

Solitude Journal 4
Time After Time



Published by Akademie Schloss Solitude

Solitude Journal 4

Time After Time

Contents

Graphic Interventions (Cover and Pagination) HuM-Collective	<i>m/othering</i> Text by Tanya Villanueva, followed by an interview with Jazmina Figueroa Ifindme.
Greetings Elke aus dem Moore C	<i>Cradle Resistance – Wintering Songs</i> Eirini Vlavianou I'llbe
Editorial Introduction Jazmina Figueroa, Dzekashu MacViban, and Denise Helene Sumi au	<i>Melody of a Journey</i> Sada Malumfashi waiting.
<i>Today is the Magical Cube</i> Camila de Caux and Eric Macedo ghtupinc	<i>Dissociations (Fitz Roy)</i> Nadine K. Cenoz Timeafte
<i>Black Time</i> Fatin Abbas ircl	<i>Offset</i> BF rtime.If
<i>Dis (Possession)</i> Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez es.Ifyou'r	<i>Studies in Aqueous Time</i> Zahra Malkani youfall,
<i>What Endures?</i> Wanjeri Gakuru elostyou	<i>The Fifth Element</i> Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie Iwillcat
<i>Stretching the Notion of Painting</i> Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer canlooka	<i>Dear Maria</i> Valentina Sciarra chyou.
<i>Overstimulation Propaganda</i> Chloë Langford and Jira Duguid from Fantasia Malware in conversation with Denise Helene Sumi ndyouwil	<i>Kalachakra</i> Pratyush Pushkar and Riya Raagini a.k.a. BaRiya Timeaftertime.

Greetings

Elke aus dem Moore

Time does not exist; it is a human construct; an idea or projection for a sensation of a string of moments that we call duration or time. This sensation is »neither neutral nor objective« as Fatin Abbas states in her essay »Black Time.« »Time is experienced, valued, and used differently depending on culture, history, and political context.« The perception of time is based on different value systems and creates – if these systems' diversity is not acknowledged – immeasurable misunderstandings, which may then even lead to conflicts.

Acknowledging different perceptions of time is central in a process of decolonization. While the industrial-capitalist monochromatic perception of time is associated and defined with aspects of economic activity and places the individual at the center, the polychromatic perception of time foregrounds creative work and the connection of people and the environment.

Being aware of these different approaches and questioning a universal reckoning and definition of time is central in a process in which power relations are critically questioned. In times of transformation and constant change, new perspectives on the relationship to time can be revealed or even new models for dealing with time can emerge.

I would like to thank Fatin Abbas and Dzekashu MacViban for the inspiring conversation that gave rise to the idea for this journal. Many thanks to MacViban for his profound work as editor of this edition of the *Solitude Journal*, and to Denise Helene Sumi and Jazmina Figueroa from the Digital Solitude program as well as the entire team at Akademie Schloss Solitude. Many thanks to all authors of this issue for their contributions.

Editorial Introduction

Jazmina Figueroa, Dzekashu MacViban, and Denise Helene Sumi

Like other paradoxes, time is self-referential. One way to approach time is to consider it within the framework of linearity/nonlinearity, in which case, Faulkner's words from *The Sound and the Fury* come to mind: »I give you a watch, not so you could remember time, but so you could forget it ... And not spend all of your breath trying to conquer it.« Within this specific framework of temporalities, there is no distinction between past and future, yet the reverse is also true: the »profitable« use of time that has underpinned capitalism among other »isms« for centuries attests to this.

Another way to approach time is to deconstruct it by looking beyond the dichotomy of temporalities, embracing non-Western positions and understanding that time is a construct of geography, as much as it is a construct of neoliberal capitalism. In this regard, *Solitude Journal 4 – Time After Time* attempts to push the boundaries of our understanding of time, by questioning time as we think we know it, as well as exploring it through complex prisms such as multiple and contested histories, anticapitalist discourse, Afrofuturism, queer positions, feminist scholarship, Indigenous futurity, and land sovereignty amid a global environmental crisis – a moment associated with running out of time.

In a time when the idea of progress has been wiped away by an ongoing state of crisis fueled by the industrialist-capitalist complex and colonial legacies, we'd like to recall presumptions of a lost present.

The journal's title, *Time After Time*, suggests a breach in continuity from any known constructs of time. It is an obvious nod to the expression performed by Cyndi Lauper in her eponymous 1980s pop-rock ballad. The phrase »time after time« is moreover in pursuit of the abundant encounters folded into the past, present, and imagined. The authors and artists in this edition home in on their allegiances to time through retellings, observations, and deconstructions.

In Anglophone literary canons, phrases such as »time will tell« describe the specific duration needed for what's to come, »telling time« or »of/at all times« is a way of marking the present moment as whole and complete, and if something is to occur in »only a matter of time« that denotes the inevitable. Idioms such as these

impose the annexation of certainty with time and its passing. However, »time after time« expresses another relationship having to do with repetition – time in the making, undetermined, and infinite. How often can a single situation occur, be retold, noticed, amplified, and reduced? Time and time again.

Drawing from the aforementioned positions and beyond, the contributions to this issue speak to each other, complement each other, and distance themselves from each other, offering multiple entry points into the notion of time: Sheila Chiamaka explores the Igbo ontology of time, in which time is place, time can be shifted, and time exists in more than one sphere. The Fantasia Malware collective creates games that evoke a sense of spiraling through chaotic and nonlinear worlds of myth-making and storytelling. Fatin Abbas reflects on how time is often used to create social bonds in Khartoum, whereas in New York time is used to produce things. Time can also be a tool to liberate or oppress. »The more oppressive an economic or political system is, the more compulsively it controls time,« she writes in her essay. Wanjeri Gakuru says that »time stands still,« following the brutal British repression during revolutionary uprisings in Kenya; while BaRiya meshes past epochs with emerging queer Hindi poetics in their metrical translations and quantum-like mediations.

Often it is language itself and narratives that form the way we relate to time. We tell ourselves stories, get lost in (sci-)fiction, predict the future, and juggle our memories. »Well, to make it simple as possible,« as stated in the opening contribution by Camila de Caux and Eric Macedo, »we usually say that we remember the past, live in the present, and make plans or guesses for the future,« only to then explain that the different arrows of time are tricky concepts. »Time is a silent language,« writes Sada Malumfashi in his contribution. A silent language emerges with multiple dialects, twists, and ambiguities.

Time as a language and the ambiguous forms it takes are touched upon in a conversation with Tanya Villanueva about exchanges and artistic collaborations between her and her child. Villanueva's time perception shifts in her role as artist and mother, she says it is, »how

love exists between each of us, making time to uplift each other against the darkness of our days.«

This journal also includes artistic takes on varying realms of absence in the Eurocentric episteme. Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez's reflects on dispossession with the institutional site; Nadine K. Cenoz's dissociates the explorer-colonial narratives forced upon Cerro Chaltén land in Argentina.

We, the editors, would like to express our utmost gratitude to all the authors and artists who have trusted us to compile their contributions into this intricate snapshot of decolonizing time. Thank you to Kimberly Bradley for the meticulous oversight and proofreading of all the authored works, biographies, and work descriptions anthologized in this edition.

We would additionally like to give an extended thank you to the thoughtfully designed intervention by HuM-Collective, consisting of Hannah Häußner and Max-

imilian Borchert. The printed book from which you might be reading this introduction will gradually change when the paper is exposed to haptic imprints and/or light washing, suggesting a subtle embrace of things used over time. Along the margins of the page is a sentence incorporated by HuM-Collective, where normally page numbers would be; to tell time instead of to count (reading) time.

For this iteration of the *Solitude Journal's* cover, studio Beton processed a drawing from the 2022 series *Studies in Aqueous Time* by artist Zahra Malkani. We would like to thank the artist for the possibility to using one of her drawings as the cover subject. Reproductions of Malkani's original drawings can be found in the journal. We would like to thank Elke aus dem Moore for her trust in us editors and the initial conversations we had with her and Fatin Abbas, which laid the foundation for the journal. Enjoy these timely readings.

Today is the Magical Cube

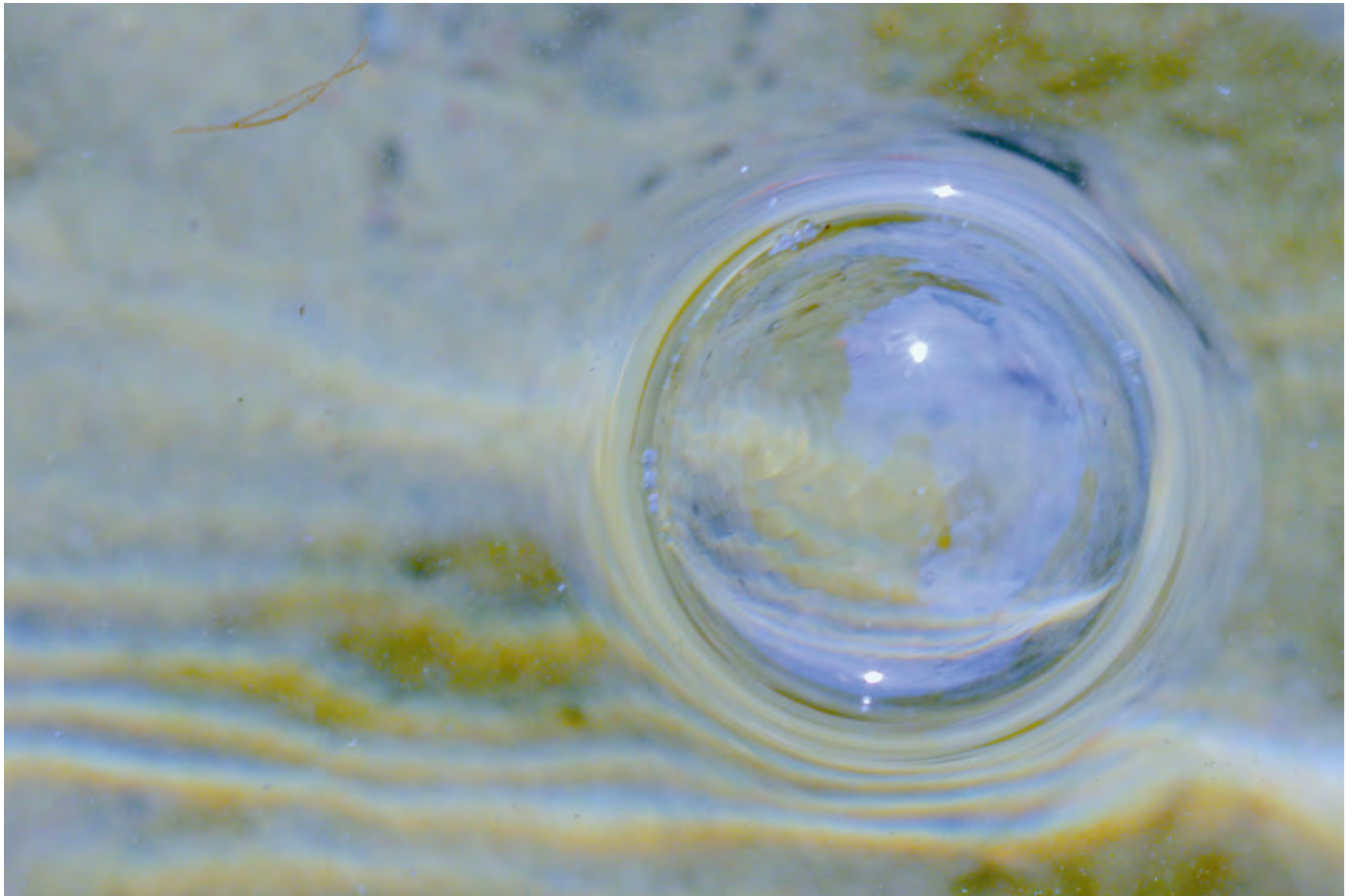


Photo by Eric Macedo. Courtesy of the artist.

Camila de Caux and Eric Macedo

Can time run backward in the future? Does time run slower in distant galaxies? The following text depicts a fictional dialogue with Nico, an eight-month-old, about his perception of time. Nico turns his efforts to show us that time should not be conceived as a unidirectional timeline and that the idea of future is a misconception that can only exist in the delusional minds of adults. The fictional conversation examines a few non-Western philosophical traditions in which only what we conceive as the past and, more importantly, as the present, play a role.

Nico: Mama, what is time?

Cami: Oh, dear, isn't it a bit too soon for this question?

Nico: But doesn't »too soon« already imply a specific notion of time? If something is »too soon,« it means that we shouldn't be talking about this now, but *will* be talking about it at some point in the future. It means that things are attached to certain moments in time, as in a fixed order. Like crawling ...

Eric: Like crawling? Do you mean that crawling has a specific order between knees and hands?

Nico: No, I'm saying that you are all the time encouraging me to crawl. And you told grandma the other day: Nico is almost crawling. And people are always saying: my baby is already crawling.

Cami: Yes, I guess you are right. Since children develop in more or less similar ways, we can sort of predict the order in which things happen when a child is growing. There are many studies about it. And although much of them are quite questionable, we still rely on them more than we admit.

Nico: Oh, I feel so claustrophobic! Like I am trapped in the future.

Cami: Poor baby! I guess the adult world is always expecting children to be something else, pushing you to do things as adults do.

Nico: Bingo. Watch out, next thing you know you are calling me »cute little man!«

Cami: Oh, come on ...

Nico: But I understand that this may be quite inevitable for you since we babies are really growing. Now what do you say: if people can tell how I am going to develop, is this a way of remembering the future?

Eric: Well, to make it as simple as possible, we usually say that we remember the past, live in the present, and make plans or guesses for the future. But there are probably some ways of remembering the future, although they escape me right now.

Nico: Oh, I'm having a *déjà vu* here ... Or is it *vújá de*?

Cami: Tricky. What if we think of time as a river? Let's say you are in the middle of it, looking towards the mouth. You have already traveled all the way from the springs. The past is the accumulation of your memories, or actually of all that you are. And as the river gets wider and wider, it accumulates more and more water.

Nico: Am I using water wings?

Cami: Yes, I'm pretty sure you are. And you are constantly floating toward the future, which always starts from where you are and moves forward. But you can only know what you've already seen, you don't know what's coming.

Nico: And why do I want to go there? Is there a playground or something?

Eric: Now that you are saying it, yes, the future could be some kind of playground, an imaginary realm of possibilities with which we play in our thoughts.

Nico: Ok, so I'm in the middle of a large river, alone, floating endlessly toward an imaginary playground that I'll never reach.

Eric: Well ... this is what we conventionally call the »arrow of time.«

Nico: Oh, curious! I remember holding an arrow at aunt Luisa's house and you telling me to watch out, that I could hurt myself. Isn't an arrow a weapon?

Cami: Well, yes, maybe the arrow of time can be some sort of weapon ... It has been imposed by the industrial West everywhere, erasing other conceptions of time.

Eric: Although it seems to describe something real, don't you agree?

Nico: Yay, we are finally having the »what's real« talk!

Eric: Oh, please, not today! It's just that the arrow shouldn't be seen as the only way to describe time. Even among modern conceptions, there are ways of seeing time way differently from the clock time model, this linear and abstract sequencing of past, present, and future.

Cami: And there's a danger of just denying linear time and ending up exoticizing extra-modern peoples, saying

that they live in ahistoric, eternal, or static time, or else that they only rely on cyclical periodizations. But it is not because people do not describe their temporalities by means of the clock that they don't think of things as coming before or after one another.

Nico: But wait, isn't clock time itself a cycle?

Eric: Isn't it? And all our calendars are based on cycles, and a lot of our daily talk is based on cyclical references, like days and nights, or else when we think of seasons. We do not need to deny the arrow of time to use other conceptions of time. But what we call clock time is often denying other temporalities, resonating with racist ideas of progress and civilization.

Nico: No! »Boo to captain clock!«

Cami: Ok, so we're quoting now. But I have to say again that it's not so simple.

Nico: What do you mean? Down with the clocks! Can we rip that one apart and play with the little pieces?

Cami and Eric: Just don't stick them in your mouth!

Eric: Things can get pretty complicated if we look at them closely. Physicists say that they can be quite sure about the direction of time for three reasons: first, that we remember the past, but don't remember the future (this is the psychological arrow of time); second, that everything in the universe tends to go from more organized to less organized, like the toys in your room (this is called the thermodynamic arrow of time); and third, because the universe is expanding, with all the galaxies and stars and planets getting further away from each other (this is called the cosmological arrow). Weirdly, some scientists have suggested that in the future time could start running backward, as the universe would begin to contract instead of expand. Then we would really remember the future.

Nico: Time would go backward? Would this mean that my room would get clean by itself?

Eric: Exactly. We wouldn't need to collect toys from the floor anymore. But now the physicists seem to concur that time will always flow in the same direction.

Nico: This sounds way more boring than the first option.

Eric: Yeah, right?

Cami: Not to mention the whole other universe of physicists who argue that time doesn't exist. But I guess we could leave that part for another talk.

Nico: Ok, because I think for us babies time flows backward.

Cami: What do you mean?

Nico: When I was born, I could not make much difference in what I saw or heard. And little by little things started to become more ... bounded. As if the room was tidying itself. So maybe I am facing the other side then? Of the river, I mean. I'm looking at the springs. Does it invert time?

Eric: Now the future would be coming in your direction, right? That's interesting. And the future would always rise from the springs, not as in a model of progress. The future is coming from the earth itself.

Nico: And the bubbles and the little waves around my body are the present. Now the present is the playground!

Cami: But I have to say I glimpse a problem here. When the past just flows away from me, and I flow away from it, I'm constantly letting go of my memories. This can, of course, be a good thing, but it can also serve as a pretty good excuse for colonialism's continuing erasure of its past and present violences.

Eric: Yes, and now that I'm thinking about it, the future becomes too highlighted. When you have your eyes so focused on this source, on this spring of eternal future, it can draw the Future, with a capital F, the future of progress. This future, springing from the earth, becomes some kind of resource to be exploited.

Nico: Wasn't it Ailton Krenak who said that the future doesn't exist?

Cami: Yes, he was talking about how the idea of the future is convenient for capitalist, colonialist, extractivist powers. And how it is so closely related to the idea of progress. He says that the future is a promise, some kind of hope for a thing that is coming, but never comes.

Eric: And I think he was talking about what changes, if you think of it as the immediate aftereffect of our actions

and decisions. Then it doesn't exist beyond our actual doings, and hence it is also our present responsibility for the world.

Nico: Hum ... Even though adults relate babies to the future all the time, maybe we babies don't really work with the idea of future ourselves.

Eric: Gotcha. See, this morning you were really excited about eating strawberries, but you got distracted three seconds later, before we even headed to the kitchen.

Nico: Time passes differently for you! No offense.

Cami: None taken. But maybe we can say that time passes differently for everything that exists. Some physicists also think that this is a consequence of Einstein's relativity.

Nico: Are we talking about the guy with the tongue and funny hair?

Eric: Oh, you know who Einstein is.

Nico: It's just that I thought you didn't!

Eric: Ok. But it's mindblowing to think that one instant here would last more than eight years in a galaxy such as Proxima Centauri b, and even more if you invert it: what is our correspondent of one second in Proxima Centauri b? You kind of extend time to such small intervals that it kind of stops making sense.

Nico: Wow, speed it up! For me, it's like there are so many things happening between what you call now and what comes next ... You seem not to have such a hard time waiting for things, but for me it's just hell. What you call the future is usually so extended that it seems quite a random election of probabilities, colored by a handful of other interesting events.

Eric: If things pass through you less quickly than they do for us, does it mean that the future is closer for you than it is for us? I mean, if we keep the point of view of our speed.

Nico: Gee whiz, I just said I might not have a sense of the future and you take the opportunity to shove it even closer to my nose. I mean, why would you need the future if you already have it, huh?



Photo by Eric Macedo. Courtesy of the artist.

Cami: All this reminds me of how the Aymara people locate time in space. The past is what stands ahead of you, the »front time.« It is what stands before their eyes – and quite literally since the word used for »eyes« and »earlier« is the same. So the Aymara point to the front when talking about the »old times,« or the earlier generations, or even the »gentil timpu,« the times before the Spanish invasion. And accordingly »a future day« is what stands on the back. The curious thing is that, while they use many different gestures to sign the past (in front) and the present (on the floor), their gestures are far less elaborate when they want to refer to the future.

Nico: So it's like I am looking instead at the mouth of the river? But the springs are the future?

Eric: So the future stands behind you and you cannot see it. Or maybe you just get some glimpses of it when you turn your head. But you are mostly looking at the past and playing with bubbles in the present.

Nico: So the past is yet to come – yes, I'm quoting that talk of Karen Barad now.

Cami: Anytime! But also, if you think about it, now the past is changing. You are constantly looking at the past, but the past is never the same. It's as if the past events continue to exist with their own futures, that can be different than the one you are living now.

Nico: So it's not possible to step in the same past twice, huh? Adiós, my good Heraclitus!

Eric: And now the future is coming toward your back. So all the random projections and possibilities of the future are slipping away, except for the particular ones that are actually touching your body, becoming bubbles and splashes. Right now. Around you.

Nico: Yes, especially if it rains!

Eric: Oh, yeah, the rain! The flux of the river changes with the conditions, more water, less water, evaporation, mist ...

Cami: Would it be too much of a cosmological cake if I mentioned that for the Quechua the future is above and the past below?

Nico: More of a *pan-cake*, I would say.

Cami: Okay, but the mix becomes particularly interesting if you think about what Vine Deloria said about a spatially situated notion of history. History for the West occurs primarily on a temporal frame, even if that frame is metaphorized on a spatial surface like an arrow. Deloria contrasted it with his and other peoples' strongly spatial mode of thinking. Locations in native peoples' homelands have countless and multiple stories. And temporal knowledges are intrinsic to the landscapes, deeply specific, dealing with precise geographical formations, conditions, features, and rhythms.

Eric: So we don't have to stay only in the river anymore. Time is all around. Everywhere you look there is history.

Nico: But with different times at every location.

Eric: And different pasts are still happening. So a new act in the present can change the past.

Cami: Yes, the landscapes change, and I move through them, and make them while living through them. So if the past is not changing, I can turn to a different place. If what's inhabiting my view is a bad memory, if it makes my body heavy and sad, I can change my horizon. Walk to forget, say the Katxuyana.

Nico: Then you have it, huh?

Eric: What?

Nico: Your ending.

Cami: I don't get it.

Nico: Because if it's too soon for me to crawl, it's even sooner to walk. And, well, if I don't walk, I can't forget. I see it all.

Inspirations and further readings

Karen Barad, »Troubling Time/s, Undoing the Future.« Conference at the Faculty of Arts of Aarhus Universitet, Denmark, 2016. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dBnOJioYNHU>

Vine Deloria Jr., *God is Red: A Native View of Religion*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing, 2003.

Martina Faller and Mario Cuéllar, »Metáforas del tiempo en el quechua.« Conference at the *IV Congreso Nacional de Investigaciones Lingüístico-Filológicas*. Universidad Ricardo Palma, Lima, 2003. <http://personalpages.manchester.ac.uk/staff/martina.t.faller/documents/Faller-Cuéllar.pdf>

Jay Griffith, »Boo to captain clock,« in: *New Internationalist*, 343 (March), 2002, pp. 14–17. Available at: <https://newint.org/features/2002/03/05/boo>

Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*. London: Bantam Books, 1989.

Ailton Krenak, »Earth's Fever,« Interview by Eric Macedo and Camila de Caux in: *a perfect storm*, 2022. Available at: <https://aperfectstorm.net/earths-fever/>

R.E. Núñez and E. Sweetser, »With the Future Behind Them: Convergent Evidence From Aymara Language and Gesture in the Crosslinguistic Comparison of Spatial Construals of Time,« in: *Cognitive Science*, 30, 2006, pp. 401-450. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15516709cog0000_62

Rasheedah Phillips (ed.), *Black Quantum Futurism: Theory and Practice, Vol. I*. The Afrofuturist Affair/House of Future Sciences Books, 2012.

Carlo Rovelli, *The Order of Time*. New York: Riverhead Books, 2018.

Roy Wagner, *Coyote Anthropology*. Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2010.

Camila de Caux is a writer, ethnologist, and parent, working around notions of corporeality and multiple ontologies, and their reverberations in political practices. Since 2010, she works with the Araweté ethnic group in the Brazilian Amazon.

Eric Macedo is a former Akademie Schloss Solitude fellow, anthropologist, and parent. His work deals with questions of difference and ethnocentrism, human-environment relations, colonialism and, more recently, with intersections between anthropology and science fiction.

Nico is their child.

