempo, y con la presión atmosférica y social, se hizo difícil no percatarme de que, de las singularidades que habitamos en el mundo, hay unas que nos cuesta más estar en sincronía con el ritmo establecido. Hay unos fuegos interiores con mucha fuerza pero que no logran salir. Hay motores de singularidad en todos, pero también un "orden" general; cuándo se es isla sola, isla neurodivergente, isla ahogada, isla disidente, la combustión es distinta y la existencia y el movimiento de las olas también lo son.

A mis 23 años, después de mirar a mi alrededor y sentirme perdida y sin comprender mi entorno, me diagnosticaron por primera vez con autismo. Para aquella época –hace más de una década– no había tanta información y difusión como afortunadamente hay hoy. Yo recibí el diagnóstico como un caramelo que se guarda en el bolsillo: la depresión y/o posible burn out que transitaba en ese momento, tenía a mi vida colgada peligrosamente de un hilo viejo, raído y delgado.

A veces, había algo de alivio caótico en el encuentro con otras islas que, como yo, sentían el mundo desde un lugar muy propio. Con ellas, el tormento de la marea incomprensible no era menos denso pero sí menos solitario, un poco menos son los síntomas del mar de una isla que aún no puede nombrar lo que le pasa. Esas marejadas a veces hunden, separan a esa isla de casi toda conexión.

Pero no se me entienda mal, todas esas aguas-emociones y sus movimientos, no son una condena, son, en realidad una vasta posibilidad. Sólo que un mundo que gusta de peceras, control y homogeneidad, quita la posibilidad de entender la naturalidad de la agua a esas islas que tienen en sí una frecuencia única.

En todos esos ires y venires, en ahogamientos, islas naufragio, muertes invocadas, encontré que entre mi ser isla y la sociedad de otros miles de islas, había un abismo. Me percaté aquellos días en que estaba hundida y me sentaba en el escalón de la puerta de entrada de las residencias estudiantiles, y observaba por horas el mundo pasar, mientras fumaba o esculpía. Oía conversaciones, y recordaba conversaciones, porque cuando una es isla ahogada las palabras y el otro no existen igual.

Y entonces ví, que cada pájaro-palabra que había emanado de mí, que cada pájaro-palabra que había llegado a mí, no se mantenía plenamente igual a sí mismo al
momento de emerger de su isla madre, esto es potencia humana de la singularidad, sí, su fuego, pero para algunes es también una roca que ancla al fondo.

Hay para quienes el abismo es más grande: su fuego singular no vibra tan cercano a la vibración del fuego de otras islas. El abismo se puede volver condena. Hay una fisura constitutiva humana y un abismo del lenguaje que le acompaña.

Algunas islas forman archipiélagos y la soledad solo parece una ficción del viento, aunque el abismo siempre esté. Algunas otras islas que hemos estado o estamos hundidas, que somos volcanes humeantes, podemos encontrar ese archipiélago y ver con serenidad el abismo cuando por fin llega la comprensión y se rompe la imposición de la única norma.

El proyecto de Abismos de Aguavientoala se cultivó en mi ser, en mi disidencia, en mi neurodivergencia por muchos años. Creció en el límite donde se corroboró el diagnóstico, en el momento en que la vida me pesaba más, y justo cuando más islas, a la distancia, compartían información y su sentir conmigo. Fue entonces que empezó a tener forma.

Mi pensamiento al ser visual, dejó de intentar entender esta situación por otros medios y una tarde de lluvia, frente a un café, con mi cuadernito y lápiz en mano, empecé a dibujar y con ello fue llegando la claridad de este refugio.

Este libro quiere ser un refugio, un pájaro-pez que viaje entre islas y les haga sentir que no están solas, que no son las únicas. Que el capacitismo que quiso condenar con dolor a las islas y las normas homogéneas no son más que un paradigma quebrado que requiere ser reformado. Desde dónde queramos, podamos y necesitemos, nuestra voz singular llega y hace archipiélago; y seguimos siendo islas, a veces ahogadas, a veces no, pero sí menos solas y conscientes de la agencia y fuerza que tenemos.

Mito

Antes de la isla, el abismo

Mito líquido del abismo que atraviesa: las islas que fuimos, somos y seremos y los silencios volcánicos.

Hubo un momento en que la Madre Tierra no era acto, sino potencia. Agonizando por los roces incesantes e indeseados de los cielos, emergió de ella una protección: una capa de agua la cubrió.

Justo en ese instante, mientras se cubría de agua, la Madre tuvo una hija, la Luna, a la que mandó lejos para gobernar la capa que la estaba cubriendo.

Y entonces una capa de emoción cubrió a la Madre: porque para ella, la emoción no es vulnerabilidad, sino defensa. Y con esa agua, su centro se hizo fuego.

Como una apuesta alquímica, el mundo se llenó de significado. Todo lo visible era la agua. Todo era agua. Al calentarse por el sol, y al hervirse desde el centro de la madre –como cuando se derrite una crayola al sol– algo quería empezar a emerger. El átomo que subyacía era la voluntad. La voluntad: esa conexión con la tierra-fuego y la agua-sentimientos.

De ese rugir de aguas profundas y tierra caliente, manaron los peces. Peces que encarnaron la voluntad de la Madre.

Que, huyendo de Urano, se mantenía fuerte y pudo ser madre sin Urano. De su voluntad surgieron las primeras islas. Porque la madre fue madre sola. Y somos hijas de solas mujeres.

Y así nacimos todes, como islitas conectadas y separadas por agua.

Somos islitas, islitas…islas.
Islas rodeadas del fuego de la singularidad. Un fuego que transforma al pájaro-palabra cada vez que lo dirigimos para otra isla.

Parir el pájaro ya es transformación. Su vuelo lo es. El tiempo que pasa hasta llegar, también lo es.

Nunca llega el pájaro que surgió.

Pero a veces, el fuego propio de la isla que lo recibe vibra de tal forma

que le devuelve algo del sentido original al pájaro, y nace la cercanía.

También hay islas - a veces islitas volcánicas- como yo, que están hundidas, sumergidas… ahogadas… tan hundidas que no podemos ni intentar lanzar el pájaro. Y el fuego sobrevive como fueguito exterior, porque todo el fuego está en el interior.

Humeante.

Pero los peces, el lenguaje de las emociones, la voluntad y el compromiso rompen cerca y unen.

Todo nace en el abismo del lenguaje. Y desde ese abismo nació también Abismos de aguavientola.