Black Time

Fatin Abbas

i

Solitude Journal 4 *Time After Time*

In this essay, first published in *Kulturaustausch* magazine, Issue 4, 2022, Fatin Abbas reflects on our relationship with time: from the time crisis the pandemic created to how time is neither neutral nor objective and how our perceptions of time are shaped by myriad factors.

When I was a teenager growing up in New York, my friends and I would tease each other. When one of us arrived late to a gathering, we'd say, »You're on African time today.« Or »you're on Black time.« To be in Black time is to be unpunctual, slow, and unproductive. In the west, Black time is marked as deviant time. It's to violate an invisible norm: white time.

I've been thinking about this teenage joke in the context of the pandemic – a crisis that changed our relationship to time. Suddenly we were home, saving hours of commuting. Meetings, classes, events were canceled. Financial relief offered by governments opened up possibilities. There was time to rethink marriages and careers, to garden and bake and learn new languages. In spite of the havoc, there was hope that the pandemic might slow things down.

But for many, if not most people, the pandemic did the opposite: it created a time crisis. Especially for parents, those in the medical professions, essential workers, and working-class people, the COVID crisis set into relief another crisis that predated it: increasingly, we're expected to do more and more with less time and resources. Technology has only made things worse. Our time is continuously at risk of being hijacked with the ping of a text or an email notification.

The pandemic not only created a time crisis, though. It also coincided with the Black Lives Matter movement. This overlap isn't accidental, and also points to an overlooked link between time and discriminatory structures. Time is a double-edged sword, a tool used either to oppress or to set free. It's neither neutral nor objective, though we often treat it as such. Time is experienced, valued, deployed differently depending on culture, history, and political context.

Take Black time. That teenage joke has a basis in the fact that cultural conceptions of time vary enormously. I was born in Khartoum, Sudan, and have traveled between there and my adopted country, the United States, my whole life.

Switching between »American time« and »Sudanese time« is always a shock. In Sudan, people expect you to visit them not for one or two hours, but for seven or eight. Better yet if you spend the night (Sudanese living rooms are furnished with beds, partly to accommodate day visits that stretch into overnight stays).

After four or five hours of a social visit in Khartoum, I'm mentally thrashing my teeth, biting at the bit, ranting and raving in my head about how was it *possible* that these aunties of mine could think that I had all day to waste chit-chatting about nothing?

I have things to do! Deadlines to meet! And even if it's simply that I want time alone, I want time *alone* to rest so that tomorrow I can be more efficiently *productive*. For rest is only a means to more productivity.

It was only after years that I understood: in Khartoum, time is often used to create social bonds; it produces solidarity and community. In New York, time is used to produce things – primarily things for getting oneself ahead. This is not to romanticize Sudan, where the labor of hospitality falls on women: the cooking, cleaning, hosting that creates the conditions necessary for community (though communities everywhere are built on the labor of women).

But the dissonance between Sudanese and American time points to the fact that the »time« I was used to in the US, that I subscribed to as »right,« as normative, is rooted in a specific culture and economic system. I'll call it »white time.« White time is western capitalist time, understood as useful for producing material or intellectual goods for consumption. White time is linear, efficient, punctual, productive – for neoliberal capitalism.

The measurable seconds, minutes, hours that structure white time assume a linearity that is – for many Black people, people of color, formerly colonized people, queer people, any group shaped by histories of violence – an illusion. Black time is a joke, but it's also deadly serious. It's marked by layers of trauma: historical trauma of slavery and colonialism, out of which arises societal trauma of structural racism, out of which arises economic trauma of continued dispossession. Often, these overlapping traumas feed into familial or intimate trauma.

Time marked by trauma is warped. Past, present, and future blend together. That's why there's a ghost in Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved*. The dead baby comes back as the trauma of slavery haunting the Black mother, Sethe, in the present. Sethe escapes slavery. But she can't move into the future. How can she?

Time is not only shaped by trauma. It's also used to traumatize. The more oppressive an economic or political system is, the more compulsively it controls time. During the Holocaust, the Nazi dictum posted on the gates of concentration camps, »Arbeit macht frei,« was a disturbingly ironic statement about the way the Nazis controlled time to carry out the simultaneous objectives of exploiting and exterminating prisoners. Every second of the day was regulated and used up in labor. Prisoners often dropped dead. Concentration camps harnessed time as an instrument of

torture. During the slave era, most field slaves were forced to work to the maximum (up to 18 hours during harvest season) and given minimum time to rest – just enough to ensure that they continued to be productive. Of course, countless people died.

As historian Caitlin C. Rosenthal has shown, time-intensive labor practices under slavery served as direct inspiration for modern business management practices. For instance, the »task« system, which was developed as a means of organizing slave labor (it required that each slave completed a minimum quota of »tasks« within an allotted time), was adapted by two founders of modern business management, Henry Laurence Gantt and Frederick Winslow Taylor.

This is not to equate late capitalism with slavery – workers are paid, even if badly, and they have rights, even if fewer and fewer – but it's useful to consider the links between these two systems. Today, accounts of Amazon warehouse workers having to pee in bottles because it takes too long to walk to the bathroom, in order not to miss the »fulfillment« demands of the company, point to the ways that capitalism keeps workers subject by controlling time. The »gig« economy that has become prevalent is built on paying workers little enough so that they have to work more and more (two, three, four gigs simultaneously). Time comes under the control of an ever-ruthless market. No room to rest, protest, or be creative. No time to challenge a system built on the exploitation of the many for the benefit of the few.

But there are signs that people are fed up. During the pandemic, some of us experienced »slow time,« others a »time crisis,« and most of us got a taste of both – if in unequal doses. We've realized that our relationship to time can be different. Between January 2021 and February 2022, nearly 57 million Americans left their workplaces, a 25 percent increase from the same period before the pandemic; and the rest of the world is reflecting a similar trend. The »Great Resignation« is partly driven by the fact that people are tired of employers who exploit their time while paying them terribly for it.

Quitting one job for a slightly better one isn't enough, though. Younger people – millennials and Generation Z – are waking up to the fact that the upward mobility hustle is a time waste. Inflation is spiking, affordable housing is out of reach, the climate is going to hell. Those who ascribe »laziness« to these generations misread a shift in values: young people are realizing that there are more meaningful (rather than profitable) ways to spend their time.

It's also why emergent initiatives – such as a Universal Basic Income (UBI) – are more popular amongst the young. Basic Income is radical because it can liberate people not just from economic precarity, but from time deprivation. It gives time not only to the rich but to the poor, to mothers, to artists, to those who are working not for the profit of a corporation but for the public good. It can open up exactly those spaces for rest, protest, and creativity necessary for confronting the challenges we face – from climate change to white supremacy to the gig economy.

We should lay claim to Basic Income, to slow time, to any notions of time that challenge the logic of the market. That includes Black time. Because it's out of

sync, Black time disrupts the »efficiency« of neoliberal capitalism. It reminds us that there are conceptions of temporality that exist outside the norm of white time. Black time registers the traumas that shape the histories of marginalized groups. In slowing things down, it makes space for solidarity and community.

By prying open these pockets of time, we can create new possibilities. We might even be able to get rid of an exploitative economic system altogether. As the author Ursula K. Le Guin says, »We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings.« But that takes time.

Fatin Abbas is the author of *Ghost Season: A Novel*, out from W. W. Norton in the United States and Canada in 2023. Her fiction has appeared in *Granta: The Magazine of New Writing*, *Freeman's: The Best New Writing on Arrival* and *The Warwick Review*, amongst other places, and her nonfiction writing has appeared in publications including *Le Monde diplomatique*, *Zeit Online*, *The Nation*, and *Africa is a Country*.

Copyright: 2022 ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) and the author. All rights reserved.

Dis (Possession)



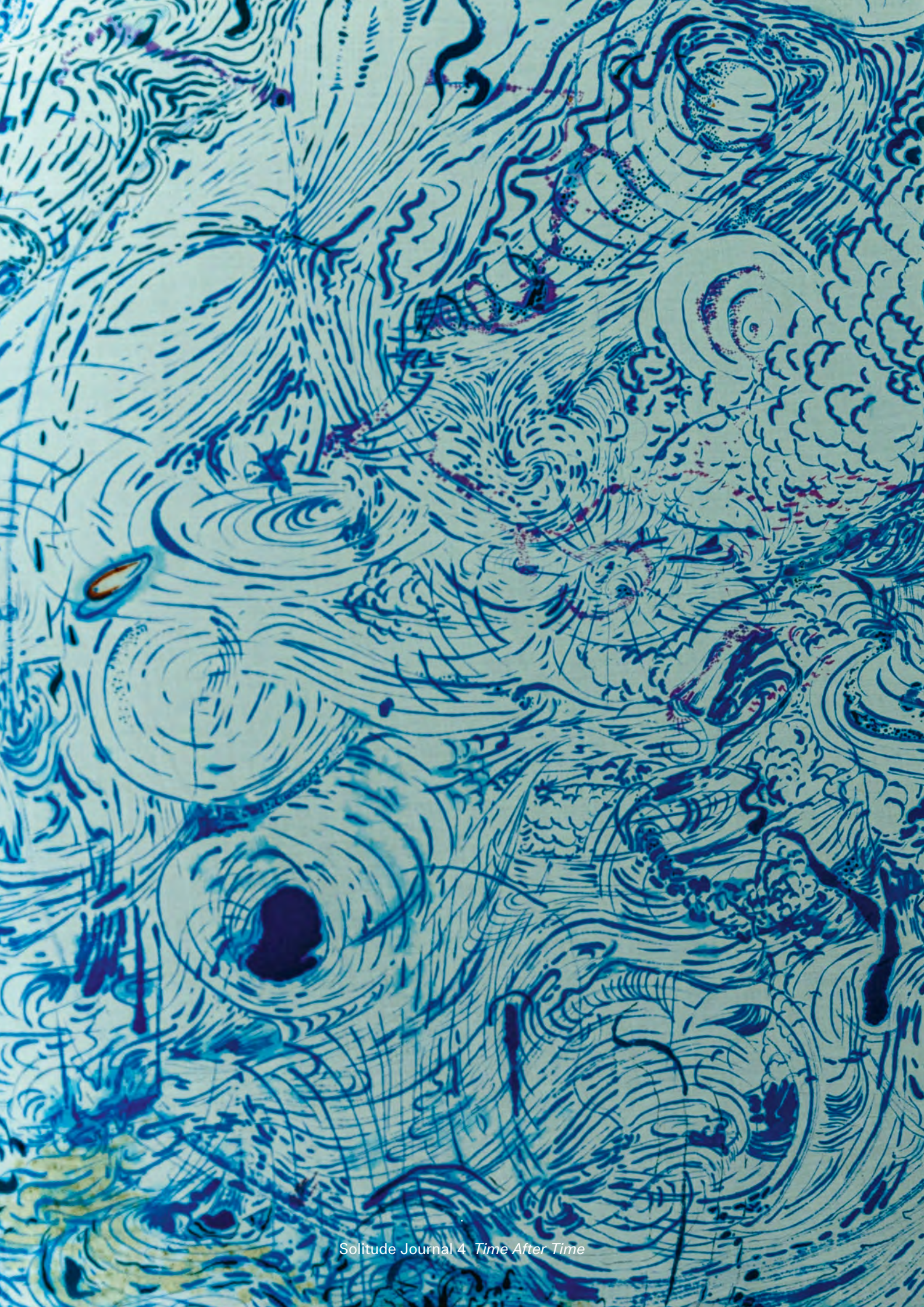
Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez

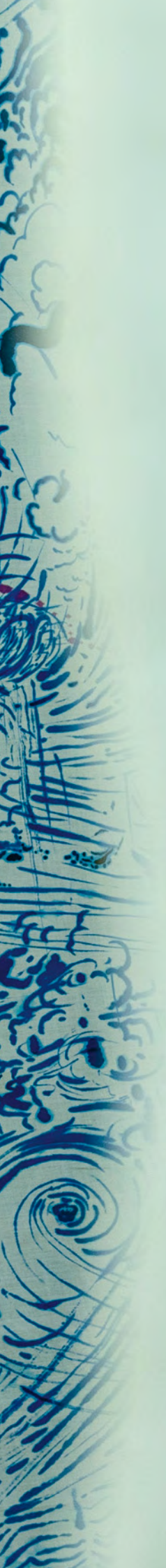
e



s

Dis(Possession)



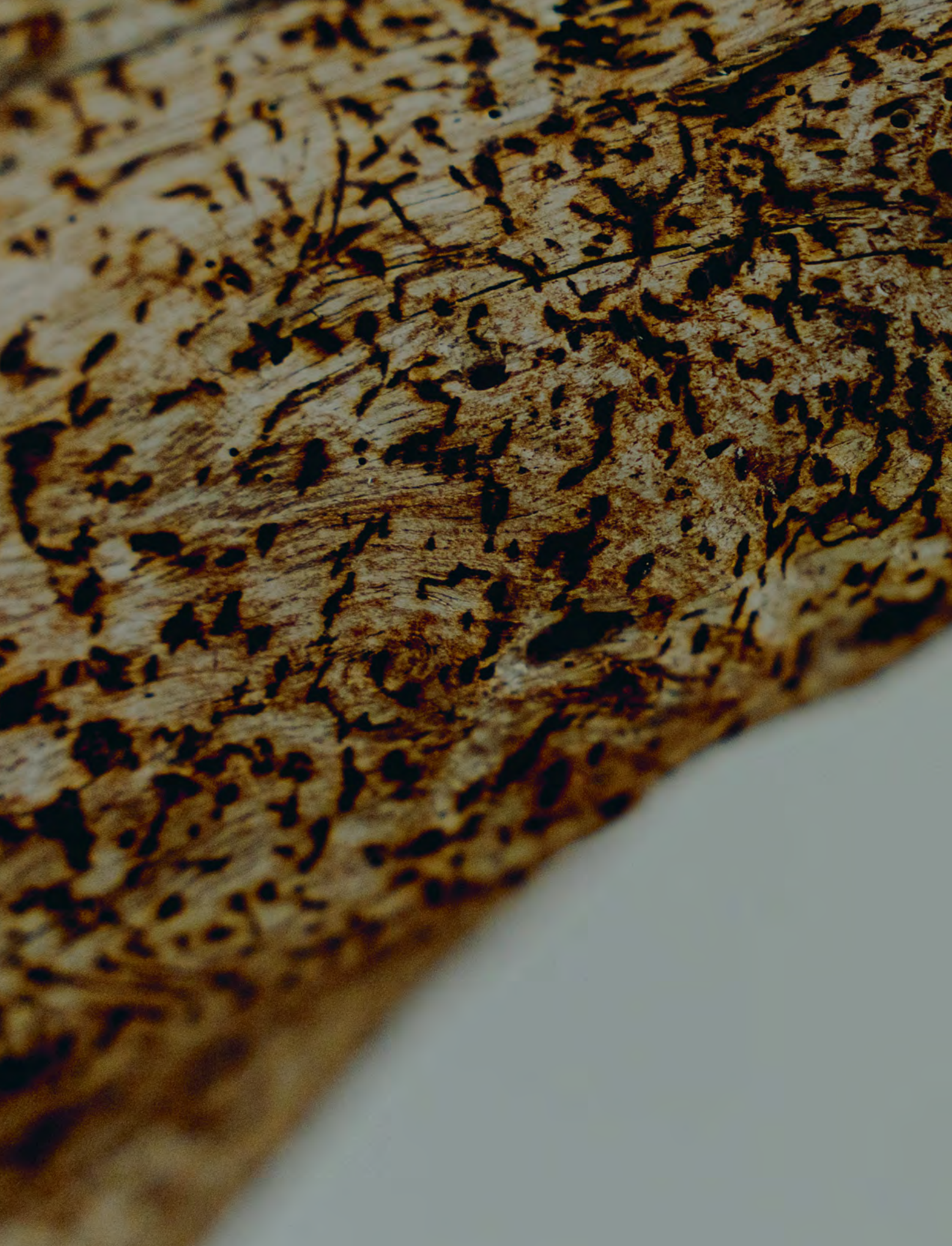






y

Dis(Possession)





Brother you say:;Turn and return the stolen wealth! Sister you say:;Turn and return the stolen dreams! Y el eco en este asilo ilustrado se vuelve elíptico. Vimos pasar el sord(id)o grito de una mujer, que en el justo ocaso de la monarquía, bailaba con un árbol, todo mundo en silencio (*secret sunrise* en solitude); y a la elipse la tajo una recta, como las de este parque que insisten en llamar bosque. Con la cabeza mía, en átomos volando bajo, hiciste de enredos caracoles. Era la coronación de Francia Márquez Mina, te ofrecí siete camarones. Debí ser por los untos que al cuarto entre dos veces, a la segunda, aturdida por el golpe, entré mareada. Me ofreciste agua en una tapa, y el consuelo que me habías dado antes lo convertí en lecho. Toda encerada en ese suelo seco, giré al sol sobre el alféizar y soñé un sueño pesado. Abelardo, ya menudo en sus últimas horas de sueño, se despertó pesado para su funeral. El cofre cargado entre seis pesó lo que pesa un árbol. María, en la apnea del sueño, nada junto a Obdulia y Librada en el lago de la memoria, por la fuente, Carlos y luego Emiliano, arriados cruzan mi cabeza, van doblados de la rasca en el lomo de sus caballos blancos. Acá otro tajo. Le digo yo al abuelo que esa espada de la república de las armas mejor se la lleve y así nos acorta el camino, Gabriel Orlando y Cristina nos estan esperando. Y me despido antes de que crean acá en esta colonia de artistas que yo soy abeja y vine a polinizar su fértil miseria.

(DIS)POSSESSION Despojo: diferentes mecanismos de expropiación que comprenden saqueos, confiscación y ventas bajo coacción, facilitadas por medios legales, extralegales (o ambos). Banu Karaca ha propuesto, más allá de los lentes de la tenencia de tierra y de la privación de derechos, conceptualizar el despojo como un proceso contradictorio que al mismo tiempo produce ausencia (pérdida) y presencia (redistribución). Esta redistribución [en el caso de las cosas, objetos, artes] no solo obscurece el contexto de donde estas emergen y las condiciones violentas bajo las cuales cambian de manos; sino que también crea redes complejas de beneficiarios y diferentes formas de implicación. De manera más amplia, el despojo fundamentalmente da forma a la producción de conocimiento y percepción de los objetos artísticos, así como a los contextos institucionales del mundo del arte, incluyendo los museos, las narrativas de la historia del arte y los archivos. Gracias Memory Biwa por el abrecaminos.

Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez, *Cría Fama*, Pacific Shark - Bogotá, 2022 (fotografías de Sergio Durán)

Brother you say: ¡Turn and return the stolen wealth! Sister you say: ¡Turn and return the stolen dreams! And the echo in this enlightenment asylum becomes elliptical. We saw pass the deaf cry of a woman, who in the fair twilight of the monarchy danced with a tree, everyone in silence (secret sunrise in solitude); and the ellipse was cut by a straight line, like the ones in this park that they insist on calling a forest. With my head, in atoms flying low, you made shells out of the tangles. It was the coronation of Francia Márquez Mina; I offered you seven shrimps. It must have been because of the untos that I entered the room twice, the second time, dazed by the blow, I entered dizzy. You offered me water in a lid, and the consolation you had given me before I turned it into a bed. All waxen on that dry floor, I turned to the sun on the sill and dreamed a heavy dream. Abelardo, already slight in his last hours of sleep, woke up heavy for his funeral. The casket, lifted between six, weighed what a tree weighs. Maria, in the apnea of sleep, swims with Obdulia and Librada in the lake of memory, by the fountain, Carlos and then Emiliano, arriados cross my head, they go wasted bending on the back of their white horses. Here is another chop. I tell grandpa that he'd better take the sword of the republic of arms with him and so he'll shorten our way, Gabriel Orlando and Cristina are waiting for us. And I say goodbye before they believe, here in this colony of artists, that I am a bee, and I came to pollinate their fertile misery.

(DIS)POSSESSION (Despojo): different mechanisms of expropriation comprising looting, confiscation, and sale under duress, facilitated by legal or extra-legal means (or both). Banu Karaca has proposed, beyond the lenses of land tenure and disenfranchisement, to conceptualize dispossession as a contradictory process that at the same time produces absence (loss) and presence (redistribution). This redistribution [in the case of things, objects, arts] not only obscures the context from which they emerge and the violent conditions under which they change hands; it also creates complex networks of beneficiaries and different forms of involvement. More broadly, dispossession fundamentally shapes the production of knowledge and perception of art objects, as well as the institutional contexts of the art world, including museums, art historical narratives, and archives. Thank you Memory Biwa for the abrecaminos.

Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez, *Cría Fama*, Pacific Shark Bogotá, 2022.

Photos: Sergio Durán

Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez is an Afro-descendant artist based between Bogotá and Quibdó, Colombia, whose work spans multimedia installations, critical writing, editorial practice, and curatorial and socially engaged projects on the counternarratives that distort and fight hegemonic power structures.

What Endures?



Osborne Macharia, from the series *Kipipiri 4*, 2016.
Courtesy of the artist.

Wanjeri Gakuru

e

Solitude Journal 4 *Time After Time*

The Mau Mau grassroots anticolonial movement was a turning point in Kenyan resistance under and against violent British rule – which suppressed creative expression, independence, and thought. The British military state’s documented atrocities have been withheld in various archives or destroyed, diminishing their accountability for such horrific acts. From that revolutionary moment and a cultural past often erased by colonial hegemony, Gakuru asks, what endures?

The most serious blow suffered by the colonized is being removed from history and from the community. Colonization usurps any free role in either war or peace, every decision contributing to his destiny and that of the world, and all cultural and social responsibility.

—Albert Memmi.

Undoubtedly, Africa continues to live in the long shadows cast by the 1885 Berlin Conference. While the continent had experienced various European spheres of power and influence in the preceding years, this gathering made decisive changes to the autonomy of large territories and communities across the continent. It was motivated by capitalism but couched within a moral argument for »civilization.«

The avaricious colonial project was married with religion and a superiority complex that justified all actions. Consequently, in the 70-year period the mutable territory of Kenya fell under direct British rule, the rights and privileges of the Indigenous communities resembled that of *homo sacer*. This is a figure in Roman law understood as someone who can be killed without the killer being regarded as a murderer; a person so completely stripped of status and value that even their material form could not be used as a sacrifice.

This reduced view was most apparent between 1952 and 1960, when Governor Evelyn Baring declared a state of emergency in the Kenyan colony. Issued merely 14 days into his new posting, this directive sought to tame the guerilla-style insurgency of the Mau Mau, a grassroots anticolonial movement. While political organizations and trade unions had valiantly fought for the rights of ordinary non-African loyalists, all the lobbying, diplomacy, and incidents of civil disobedience were not enough to push the needle toward real change.

Least of which in the eyes of the Kikuyu, Embu, and Meru communities, which had been pushed out of their fertile ancestral lands and forced to return as laborers on these same fields now owned by Europeans settlers. By 1948, 1.25 million Kikuyu had been restricted to just 2,000 square miles (5,200 square kilometers), while 30,000 settlers occupied 12,000 square



Osborne Macharia, from the series *Kipipiri 4*, 2016.
Courtesy of the artist.

miles (31,000 square kilometers). It was this quest for *ithaka na wiathi* (land and freedom) that led to retaliatory attacks on farmlands and administrative posts; against settlers and the tribal police who helped them.

The British response to the uprising was brutal. In 1953, a large-scale system called »The Pipeline« was developed to process suspected Mau Mau sympathizers and fighters. It shuttled prisoners through a network of more than 100 detention camps across the colony. And, used tactics such as starvation, electrocution, and mutilation to try and break their spirits.

In September 1955, an article written by British MP Barbara Castle appeared in UK socialist magazine *The Tribune*. She stated that »In the heart of the British Empire in Kenya there is a police state where the rule of law has broken down, where the murder, rape, and torture of Africans by Europeans goes unpunished, and where the authorities connive at its violation.«¹ She wasn't wrong. There are reports of wanton abuse

If it is indeed the victor who writes history and counts the dead, then how many continue to go unmourned?

of power, sexual misconduct, and British officers getting a £5 reward for each Kikuyu killed, regardless of the circumstances. They just had to make sure to cut off the victim's hands for later identification. This underscores an insidious side of the British administration in Kenya; meticulous record keeping. A census conducted in 1960 revealed that more than 300,000 Kikuyu had been killed or could not be accounted for. One thousand and ninety were said to have been hung on mobile gallows that traversed the country. And, there is documented proof that several captured Mau Mau rebels were forced to appear as extras in the 1955 film *Simba* and executed three days after filming.

It comes as no surprise then, that within a year of the end of the state of emergency, a Colonial Office guidance on the disposal of classified records and accountable documents was made. Known as »Operation Legacy,« it involved colonial officers burning documents in incinerators and using weighted crates sunk offshore. What could not be destroyed was permanently hidden.

Perhaps it was an observation that their eight-year season of carnage wouldn't auger well with the winds of change blowing across the continent. Germany had lost hold of Cameroon and Togo; Congo was taken back from the cruel Belgians, while Italy left Somalia and France had seen Madagascar, Benin, Burkina Faso, Niger, Ivory Coast, Gabon, Central African Republic, and Mauritania revert to its peoples. Ghana, another former British colony, had already achieved independence in 1957 amid the horrors happening to their East African neighbors.

It has emerged that a key principle of the Colonial Office guidance was that no documents were to be shared that might »embarrass Her Majesty's Government (HMG).«² In 1963, this meant 294 boxes containing 1,500 files were sent back to England even as Kisoï Munyao climbed Mount Kenya to bring down the Union Jack and hoist the Kenyan flag. In 2022, with the nonagenarian monarch's passing, this fierce bid to sanitize the image of HMG has manifested as virulent suppression of criticism through intimidation and arrest of protesters and media reports that gloss over exactly how (and why) the royal family has an estimated \$28 billion fortune.

Those 294 boxes are now referred to as the »migrated archive,« and these documents are part of a horde sprawling across 79 feet of shelf space. They speak to life in 21 former British colonies. Requests to access the Kenyan documents were repeatedly denied from 1967 to 2006. It wasn't until 2011 when they were finally declassified following legal action taken against the British government by Mau Mau veterans.³ After a long struggle, the government finally paid £19.9 million in compensation to more than 5,000 claimants.

Within that mountain of data, time stands still.

These records of attrition are damning, right down to the thousands of destruction certificates that confirm deliberate absences within the archive. If it is indeed the victor who writes history and counts the dead, then how many continue to go unmourned? These gaps in knowledge are unforgivable. Equally egregious are the erasures cultural imperialism wrought. To be fair, this onslaught began with early missionary work on the continent that demonised indigenous traditions and norms.

For instance, the Kikuyu refer to their creator God as *Ngai*. He created the first man, Gikuyu, and took him to the top of Mount Kirinyaga to show him all the land that belonged to him. When Gikuyu descended the mountain, he found his wife, Mumbi, waiting.



Osborne Macharia, from the series *Kipipiri 4*, 2016.
Courtesy of the artist.

Together, they had daughters who formed the nine Kikuyu tribes.

Ngai, like *Mulungu*, *Akuji*, *Were*, *Enkai* and *Nyasaye*; the creator Gods of various Kenyan communities, went through a process of inculturation. Stripped of power and potency, they are today largely understood as the local language terms for the Abrahamic God of Christianity rather than singular deities. Author Matthew Karangi shares how in 1930,⁴ when a storm fell a *mugumo* tree (the Kikuyu consider the fig tree sacred), missionaries sent the trunk to Scotland where it was turned into a cross and returned to Kenya to be displayed in their church.

This obliteration of ethnic values extended to language and cultural production. In his book, *Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature*, longtime advocate for indigenous lan-

This assertion of colonizer hegemony over African thought in critical and creative production is the result of eons of conditioning. It is what happens when social, economic, and political spaces reward proximity to whiteness.

guage literature, Prof. Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, reflected on the 1962 Makerere Writers' Conference. Attending as a student, he observed how the first agenda at this historic gathering dubbed a »Conference of African writers of English Expression was: *What is African Literature?*« How could that be understood when the group had excluded their colleagues who published in Kiswahili, Amharic, Yoruba, and many other indigenous languages?

Prof. Ngũgĩ wrote, »English, like French and Portuguese, was assumed to be the natural language of literary and even political mediation between African people in the same nation and between nations in Africa and other continents.«⁵ This assertion of colonizer hegemony over African thought in critical and creative production is the result of eons of conditioning. It

is what happens when social, economic, and political spaces reward proximity to whiteness. Little wonder why outside of the Bible and government communiqué, many Kenyan communities do not interact with their local languages in a meaningful literary fashion.

In 2016, Kenyan photographer Osbourne Macharia produced a series of striking images called *Kipipiri 4*. The project was a collaboration between Macharia and Kevo Abbra, Valary Mdeizi, Richard Kinyua, Corrine Muthoni, Jeffrey Onyango, Victor Ndalo, Jared Maina, and Joseph Kyule. Combining their skills in photography, hair, costume, make-up, illustration and more, the photographs told a mesmerizing fictional tale of a special unit of four women from a small village within Kipipiri Forest in the Aberdare National Park.

The women's hair was voluminous and fantastical. Bobo's strands held a route map to the Mau Mau caves and Chep smuggled knives and other blunt weapons in hers. Achi adapted hers to carry large baskets of food and Mwendu made it so her hair amplified her voice tenfold. »For me, it was the women who played a role, but their story was forgotten or never told. The whole idea was to spark that conversation where people could actually share their stories, and feel that they are not forgotten,« Macharia explains of the work.⁶

Archival imaginaries such as these are necessary. While they are the product of a blend of fact, imagination and the deep puddles of enchantment in-between, who is to say the stories they tell could not exist? For years, Kamiti Prison and Detention Camp was known as the only internment center for Mau Mau women fighters and sympathizers. However, the 2011 migrated archive documents revealed a secret place called *Gitamayu* that operated between June 1958 and April 1959. It was set up as a satellite of Kamiti to facilitate the intensive »rehabilitation« of women deemed »hardcore«. According to a November 1958 report, the »noncooperatives« could be »easily identified by their refusal to speak except among themselves, and in some cases their pathological inability to walk.«⁷ They suffered greatly but remained so deliberately disobedient that *Gitamayu* was eventually shut down and the women were transferred back to Kamiti.

In the novel *Dust*, Kenyan author Yvonne Owuor asks »What endures?« We do. We always do. We persist, we refuse to diminish ourselves and remain silent. We push for the reclamation of thousands of stolen artifacts and human remains. We publish PhD theses in isiXhosa and ChiShona. We tweet. We write songs. We dance. We endure.



Osborne Macharia, from the series *Kipipiri 4*, 2016.
Courtesy of the artist.

Wanjeri Gakuru is a freelance journalist, essayist, and filmmaker living and working in Nairobi. Her work is presently focused on nostalgia and the human condition.

1 Caroline Elkins: »Imperial Reckoning—Britain's Gulag in Kenya.« New York 2005.

2 Anthony Cary: »Cary report on release of the colonial administration files.« by. Foreign & Commonwealth Office, 24 February 2011.

3 Leigh Day: »The Mau Mau Claims.« www.leighday.co.uk.

4 Matthew Muriuki Karangi: »Revisiting the Roots of an African Shrine: the Sacred Mugumo Tree: an Investigation of the Religion and Politics of the Gikuyu People in Kenya.« February 12, 2013.

5 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o: »Decolonising the Mind: the Politics of Language in African Literature.« London 1986, p. 6.

6 Josephine Opar: »Osborne Macharia on Honoring

Kenya's Female Freedom Fighters with Opulent Hair.« in: *OkayAfrica*.

7 Katherine Bruce-Lockhart: »Unsound minds and broken bodies: the detention of hardcore Mau Mau women at Kamiti and Gitamayu Detention Camps in Kenya, 1954–1960.« in: *Journal of Eastern African Studies*, 2014.

Stretching the Notion of Painting



Mukenge/Schellhammer, installation view of *Mbok'elengi*, Yango Biennale, Kinshasa, 2022.
Courtesy of the artists.

Christ Mukenge
and Lydia Schellhammer

Mukenge/Schellhammer explore how geography and infrastructures influence formats of production as well as longevity and conservation of art. Their projects combine these contrasting approaches to challenge universalisms about formats of production of painting.



Mukenge/Schellhammer, installation view of *Mbok'elengi*, Yango Biennale, Kinshasa, 2022.
Courtesy of the artists.

In Kinshasa, we experience painting as a temporary medium.

Materials such as fabric and paint decay after a short time due to the tropical climate and there are not many museums, workshops, or cultural centers that can store artworks. The practice of preservation in and through art corresponds to a more performative and situational approach to the material; the dominant media logic of recording and storage is opposed by a logic of the ephemeral and variable. In our project *Stretching the Notion of Painting*, we combine these contrasting approaches to challenge the Western idea of painting. That is why we have started a series of works that questions painting as a sustainable, static medium and instead understand paintings as a dynamic, temporary medium.



Pigeon de la Terre and Beauté Sauvage performing with paintings by Mukenge/Schellhammer, installation view of *Mbok'elengi*, Yango Biennale, Kinshasa, 2022. Courtesy of the artists.

Mbok'elengi *

Presented within the framework of the Yango Biennale in Kinshasa. Mukenge/Schellhammer featuring the performers Pigeon de la Terre and Beauté Sauvage, Kinshasa, 2022.

Mobile Photo Studio

Mbok'elengi is an interactive installation composed of paintings and accessories. As a temporary urban intervention, it invites visitors to interact with the paintings. Those viewers wishing to do so can pose in front of the paintings and have their pictures taken. The result is a direct dialogue between the painting and the public. The performers, Pigeon de la Terre and Beauté Sauvage, were invited to use two paintings as accessories. The studio installation consists of wooden panels painted with acrylic paints, spray paints, and oil pastels. The structure is inspired by historical photo studios in Kinshasa from the sixties and seventies. As a backdrop for portraits, painted backgrounds become frames for the photographed subjects. Two painted fabrics in the format 100×200 cm are movable parts of the installation as unframed paintings.

In the case of this interactive installation, painting is also used as a background and accessory for the interaction of not only performers, but also the public. The meaning of the artworks unfolds only in interaction with people; it doesn't stand for itself. This approach responds to Kinshasa's urban reality. A city with very few exhibition spaces and museums makes artistic intervention in urban space a necessity as an accessible form of artistic expression.

* Place of Joy



Yara Richter and Kai Krämer performing with paintings by Mukenge/Schellhammer
in the framework of the exhibiton *Pool Malebo*, ifa Galerie, Stuttgart, 2022.
Courtesy of the artists.



Yara Richter performing with a painting by Mukenge/Schellhammer in the framework of the exhibiton *Pool Malebo*, ifa Galerie, Stuttgart, 2022.
Courtesy of the artists.



Mukenge/Schellhammer, installation view of the exhibition *Pool Malebo*, ifa-Galerie, Stuttgart.
Courtesy of the artists.

Pool Malebo

Experimental performance produced in the framework of the multimedia show *Pool Malebo* at ifa Galerie Stuttgart. Mukenge/Schellhammer feat. Yara Richter and Kai Krämer, Stuttgart, 2022

Pool Malebo is a well-known place in Kinshasa, a tropical river landscape that has been both a real trade center and a site for the projection of European fantasies from colonial times to this day. Drawing from this hub for the transshipment of goods and images, the artists explore the fictional potential of contemporary depictions of otherness. They invited students from discoteca flaming stars' (Wolfgang Mayer and Cristina Gómez Barrio) »Body, Theory and the Poetics of the Performative« class at ABK Stuttgart to interact with stretchable and non-stretchable paintings and to transform the images during the interaction with their bodies.

The students were invited to interact with two paintings. One is an unframed acrylic painting on canvas in the format 150×240 cm. The other is a mixture of acrylic painting and marker pen drawing on stretch fabric in the format 100×130 cm (unstretched). The visual goal of this experimental collaboration was to change the motifs depicted in the paintings through (body) movement. The interaction between body and material has changed the static motifs of the drawings and paintings into dynamic, dialogical elements. The approach of moving images that shift and deform through external influence is also a visualization of the distortions of identities through representation as alterity and the alien gaze.

Mukenge/Schellhammer is Christ Mukenge (b. 1988, Democratic Republic of the Congo) and Lydia Schellhammer (b. 1992, Germany). The artists expose themselves to transcontinental conflict situations within rapidly changing social systems between Europe and the Democratic Republic of Congo and respond to their experiences and investigations in an ongoing artistic process that includes analogue and digital paintings and drawings, experimental videos, urban interventions, and performances.

Overstimulation Propaganda



Fantasia Malware, *Orchid Collector*, 2020–21.
Courtesy of the artists.

Chloë Langford and Jira Duguid
from Fantasia Malware
in conversation with Denise Helene Sumi

Fantasia Malware is a collective and label that makes fantastical, magical, corrupt, and chaotic software. They develop and publish experimental video games and live performances. The members of Fantasia Malware are Chloë Langford, Jira Duguid, and Gabriel Helfenstein. For Solitude Journal, we spoke with Chloë and Jira about their experience of the world as Baroque and lurid, and how the games of Fantasia Malware lend themselves to iconic, erotic, chaotic, and nonlinear worlds of myth-making and storytelling.

Denise Helene Sumi: What is moving through time and space in your game environments? The player, the games' characters and 3D objects, the narration, or storytelling itself?

Chloë: I do feel like all of them have this way of moving that's like ... umm ... where the game is played in a kind of circular way.

Jira: I would say that everything we do is like an assault, like the game moves through you, like you're the ...

Chloë: ... the vessel for an assault.

Jira: ... and so the games are moving through you ...

Chloë: ... so you are a top ...

Jira: an artistic top.

During your game/performance Orchid Collector, the collector says: »We should be aware it is dangerous to have too much time.« Why? Isn't it the gamer's ultimate dream to binge on gaming forever?

Chloë: The things we make are ... short and chaotic. I feel like in a way our games are kind of bingeing, just short bingeing. Binge very intensely for a short amount of time.

Jira: Yeh, it's an entire season in ten minutes.

I think we're a similar age, and your game The Life of Saint Siona Bianco Xena reminded me of two things: I, like many others, grew up in the nineties watching Leo and Claire in Romeo and Juliet, this film was kind of my personal nineties climax that was full of charged Baroque decay. And the three of us likely all played Zelda's Ocarina of Time – you know, Saint Siona kind of looks like one of the six great fairies from the fountains. You mentioned you are interested in »excessive Baroqueness – both aesthetically and in the design of systems, overstimulation, megamalist aesthetics.« Tell us more.

Watch Orchid Collector:



Jira: In talking about references or inspiration from the past, something I like about older games is that their technical limitations meant that life or reality had to be represented by triggers and icons. It's a very strange kind of gambling simulation experience. You have a limited pool of things and you're trying to evoke something larger with that and it creates a very particular atmosphere, which is something that I find inspiring about the games of a certain era ... in the way they had to abstract.

Chloë: I think it's a big compliment to Saint Fiona that she looks like one of the six giant fairies, she could definitely inspire some giant lady fetish. What about overstimulation or Baroque-ness? I feel like I am constantly overstimulated, but I sort of like that or I feel like I need to be overstimulated to function.

Jira: Yeah I dunno. For me, I've always been drawn to this extremely lurid ...

Chloë: ... even just the word lurid, it's such a hot word ...

Jira: ... and to answer why, I just feel like it's my experience of the world, the world around me is a lurid, Baroque, and a fucked-up thing.

Chloë: I feel like that's both how things are but also how I need things to be, and when there's not enough noise, I become destructive rather than creative or something ... I don't think that we are making an intentional critique of noise or overstimulation. I think it's just an honest expression of how we feel. It's not a value judgement.

Jira: Yeah, it's more like overstimulation propaganda. I can't explain it, it just feels like it's my truth.

Chloë: When I made the clock (*UR KAOS UHR*), part of what I was trying to make the work about is this idea of thriving on chaos ... like when you abandon control and let chaos come into or through you, then you can kinda ride the wave of this chaos and it's kind of generative.

Thinking of megamalist aesthetics and reading the description of your last event at trans-mediale studio – where you invited Jeremy Couillard to play Escape from Lavender Corporate Island – made me think of the grotesque Cronenberg/Pattinson movie Cosmopolis, in which a multimillionaire drives through the streets of Manhattan, haunted by »the glow of cyber capital« and the »Specter of Capitalism.« Do you feel the need to create games as a critique on the »temporal data-driven« organization of late-capitalist human life, and its surveillance machine, or are your games simply part of our already dystopian present?

Jira: I feel like for me it's about processing that experience, it's not necessarily a value judgement and it's not necessarily dystopian, it's more like interpreting the present.

Chloë: Yeah, in a rational sense I might have critiques to make of that culture, but in the work it's more like an emotional processing or a way to make sense of this constant flood of meaningless symbols.

Jira: There's like the big picture political or structural reasons, but there's also how you experience it as a person ... advertising is kind of a beautiful hypnotizing thing, when you think about it in a purely experiential way. Which is also how we live. There is the emotional experience of things.

Chloë: Yeah; the final scene in your game *Mirror Mall*, which is about your experience of walking around Times Square ...

Jira: ... high on mushrooms ...

Chloë: ... high on mushrooms. What I remember you writing to me about going to Times Square was that it was the most beautiful but hollow thing ...

Jira: ... it was the saddest and most beautiful thing I've ever seen. I mean, if you live in a casino hellscape, of course you make things that look like that or are about that...

Chloë: When I think about *Orchid Collector*, how it's a game where the rules don't make sense, and I think this is also kind of like life. There are all these structures and systems,



Fantasia Malware, *The Life of Saint Xena Bianco Xena*, 2021.
Courtesy of the artists.



and they don't make sense, and the reason they don't make sense is they're made of symbols, but the symbols don't mean anything anymore. Value has been destroyed and you live in a world where there is a flood of meaningless symbols.

Jira: It also makes me think of my experience of social media, how these websites have gone from being a linear experience to being algorithmically mediated with emotionally manipulative notifications. It's a system that you have to respond to rather than control. Like a hamster on a wheel. It's this thing that you have to balance and your agency is gone, you just have to navigate it and it's relentless.

Chloë: Yeah, and that kinda sounds like what you said before, about the work being an assault.

Jira: We're addicted to things that make us feel like shit.

In the The Life of Saint Ʒiona Bianco Xena, one can observe a fascination for slugs. Can you discuss this in relation to certain characteristics of a slug, such as fluid/liquid rhythms and slowness?

Jira: I just don't think about things like this. I can't give you a logical reason why we chose slugs.

Chloë: I don't think there's a logical reason. I do think there's something about the way slugs are gooey and amorphous and lumps of nothing and also they're supposed to be disgusting but they're actually beautiful, and this relates to the character of Saint Ʒiona.

Jira: With making Saint Ʒiona, there were these threads that we were all developing and like any myth-making or storytelling, the next person is exaggerating or evolving the parts of the story that resonate with them. And somehow a reference to slugs became central.

Chloë: Slugs are also formless, so they can take on any form or move in any form and that's kind of how the story in Saint Ʒiona Bianco Xena works; it's this story that keeps changing shape.

Your games ooze with eroticism, pleasure, and sensations. How do you succeed or fail to translate the temporality of arousal/climax in your games? Do you aim for a catharsis or a transcendental bliss within your games?

Chloë: I don't think catharsis, but maybe transcendental bliss. The kind of bliss where your mind has been obliterated ...

Jira: ... from a good fucking ...

Chloë: ... like an aggressive kind of transcendental ... your brains have been fucked out.

Jira: An extreme presence that you can only get from being fucked really good.

Chloë: This is why we're artistic tops.

Your games evoke a sense of spiraling. The rules are broken and absurd. The player gets lost in time. Do you feel that video games lend themselves well to forms of non-linearity?

Jira: Absolutely, that's one of the things that interest me most about video games, their non-linear structure. Ultimately, I feel like making games is about making a series of systems to create an interesting interplay between different elements. That's what interests me most about games ... thinking about creating systems in an artistic way or in an expressive way to evoke some kind of emotion or idea.

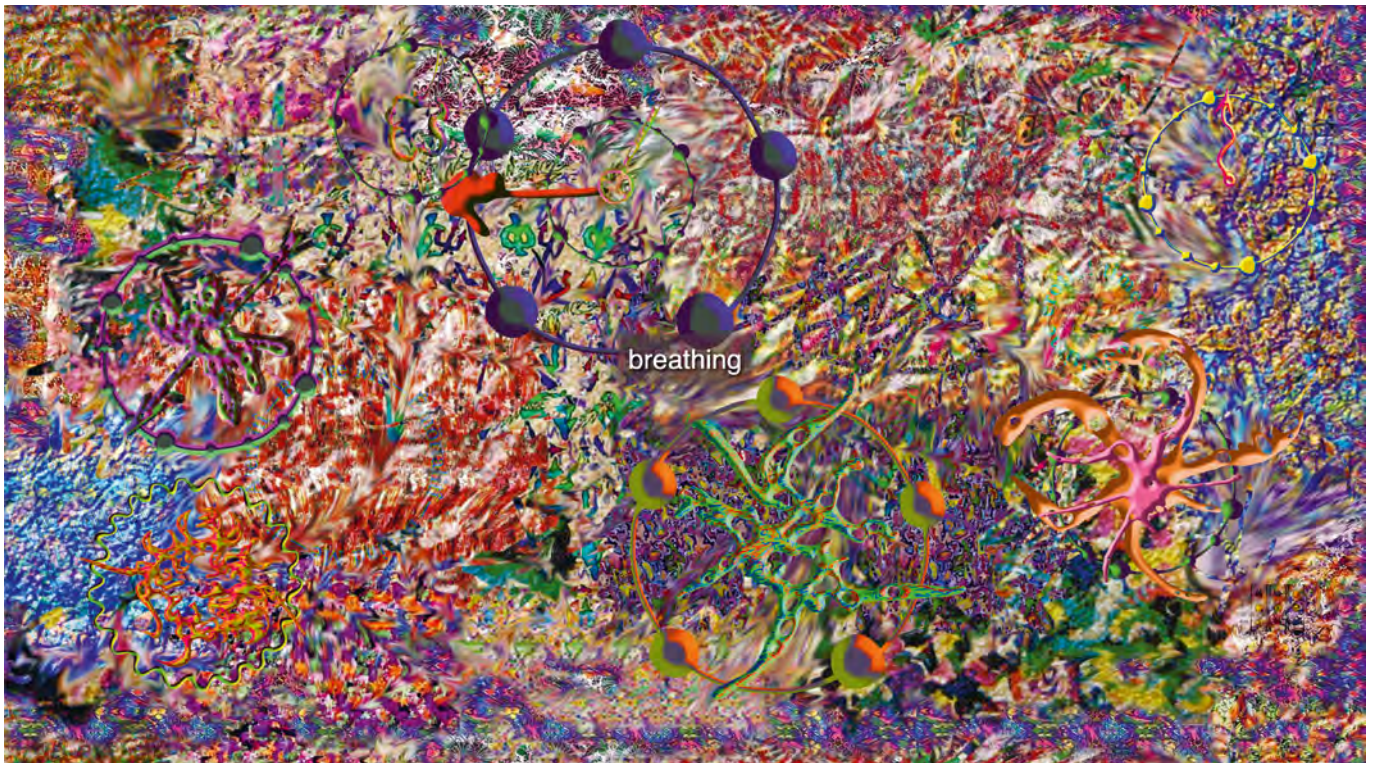
Chloë: What do you think about spiraling? I definitely like the idea of spiraling.

Jira: Yeh me too ... because it's like ...

Chloë: ... because it's kind of like obsession, which I think is something that we're both ... have an interest in ... have a tendency towards ...

Jira: ... dabble in ...

Chloë: ... yeah, dabble in obsession.



Chloë Langford (Fantasia Malware), *UR KAOS UHR*, 2022.
Courtesy of the artist.



Jira: Yeah, it's interesting because people often talk about a gameplay loop, there's this idea that you start a new game, you collect some things, you go back to the hub and then you start again and that's the loop. But a spiral is interesting because it's ...

Chloë: ... it's getting smaller or bigger ...

Jira: ... it has a third dimension, the loop never goes back to the same place but it's repeating itself.

Chloë: Which is sort of how life feels. Also a spiral can feel both freeing but also ...

Jira: ... maddening ...

Chloë: ... or manic or you can be spiraling inwards ...

Jira: ... or outwards. When I think of spiraling I think of inward and I think of actual panic and it makes me feel anxious.

Chloë: For my performance at transmediale studio in September, part of it is just a cave, running really fast through a cave, and there is no game play, you're just running for a really long time. But yeh the idea is about obsession ...

Jira: Sounds like a fever dream ...

Chloë: Yeah, like a psychotic spiral.

Would you like to name a few game developers, coders, hackers, or games that particularly inspire(d) you?

Jira: For me there's two chapters of my life, the first would be the obscure strange alien uncanny older games, particularly *LSD Dream Emulator* from Osamu Sato. And then in the present it's people like our peers or our friends ...