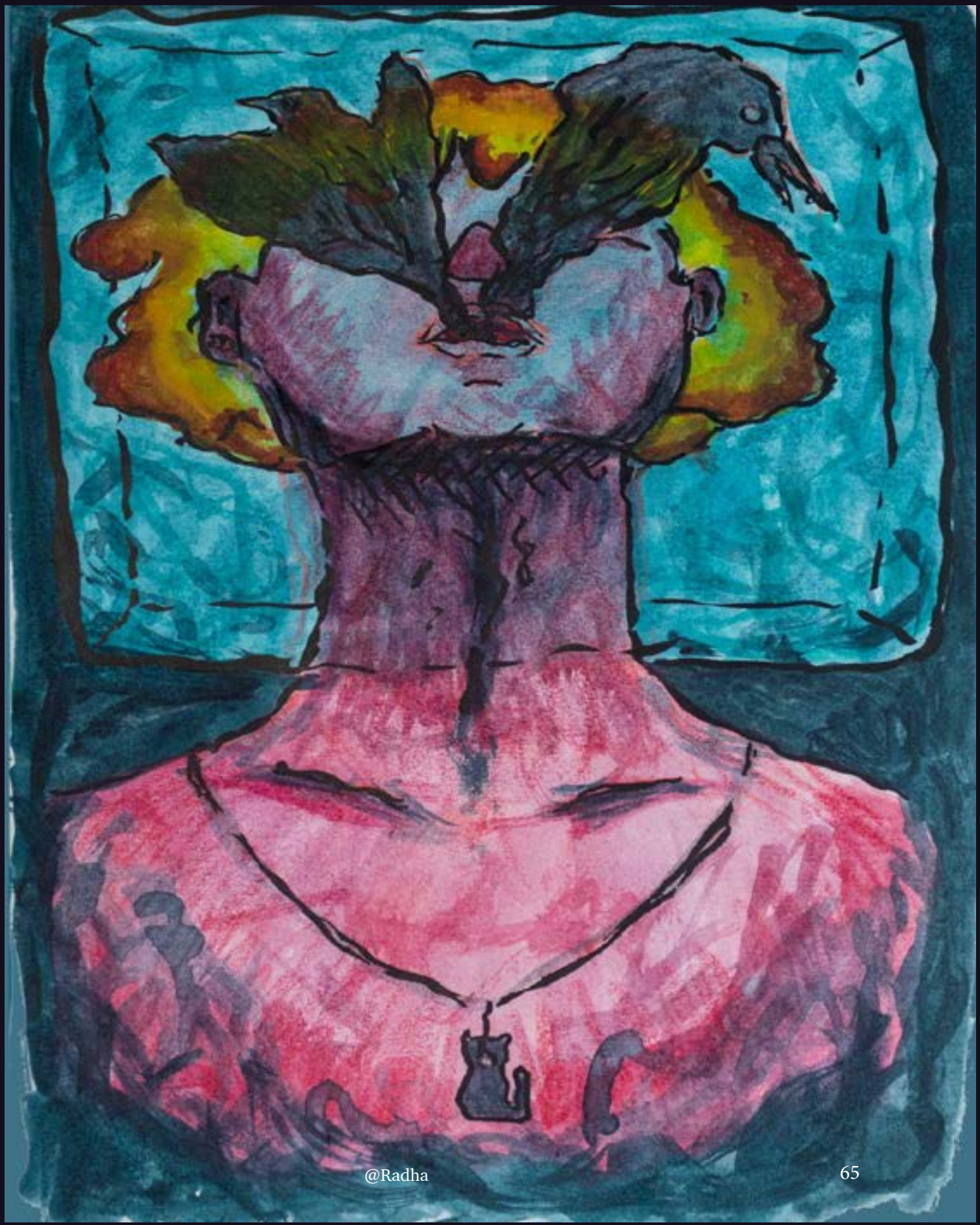
Este es su mito submergido.

Como una pergunta sobre el language. Como una petición de escucha de los cantos de las islas y también de las islas sumergidas. Un canto que no se grita, que busca desde lo ahogado, que abre grietas y voluntades-peces para nombrar, para dialogar, para crear desde la más profunda honestidad.

El núcleo

A partir de este momento, te convido a que exploremos esta obra de cercanía y refugio nadando. Sabiéndonos a salvo. Sabiéndonos acompañadas, acompañades. Las palabras-pájaro son puentes. Aquí vibramos con cierta cercanía, y por eso nos encontramos. Pero ahora serán los peces y nuestras manos y ojos las que tengan cercanía y comunicación.

Gracias por estar.