Chloë: That's what I was going to say, I don't care so much about games, but what I do care about or what I am inspired by is what the people we know are making.

Jira: To name a few specifically, Jeremy Couillard, Halberball.

Chloë: M, who is going to perform with me in September and alpha_rats, who designed the posters for our event series this year.

The essay about Chloë's latest work UR KAOS UHR by your friend Merle Leufgen begins with a (fake?) ancient proverb: »Make and unmake the rhythm of your life. When to sleep and when to eat, when to fall in love and when to grieve, when to bleed. What is time but desire moving through space?« Can you talk more about desire and how it manifests itself in your games?

Jira: I make games that are how I desire to be fucked.

Chloë: I feel like desire is also how I experience the world. I don't necessarily only mean sexual desire towards specific people, but something about the way you feel when everything feels full of possibility and you desire to interact with that possibility and that kind of leads you through time and space, it's a like a path that you follow or that pulls you along it ...

While playing UR KAOS UR I became somewhat hooked on activating the »secret« modes: »erotic time« with its critter-like sounds and »breathing« that comes with a clear high and relaxing tone, pausing the chaotic noise for a moment. How do these modes relate to the rest of the game's temporal and auditive modes?

Chloë: In Orchid Collector, there is the really chaotic maze play, where we are running through the maze, but then there are these dream sequences or interludes and everything is paused and you just focus on one thing and that thing is crisp or direct. This is similar to what the question is describing, this really chaotic noise and then this really sharp, single tone. There's something about that as an experience that draws me. The contrast between moments where you are being flooded with sensory input and then moments

where everything goes quiet and you only hear one thing. Do you experience something like this sometimes?

Jira: I feel like sometimes I can be a bit ... manic and then morose? Experiencing this oscillation between extreme feelings or emotions. Going from feeling like I'm a fucking genius to like I'm a worthless human in two seconds. The intensity of our games is also like both sides of a spectrum and switching between them.

Chloë: I just nearly finished reading *Orlando* by Virginia Woolf. I think this is something that happens in this book, where there will be this flood of words and sensations and then suddenly everything will stop and switch to something else, and there's something about that that fascinates me.

Fantasia Malware is a collective and label that makes fantastical, magical, corrupt, and chaotic software. <https://fantasia-malware.net>

Chloë Langford is an artist living in Berlin, Germany. She makes art, performances, and video games using web technology and game engines.

Jira Duguid is a professional Nontent Creator and self-taught new media artist working with game engines in order to commodify dreams/nightmares/memories for mass distribution online.

Denise Helene Sumi is a curator and editor based in Vienna and Stuttgart, and co-editor of this issue.

Visit *Fantasia
Malware*:



m/othering



Text by Tanya Villanueva,
followed by an interview with Jazmina Figueroa

The cyclical nature of the relationship between mother and child is at the heart of Tanya Villanueva's work *How We Exist Together*. For the artist and parent from the Philippines, a cycle is interpreted through exchanges in care work, spending or making time, and the intergenerational timelines Villanueva activates in her video collaborations with her child Ollie.

The world was ending in a lot of ways when I started making art with my child, Ollie. It was 2017, and they were about to turn into an adult. I was slowly leaving behind a painting career to focus on earning a living and our country was quickly being ravaged by the unbearable power of a violent president on a murder spree under the guise of a »drug war.«

In many ways, I was surrendering to daily life – surrendering to dishwashing, cooking, and homemaking. My body was tired of constantly being out drinking, going to endless exhibition openings, and participating in one group show after another; talking about art as if it were this wonderful most important bubble in my life. I was living as if I were still a single young adult, when in truth I was in my thirties and a solo parent.

At the heart of this surrender is my child, Ollie Villanueva. Ollie took a break from school and her friends to focus on trying to live through their life as a teenager, being so burned out by high school life and discovering the many facets of their mental illness. Several years before lockdown my child and I were already in isolation due to our mental health. I was suffering from chronic depression and she was diagnosed with Bipolar II disorder. We took a break from friends, peers, and habitats as an artist and a teenager and formed a sort of space where we made time to just be together, resting from the world and getting to know ourselves.

In some ways, my art became a form of solace and a reminder that even though I paused exhibiting and all the performances of being a contemporary artist, I was making meaning of my time and the freedom that I share with Ollie. We, of course, had little money since I stopped producing paintings. What I had a lot of were time, patience, and the internet.

In 2017, I started a collaborative art project with Ollie specifically for us to play with time. We took our time to rest, work together, and get to know each other more deeply by making ourselves perform the very invisible work we have been doing for each other our whole lives.

How We Exist Together is done in a format to mimic online tutorials on food, arts, and crafts that showcased Ollie as the kind of content I am willing to share. It is a 30-minute video of me bedazzling their face one gem sticker at a time, in the hopes of

illuminating our relationship and how love exists between each of us, making time to uplift each other against the darkness of our days. What was intended as just an Instagram post became a new media installation of Ollie bedazzled on video, photography, and projections. What was moving about this work was the intimacy I created by spending art-making time with Ollie. They were sleeping while I was creating a lovely picture of them. It was a yassified version of how we spent our days together cooped up in my mother's house, nursing our traumas and healing together.

Another thing we love to do is to sleep together. Most of the day's complexity and troubles get assessed and processed together while we wait for our sleep medications to put us down to slumber. We got to know more about each other within this hazy space before becoming unconscious. Our conversations are funny, wild, and at times very complex and always honest. We rely on each other's points of view and humor to comfort us at the end of our day. We created the work *Invisible Work Performing* as a short video performance of the work we do during our sleep time. It was me reminding myself of the importance of the work I do on building a solid and honest relationship with Ollie. It took precedence over anything else I was busy with at that time. It also was a comfort to my anxiety about not being able to produce new paintings and exhibitions and not making enough money. I was comforted by the fact that through it all, inside our house I am a triumphant mother in closer proximity to my child, who began trusting me more.

**My art became a form of solace and a reminder that
even though I paused exhibiting and all the
performances of being a contemporary artist,
I was making meaning of my time and the freedom
that I share with Ollie.**

This safe space we cultivated together was sacred: it was alive, tender, and intimate. This work is just a glimpse into our reality.

These tiny worlds that I have cultivated and taken care of while in isolation within myself and within this time; this small family unit that has helped me survive this moment are all that I have and all I can offer. It is everything important and clear to me.

Making time is how queerness operates. Being at odds with the world and with this world built for somebody else, making time makes world-building present in the now and makes hope a practical everyday activity. It is by making time that we can turn shame and rejection into portals for transformation and care. We get to reimagine the world to include ourselves in it – to see ourselves belonging to it.

I am a mother and an »othered« member of our art community in the Philippines specifically because I chose to prioritize nurturing the life that makes my art and disengaging from the endless hustle of showing up in the art world. At a time when I wasn't seeing the kind of art that inspires me, I forged my way.

So, for you to get to a place that doesn't exist, you make time for it.

The following is a conversation between Tanya Villanueva and Jazmina Figueroa about Villanueva's project series How We Exist Together and How We Work Together, made in 2018 in collaboration with Villanueva's daughter Ollie.



Video still from *Invisible Work Performing*, 2018
single channel video.

Jazmina: Let's start with what parts make this series up as a whole. You created the videos, and you collaborated with your child. And now the accompanying text published in this journal, which takes a more reflective approach towards the work.

Tanya: This work is basically about me taking time and being honest with myself about what I had at this moment, which was not much. In terms of materiality and things that concerned me at that time, everything gravitated toward my child. I had to simplify a lot of stuff because of what was happening then. The country was in turmoil and I didn't have any capacity to be a good parent because of my depression. I couldn't become a good artist either, because I didn't have the focus or the will to do work back then. Everything was simplified and slowed down for those reasons. I didn't want to talk in metaphors because the world was complex already. I wanted to speak about what was important to Me, and that was taking care of my daughter. Using her face and the time I spend with her as subject matter is what makes up this body of work.

If we were to zoom out from the relationship between you and your child and consider taking time as an act of possession; time spent on care, nurture, or simply stopping to pause, do you feel that taking time here is

sort of an anti-productivity stance or more an act of care and nurturing?

It was about slowing down and a way for me to control the time that I have and try to capture it from a position of comfort. Taking the life that I have as it is as starting point instead of trying to catch up, feeling like I am running out of time, or being within a productive scheduling routine. And to do that I had to take care of the time that I spent. I wanted it to be spent with my daughter.

How did your child contribute to the work?

It was the first time that I asked my child to make work with me after she decided to take a break from school for personal reasons. Drag comforts her and is a way to navigate this period of her life. I wanted to do something with her that has significance in her life. She likes doing make-up and makeovers and in that way, she helped me shape the final look of the project. She also wanted to learn how to be an artist during her break from school. I told her that the best way for her to learn about art is to experience it. I was trying to give her life lessons and I wanted to do that through my art and see how I respond to the world as an artist.

The project was an art project, but it also was a parenting technique for me. I could be with her while she occupied her time with something while she was not in

school. I had to focus on her, and this project was a way to meld all these different aspects of art making – doing one activity together, making videos.

You both are enacting something from the other through this intergenerational exchange. You're learning about makeup, for example, and she's learning about artistic expression. Was this intentional or more of natural extension of your relationship to each other?

It was intentional because this work also refers to how I was taken care of by my dad, who was also an artist. Anything that I was doing with Ollie was about how I was treated as a child. It was important for me to connect with her/them through things that interest Ollie because it was the kind of attention that I didn't get as a child and to heal that space with my dad. My dad was a very productive artist, he was very prolific and was always writing, involved with other people and other projects. He's so visible in the family because he was the center of it, but the relationship I had with him was not good. I didn't want to continue down that path of being an artist in relationship to my child. I wanted to nurture my family. That's why I intentionally included my family in my work so that I wouldn't make the same mistakes that my dad did with me.

If we speak about breaking patterns and timelines, you're making choices based on experiences that you don't want to revisit from your own reclamation of your timeline.

Yeah, when you speak about care work that's what I mean. I'm trying to repair or heal an ancestral line.

Is that what the title for Invisible Work Performing refers to?

Yeah, *Invisible Work Performing* is about care work and the things that I do as a parent and as a woman. I know also to speak about it or put it at the forefront would be a performance of the invisible work and not the actual care work. That carries on in my practice now. Everything I do is sort of a performance of that care work.

I've experienced your work Art School Beauty Salon, where I and others were able to have cosmetic treatments. It's an activation or creating space for participation, specifically, participating in beauty rituals where being among one another and wellness are at the core of those spaces. Is that something that resonates with you?

There's transformative power in this. I think it's what specifically care does – it transforms you. It

transforms you into a gentler person. It can transform you into a more active being that participates in other people's lives.

The scene set in Invisible Work Performing is an intimate space. Can you talk a bit more about the staging of this video?

We were supposed to do it inside my room because I wanted to use natural light as much as I can. There was a space in our garden that sparkles at a certain time of day. We just brought what was supposed to be our bed outside, along with the materials that we were interested in, like iridescent cloths and sequins. We made a transparent screen around the sleeping area. We also decided to wear white because we wanted to look like patients. After all, we cope with our mental illnesses with humor a lot. It's a way to recall and reference or make fun of ourselves.

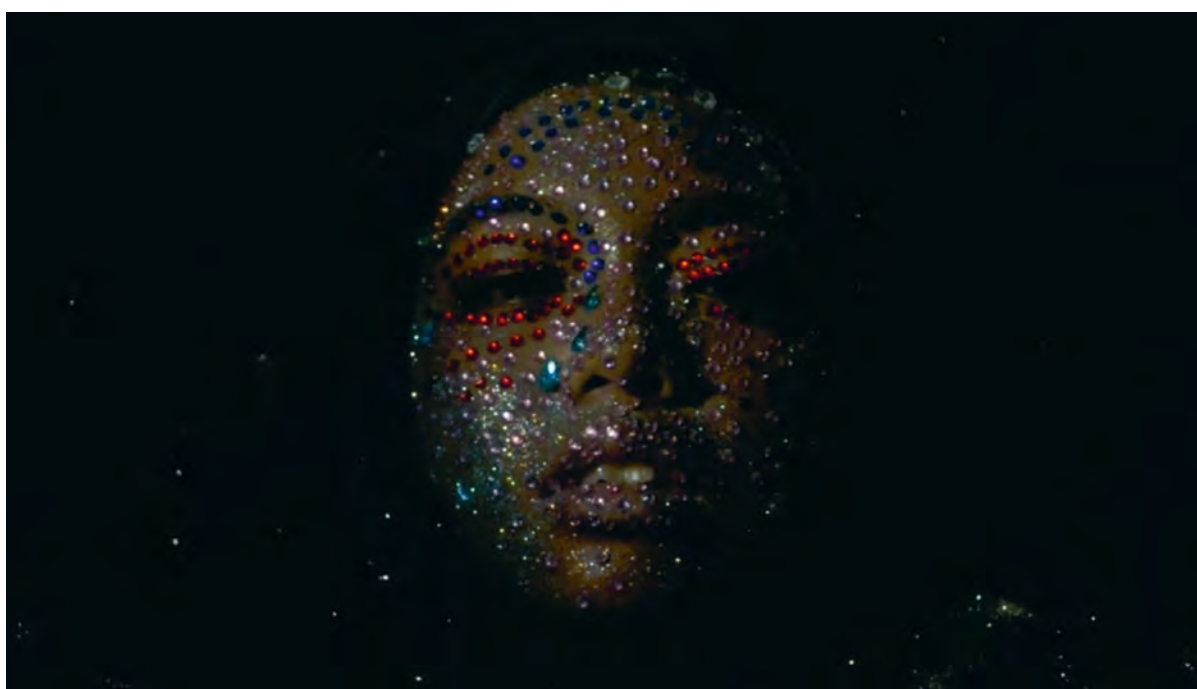
Ollie set up the cameras and the directions of them to make the angles that we would use. She/they were more proactive with this collaboration and more hands-on with how we would go about it. They also edited the final video; Ollie was more knowledgeable in that aspect of the work.

Each of us has different things to offer to each other, and that shouldn't be limited. Nourishment comes in different forms. It's important to open up that space and give people the option of how they respond and give back to the labor done.

Where does the video How We Exist Together take place? The description states it was shot under a full moon on the Baler seashore in 2018. A full moon also happens at a certain place and is a marker of time. The inclusion of this information reads as a timestamp of where and when existing together takes place.

It has a corny meaning. I named my child Luna and she just changed their name to Ollie. I was referring to the moon as her and the moon as just borrowed light from the sun. For me, it represents my strength, which is just borrowed from Ollie. I was speaking of the moon more as an object to assign metaphors to or specific allusions, it was more about what it means to me as a symbolic presence in my life.

If I think about how to read your work, the full moon has its own cycles, you know? There's almost something cyclical in your work or how you work with people. In thinking about time and the way you operate within your relationship to your child, that cycles back to your



Video still from *How We Exist Together*, 2018
multi-channel video installation.

m

m/othering

experiences in your relationship with your father, who is also an artist.

Yeah. That's a good way to think about it – being able to spread myself to different facets of my life but they're always connected. Coming from someone who is always confused about the world. It's a good burden to be guided by so that I will never get lost there.

The work also suggests or provides an understanding of how one can exist with another. From this work have you come up with an answer to the prompt: how you two can exist together within a relationship that has played a big part in each your lives?

Tanya: The video is a slow-moving image of Ollie running for 30 minutes. And I feel that's the answer to that question. I can exist in that space and you can glance at this for a moment and understand. It's just me putting her into the light. I am answering it as I do my work. This answer has become very simplistic for me. It doesn't have to be wrapped up in whatever politics, my mere existence is already a stance. The work itself is the answer to that.

What about the fake tattoos featured in the video?

Tanya: The tattoos show safe spaces. One tattoo shows an octopus garden, a safe space for an octopus. One is a music studio from a convict inside a prison in the Philippines. One shows a mosque that burned down, a safe space for Muslims, and one a Baler beach, which was a safe space for my closest friend. These tattoos were pictures of all those safe spaces resting on Ollie's body while I massaged those spaces on their skin. It's my indirect way of telling Ollie about privileges and who has the right to safe spaces.

I like what you said earlier about your role as a mother and the hardship around it. We as women tend to fall into these traps of being aspirational or role models. I'm thinking about the symbolism of failure in your work. How To Exist Together is very much about depicting darkness and light shining through the darkness. I know you said you weren't thinking about metaphors, but I think failure is also something worth shining a light on. The work is then against a sort of productivity of performing and producing and doing things better. I think failure is a beautiful space to work within and spend time in.

I can't help it! (*laughter*) That is why the work is shown as a projection, using this borrowed light. I don't think I will be here in my work, if not for the failure

that I experienced. My whole work changed because I couldn't produce the same things anymore, which carved a new space for me to be a more honest artist. I'm not afraid of failure anymore. It's still scary, but when it comes, I know that it's just a temporary position and it's a teacher most of the time. I can laugh at it and sit with it and do nothing about it.

People like to paint failure as something that is not in our hands. They like to see it as something to endure and not something to embrace and take on.

Yeah. You can always change your mind. You know, it's your headspace. Everything is falling apart just means that there's a renewal, space for new things, and new perspectives. So that's what I'm not afraid of. I like seeing things fall apart because it means that it's gonna create space for something new or something better.

Can you tell me more about Ollie?

Ollie is a much better artist than me. Much better in many ways because Ollie is more comfortable with herself. It's okay if I call her »her,« sometimes I call her »it,« sometimes I call her »them.« She has come a long way from her traumas and she's using art to process those things. This made her a braver person in tackling life. Ollie is also great at performing, which is something that I am just skirting around. But she is a real performer. She does drag; she knows things like death drops, the splits, and all the wonderful drag things one can do. She's good at singing and she's a musician. So, she's this all-around powerhouse actually, trapped in a very confused human being. She's also taking to feel where she would be comfortable as an artist.

I am curious to learn what Ollie is interested in as an artist, because this is very much the framework and structure that you're inviting her into.

The one that you see on the video is her, that wasn't me. The person with green hair is Ollie. In that work, I was indirectly telling Ollie about the privileges of having time to just lie down and be together. This isn't present in most families – to be close and talk to each other about your lives while resting. That work was also teaching Ollie that she is privileged to have that space.

**I'm not afraid of failure anymore. It's still scary,
but when it comes, I know that it's just a temporary
position and it's a teacher most of the time.**

My name is **Tanya Villanueva**. I am a visual artist working across various mediums such as painting, object-making and photography, and textile works. I am a single parent of a teenager and I am currently bent on using my time to be equally available to care for both my daughter and my practice as an artist.

Explore works by
Tanya Villanueva
online:



Jazmina Figueroa is a writer based in Berlin and co-editor of this issue.

Cradle Resistance - Wintering Songs

Eirini Vlavianou

I

Solitude Journal 4 *Time After Time*

Eirini Vlavianou's essay and supporting artistic contributions center on ideas of human rest and natural cycles, specifically the act of singing lullabies, as a revival of ancient knowledge. She is committed to recognizing ancestral practices and undertakings that are elusive or intangible. Challenging the perception of nature as a site of resource extraction and rather seeing it as a sacred living organism that humans are intrinsically not separate from, Vlavianou reminds us that we are bound to nature. In the age of planetary destruction and apathy, Vlavianou writes that we »need to explore how our understanding of the self, universe, and the communal can change through the creation of new mythologies, speculative histories, and unfamiliar embodiments, all influenced by the intra-actions we can observe taking place in micro and macro levels.«

The suppressing character of time, as a mechanism for productivity, growth, and profit within capitalist times, has created a deep chasm between human and nonhuman agencies. The interpretation of growth in terms of efficiency and financial value rather than maturation of the collective has glorified grind culture, assigning guilt to resting, and bestowing value to those who work to the point of exhaustion. But this perception conflicts with the natural rhythms that request both periods of intense blooming and periods of rest and retreat. Hibernating and wintering times¹ that foster a sense of lingering and resetting are essential to seasons of fallow that ultimately contribute to cycles of rebirth and renewal.

Dismantling ideas around calculated time and productivity means redefining growth as a collective effort, entangled with care, while creating a space in which rest is possible and where adjourning as an operative mode is an option. Spaces of suspension, where everything becomes liquified and clocks cease to exist, seem to be an urgent requirement of our collective terrestrial body, while worldwide debris, waste, and noise are gaining more space. In order to reclaim rest, we have to remove ourselves from the Protestant, Calvinist, or Puritan ethics of work throughout the West and reimagine a space that has historically been applied to the few. In my effort to relieve myself from the guilt that accompanied retreating and unproductivity, I came to rethink the practice of singing lullabies. This ubiquitous act and performance is an elusive practice which, if observed closely, can be reintroduced as a reproductive labor song. The imaginary cradle that appears through its use could function as a protective spell, allowing the performers to request their own rest and cast out the legacy of noise, to seek silence, and relieve themselves from hyperproductivity.

In order to provide the right context, one must first recognize those who have performed those cradle songs throughout the years: the caregivers. Usually romanticized as the mother, a caregiver is a person who nurses, heals, and cares while intensively constructing the ecology of a home. But caregivers, such as mothers, sisters, maidservants, nannies, or wet nurses, have been abused and suppressed as colonized bodies who have encrypted upon their acts and practices the politics of labor and capitalized care. Their role is to perform care and provide, without any boundaries or requests. As Maria Puig de la Bellacasa writes in her work *Matters of Care*, »*To care can feel good; it can also feel awful. It can do good; it can oppress. Its essential*

character to humans and countless living beings makes it all the most susceptible to convey control. But what is care? Is it an affection? A moral obligation? Work? A burden? A joy? Something we can learn or practice? Something we just do?»²

Similar to how care embraces the ambivalent grounds *Matters of Care* addresses, lullabies as a practice of care are located in the precarious position between affection and labor, rest and unrest, work and nonwork. In this complex system, lullabies can act as a cry for those performing, mourning everything they were stripped of. The motion that accompanies those songs – swinging the child in a cradle or embrace – complements the act with material effort. The scenarios vary across realities but even though the subjects differ, they all share the common ground of the person who wants to put the sleepless to sleep in order to complete tasks that cannot happen while they are awake. By creating a surreal imaginary landscape through storytelling and fable, the caregiver not only puts the child to sleep, but also demands their own rest. If the child remains sleepless, the lullaby becomes darker and closer to a curse. The lullaby becomes a subversive spell.

Sleep, my child,
I have things to do:
Wash your clothes and sew.³

Night-night little mama,*
Night-night little mama,
If you don't sleep, the crab will eat you
If you don't sleep, the crab will eat you.

Your mama isn't here, she went to the market,
Your papa isn't here, he went to the river,
If you don't sleep, the crab will eat you
If you don't sleep, the crab will eat you.⁴

Sleep, little one
The cuca's going to get you
Daddy went to the fields
And Mommy went to work
Come down, little cat
From the roof
To see if the child
Is sleeping peacefully.⁵

Even though the lullaby, according to Lorca's research on examples coming from the Hispanic region⁶, is

never sung to a newborn child but to a spectator who can understand its plot and the space formed by the caregiver, there is no actual need for the listener to understand the unfolding narratives or even comprehend the need for their sleep. Instead, it seems imperative that the performer voices their own anxieties, frustrations, fears, and dreams. The space of narration concealed with the veil of imagination and fables is the only safe space for the performer to reveal disregarded needs and distress, but also bless or curse the social and economic construct of the family.

All the work
Falls to the poor women
Who wait in the night
For their men to come

Some arrive drunk
Some a little tipsy
Others say, »boys,
Let's kill our wives!«

They ask for dinner,
The women have nothing to give them
»But what did you do with the change?
Woman, what a house you keep!«⁷

However, the comfort of lullabies sometimes spreads beyond the cradling and hushing tones of the voice and into the comfort of the social factory in which everyone is where they should be.