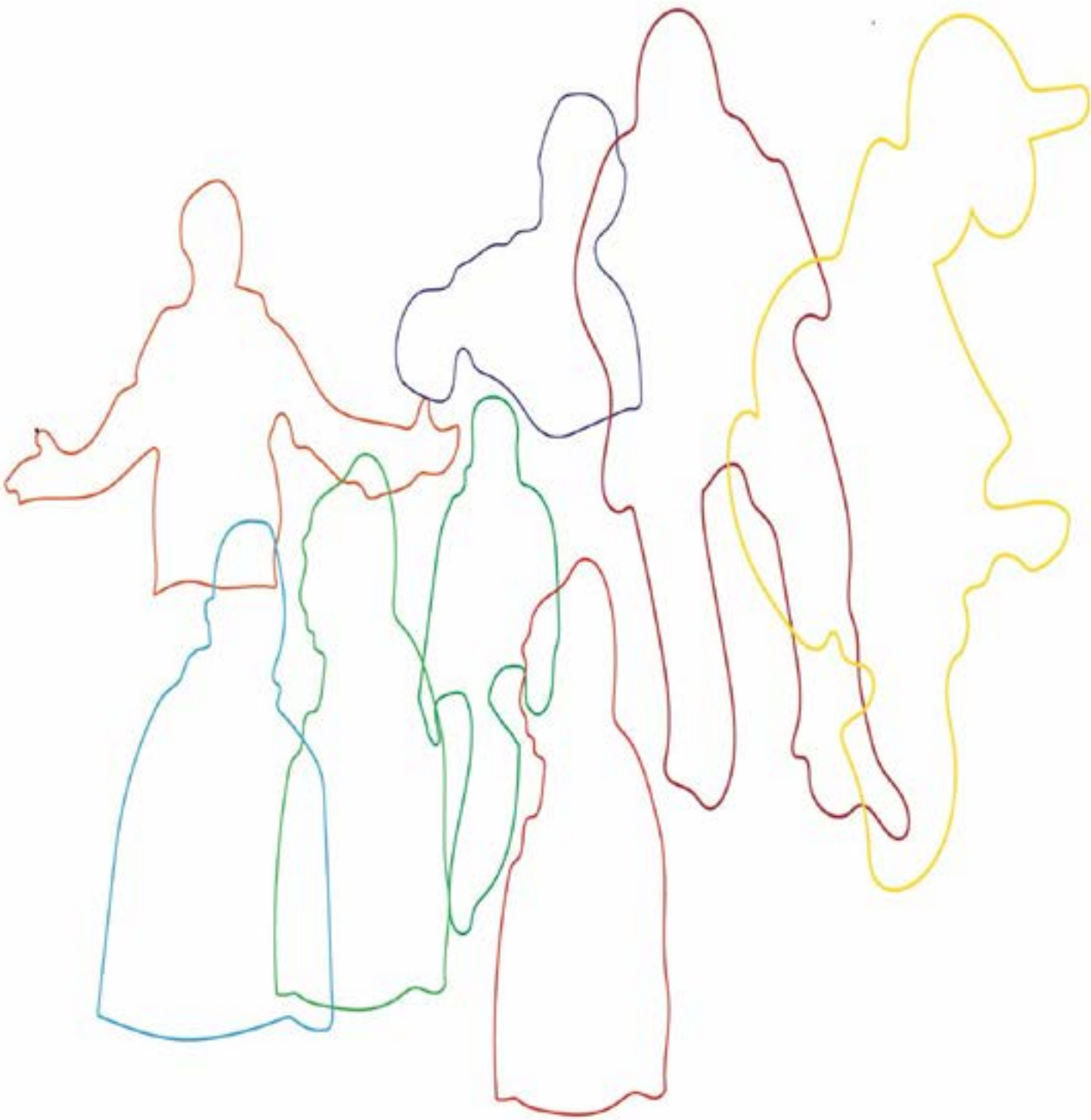
@Radha Madhava

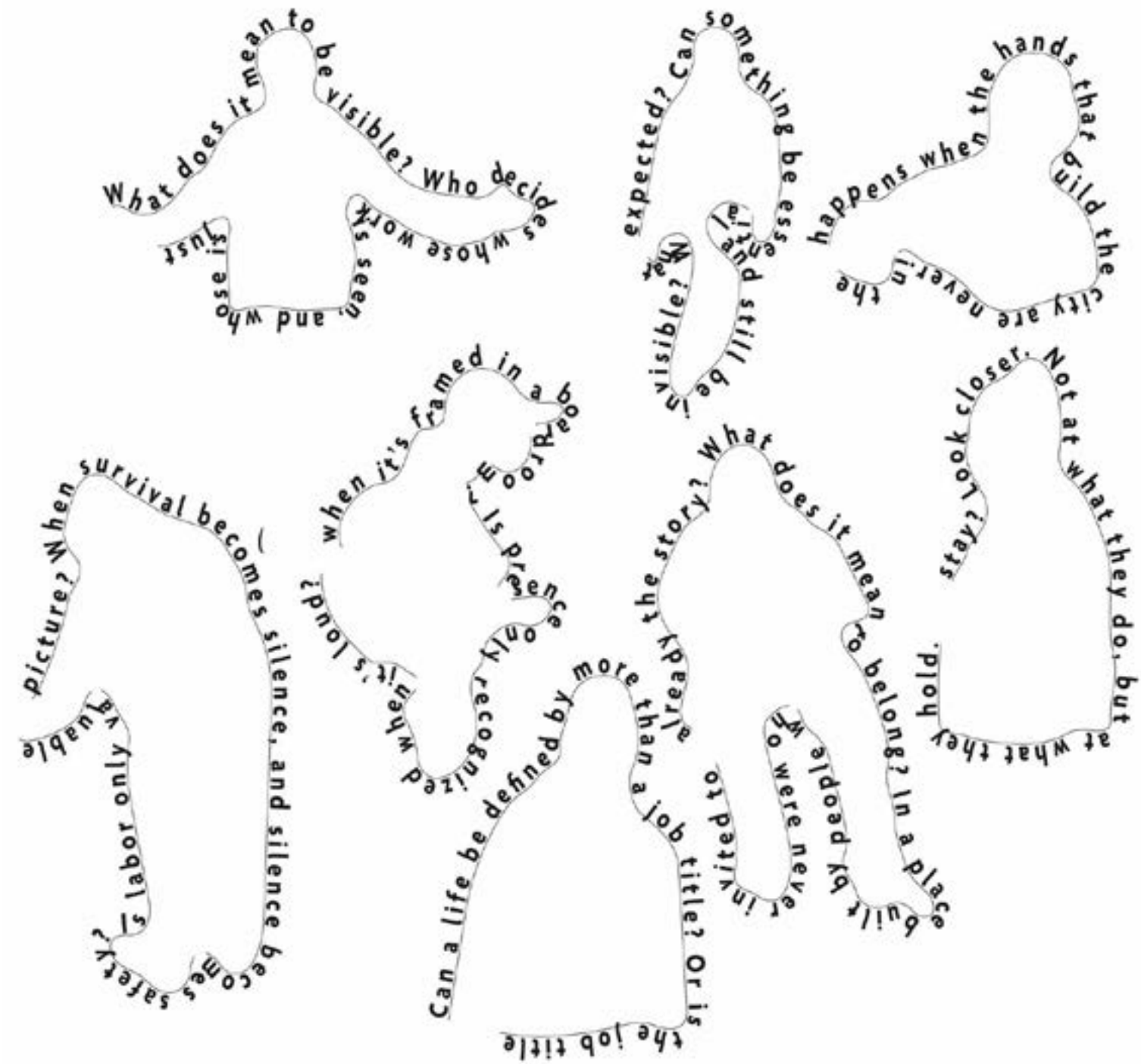
@Radha Madhava

~~Audio-Visual / Visual~~

They Matter

Deeptha Babu (USA & India)




What does it mean to be visible? Who decides
whose work is just seen, and who is
expected? Can something be essential still be
invisible? When
happens when the hands that build the
city are never in the
stay? Look closer. Not at what they do, but
at what they hold.
when it's framed in a boardroom is
only recognized when it's loud?
picture? When survival becomes silence, and silence becomes safety?
Is labor only valuable
the story? What does it mean to belong? In a place
already
built by people who were never invited to
Can a life be defined by more than a job title? Or is
the job title

Rasu' - plânsu

Aga Luczakowska (Poland)

I see photography as a way to preserve memory and invite questions rather than provide answers. I value imperfections and a sense of the primitive - qualities that carry emotional truth. As Greene once said, "If we keep it primitive, then we will get the iconic image… being perfect is boring." My approach is also influenced by time spent in Berlin's galleries, where I reconnect with contemporary art, and by years in Bucharest, a city whose raw textures and layered histories continue to inform my vision. Equally, I draw inspiration from my love of Brâncuși's work - his devotion to form and light.

@Aga

@Aga
@Aga

@Aga

Guided by the Light

Sarah Hussein **(Egypt)**

This painting shows a group of young women from different cultures and backgrounds, all looking toward one source of light — a hand holding a lantern. Each face has its own story and identity, but together they form a shared movement toward hope. The mix of shadow and light on their faces reflects both fragility and strength, as well as the challenges of today's world. The work connects to the theme *Re-Imagine, Now!* by using the lantern as a symbol of hope, compassion, and transformation. In moments of fear and restrictions, the light becomes a way to imagine a different future, where people come together instead of being divided. The painting does not repeat violence, but instead opens a space for imagintion, healing, and solidarity. It asks us: how can we re-imagine the present, if not by walking together toward the same light?