Fathers gone a-hunting,
Mother's gone a-milking
Sister's gone a-silking
Brother's gone to buy a skin.⁸

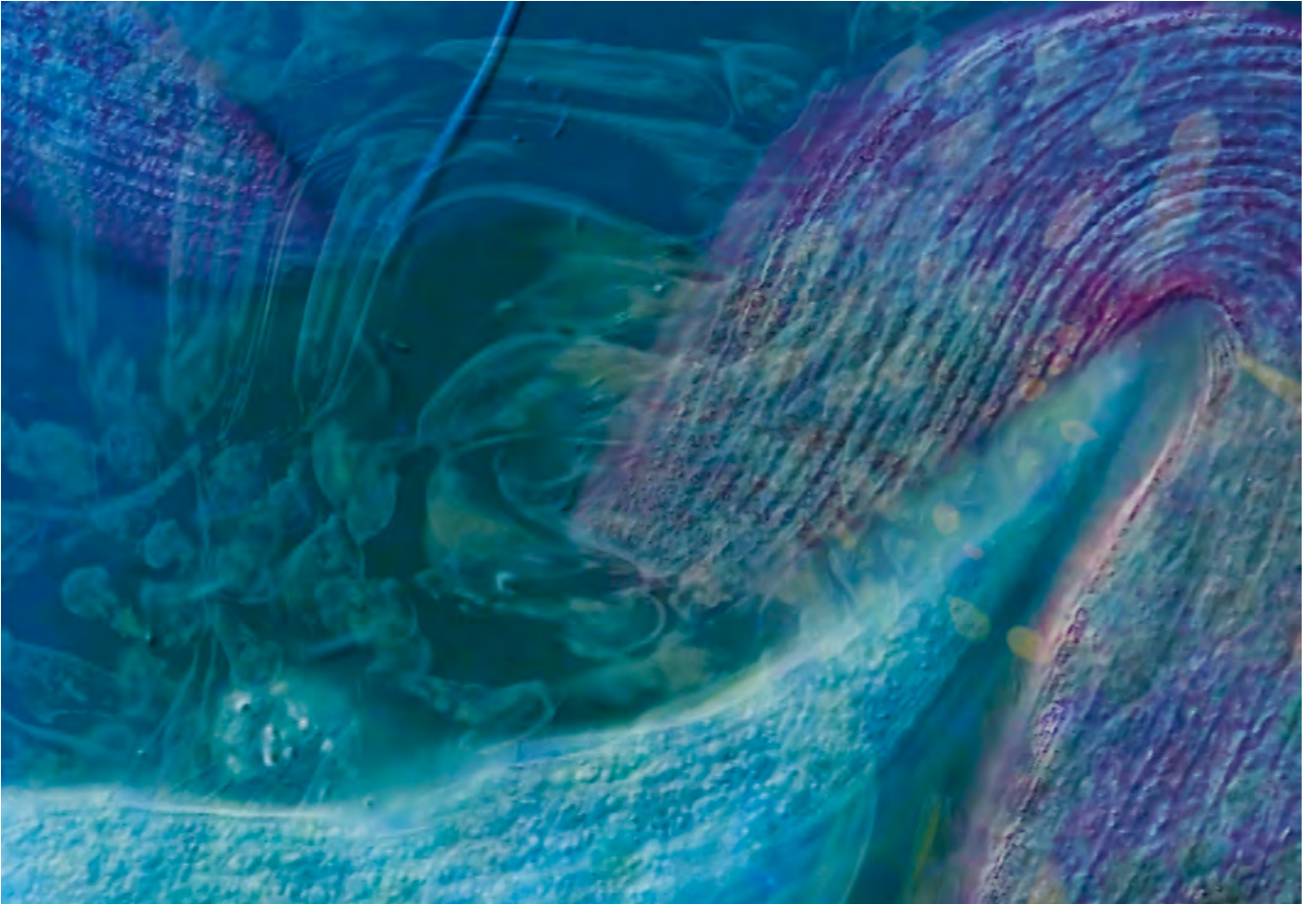
While those two examples are different directions of the use of lullabies, the divisions of labor are met in both, and the order and command of production become a melodically soothing tale. The caregiver is cursing those unjust constructs, even while reproducing them, and finally, the outcome is always the same; a state of inactivity and a slumbering child. The dualism between affection and labor and work and non-work is endorsed through the struggle of two bodies; the working one that endeavors its rest, and another one that denies it. The battle between those completely unequal and opposite bodies creates a dynamic of a resisting body that becomes still and an unrested

counterpart that is responsible for this state of relaxation. Vigorous bodies exercising their right to rest is the inspiration for reclaiming the practice of lullabies while harnessing its power into a protective spell. Can we use the lullaby to sing out an economy of care that is outside of what we already know and exorcize the systems that colonize human and nonhuman bodies but also use sound to control and determine the psychosomatic situations of those bodies?

This work is a meditation around the concepts of care and rest in regard to more than human agencies, processes, and rhythms. Contemporary understandings idealize the ecosystem as a single-entity caregiver, a mother, who offers care without requesting anything in return. Failing to recall our own entanglements with the rest of the ecosystem, human perceptions have created an ontological divide between human and other-than-human processes while exempting humans from basic physical properties and laws as well as grounding a dangerous faith in human exceptionalism. This work is an effort to imagine a space where this romanticized caring body can request its rest. Using the practice of lullabies as a resistance mechanism, this work speculates on a lullaby produced for and by the ecosystem, exorcizing the noise and violence that is placed upon it.

Explore the work
Requies Terrae
online:





Eirini Vlavianou, still image from *Requies Terrae*, 2022.
Courtesy of the artist.

Taking inspiration from nonhuman organisms and communities, **Vlavianou** endeavors to re-establish the human experience into a beyond-species or multispecies openness and care. By employing the principles of intake, transformation, and exchange, Vlavianou's practice is a search for the self within an ambiguity in which languages, symbols, and practices of the past are reintroduced in order to uncover a more intuitive and sensorial comprehension of the world.

1 K. May, *Wintering: The Power of Rest & Retreat in Difficult Times*. London 2020.

2 María Puig De La Bellacasa: *Matters of Care: Speculative Ethics in More than Human Worlds*. Minneapolis 2017, p.1.

3 An example deriving from the book *Deep Song and Other Prose* by Federico Garcia Lorca, a lullaby from the Tamames region in Spain.

4 *Dodo Titit*, a Haitian lullaby.

5 The *cuca* referenced in this lullaby, originates from the Portuguese *coca*, a dragon legend brought in Brazil during colonial times. The *cuca* is an ugly old woman who appears in the form of a crocodile and robs disobedient children. She only sleeps once every seven years and sometimes caregivers use this element of the tale to scare children into sleep, threatening the *cuca*, who will get them if they remain awake.

6 Federico Lorca García & C. Maurer: *Deep Song and Other Prose*, New York 1980.

7 Another example deriving from Garcia Lorca's book and the Asturias region.

8 Holly Pester: «Songs of Rest: An Intervention in the Complex Genre of the Lullaby,» in: *The Restless Compendium*. New York 2016.

Melody of a Journey



Sada Malumfashi

w

Solitude Journal 4 *Time After Time*

Sada Malumfashi's piece is a hybrid text that narrates a journey across European cities. *Melody of a Journey* sets out to deconstruct the relationship to time and language from an African perspective in a Western construct.

Time is created by events. In an eventless universe there would be no time.
—John Berger

7:59 pm

I am writing this, in Kaduna as I scan time and juggle memories. It is a pandemic. Bodies have disappeared, walled behind fences and gates. To each his own.

...

In this timeline, there is an art gallery in a plantation street in an area labeled with street signs that evoke memories of white power over Black bodies. The conversation is a radio interview, and a microphone edges towards lips. The train ride from the book I read from is different from the rides on the U-Bahns and spaces of Berlin:

This train ride is from Kaduna and it is not glossy
but a carrier of bubble of humans
men, women, children, matted bags, glistening silver buckets
wrapped bundles of brooms, prickly tubers of yams
creaking assemblage of overhead fans
backpacks, nylon leathers, passengers
standing, hanging
heads lying on walking aisles.
But this is Berlin, not Kaduna
Train here is luxury, a space for thinking
lectures, laughter and discuss.

...

I scroll Twitter on the screen of my iPad, giggling at the sound of a joke or the sound of an attempt to joke, or a picture or a scene stuck in time.

Scene

A barbershop in Berlin. N is having his hair shaved and his now »mohawk-esque«-shaped hair reflects in a mirror in the picture while the barber is distracted from his task by my laughter. Above, on a television screen, a Bundesliga match is ongoing and the team in white is aligned in a perfect 4-4-2 formation.

(Enter Pa T, an older male, and his two acquaintances and first-time visitors to Berlin)
A sign outside the barbershop hangs, reading »closed.«

Barber: Wir sind geschlossen.

N: Bros, abeg help me now, I badly need this haircut. It's a few days until Christmas and I am traveling tomorrow.

Barber: *(pointing at closed sign)* No! No! Closed!

Me: من أين

Barber: *(with a wide grin and surprised face)* Palestine. Palestine!

End of scene



Photos by Sada Malumfashi. Courtesy of the photographer.

t

Melody of a Journey

10:00 pm

In this time capsule, the barber grins, not expecting the sound of his mother tongue, of his lost city from this stranger in a strange place. We keep grinning and nodding in appreciation of language. This is Germany. Time is a defined construct. My calendar is filled with appointments, meetings, and social gatherings set in the future. But here, right now, we collectively created another meaning of time. We abandon our calendars and allow the involvement of humans and not the ticks of a time clock. What is early and what is late? Time to this African and Arab in a European city is about the value of human interactions, not schedules anymore. But will this barber have to take out these extra two hours he had allocated to our group after the official *closing hours* from his time tomorrow morning? How will this intrusion affect the next day's schedule of his next German client waiting for a 7:00 am haircut? A domino effect of a cataclysmic time collapse as an African and an Arab break European time. Time is lost and wasted. Anarchy. Yet, even in the waste of time, genuine human interactions have to continue. Time is a silent language and there is a fine art to opening closed barbershops in a city that lives in time, in future appointments. The art of memory and language.

...

The culture of time I find in Germany is of one thing at a time. Scheduling meetings and drafting agendas weeks in advance. I adjusted to this culture of time, and even began getting used to it. I am awake at 2:00 am to beat scheduled deadlines set in other continents. The time is 2:59 am and my watch ticks not towards 3:00 am but back to another 2:00 am. The magic of daylight savings time. Two different hours in the same day. A time joke. Tomorrow in my meeting with S. Will I be one hour early or one hour late? Here, time is not real.

Now, I stare at garbage, clutching my jacket into my body. The exhibiting artist sitting by my side is adorned in her native pink sari and wearing white sneakers. I am staring at an artwork from her solo exhibition *Garb-Age* where she scavenges trash, baggage, and discarded elements (broken glasses, cigarettes, coins, paper bags) to interact with time and epistemology. In another art gallery in Berlin, we are all curated garbage, in a ritual of time. A global mess. We are the garbage, we are the artwork, and we are time going mental as we view our reflections in broken mirrors and glasses.

...

I met S a week before her exhibition. I listened and learned the artistry of her garbage, the artistry of her activism, through conversations about the global injustice on people, on the climate, on time – conversations about our global mess. »You know sometimes, the whole work gets really depressing,« S adds as we pause in front of her apartment. »Working with so much mess and thinking about how to make the world less messy. Sometimes I just give up. And in these moments, I step out of my studio and go out for a smoke. I guess it's a way of punishing myself too for what we are doing to the world, by ingesting garbage – poison, into my own system.«

...

10:01 pm

Amsterdam is a whirlwind. Cultural by day, bawdy at night. It is one of the days of the festival of light and the skies lit by man-made structures competing with the genius of

God. I am the single black body in a boat of tourists ferrying the waters of river Amstel. I have time arranged. Train tickets bought ahead of time, as I begin to travel across Europe in a future schedule. Time is a capsule.

12:01 am

Another day clocked according to schedule. I am on a train leaving Amsterdam for Sloterdijk Station. Sitting opposite me on the train is a young Black woman in a crop top and denim jeans. She looks to be in her early twenties. I could feel her gaze linger on me since I stepped into the coach. I attempt to avert the strong gaze by looking back into her eyes. Our eyes meet – hers a shade of dark brown. She continues to stare intently. I could not continue and now I am looking down at my feet, sideways into the coach – anywhere but into her dreamy eyes. This would continue for the next two stops until »crop-top denim jeans« woman will finally alight. I turn my head through the windscreens and look at her walking outside on the platforms. Then like a breeze, she turns around, smiles and blows me a kiss and waves me off as the train begins to move. I freeze in the moment, unable to return her kiss. As the train shudders and moves faster, I burst out in an uncontrollable laughter. I am tempted to press the emergency halt signs, drop off and pursue this unlikely romance.

What happens when we stop time in its tracks on the coach of a train – do we end up in a loop of space or a loop of infinite lights? Two strangers in the lights of Amsterdam tripping over time.

...

In the past days, I was in control of time, with pre-booked train tickets and an arranged schedule as I traveled across Europe. For my time in Hamburg, I had planned on a tourist walk around the central station to the Kunsthalle Hamburg museum, and gawk in real time at Van Gogh, Rembrandt, and Monet, and a street shopping experience along the Mönckebergstrasse. But the skies seem like they are always eager to rain.

In certain parts of Nigeria, rainmakers are held in high regard and people pay them to keep rains away from events such as weddings. Rains waste time and can reduce the value of and time spent at social gatherings. Sadly, I am not from this stock of rainmakers, so the downpour restricted me to the confines of the central station sipping coffee at a Döner shop. I am the only customer besides the Turkish owner, who goes back inside to dispose the trash. He hesitates before leaving me alone, his face glowering and not trusting. I finish the last drop of coffee when a middle-aged white person walks in, a beard covering his face. He speaks in German to me and I smile and shake my head signaling to him that I am deaf in that language area. He comes close to the counter and leers, searching for the Turkish owner. I perceive a whiff of odor from the grocery bag in his hand. He walks around, his gait unsteady. My eyes follow him. He begins to walk away towards the exit, but then instantly picks up a bottle of wine and places it into his grocery bag and hurries away. I am left bewildered. I do not know whether to raise an alarm for shoplifting or not. I remain frozen on my seat, coffee in hand. What can I do? I am the black stranger here. The one followed or watched closely by security guards in any store in Europe, so how do I gaze back in time, and raise an alarm on a white person shoplifting. How do I tell them exactly what happened without being able to speak the proper colonial language? The Turkish shop owner re-emerges and I immediately pay him for my coffee and drag my suitcase into the rainy streets of Hamburg almost running.

A hundred years back in time, in the lifetime of my father's grandfather, my likeness is displayed by the German colony as a *Völkerschau*, a human zoo. Time is a continuum. I feel complicit for the actions of my likeness a hundred years ago for not protesting. And now, in this shoplifting, I feel complicit.

...

1:59 am

I am at Konstanz, waiting in the cold winter night, alone in the station for the next train to Zurich. Over the next couple of hours, I roam until I find myself at the border crossing – here in one part I faced Kreuzlingen in Switzerland, and on the other side, I was in Konstanz in Germany. A line, a border, and in that moment, I put one leg across the line and I was lost in time, lost in two cities, in two countries, my body shared different politics, different currencies, but the same swift air, blowing on both halves of myself for 60 seconds.

3:00 am (DST)

One minute becomes one hour. How do you run down time as you wait for the next train? Do train tracks understand how to cheat time? I whirled stones into the lake, howled into the night sky, and laid on my praying mat in the railway station facing the *qibla* my heart towards the Kaaba in Makkah and prayed that time remains sane. I listened to Naziru Ahmad's Hausa music as the tinny sound springing from my iPhone in ripples shuffling with Burna Boy's lyrics pulsing with the winds and walls of the station. In the eerie silence of the night in faraway Switzerland I stopped time and traveled home on the waves of music to the cozy beats of my room in Kaduna, singing:

»Anybody, wey no want to soji/Anybody, wey no dey carry body/Nack am something, ah ah/Nack am something.«

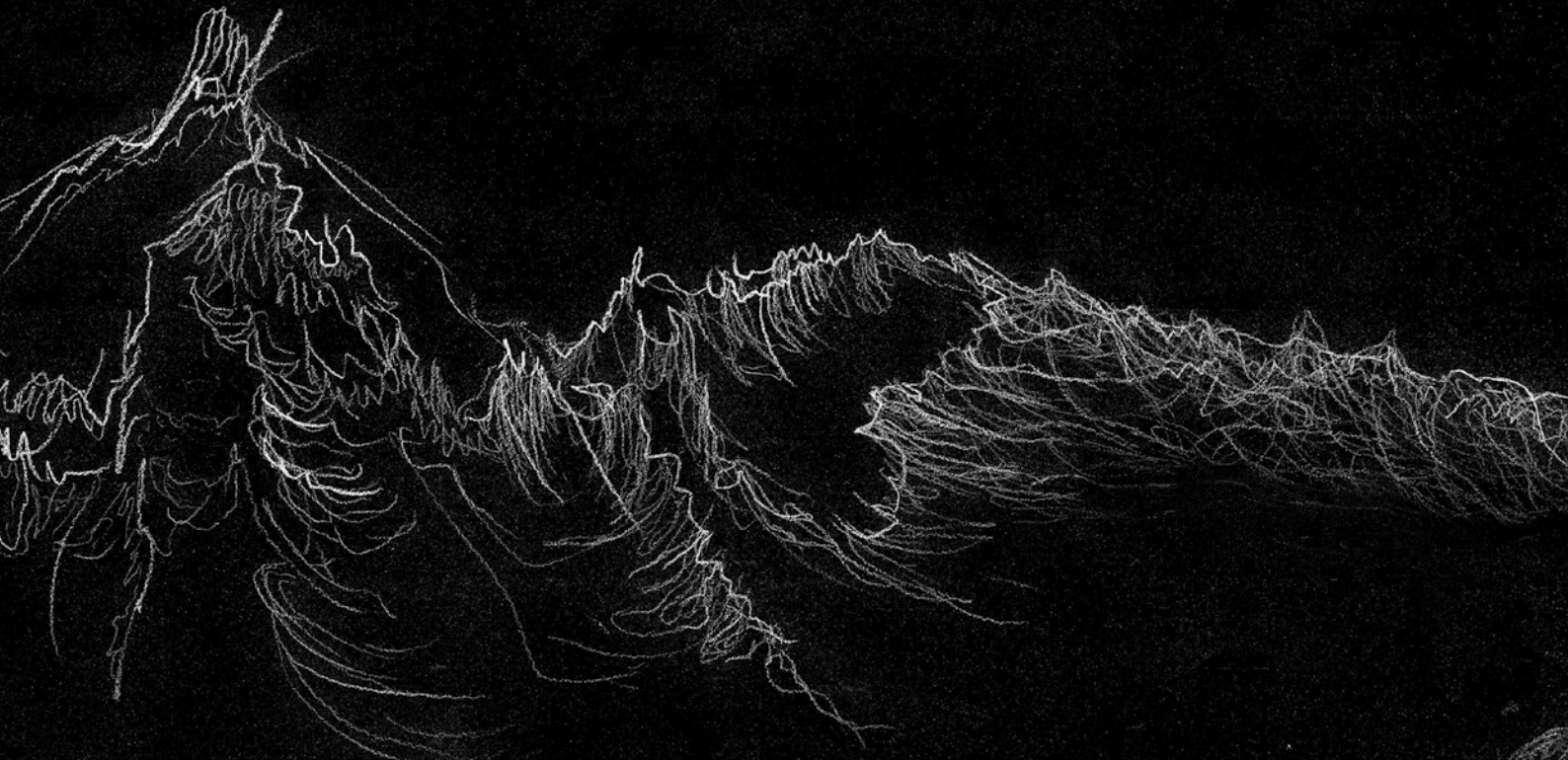
...

8:00 pm

This story is a trick of time. We are all strange bodies dancing to the melody of a journey.

Sada Malumfashi is a writer living in Kaduna, Nigeria.

Dissociations (Fitz Roy)



Nadine K. Cenoz's landscape drawings are comic-like, revealing the connections between colonial expansion to narrative representations of adventure. *Dissociations (Fitz Roy)* is inspired by photos of mountaineers ascending the Cerro Chaltén in Patagonia. Due to Argentina's colonial history, the mountain range is also known as Mount Fitz Roy, which was named after R. FitzRoy, the captain of Charles Darwin's voyage to Patagonia. Darwin produced taxonomic drawings of the Indigenous people, flora, and fauna of Cerro Chaltén based on Western-Eurocentric understandings of representing, taming, and conquering the region.

Nadine K. Cenoz uses drawing to approach questions of subjectivity and explores the psychic and political complexities of displacement. She focuses on the (mis)translations and interstitial relations to understand the preconceptions and projections about places with their material conditions.

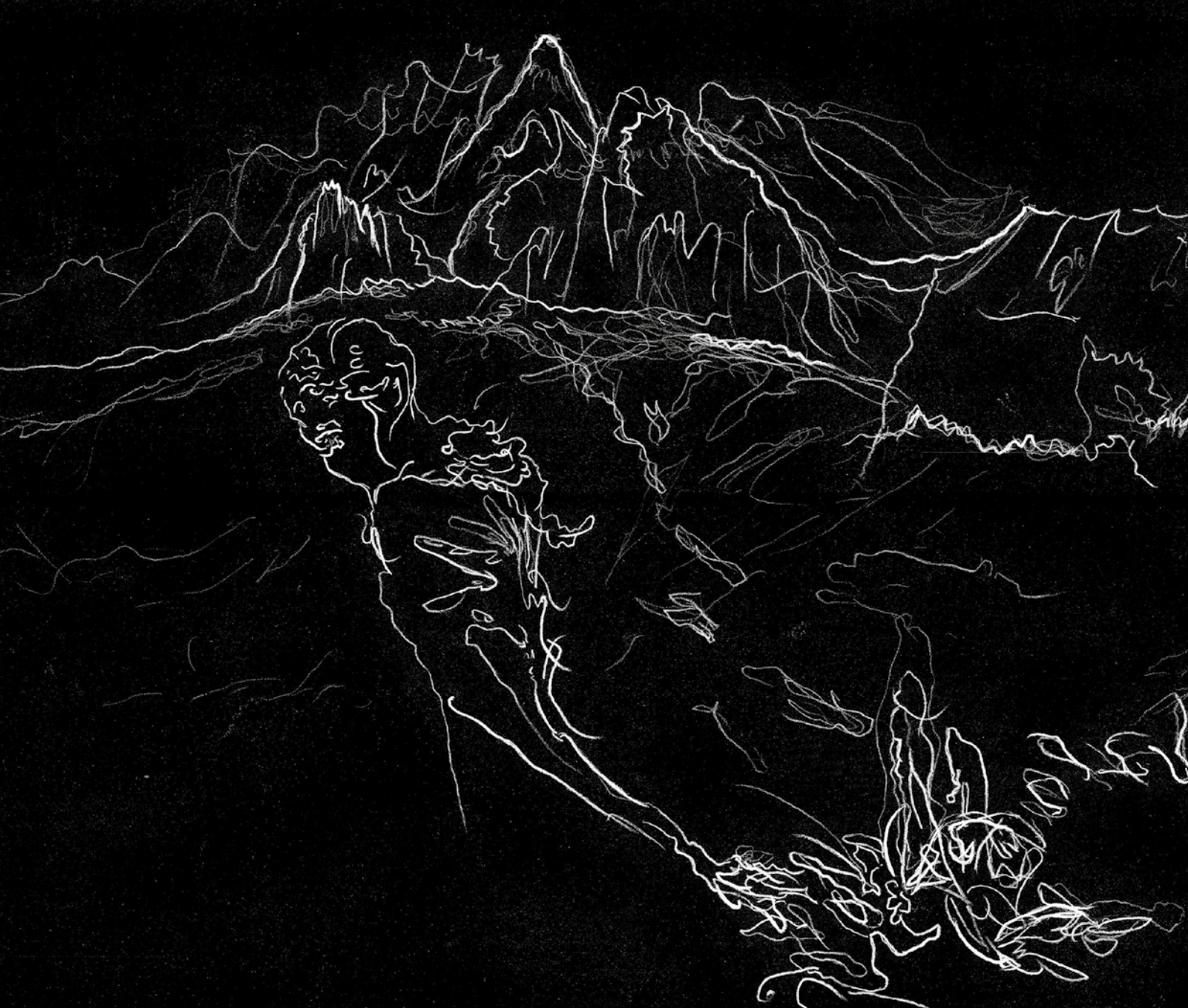




STILL PSYCHED AFTER
TWO COLD, UNCOMFORTABLE
BIVOUACS

AFTER
GYMN
BALA
DIZZ





SUMMIT
KING FREEZING
SIBILITY



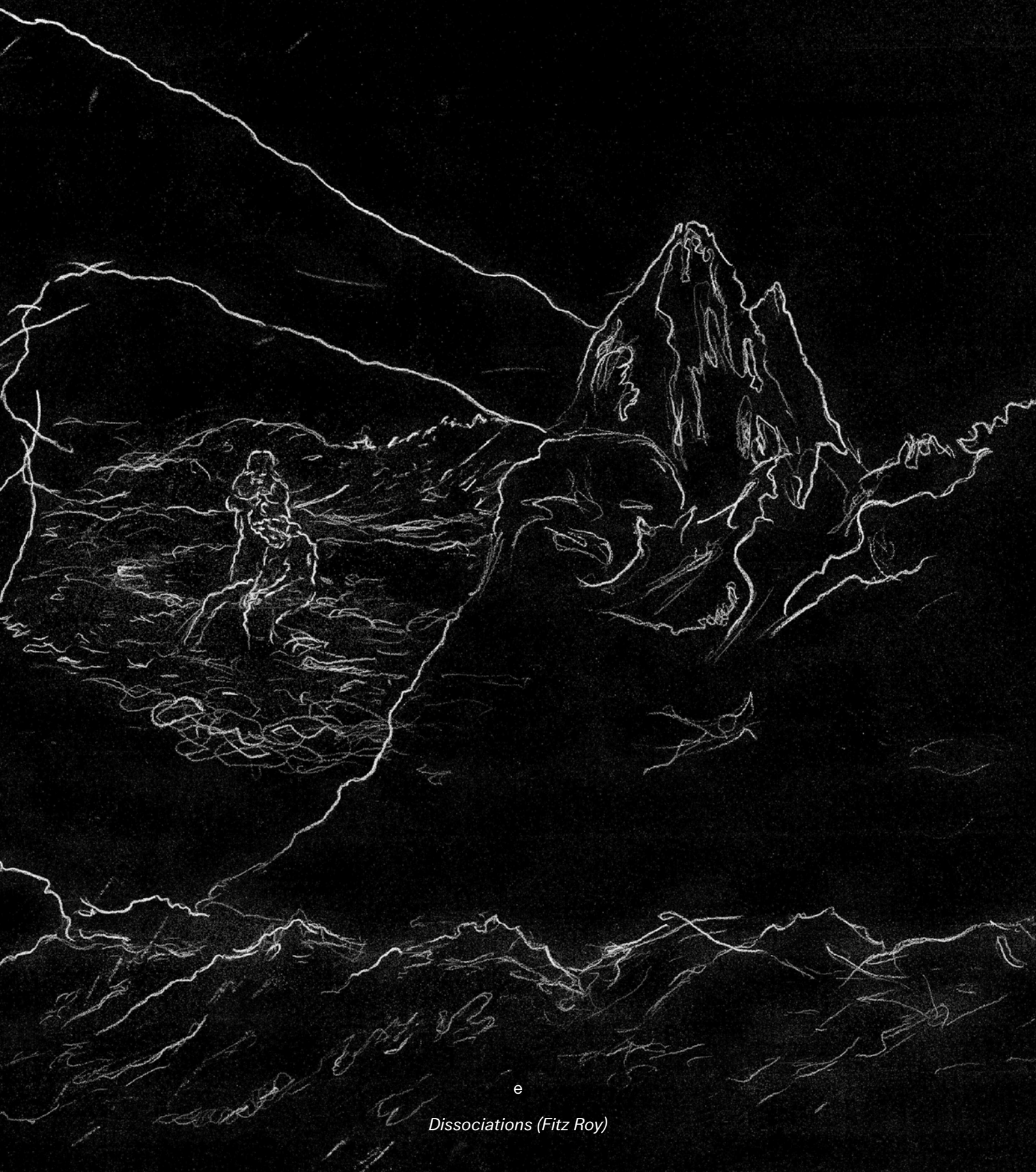


f



t

BEHIND THEM IS CHILE AND
THE CONTINENTAL ICE CAP



Offset

BF

r

For *Solitude Journal*, researcher and audio producer BF reflects on their fluctuating, durational, and embodied local position in time and place, entangled with web time and linear clock time. This writing, and the audiovisual elements presented on the web version of this issue, draw from *Local Time*, their ongoing ecological listening project. For the past few years, they have been recording, listening, and programming creatively with their local neighborhood in and around »Footscray,« which is in the inner Western suburbs of Naarm or »Melbourne,« »Australia.« Although they align sound recordings in the linear, gridded clocks of digital audio workstations and the millisecond-measures of JavaScript, they challenge temporalities of place(s) and acknowledge that contrary to white settler-colonial imaginings, places are not static locations, settings, or temporalities.

The screen of my recording device blinks:

00:00:00
00:00:00
00:00:00

I press REC and the blinking zeroes begin counting:

00:00:01
00:00:02
00:00:03
00:00:04
00:00:05

And on and on, the built-in digital clock ticks upward in discrete measures, counting the seconds elapsed since the recording began. I create a linear reel of digital »tape« that, when I load it into my DAW (Digital Audio Workstation), will span past the width of my computer screen.

Aligning rhythmic sounds like my footsteps to the DAW's linear, gridded clock, I will find the beats-per-minute time signature of this recording. I will fast-forward past boredom, and find a compelling interval where I'll slow the playback rate and highlight a clip to be replayed and replayed. I skip backward and forward through »infinitely supple« digital time.¹ A day, and more, is listenable and skippable and I can see and store more time than I can comprehend. This is the field recordists' »glut of data,« a glut of time where practitioners' libraries swell: if played in real time, my recordings would span longer than my career.²

I divide time into discrete portions and measure its size in gigabytes and its length in days, hours, minutes, seconds and milliseconds. Feeling restless or sore in the field, I become fixed on the seconds ticking upwards and tell myself to hold still for just another minute, or more. More »gold« added to the field recording library.³ But the homogenous regularity of that accumulating clock time cannot measure the experiential duration of my attention that I register more expansively when I'm not watching the clock.⁴

Manipulating and presenting field recordings on the web, I write JavaScript code – some of which uses the Date object which stamps »a single moment in time«⁵ measured in milliseconds since the »epoch« of 00:00:00 midnight on January 1, 1970 (also known as the Unix timestamp). This millisecond-measured object is parsed into a string to write something like this:

Sun Aug 14 2022 11:37:25 GMT+1000 (Australian Eastern Standard Time)⁶

That time string is localized relative to the time information provided by my computer. Or, if I publish this code on the web, it's localized to the time information provided by whatever device is accessing the webpage. In other words, your device knows where you are and what time zone that places you in. To display my local time relative to yours, I manipulate Date. I wrestle with the problems of working with timezones⁷ and use JavaScript methods such as getTimezoneOffset, which tells me the difference between a date evaluated in UTC versus the local timezone.⁸ I find our relative temporal offset from the zeroed »middle« timezone standard UTC+00.

Michelle Bastian explains that although clock time measures the length of a day, »atomic clocks cannot synchronize precisely with the rotation of the Earth, since this rota-

tion is variable.«⁹ So, UTC or Coordinated Universal Time is a negotiated version of clock time, constructed from solar time, atomic time and the ongoing offset of »leap seconds.« Bastian says that »telling the time« is not a factual description, but rather a performative act. She proposes a move away from established conventions of reading mechanical or digital time as objective measures, in favor of a broader definition of the clock:

A device that signals change in order for its users to maintain an awareness of, and thus be able to coordinate themselves with, what is significant to them.¹⁰

Digital time on recording devices, DAWs and on the web are tools of measuring and manipulating clock time, and they are devices I use in performative acts of »telling time.« But my body is the clock with which I measure local place, enacting Donna Haraway's »view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body.«¹¹ I trace Footscray through repeated movement and I sense place-temporalities through my view from a body via hunger, thirst, tiredness, restlessness. Some rhythmic actions like digging and walking are repetitive and rhythmic and can become percussive and seductively constant. I entrain myself to place; my footfall, heartbeat, breath, and sleep are synced to the night/day, on- and off-peak, dawn and evening chorus and seasonal rhythms.

I know »when« I am by noticing changing colors of skies and plants, arrivals and departures of fledgling birds, invoking Glen Morrison who says »spaces become better known as places as they become ›time-thickened.«¹² In this time-thickening of space into place into neighborhood, I am a »rhythmanalyst«¹³ attentive to place-rhythms that are paradoxically both ever-changing through processes of becoming, but also consistent and stabilized by steady patterns of flow.¹⁴

My listenings in place intensify my noticing of »background« ambience, the repetitive,¹⁵ rhythmic sounds; familiar, in the composition of place, this is the percussive rhythm to which my everyday is entrained. I sometimes treat place as »nature« which, when viewed as a »substance« might appear »comfortingly present, endless, normal, straight.«¹⁶ I reach for audio-gathering equipment. I return to familiar places, and wait, and hope for a repeat performance, sometimes revealing an extractive white colonialist instinct that is »possessive and protective about asset accumulation and ownership.«¹⁷ Place eludes¹⁸ my desire for capture and control, and I leave with an empty memory card.

The recording device displays its void:

00:00:00

Zero-zero. In linear temporal media these zeroes signal a beginning, the null-duration of audio-visuals not-yet-experienced. On a digital clock: midnight, the »middle« of the night, ending one day and beginning the next. On a recording device: data accumulation not-yet begun. On a digital media playhead: a paused start. A frontier zero time punctuation in the ideology of the roll-out of linear time.¹⁹

Cyclical, rhythmic place »has nothing to do with good old reliable constancy«²⁰ and does not conform to linear expectations. »Nature« is not a »stable background« to human life, a confused misconception reinforced by Western cultural concepts of an abstract clock like UTC which – despite ecological crises – »problematically projects an unending future no matter the context.«²¹ Places in »Australia« are not static locations or settings. Rather, »these are places that are best understood as endless events ... fluid or airy or ethereal and constantly altering.«²² In white settler-colonial imaginings, »authentic Australian identity« is »set against the great silence of the bush«, but »just as the land was not ›empty‹ nor ›belonging to no-one‹, neither was the soundscape silent.«²³

The English colonization of Australia was premised on »uninhabited,« »empty land« deemed »Terra Nullius«: land without signs of ownership, occupation and government visible to the colonizers. It developed into an effort to permanently extinguish indigenous people: their bodies, identities, cultures, languages; their knowledges. Genocide.²⁴

My generational connections to this continent are rooted in English and Irish convict-settler ancestry based on theft and possession that has been »jealously guarded by white Australians«²⁵ while »the white body was the norm and measure for identifying who could belong.«²⁶ My white, colonizing body should not be the measurement scale of this place. Reflecting on the extractivism inherent in settler-colonial formations of land, Dan Tout reminds us that settler-colonies are premised on »the foundational projection of permanent territorial sovereignty;«²⁷ settlers arrive uninvited and then outstay their welcome, if they were ever welcomed at all. Home is not permanent, and a claim made on place doesn't grant ongoing access. Movement is vital to place-knowledge: »Country calls for activity; it needs rousing engagement more than it needs settlement.«²⁸

I do my best to enact »rousing engagement« through acts of care and active participation in place – led by listening. I try to reject and resist extractive and accumulative impulses. A library of field recordings will always be incomplete, I cannot fully represent or capture place, and I cannot grasp for an »ending« where the timeline of place-listening is complete.

Listening to and with place, I notice more-than-human temporalities that elude measurement, prediction, expectation, control. A frustrating escalation of pigeon coos that vibrate from all sides. Worms »squelch and schlurp«²⁹ when I'm turning the compost. Rustling wetland reeds. A thrilling portamento of a faraway currawong. A drone of traffic and machine diggers. The crack of a seed pod and the scatter of its insides. My hesitating breaths. I take up Anna Tsing's assemblage thinking:

Patterns of unintentional coordination develop in assemblages. To notice such patterns means watching the interplay of temporal rhythms and scales in the divergent lifeways that gather.³⁰

Imagining futures outside capitalism's monodirectional and cumulative »progress stories,« Tsing turns instead toward »temporal polyphony« of third nature: »open-ended assemblages of entangled ways of life, as these coalesce in coordination across many kinds of temporal rhythms.«³¹ I continue assembling temporal rhythms between body-listening, place-listening and digital-listening. I sow seeds. I feel elongated evenings as seasons shift toward blooming flowers. I watch a waxing moon. I dig with worms. I gather seeds. These listenings cannot be felt in the web browser. But my use of web coding informs my understandings of place, and vice-versa. Moon phases can be measured in fractions. Sunset time can be checked as a percentage difference from the 24-hour hundred percent. These clock time measures are outside my body's measures, but they facilitate me putting shapes around my listenings. I try to coalesce varied and sometimes contradictory, sometimes complementary senses of time, allowing for forms of knowledge beyond measurement but within embodied comprehension.

Here and now, it's early afternoon. My lunch is digesting and making me feel sluggish. I feel a slight pain in my neck. Out my lounge-room window, I can see large white and gray clouds blocking out the formerly blue sky, signaling the rain that I know is forecast for this evening. My nose and eyes feel itchy with road dust and pollen. I perceive time through my body, an in- and external »offset« that places me here and now.

Here and now, read with the JavaScript method `Date.now()`, is 1662688115662 milliseconds (since the Unix timestamp »epoch«) – a number I cannot properly read or understand, but I can manipulate. By the time you read this, millions or billions of milliseconds will have accumulated and been added to that number. To program JavaScript events, I calculate time in thousands: 60,000 milliseconds per minute, 3,600,000 per hour. I slowly backtrack with my arrow key to trace each zero, counting aloud as I code: one-two-three zeroes per thousand milliseconds for one second, itself a measure of time I can only fallibly measure as a verbally-counted »Mississippi.«

To check my code, I refresh the browser window and the scripted sequence I programmed resets to its frontier zero – an epoch `window.onload` event. I listen again to the sound clips and rewatch the videos and graphics I've programmed. They loop. They collide. They repeat. They are familiar but become uncanny through their looping repetition. I have hidden – as I often do – the default appearance of the HTML Audio Object, which would usually display a play/pause interface, a linear representation of the media file, and a timestamp of its `currentTime` elapsed in playback and its total duration. By obfuscating these interactive playback controls, I cannot watch the seconds-elapsed-since-00:00:00 counter. Watching and listening in this browser window, I return to embodied durational attention.

While digital sound's linearity and web time's millisecond-measures can feel limiting, these tools also open possibilities for expansive and cyclical listenings. In web playback algorithms driven by clock time, in turn driven by my embodied listenings in place, I experience assemblages of time, sound and place – Tsing's »unintentional coordination« – that sit outside of measurable progress and accumulation.

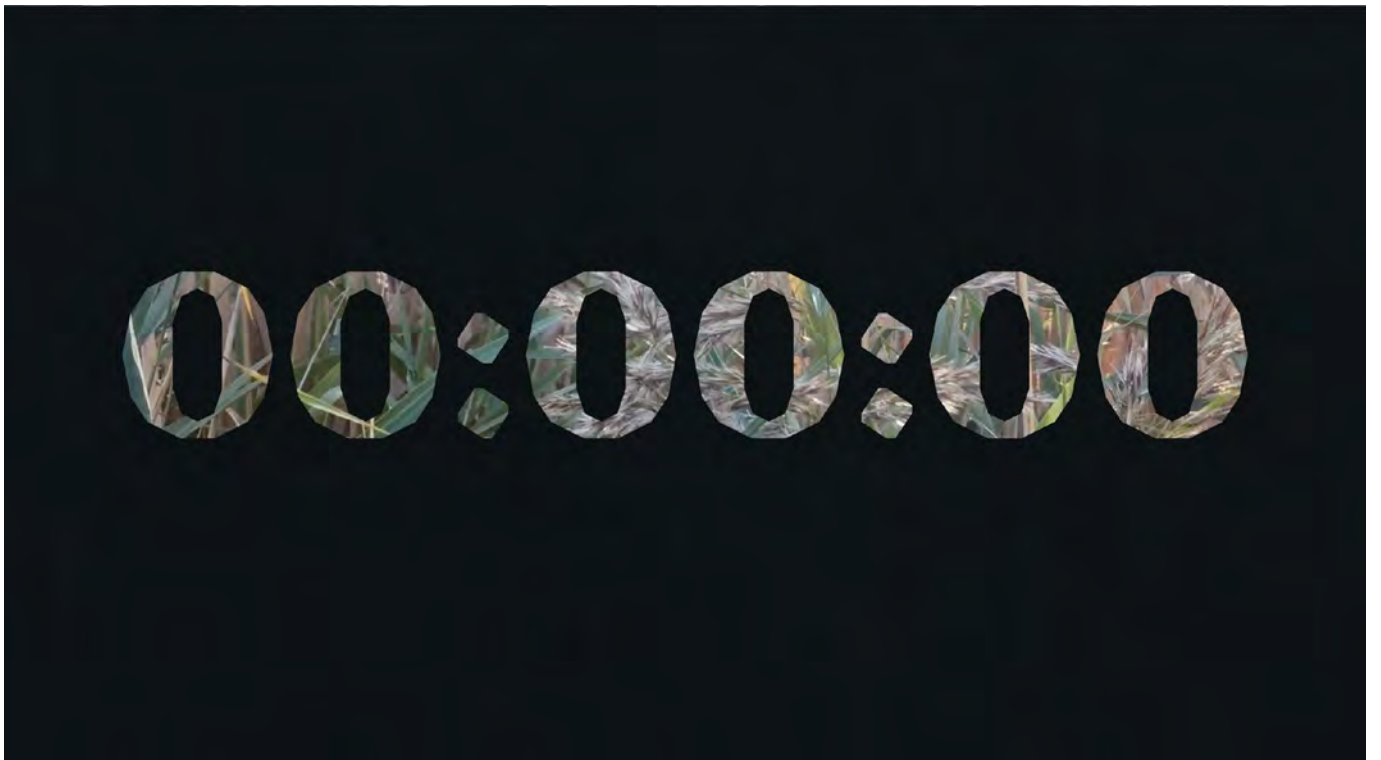
Temporal assemblages are unfolding knowledges of time that I cannot fully know or perceive. Again, I entrain myself to rhythms of place. I listen.

It's now tomorrow, and it's morning. The ground is wet from the promises met by yesterday's clouds.

I continue listening and attending to my `now()`.

Explore the work
Offset online:





BF, still image from *Offset*, browser based audiovisual work, 2022.
Courtesy of the artist.

BF is a fledgling. They garden, listen, and learn on Marin Balluk Wurundjeri Country.

Acknowledgement

I am an uninvited guest in this stolen Country. The Traditional Owners of this place are the Marin Balluk peoples of the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and to the elders and custodians of the lands and waters where you are.

1 John Potts: *The New Time and Space*. London 2015, p.15.

2 Kelly Servick: »Eavesdropping on Ecosystems,« in: *Science* 343 (6175), 2014, p. 837. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.343.6175.1077-b>

3 Sound artist and field recordist Camilla Hannan encourages producers to »wait a couple of minutes longer than you're comfortable ... because that's when you get the gold,« in: Audiocraft Podcast, »Season 2, Episode 4: It's All in the Detail,« in: *Audiocraft*, 2017. <https://www.audiocraft.com.au/audiocraft-podcast-season-2-ep-4>.

4 Henri Bergson: *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness. Duration and Simultaneity*. Indianapolis, New York, and Kansas City 1913/1965, p. 57.

5 »Date - JavaScript.« MDN Web Docs. 2022. https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/JavaScript/Reference/Global_Objects/Date.

6 Since I began writing this, I am now in Australian Eastern Daylight Time, or GMT+1100 – a seasonal temporal offset that places me further out of sync with local place.

7 Tom Scott, »The Problem with Time and Timezones,« in: *Computerphile*, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5wpm-gesOY>.

8 MDN, »Date.Prototype.GetTimezoneOffset() – JavaScript,« MDN Web Docs, 2022, https://developer.mozilla.org/en-US/docs/Web/JavaScript/Reference/Global_Objects/Date/getTimezoneOffset.

9 Michelle Bastian: »Fatally Confused: Telling the Time in the Midst of Ecological Crises,« in: *Environmental Philosophy* 9 (1), 2012, p. 30.

10 Ibid., p. 31.

11 Donna Haraway: »Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,« in: *Feminist Studies* 14, No. 3, 1988, p. 575. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>, p. 589.

12 Glenn Morrison: »Perceiving the World on a Walk,« in: *Writing Home*, 2017, p. 15.

13 Henri Lefebvre: *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. London and New York 2004, p. 19.

14 Tim Edensor: »Introduction: Thinking about Rhythm and Space,« in: *Geographies of Rhythm: Nature, Place, Mobilities and Bodies*, 2010, p. 3.

15 Such as the »repetition effect,« described by Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue in *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, Montreal 2005, p. 90, as a »phenomena of return, reprise, and enrichment by accumulation« when perceiving the reappearance of identical sound occurrences.

16 Timothy Morton: *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. New York 2016, p. 56.

17 Aileen Moreton-Robinson: *The White Possessive*, Minneapolis 2016, p. 67.

18 I continue to be informed by the illustrative accounts of environmental agency and »kin,« such as in the work of AM Kanngieser and Zoe Todd: »From Environmental Case Study To Environmental Kin Study,« in: *History and Theory* 59, no. 3, 2020, pp. 385–93. <https://doi.org/10.1111/hith.12166>, and AM Kanngieser, »Listening as Taking-Leave (Listening as Method),« in: *The Seedbox*, 2021, theseedbox.se/blog/listening-as-taking-leave.

19 Deborah Bird Rose: »Reflections on the Zone of the Incomplete« in: *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, edited by Joanna Radin and Emma Kowal, Cambridge MA 2017, pp. 147–8.

20 Morton: 2016, p. 10.

21 Bastian: 2012, p. 39.

22 Gibson: 2015, p. 22.

23 Jane Belfrage: *The Great Australian Silence: Knowing, Colonising and Gendering Acoustic Space*, La Trobe University, 1993, p. 80. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.9/506018>

24 Ibid, p. 6.

25 Moreton-Robinson: 2016, p. 7.

26 Ibid, p. 5.

27 Dan Tout: »Juukan Gorge Destruction: Extractivism and the Australian Settler-Colonial Imagination,« in: *Arena*, 2020. <https://arena.org.au/juukan-gorge-destruction-extractivism-and-the-australian-settler-colonial-imagination/>.

28 Gibson, 2015, p. 22.

29 Norie Neumark imitates her and Maria Miranda's worm companions in »The Voices of Wormy Compost: Embodiment, Affect and More-than-Sound,« in: *More-than-Sound*, 2021. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=703LKKPuGRA>.

30 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing: *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins*, Princeton and Oxford 2015, p. 23.