On The One Hand, On The Other

Maya Nguyen (Vietnam-Russia)

This work is part of ZOOM01_DXC_BER.MP3, a site-specific sound project based on field recordings of urban ambience at the Dong Xuan Center in Lichtenberg, Berlin —the largest Vietnamese-run market in Germany — that is based on Dong Xuan Center in Hanoi, Vietnam. “On The One Hand, On The Other Hand” documents the artist’s performative intervention to bridge two sites through sound: as sound recordings of the Berlin market from the device held in the right hand are played out loud in the Hanoi market and re-recorded with the device held in the left hand, their independent but interrelated worlds merge into one sound-space.
This project was developed during a residency at Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Berlin, GE 2023), shown at Berlin Art Week 2024, and awarded the Karl Sczuka Radio Art Research Prize 2024 from the Südwest Rundfunk and the Goethe-Institut. It was first published in *Asymptote* journal

Link to the video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ButCkezF4bI

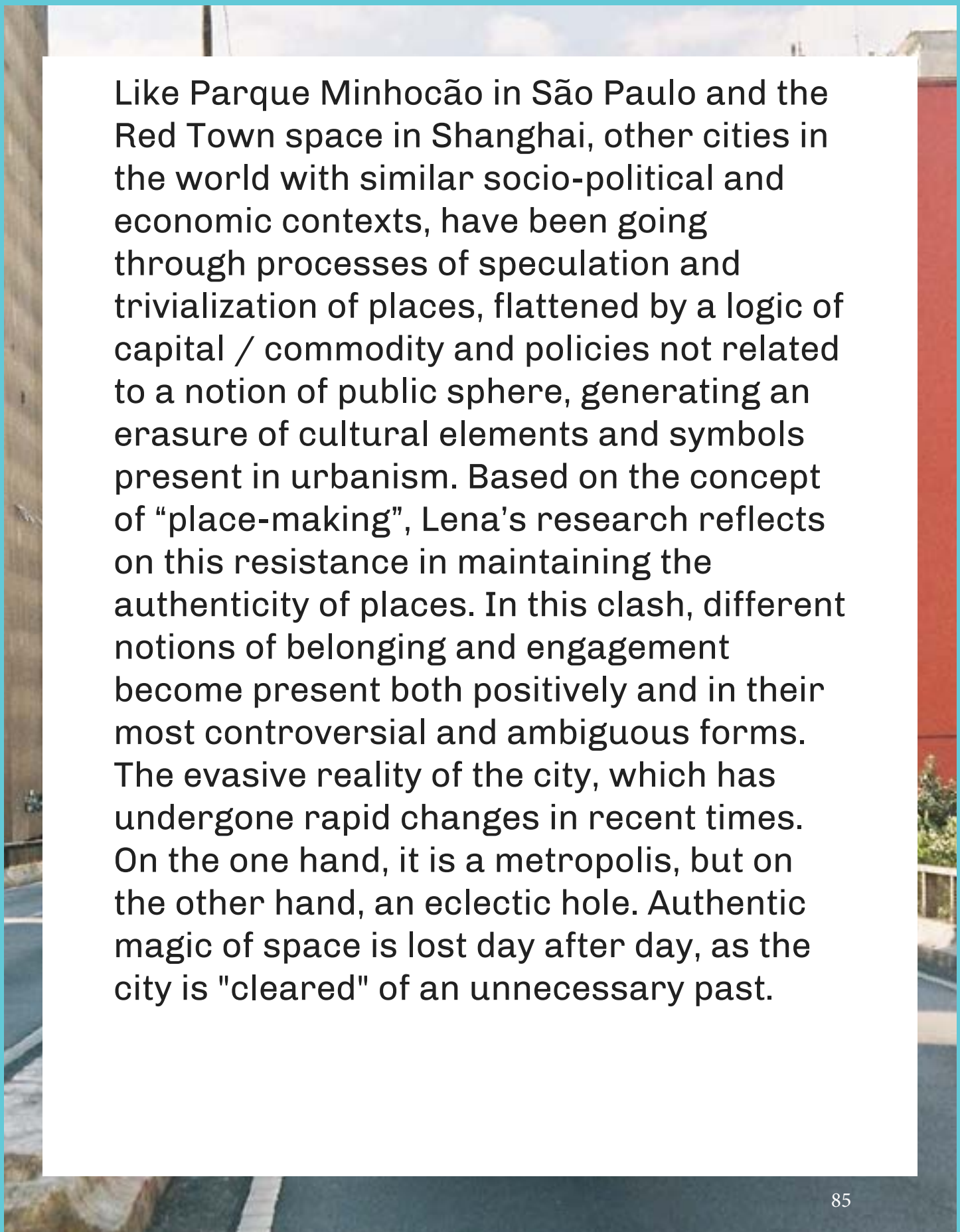
14:13
All Recordings
pipes cafe
6 Jul 2023
00:44
dxmb - hiphop
6 Jul 2023
01:43
dxmb46 - chatter/beat
6 Jul 2023
01:39
dxmb45 - vncooking!
6 Jul 2023
06:59
dxmb44 - vnshopbanter
6 Jul 2023
02:09
dxmb43 - unclear
6 Jul 2023
01:21
dxmb42 - mechcats
6 Jul 2023
dxmb41 - indian
6 Jul 2023
02:52