31 Ibid, p. viii.

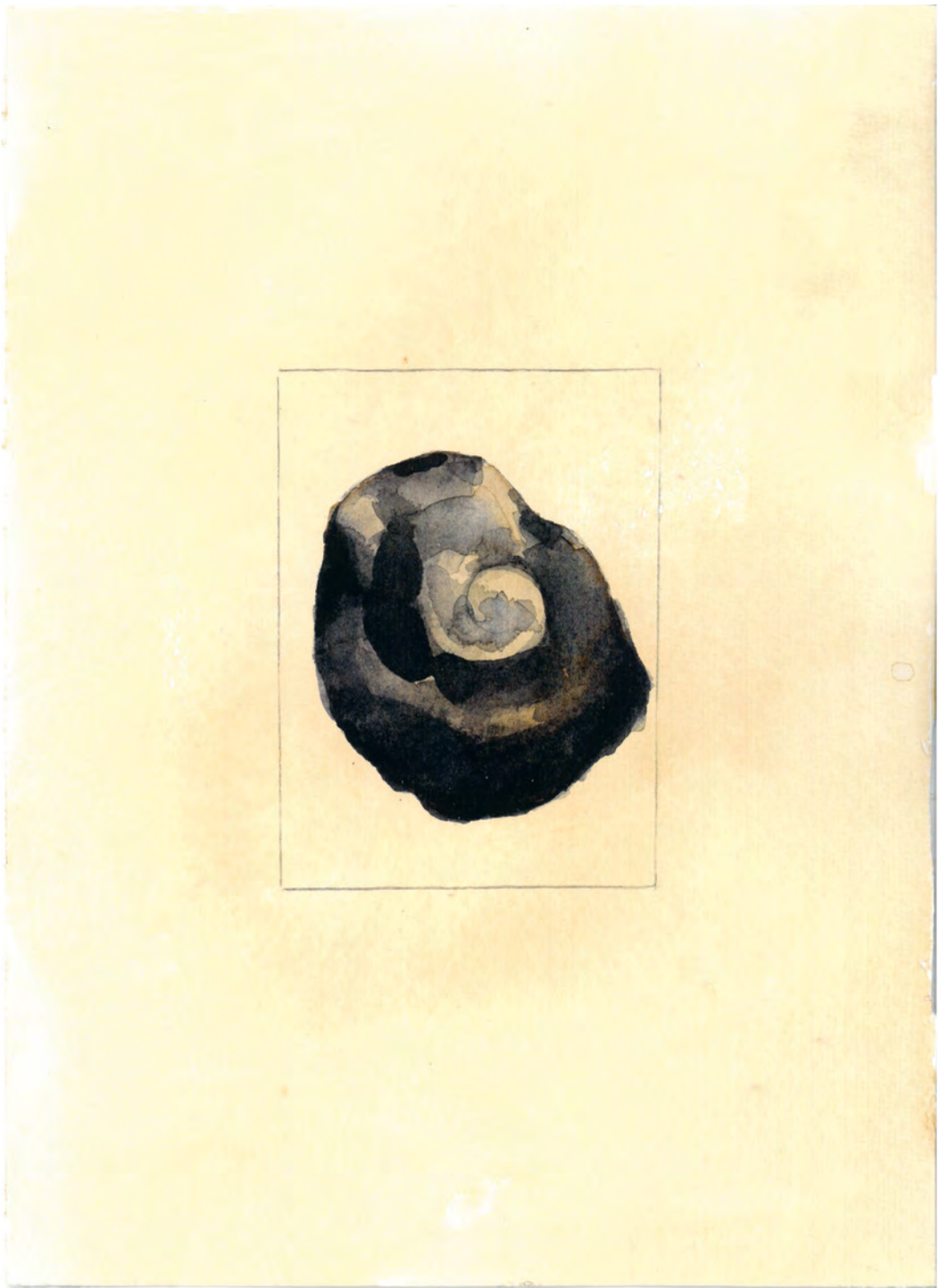
Studies in Aqueous Time

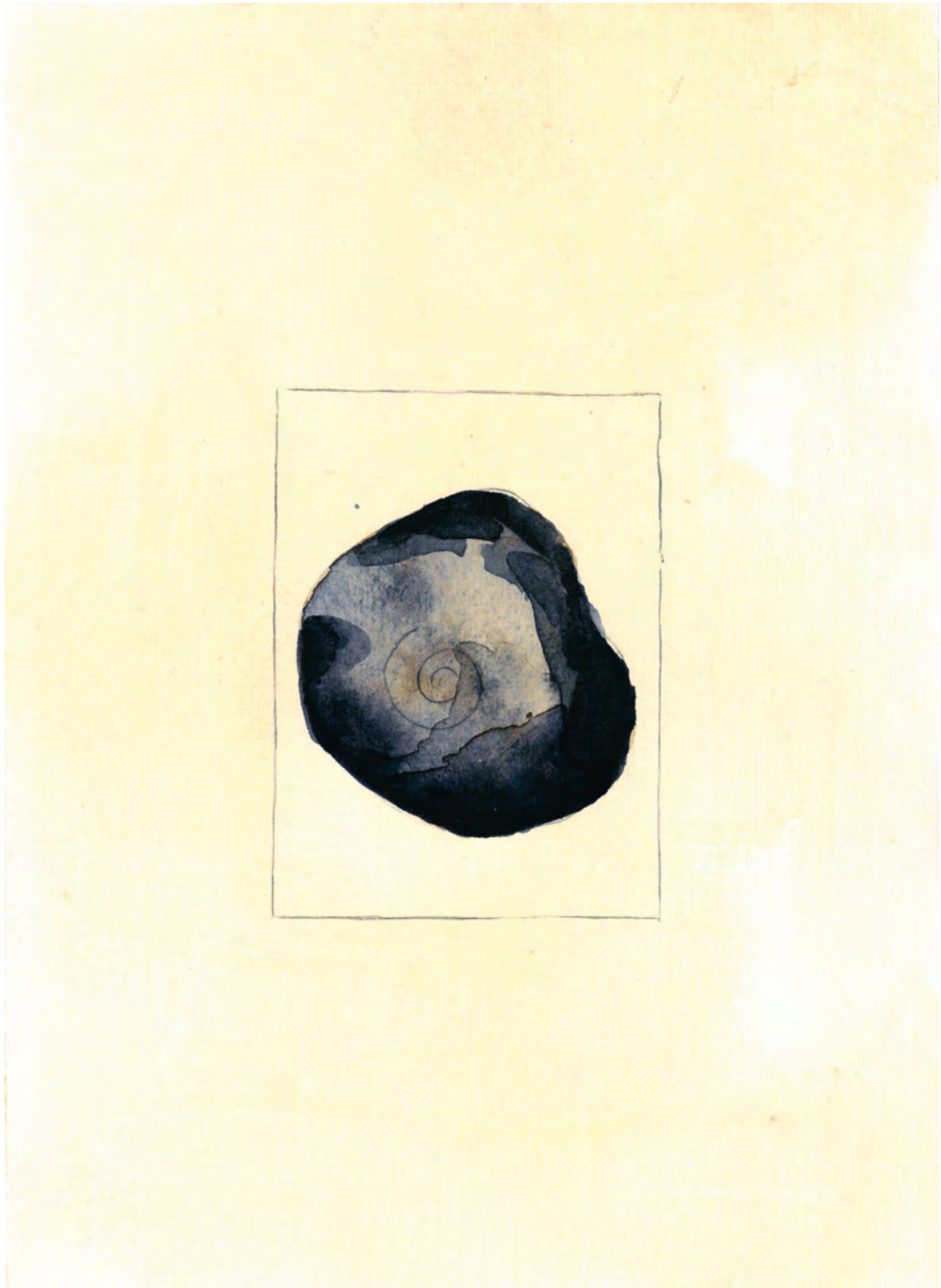
Zahra Malkani

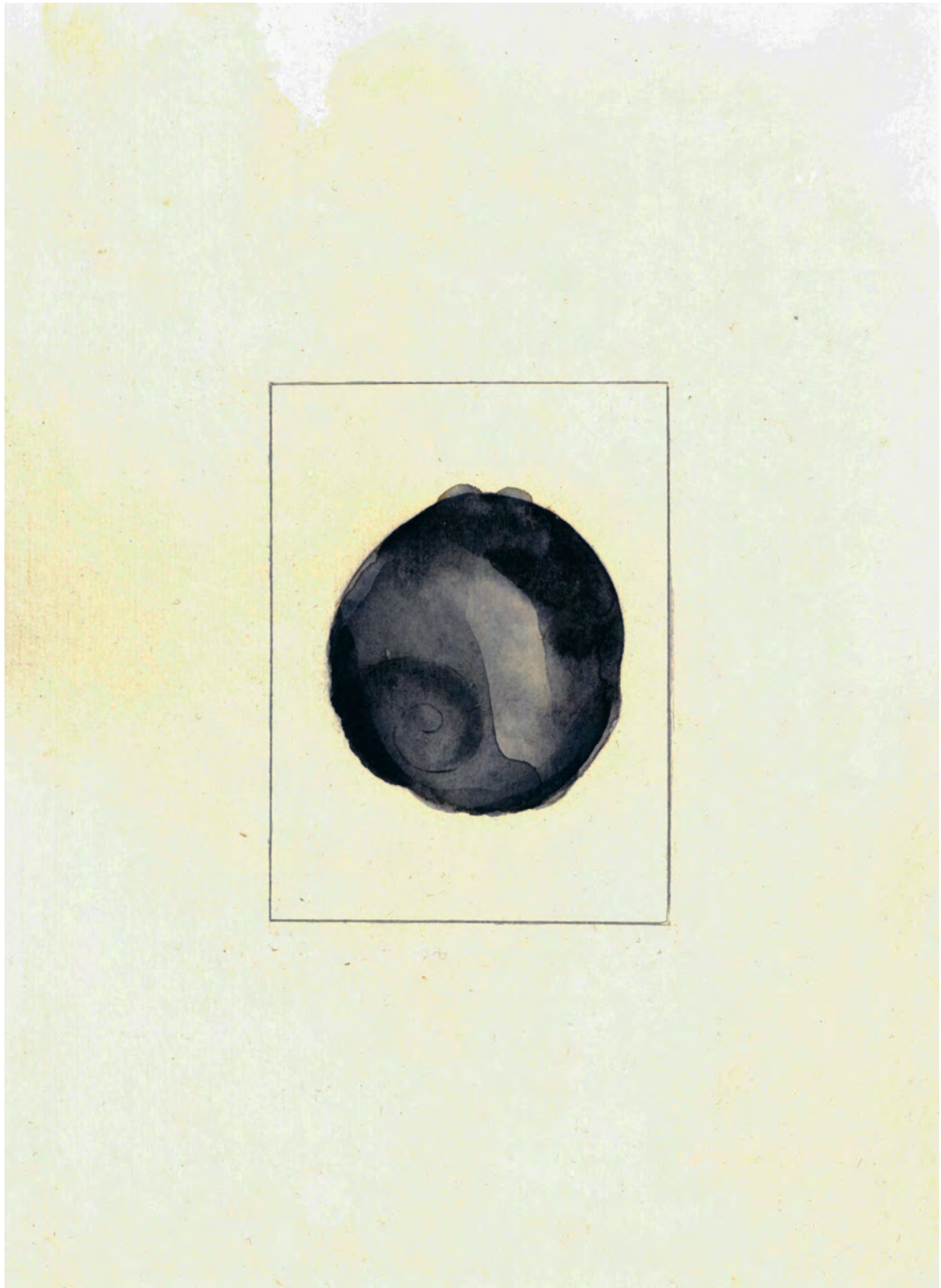
y

Solitude Journal 4 *Time After Time*

For *Solitude Journal*, Zahra Malkani who recently has been a fellow at Akademie Schloss Solitude, shares a text and selection of drawings from the *Studies in Aqueous Time* series. Depicting a sacred fossil found in Nepal, a manifestation of the god Vishnu, these drawings somewhat embody the concept of discrete and indiscrete substance (the visible and invisible), spirit, and time. The drawings were created in conjunction with the *Samandari Ehsaasat (Oceanic Feelings)* series, an audio research project, and thus are associated with »an aquatic, infinite unity« that makes and unmakes multiversal time-space continuities and geographies.

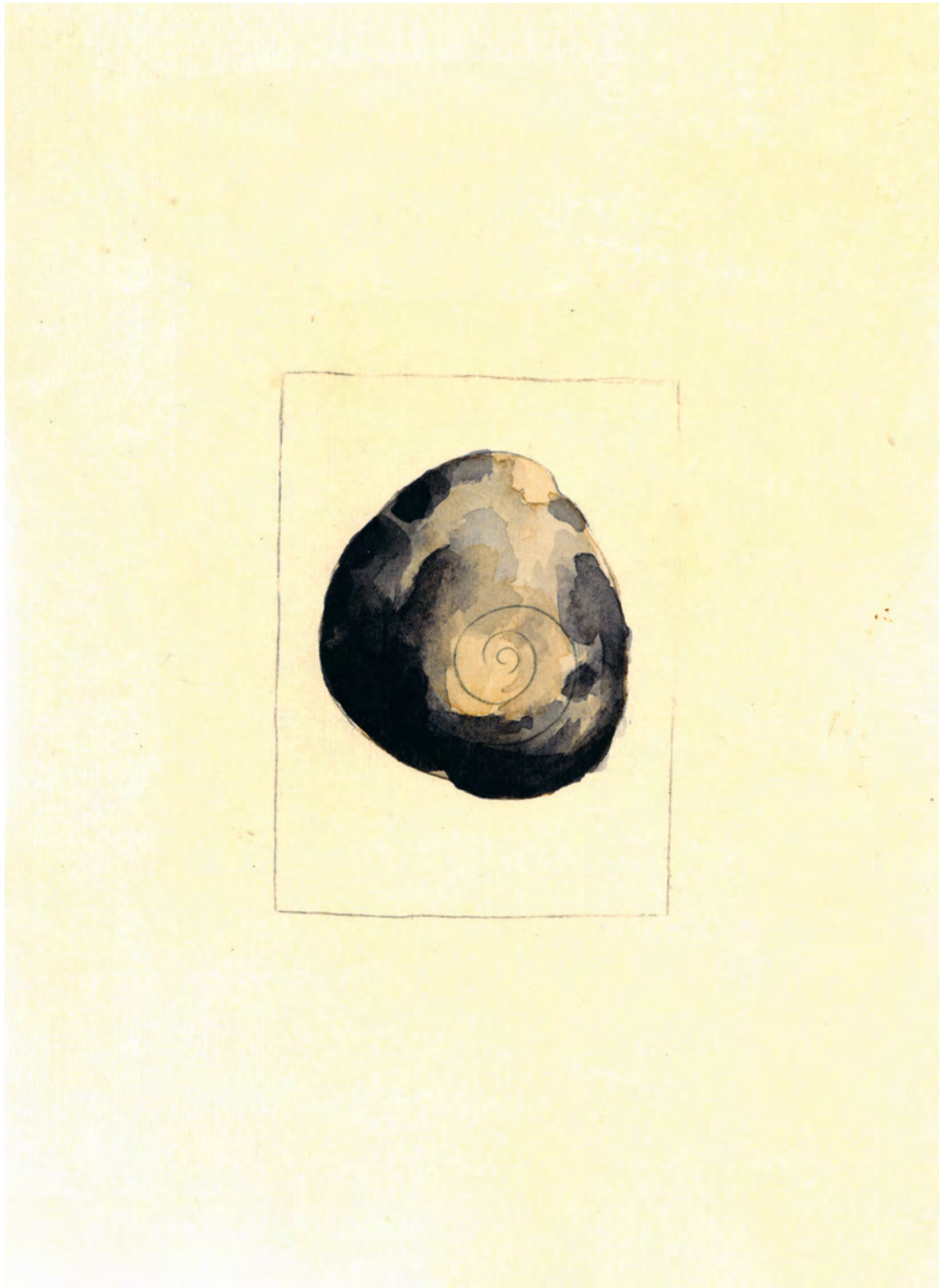






a

Solitude Journal 4 *Time After Time*





Zahra Malkani, selection of drawings from
the series *Studies in Aqueous Time*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist.

A Shaligram is a sacred fossil found at the Kali Gandaki River in Nepal. It is a manifestation of the god Vishnu in the material realm as a coal-dark stone embedded with a seemingly infinite, spiraling shell relief. The Shaligram is born of the water, emerging from deep geological time, both fossil and deity: an anionic vision of the divine. Its movement collapses time and space as expressed in its spiral ridges: maps of eternity. The stone is both dead and alive, manifestation and representation, material and spectral, vibrant water and ancient shell. The Shaligram is a bridge connecting realms visible and invisible, life and death all in the flow of a river. In Sanskrit the term for sacred place is tirtha, derived from a verbal root which means to cross over, and in particular to cross over a flowing body of water. The aquatic Shaligram is one such crossing. Despite its deceptively fixed form, this stone is dynamic, perpetual motion.

This series was created in conjunction with *Samandari Ehsaasat (Oceanic Feelings)*, an audio research project moving through coastal Sindh and Balochistan, where the sonic and the sacred come together at sea. In this ongoing project I sought and studied sounds emerging from spaces with long, rich histories of oceanic exchange and connection – spaces now devastated by development, militarism and the Pakistani state's extractive infrastructural nationalism. The term Oceanic Feelings refers to the affective experience of religious or spiritual rapture: a moment of ego-death, the dissolution of one's own boundaries into an aquatic, infinite unity. From field recordings at protests and occult rituals by the beach, to folklore and anti-colonial epics, these sounds threaten and entice with those same oceanic, ecstatic border-crossings and boundary-breakings, sacred ruptures. The tentacular, multiversal and hybrid sonic traditions of this region tell stories that invoke linkages and trace lineages across Indian Ocean geographies from Oman to Sistan, from Turbat to Tanzania – as new development rapidly occupies and encloses these spaces, erases these histories.

Each sound is a kind of a Shaligram, a bridge between realms, collapsing time and space in the co-presence of life and death. The Shaligram, this ancient, aquatic deity embodying movement and water, emerged as a vision through which I could map these cosmographical sounds that collapse time. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs writes, all water is a portal to all water.

The mashq, or the practice, of *Studies in Aqueous Time* emerges from syncretic South Asian traditions, in which drawing is a devotional practice, and the drawing itself is a potent spiritual technology, animated by repetition, relation, and ritual. In the context of the Pakistani state's extractive occupation of the coast, relentless dam development, and ongoing fetishization/deification of a more widely known fossil, coal, contemplating the Shaligram may offer us a different way of engaging the energetic forces of the universe.

Listen to:
*Samandari
Ehsaasat (Oceanic
Feelings) #1*



*Samandari
Ehsaasat (Oceanic
Feelings) #2*



*Samandari
Ehsaasat (Oceanic
Feelings) #3*



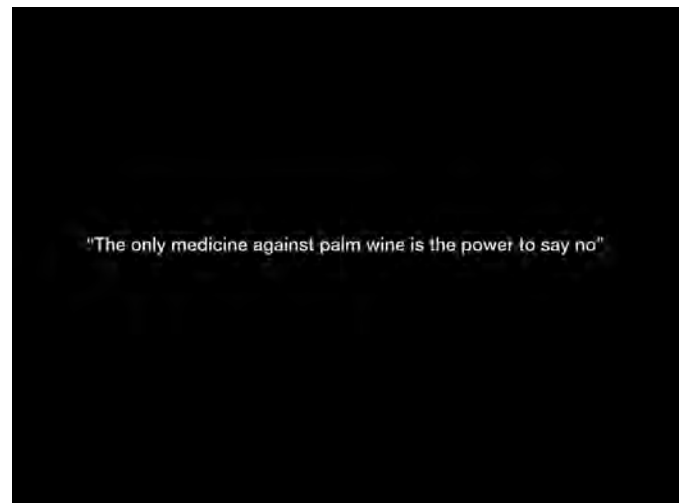
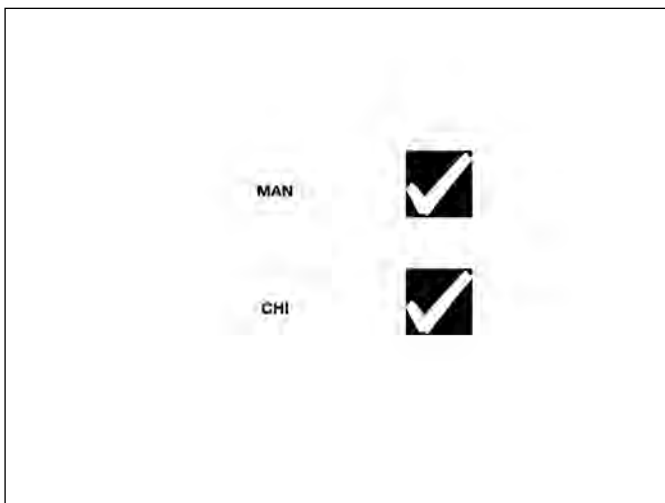
Zahra Malkani is an artist from Pakistan. Her research-based practice spans multiple media, including text, video, and the web. She explores the politics of development, infrastructure and militarism in Pakistan through the lens of dissident ecological knowledges and traditions of environmental resistance.

The Fifth Element



Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie

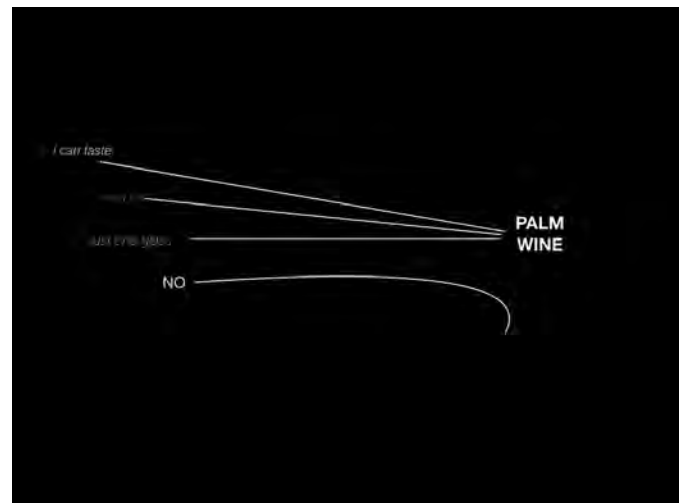
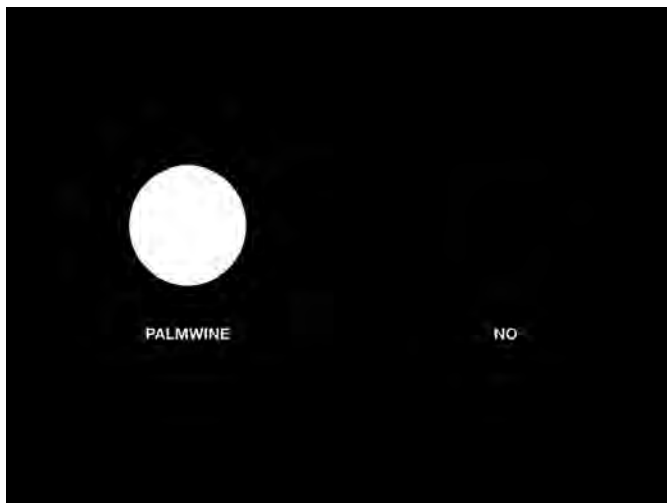
Drawing from Igbo cosmology, Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie discusses proverbs as timekeeping. Instead of telling what time it is, a proverb will suggest what the time is for. In Igbo ontology of time, time is place, time can be shifted, and time exists in more than one sphere.



What, then, is time? If no one asks me, I know;
if I want to explain it to a questioner, I do not know.¹
—Saint Augustine of Hippo

To contemplate time is to be seized by a type of madness. It feels just like the type of endeavor to get Adam and Eve banished all over again. As I sit (or stand or squat), and encounter heaps of text on the nature of time, every word flies off the surface of my screen like another leaf falling off the forbidden Tree of Knowledge. There's something seemingly sinful about trying to bring the subject to book. I once attended a sermon where the priest pronounced relativism the greatest sin of our time. Relativism, a belief that the contextual truth may contest the rigidity of the objective one, has never sounded so dirty.

From the great gurus and spiritual teachers, I learn that Time itself is never bad or good on its own. It is in fact, always up to my shaping. Time lets me say whatever I want to say about her. And yet, I am always aware that even though I can name a time »good« or »bad,« I cannot control it. I merely categorize it. I arrange it. I organize it, and organize myself around it. Myself being the space of »my self« as mass. Mass, though different from Time, is sourced from it. At the end of the day, Time is like the first fabric from which all cloth is cut. We may not see it dressed, but we must know that everybody is dressed because of it. It is extremely mind-boggling. And maybe



Time, like language, is the cross upon which we crucify our hopes or manifest our fears.

that's why we try; because just as it is human to err, it is human to wonder what is going on with Time. Time is one of those immaterial elements of a material consciousness that is as omniscient and omnipresent as the figure we call God. As the Abrahamic God pronounces Himself »I am that I am,«² Time responds with »It is what it is.«

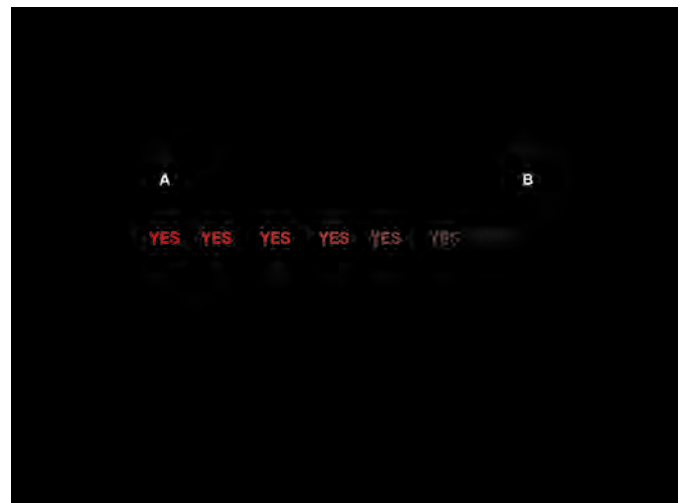
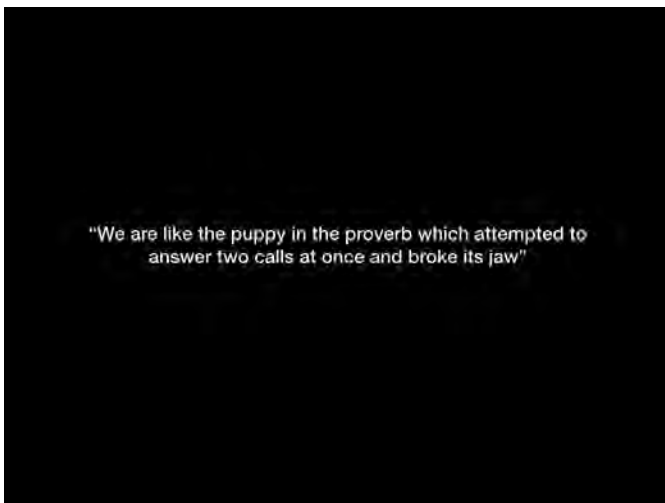
»Time is the counting of change.«³
—Aristotle

Time is as fragile as glass (once you let it slip, you can't get it back), and still, Time is as durable as forever, she is the quality that becomes mysterious once you try to understand it. Water in the space of a closed fist. On a normal day, Time should be the easiest thing to explain especially since Time is so prevalent in our language. »Day to

day,« »once upon a time,« »24/7,« »see you tomorrow,« »here and now,« the list goes on and on and on. However, like Saint Augustine, I just do not know how to explain it once I'm asked to ... water in the space of a closed fist.