Urban Play

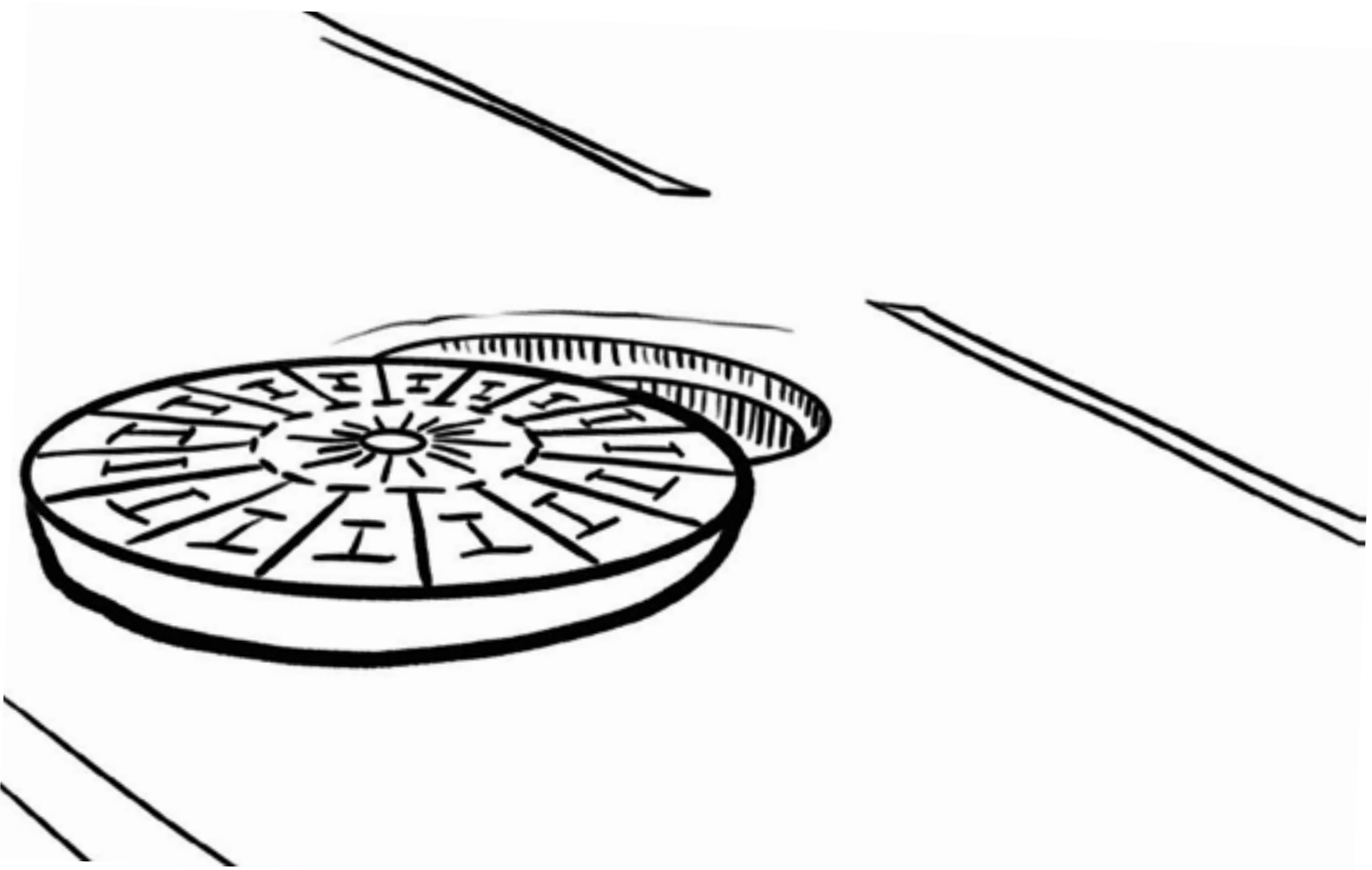
Lena Kilina, Alice Casiraghi

The work combines photography and illustration to explore the dialogue between image and text where emotion, memory, and silence become part of the visual language.

Urban Play



Like Parque Minhocão in São Paulo and the Red Town space in Shanghai, other cities in the world with similar socio-political and economic contexts, have been going through processes of speculation and trivialization of places, flattened by a logic of capital / commodity and policies not related to a notion of public sphere, generating an erasure of cultural elements and symbols present in urbanism. Based on the concept of “place-making”, Lena’s research reflects on this resistance in maintaining the authenticity of places. In this clash, different notions of belonging and engagement become present both positively and in their most controversial and ambiguous forms. The evasive reality of the city, which has undergone rapid changes in recent times. On the one hand, it is a metropolis, but on the other hand, an eclectic hole. Authentic magic of space is lost day after day, as the city is "cleared" of an unnecessary past.

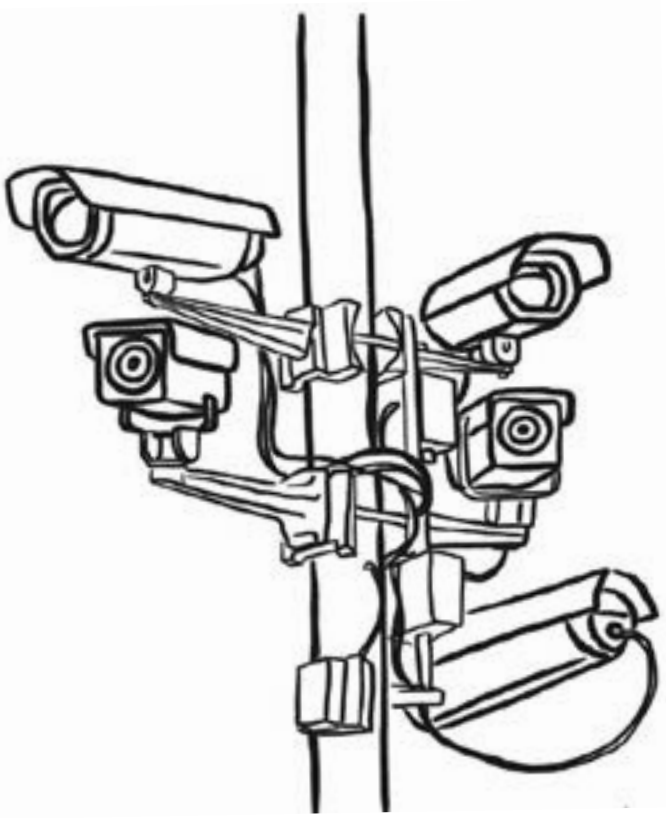


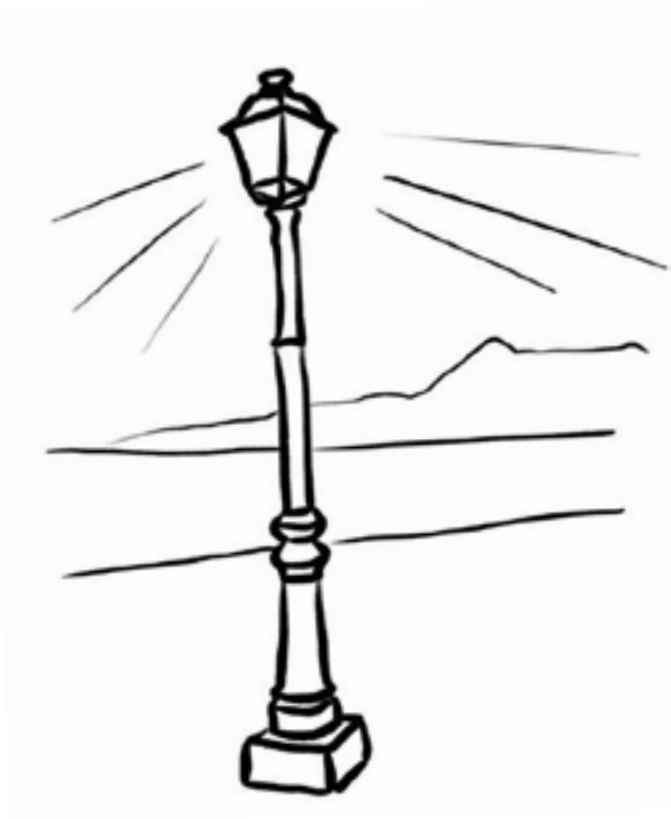
Reflections about space by Lena Kilina:

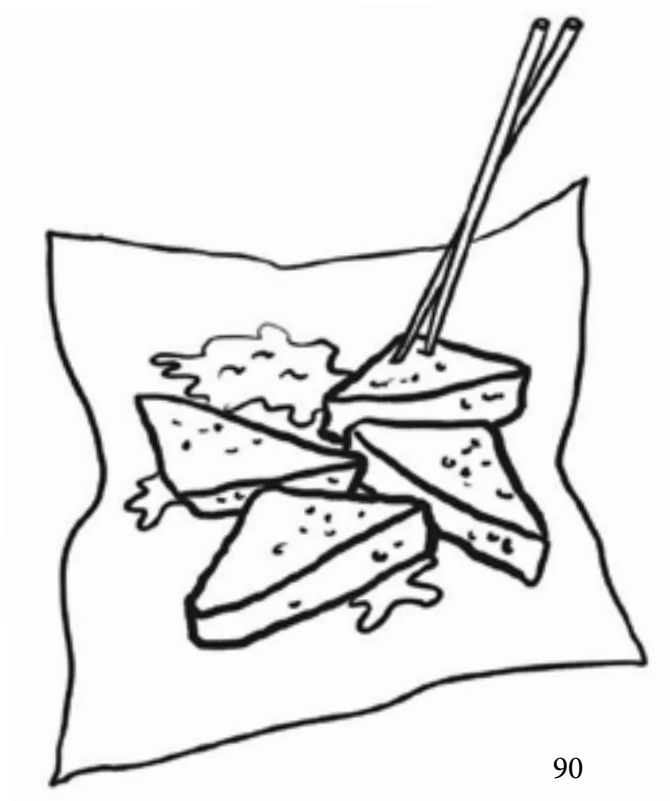
Another dimension of space
Nothing last forever. Only space will remain constant.
Notion of permanent is lost. It's all ephemeral.
The pain and sorrow are dispersed.

The city demands to not have any habits. You must be an absolute opportunist, not opened but flexible, so it makes you flow with the crowd. You can't gain a foothold in any particular fragment, but you are part of the new urban density. It swallows you. Sigh of belonging to many and to no one. How to overcome an urban alienation?

Floating in a space
Existence though the narrative issues
A strange scenario
anchored in a non-site.
Space. Its present.
The notions of territory
Displacement. Urban. Space.
Lose the balance?





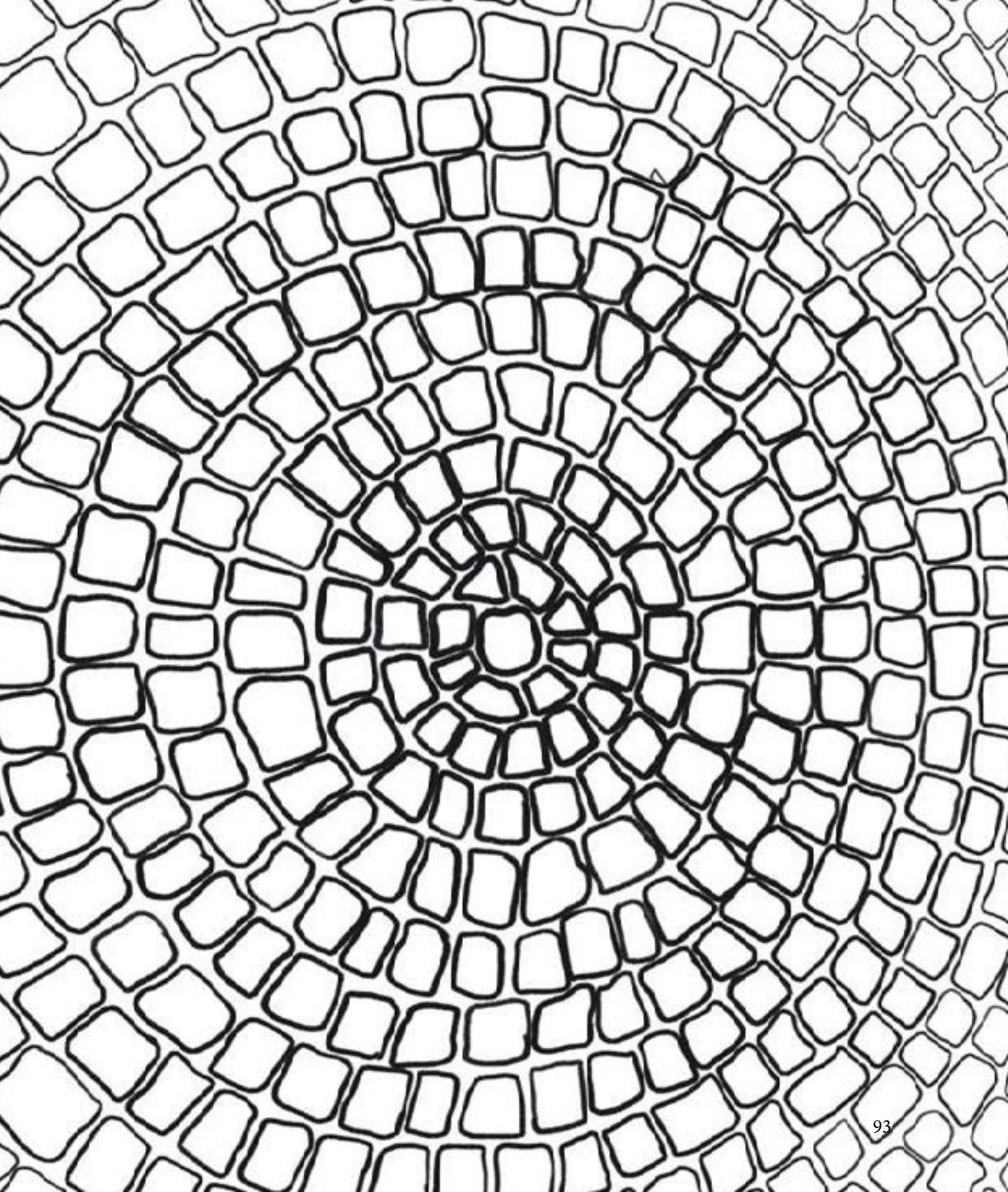


O organismo do espaço
um envelope bioenergético
sustentado por rendas arquitetônicas acidentais
de sulcos materiais em intervalos irregulares
Locais, pontos de ebulição, para os desfiles cívicos
sociais psíquicos da necessidade inconsciente.

Assim, ruínas de qualidade,
Lixo resgatado
interlúdios palpáveis, recintos, suficientemente momentâneos
para fornecer um proscênio para o oceano.

Quando alguém desaparece
Um vácuo não cai, mas sim,
Um objeto erguesse .
Nenhuma informação é perdida,

No espaço
Impressões, partículas retiradas de uma impressão,
Ou peneirado do esquecimento do mar de Deus
Separado para fora novamente para pinotear sob a estrada
Separado a parte de trás de um buraco negro
Em impressões feitas de jogo
carinhosamente redistribuído
por todo o lugar.
Em um espaço particular.



to be continued...

These are the spaces we live and cherish.

Through photography we tried to capture
the essence of these shared urban spaces
and through illustrations we visually
represented its symbols and rituals.

Concept by Lena Kilina and Alice Casiraghi
Text and photography by Lena Kilina
Graphic design and illustrations by Alice Casiraghi

Gran Canária

Sam Sara Małecka (Poland)

ESTRELLA

Almost Free, 2023.

Mykhailo Markin **(Ukraine)**

@Mykhailo Markin

Re-Imagining Heritage: Love, Migration, and Metal

Mohammadhadi Ghahramanpouri (Iran & UK)

@Mohammadhadi Ghahramanpouri

Author's BIOs

Kamelia Sofia El Ghaddar is a scholar in Women's Literature and Gender Studies, having completed a cotutelle doctorate at the University of Bologna and the University of
Granada. Her research examines contemporary Arab Anglophone women's writing, with a focus on desire, power, agency, and subjectivity through feminist, postcolonial, and affect theory. She has published on Islamic feminism and women's agency, and her dissertation explored authors such as Salma El-Wardany and Alya Mooro, situating their works within debates on sexuality, shame, secrecy, and the affirmative politics of desire. Beyond academia, Kamelia works as an educator and artistic mediator in intercultural contexts, creating pedagogical tools that blend literature, theatre, and feminist methodologies. She is actively engaged in community activism, with experience in anti-violence work and youth projects. Multilingual and transnational, she bridges scholarship and practice to foster dialogue between feminist theory, artistic expression, and social transformation.

Alice Marie Genevieve Gallouin is a digital artist, animator, and academy teacher based in Italy. Originally from France, she combines a passion for contemporary art with expertise in emerging technologies. Specializing in animation, Alice transforms classical frescoes and paintings into dynamic, immersive digital artworks, merging art history with cutting-edge technology to create visually captivating experiences that challenge traditional boundaries. Currently pursuing a PhD, Alice explores the impact of artificial intelligence on archival practices, specifically examining the emergence of AI-generated alternative archives and their implications for collective memory. Her research intersects art practice, technology, and memory studies, nvestigating how synthetic archives can serve as tools for cultural repair and resistance in marginalized communities. Fluent in Italian, French, and English, Alice continues to push the boundaries of artistic expression, drawing inspiration from historical art while embracing digital innovation. Through her work, she bridges cultures, narratives, and technologies in meaningful, creative ways.

Volha Aniska - 1990 is an independent researcher, art historian, and cultural worker from Hrodna, Belarus. She earned her Master's degree in History of Art from Vitebsk State University. From 2014 to 2020, she worked in the Arts Department of the Hrodna State Historical and Archaeological Museum, serving as the head of the department since 2015. In 2021-2022, she was a recipient of the Scholarship Program of the Government of Poland for Young Scientists at the University of Warsaw. She is the co-author of the book "Artistic representation of the Hrodna region" (2019).

Her research interests include political art, ideology in art, Eastern European art, borderlands, and decolonial thinking. Currently lives and works in Warsaw (Poland).

Laura Beaujour es mujer. Negra. De un lugar perdido en el océano. Una isla etiquetada como francesa, de herencia amerindia y africana. Creció entre Guadalupe y Francia continental. Escribe sobre identidad, sobre territorio, sobre pertenencia.

Kole Odutola is a language teacher at the University of Florida. He is a poet who combines the theory and practice of photojournalism, and environmental activism. Kole trained first as a Botanist and much later received the British Council Chevening scholarship to study for a master's degree in TV/video for Development from the University of Reading, United Kingdom. He relocated to the United States, where he earned another master's degree in
Organizational Communication at Ithaca College, NY, and later obtain a PhD in media studies from Rutgers University

Elizaveta Kheresh (born 2002), poet and translator. Graduate student at Harvard University in Slavic Languages and Literatures program. Winner of the Andrei Bely Prize as part of the team in the Best Project category (2023), editor of Flagi magazine. Translator from English, Belarusian, Yiddish, Italian, German, Polish, and other languages. Her debut poetry collection was published in 2026 in the cae/su/ra book series. She studies uncensored culture and the latest poetry of Eastern Europe and lives in Boston.

Ghazal Baharestani holds a Master's degree in Dramatic Literature. She is a theatre director, playwright, and actress. She is also the author of two books, Alphabet Stories and Being a Woman, Becoming a Woman. Ghazal is dedicated to exploring an international language for expressing social concepts and shared human pain, with a particular focus on women's experiences.

Radha Madhava Me llamo Radha, soy una artista colombiana autista con altas capacidades, pansexual y nómada. Estudié filosofía, cine y artes plásticas, me gradué de filosofía. Llevo dedicada al arte seis años. Mi obra nace de un lugar íntimo, lo femenino y esto en relación a diosa que nos sostiene, la Madre Tierra: pasando por revisar mi ancestralidad, la deconstrucción de la mitología patriarcal que ha condenado a la mujer y las disidencias. Como neurodivergente el lenguaje es para mí un abismo y una

pregunta, he interrogado esto desde lo visual hasta aislarme en bosques y a recorrer Asia en busca de respuestas visuales. Trabajo con auspicios y los mensajes de los seres que habitan el mundo desde una mirada antiespecista que evita el activismo y prefiere la ritualidad profunda. Cada obra es un conjuro visual, un acto que convoca el pensamiento abierto, propone sin imponer y ofrece capas para ser leídas por quien observa.

Diren Demir (Istanbul, 1997) is a Berlin-based interdisciplinary artist and independent curator. Their work explores transformative solutions to the challenges posed by patriarchal and authoritarian regimes. Their installations and performances often engage with themes of revelation and the body-power relationship as a site of conflict. Diren focuses on transformational activism, participatory practices, and developing new models of resistance in their artworks. They incorporate queer themes, using their own body to challenge stereotypical gender roles and de-gender memories of place and the city by referencing LGBTIQ+ history in their articles, seminars, and workshops. In 2019, their compilation titled "A Night in June: A Biographical Analysis of the Stonewall Revolution" was published.
In August 2022, their poetry and illustration book "Hail to the Fallen" was released. They have curated more than 30 guerrilla exhibitions on streets and in rural areas, prioritizing the accessibility of art, as well as in venues like Akbank Art and Gazhane Museum. Diren's works and projects have been exhibited in various countries, including Estonia, Turkey, Serbia, the Netherlands, Germany, India, and the UK.

Maya Nguyen is a Vietnamese-Russian interdisciplinary artist with a focus on sound performance and diasporic making. She gathers speech fragments, urban recordings, body movements, migratory routes, sounds imitating nature sounds, and videos of daily life into open-ended works. These often take the shape of performance lecture, sound installation, fiber, text and video. Her works put power relations into action, focusing on the domestic sphere, colonial histories, movement geographies, and the relating between the human and the natural world. She holds a B.A. in Philosophy and Comparative Literature from the University of Chicago and an M.F.A in Sound from School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has shown with Vincom Center for Contemporary Art (Hanoi), Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik (Berlin), UCLA New Wight Gallery (Los Angeles), Manzi Art Space (Hanoi), World Forum For Acoustic Ecology 2023 (Florida), Internationales Digitalkunst Festival 2022 (Stuttgart), Terrain Biennial 2021(Chicago), Watershed Art & Ecology (Chicago), Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Po-

etics (Colorado), and elsewhere.

Sarah Hussein is a self-taught Egyptian painter and sculptor whose work delves into the emotional and psychological complexities of the human experience. Through expressive portraiture and symbolic compositions, she captures moments of vulnerability, introspection, and healing. Working primarily with oil, gouache, and watercolor, Sarah explores the unseen layers of the soul, often distorting facial features and gestures to evoke raw, unfiltered emotion. Deeply inspired by nature, poetry, cinema, and dreams, her practice is rooted in the belief that true art has the power to heal and connect. Her work serves as a mirror to the inner world—inviting viewers to find parts of themselves reflected in the faces she paints. Sarah's work has been exhibited in numerous juried exhibitions and art festivals across Egypt, Italy, Poland, India, Taiwan, Turkey, the UAE, Peru, and the United States. She has received international recognition and several awards for her emotionally resonant work, including prizes from the Classical Roman Arts Foundation (Italy), Katara (Qatar), the World Art Forum (Egypt), and the Christian Pfeiffer Poster Contest (Germany). Her paintings have been acquired by collectors from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, Italy, Greece, and Egypt. She continues to build a deeply personal and emotionally rich body of work that bridges psychological depth and artistic expression.

Deeptha Babu is an MFA Graduate from Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, NY, with a background in visual storytelling, editorial design, and interactive media. Her practice centers on socially engaged art, feminist and marginalized narratives, and experimental forms that explore identity, resistance, and collectivity. Through books, installations, and interactive projects, she investigates the intersections of art, design, and social transformation, aiming to create meaningful spaces for dialogue, empathy, and action.

Lena Kilina, Alice Casiraghi (Lena) I am contemporary nomad bound by my motherland's (Siberia) roots, exploring the forever changing landscapes of collective past, present and future via contemporary forms of narration: sound, visuals and performance. I always work site-specifically in places that represent socio-historic precedents enriched by local mythology. Russia, Asia and Brazil is a gemstone for researchers and practitioners like myself. I create stories about the fusion between people and space. I believe that an accelerationist agelike ours, where people have unlearned

the conventional ways of communication and production, requires a critical retrospection of culturally pivotal moments and movements.
Through music variations, sound poetry and performance I can express, reflect and live it. PhD in urban anthropology and Asia-Latin-American cultures (UNICAMP and Fudan University, received two fellowships from Brazil and China. Artist-researcher for the Institute of International Arts Management (Spain) and Institute of Public Art in London. Ambassador of the World Music School (Finland-Shanghai). Three audio-visual and contemporary art collectives: Autoturk, The Mainline Group and Meta Golova.

Mykhailo Markin, Ukraine. (b. 1980, Kryvyi Rih, Ukraine) is an artist and former boxer whosepractice grows directly out of the experience of the ring. After studying at the Vasyakin Art School andearning a degree in Artistic and Decorative Work, he spent nearly a decade on the Ukrainian NationalBoxing Team, competing at national and international level.This background in controlled impact, endurance, and discipline shapes his artistic language. In hiswork, the boxing glove appears again and again as a key motif – a padded interface between skinand blow, a material buffer between vulnerability and pain. By pairing gloves with everyday objects incurious, sometimes absurd combinations, he examines how people cushion and reframe violence, bothexternal and internal.Working with sculpture, ceramics, ready-mades, performance, and conceptual installations, Markinaddresses themes of power, resilience, war, and survival. His projects often take the form of social and spat.

Mohammad Hadi Ghahramanpouri: For fourteen years I have given breath and voice to lifeless metal through Ghalamzani engraving and Shiraz-style calligraphy. Trained in Iran and now based in the UK, I transform single sheets of copper and silver into sculptural narratives that translate Persian miniature painting and classical love stories (Khosrow & Shirin; Layli o Majnun) into contemporary relief. After migrating from Iran—where political and social constraints endangered this craft—I committed to preserving and teaching it through talks and workshops, and to reimagining how it can speak to global audiences. Works such as Eternal Grace rework miniature imagery into enduring material form, making memory tactile and inviting intergenerational exchange. My practice is an act of cultural stewardship: reviving a near-forgotten art as a non-violent tool for empathy, collective reflection, and cross-border encounter.

Aga Luczakowska is based in Katowice, Poland. She began as a staff photographer for a local newspaper before expanding her practice internationally and developing long-term documentary projects. Aga has participated in TPW masterclasses with Stanley Greene (NOOR) in Italy, Christopher Morris (VII) in New York, USA, and the Eddie Adams Workshop. She was also fortunate to spend time at the legendary Art Kibbutz in New York City in 2007 and 2009, an artist-run community that served as a home and meeting point for creatives across disciplines. Is a photographer based in Katowice, Poland. She began as a staff photographer for a local newspaper before working internationally and developing long-term projects. She has lived in Istanbul, Turkey, and Bucharest, Romania, and participated in masterclasses with Stanley Greene (NOOR) in Italy and Christopher Morris (VII) in New York, USA. After years abroad, she returned to Poland to support her family during serious health challenges - a period that deeply shifted her perspective. After a few years' break, in 2025 she returned to photography and has had the pleasure of participating in seven exhibitions within just three months. Her work has been recognized by Der Greif, where she was featured in the Artist Section on their website and highlighted across their social media platforms.

Her practice can be described as sociological street photography, exploring human connection, everyday narratives, and the subtle social dynamics of public spaces. Alongside photography, she works as an IT project management consultant while continuing to pursue personal projects.

For further information, contact: mafambanecollective@gmail.com
www.mafambanecollective.com

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