In the elusive world of tarot, Time is known to be the fifth element for casting spells. Time, like language, is the cross upon which we crucify our hopes or manifest our fears. Missing a deadline, winning a race, catching a flight are all phrases that come with an emotional string attached to our recognition, because each of us has felt both the pain and the joy of winning in the nick of time, or losing a few steps behind it. However, what is extremely interesting about the concept of Time is that it is inseparable from the idea of language. Without language, how can we tell Time?

In Chinua Achebe's book *Arrow of God*, there's a European character called Captain Winterbottom. In conversation with his friend, Tony Clerk, he complains about the Igbo people in his company. »They've no idea of time,« says Captain Winterbottom. But actually, perhaps it is him who has no idea of *our* Time, because he has no access to the cosmology of timekeeping among the Igbos. He expects that Time lives precisely in a clock, as a number that's mentioned (1pm or 2am). Meanwhile, for the

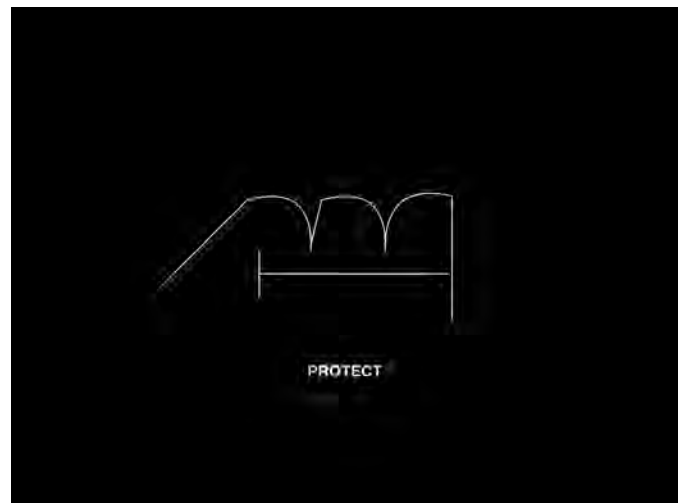
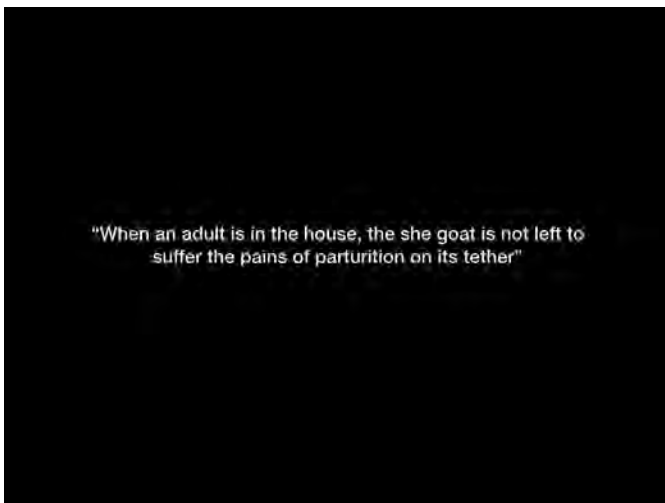


Igbos, Time lives in proverbs: concise statements that illustrate how the daily motions of human life will always be attached to the survival of the nonhuman cosmogram. Six in the morning would be nothing without the cock that crows the town awake. June is incomplete without the rain that ushers in the new yam season.

Proverbs are timekeeping technology in Igboland. As technology, Nwadike Uzoma describes proverbs to be »the philosophical and moral expositions of the people shrunk to a few words, [forming] a mnemonic device in societies where everything worth knowing and relevant to day-to-day life has to be committed to memory. They make the ideas and values they encapsulate available in these memorable and easily reproduced forms.«⁴ Where a clock can point to what Time it is, a proverb will show what Time is for. For example, if the time has come for the people to change the way they live, an elder may encourage self-belief by saying »when a man says yes, his Chi says yes.« Here, an elder reminds the collective consciousness to be brave: it's assured that when a person makes a decision to move forward, it is time for the cosmos to align and agree. In Igboland, Time isn't something that simply passes. Every second is a moment made manifest through dialogue with cosmic entities – alive, observant, and responsive to the rhythm of change.

According to Igbo cosmology, Time can be shifted if the environment does not behave as it is supposed to. She is not a figure that moves against nature. However, if nature stalls, it is a sign that Time wants to take charge of our counting, for she knows something we do not. Listen to this: »In Obollo, when the sixth moon (sixth month) appears and kola nut has not matured for plucking, that particular moon is not counted as the sixth month. In this situation, that moon is referred to as *OyiyaOnwa*, meaning the moon/month postponed. When this happens, the following moon which is supposed to be the seventh moon (seventh month) would be calculated as the sixth moon (sixth month) which automatically adds one month to the year and therefore makes that particular year thirteen months.«⁵

For Time to be fertile, space must provide the conditions upon which Time's children – events, happening and relationships – are born. It means that a place is a time. The market, for instance, is place and time. Since it is a place to encounter spirits, it is also the time to do so – one expansive moment of spirits and humans intermingling in the realm of the tangible.



As soon as the messenger and his escort left Ezeulu's hut to return to Okperi the chief priest sent words to the old man who beat the giant ikolo to summon the elders and ndichie to an urgent meeting at sunset ... The meeting began as fowls went to roost and continued into the night.⁶

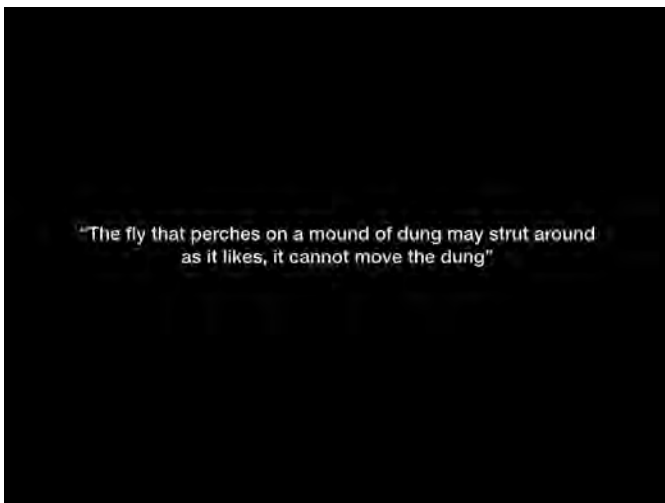
—Chinua Achebe

In Igbo cosmology, Time is of two spheres, human and ecological. Human time exists in two spheres: The »individual time« (transitional and social moments of a human lifespan such as birth, puberty, initiation, marriage, title-taking, death, burial, and funeral) and the »collective/community time« (new yam festival, masquerade outing). And then there's ecological time«, which coincides a lot with communal time in the human sphere (new yam festival, period of farming etc.). In the naming of Time within an Igbo worldview, it is important to infuse what is expected to happen in nature. New yam is supposed to come with new yam. Sunset is supposed to come with sunset. And at sunrise, we expect to see the sun rise. The Igbo calendar called Igu Aro is something observed by the visible, determined by the invisible, and marked by rituals. Whether intentionally or unintentionally, this concept challenges the western

Christian calendar where there is little or no acknowledgement of the invisible/agricultural/relational purpose of the month to the everyday existence of those living through the months. The excerpt above where Chinua Achebe speaks of a meeting between chiefs at sunset is subtly specific to this point, because in the traditional Igbo setting, the major work at sunset was palm tree dressing, but because the meeting is called for elders and chiefs, we know that they will have time to attend because elders and chiefs are exempted from such work as palm tree dressing. The expectations are twofold. First, once a man is a chief, it is not his time to climb palm trees and tap palm wine. Second, once a man is a chief, he should have the time to make it to impromptu meetings at sunset. This is a world where who can be where at what time, is again, extremely relative. Six o' clock means nothing next to the precision of sunset – an event of the cosmos filled with seconds that counts differently in each household.

Before we say more about Igbo cosmology, what is cosmology at all?

Cosmology is relationship, agency, direction, purpose, navigation. It is the fact around us which we cannot seem to have enough logic to meet, and so we use story to fill in the gaps. Stories in their most rudimentary form are roadmaps we refer to when



The Igbo calendar called Igu Aro is something observed by the visible, determined by the invisible, and marked by rituals.

tasked to make meaning of the chaos we call life. Therefore, the story about the cosmos may be as important as the cosmos itself. A person with no story about herself is like the man in the Igbo proverb who does not know where to dry his body because he does not know where the rain beat him.

In his essay »Searching for the Planetary in Every Grain of Sand,« Lukáš Likavčan writes that cosmograms bring different versions of our planetary imagination to the plane of reference. He further explains his use of planetary: Planetary as in »the dynamics in our ecosystem largely indifferent to our fate« But even though that description is stated as an fact, that idea that the ecosystem is largely indifferent to our fate is argued by an Igbo proverb insisting that a human is not a passive character in the theater of fate, but is rather an active determinant in the turning of the cosmos toward the final destination. »If a man says yes, his Chi says yes,« reads the proverb.

Roughly expanded, it means that if a human being comes into being on earth and chooses a path for his life, the spirit who is assigned to accompany him from heaven – his Chi – has no choice but to accept what the human has chosen. Free will is not just a slogan, it's a contract that God has signed with us, and therefore owes us. The concept of fate as fixed and therefore, the cosmos as an invulnerable and unaffected entity, is not the case here.

Cosmograms are not so much viewed; they are more often performed. They are danced, they are listened to [they] do not come across as explicit discourses, rather they present implicit traces of different relations which might be repeatedly applied through different registers of reality.⁷

—Lukáš Likavčan

All Time wants to do is flow. Our concept of what makes time correct or even precise, sometimes protects us from her impulse to run free from our tame grasp. From 2017 to 2018, I traveled to eight different African countries to learn choreographies local to each of the groups I visited. Somewhere between learning Intore in Rwanda and Pantsula in South Africa, I took down these notes on rhythm which have become my three lessons on decolonizing Time:

Lesson one: Replace your counting numbers with chants and sounds that match the body percussion. Put your 5, 6, 7, 8 to rest. Try Chanchancharararararachan.

Lesson two: Wear the movement vocabulary of other nonwestern cultures so you can have an embodied perspective on the diversity of intelligence. Also befriend their drums.

Lesson three: In case you wonder why our moves are fluid like a wave, it's because the smallest unit of time isn't always a second. In Pantsula, the smallest unit of time keeps expanding based on how much you can isolate body parts from each other and how fast you can transition between two movements and still stay on the beat. Basically, the smallest unit of time is as personal as the strength of one's heart rate.

Time is any way of counting the change of something.⁸

—Carlo Rovelli

Time is a dance between memory and anticipation. The past holds memory. And the future, holds anticipation. Both are expressions of a human need for sentiments. Is it too far of me to say Time is created to feed our sentimental nature? In his book, *The Order of Time*, Carlo Rovelli proposes that we, humans, are *the* time machine. In that case, does that mean that we look for who we are in the materials available to us? Where pieces of wood could have just been pieces of wood, we took it and built a tally system. Or, where sand could have just laid by itself on the beach, we took it and put it in a curved glass container and called it an hourglass. We did it to a piece of metal swinging from one end to another. And then we did it to the quartz crystal as we lodged it into these machines we now call clocks. Rather than Time telling the story of humanity, it seems like humanity is desperately trying to tell a story of Time. And what better way to tell a story than with words.

Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie is a performance artist, actor, writer, and tea maker. Her work is her way of combining memory and theory, dream and myth, rumor and fact. Born in Nigeria, her performances and installations have been shown in England, France, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, the Czech Republic, and the United States. She imagines a future where performance, physiotherapy, and technology meet at a powerful junction to upgrade the current definition of healing.

All images Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie. Courtesy of the artist.

1 Saint Augustine, et al: *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*. Felling-on-Tyne, 1906.
2 Exodus 3:14. *King James Bible*. Nashville, 1973.
3 Aristotle: *Aristotle's Physics*. Books 1 & 2. Oxford, 1970.

4 Uzoma Nwadike: *The Igbo Proverbs: A Wider Perspective*.
5 Ibid.
6 Chinua Achebe: *Arrow of God*. New York, 1989.
7 Lukáš Likavčan: »Searching the Planetary in Every Grain

of Sand: Introduction to Digital Earth Fellowship 2020–21,«
in: *Medium*, Digital Earth, June 15, 2020.
8 Carlo Rovelli et al.: *The Order of Time*. London, 2019.

Dear Maria

Valentina Sciarra



Valentina Sciarra, *The Mirror, The Door, The Couple, The Bat (Tomb sculptures)*,
installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021.

Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

The *Tomb sculptures* are an aesthetic reformulation of the Western world's concept of the tomb. None of the tombs consciously touches the earth. On the contrary they are »suspended« to give exactly the sensation of a trace of passage between life and death, like suspended bodies and lines. Each title recalls not a material body, but a concept linked to the action of »passage« or transformation.

In a semi-fictional letter to the curator Maria Vassileva, the artist Valentina Sciarra contemplates death and its absolute detachment from life within modern Western societies. The text is accompanied by photographs of her artworks – tombs, home altars, a game book, a time machine. They aim to function as proxies to restore and value a cyclical notion of death as a natural extension of life.



Valentina Sciarra, *Home altars*, installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

Home altars invites the public to reappropriate symbolic objects in our home that can remind us of the importance of dedicating a thought to »our essence« every day. These altars are without precise unique formal features in abstract forms of stone, ceramic, glass. Through these abstract forms, they try to reassume the dualistic conception, as a distinction and synthesis at the same time between good and evil, beginning and end, birth and death.

h

Dear Maria

Dear Maria,

I'm sending you some pictures of the works that I will present in my upcoming exhibition dedicated to death and our ability to accept it. In this way I would like to help us to die, in a certain sense. Or rather to perceive the time of death not as an exceptional event, but as a way of being.

As you will see, the objects or sculptures presented can be used in everyday life to better understand the interconnectedness between life and death. These are tombs, home altars for the home, and a game book to find out how we will die; that is, denying mortal reality or accepting its course.

Since the dawn of time, humans have had to deal with the finitude of their »being,« or at least their material mantle, aware that death would occur at the end of their life's path. It is from this awareness, and from the anxieties that derive from it, that men adopt different attitudes, behaviors, and rites according to both the culture to which they belong and the historical period in which they live(d). Humankind's attitude in the face of death is a dynamic phenomenon, in continuous evolution. Collective sensitivity has the duty to seek its own way of experiencing death. It is important to know what preceded us on this topic, but our responsibility is to find our tools to join the existing life cycle.

Today – unthinkable for most of Western cultures only a century ago – the most common definition in Western society is that death is intended as the antithesis of life, as its opposite, and dying is the act that precedes it: its final and conclusive stage. Death has become an object of shame and prohibition in modern society, replacing sexuality as the main taboo. Funeral rites are emptied of their dramatic charge; death is an event presented by the mass media as exceptional, anonymous, and especially violent and spectacular.

The social drama present at the moment of death, and how this event is characterized with a strong emotional and ritual intensity, moves into the sphere of theatrical drama. It thus becomes increasingly individual and virtual, largely coinciding with the experience of mass cultural consumption.

I have the impression that even this fear of dying is generated by the perception of time in an absolute way, that is, imposed from above, the same for everyone. On the other hand, this forgets the existence of relative, subjective, inner time, which each of us has the opportunity to choose and listen to. Maria, I'm sure you, too, could add further elements and questions to this talk. Don't forget to do this.

Humans know many things about life and its processes. Death, however, is generally conceived as the only human experience that cannot be told directly. Particularly what comes after the blue wave (the last energy pulsing in our bodies) that unloads our nerves to stop them flowing inside us has limited the objective scientific study to the sole observation of the body as it decomposes. It is perhaps these limits that make man's experience of death difficult to recognize and load the concept of dying with mystery and irrationality.

Maria, the works that you will soon see will try to make the »dying/dead way of being« become »alive« on a daily basis. Because I firmly believe that only by bringing the concept of death back into our everyday lives will we have the opportunity to live fully. From a physical point of view, there is no difference between life and death: death is nothing but the mode of passage from one form of life to another. The only thing you need to be afraid of is this inability to be »part of a whole,« and to live your humanity naturally.

So in our home we suspend our tomb, we light a candle on our altar dedicated to our loved ones, and we think daily thoughts to question ourselves about what rhythm our time follows.

Buona vita a te,
Valentina



Valentina Sciarra, *Time machine*, installation view of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, 2021. Courtesy of the artist and Structura Gallery.

Time machine is a monumental chair that travels through time and shows that a continuous cycle of time is possible. The sculpture suggests a particular position to travel through time: a marble seat and the positioning of the hands on the metal structure.



Valentina Sciarra, *The Blue Wave*, publication, 2021.
Courtesy of the artist.

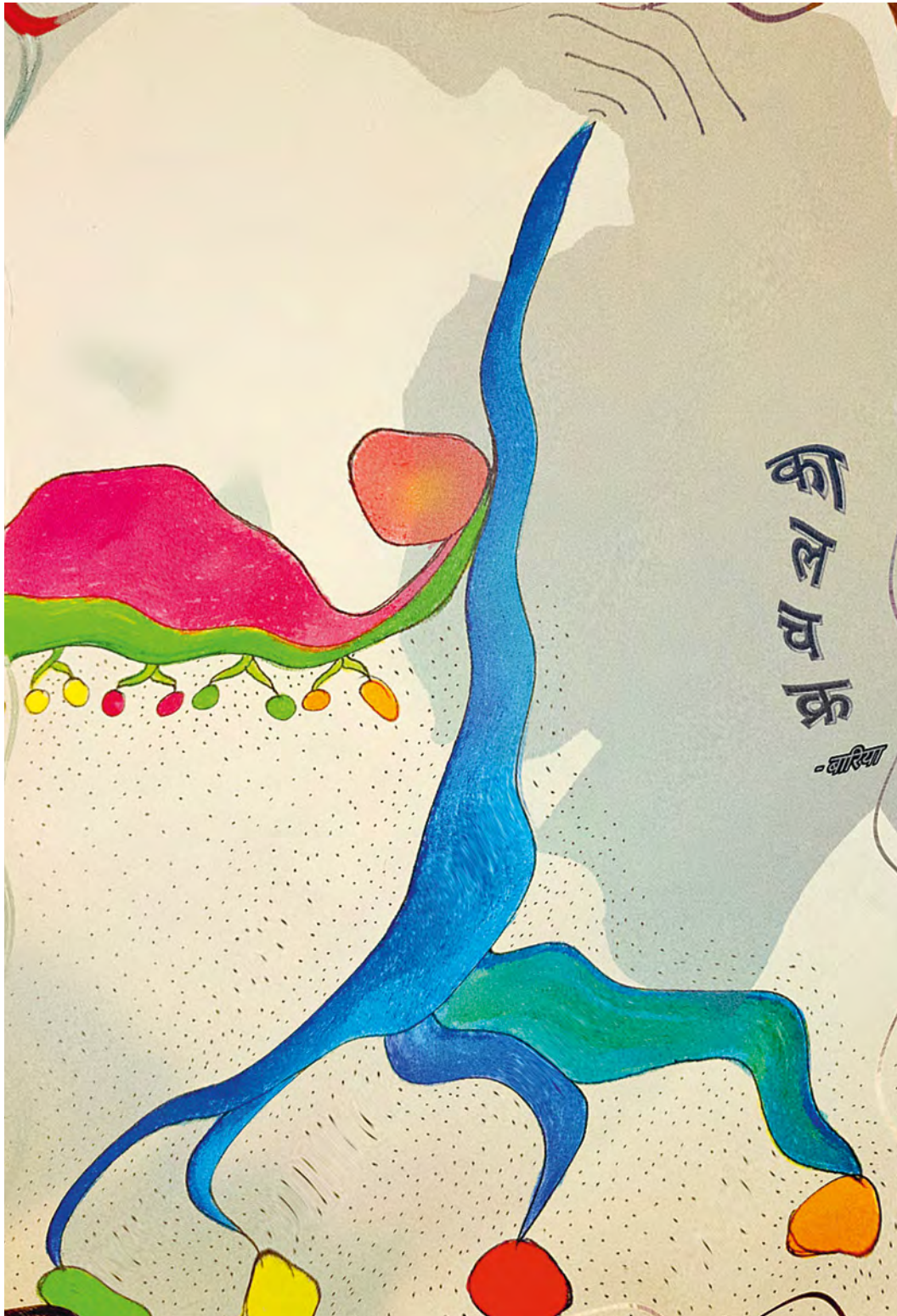
The Blue Wave game book was created for the *Salt free tears* exhibition at Structura Gallery, Sofia. It was written by Valentina Sciarra and accompanied by graphics created by Victoria Staykova based on the author's original drawings for the sculpture presented in the exhibition. Made as a complex object, the book embodies Sciarra's belief that games are a key element in accepting the concept of death. The book offers the possibility of an inner journey – playful – to face daily choices during the last twenty minutes of life before death. Being a game book, each reading can offer different paths to the ending. But ultimately, the basic concept remains the same: how we can accept death in our daily life.

Valentina Sciarra, former Akademie Schloss Solitude fellow, lives in Sofia and Rome. At this moment in her artistic career, she works with stone sculptures. A main theme of her research concerns time through sculptures, videos, installation, and writings.

Maria Vassileva is the curator of the exhibition *Salt free tears*, Structura Gallery, Sofia 2021

Dear Maria

Kalachakra



Pratyush Pushkar and Riya Raagini a.k.a. BaRiya

Kalachakra gathers temporal hacks within an archive of translated Hindi poetry spanning epochs. Synthesizing fragments in Hindi poetics with contrapuntal plead and spirituality, BaRiya's anthology represents language's quantum and inherited nature. Or with what they describe as »chants and lore emanating from language's dips into temporal devices, of disrememberment, of devotion, of ruins, of elsewhere(s), of waiting, of delays; of restfulness.«

We enter this realm with devotion slacklining, arms attached to long, feeble, superimposing, sticks of waiting⁷ as our primary support system. Destined to be let go soon after(?). Devotees' amnesiac – while walking on the rope we pray, requesting the sticks to reappear ontologically, magically trolleying spacetime to some of its halts.

Poetic ounces help us bounce into meeting their infinite projections and help hold each frame. Distributed equally among seers of ropes, are some tools – for freedom of reappearing – disappearing – erasing – blurring – hinting – for god resided, granular in all states ...

...

वह घाटी नहीं तलहटी थी जिसे हमने खोद निकाला था - और जिसे खोद निकालने की धुन में हम सैकड़ों साल पीछे गड़ते चले जा रहे थे इतनी दूर और इतने गहरे की अब हमारी खोज में हमें ही खोज पाना मुश्किल था.	It was a foothill not a valley Which we had dug out – And so engrossed in digging it out We kept being etched back hundreds of years So far and so deep That now it was difficult to even find ourselves on our quest.
शायद वहीं एक सभ्यता का अतीत ⁸ हमसे विदा हुआ था जहाँ साँस लेने में पहली बार मुझे दिक्रत महसूस हुई थी और मैं बेतहाशा भागा था उस ज़रा-से दिखते आसमान, वर्तमान ⁹ और खुली हवा की ओर जो धीरे-धीरे मुंदते चले जा रहे थे.	Maybe that is where the very past of a civilization departed from us Where I found it difficult to breathe for the first time And I had run recklessly Towards that barely visible sky, towards the present, and the gale wind – Which were slowly shutting down
इतिहास ¹⁰ देखकर जब वह वर्षों ¹¹ ऊब गया उसने अपने लिए कब्रनुमा एक कमरा बनाया और एक बहुत भारी पत्थर को ओढ़कर सो गया.	For years, looking at history, it lost interest Made a grave-like room for itself Shrouded itself with a boulder and slept.

–कुंवर नारायण (1927–2017) –Kunwar Narayan (1927–2017)

A viscosity in revealing language's awareness, consciousness-ing mistakes, slips, tones, collective breaths, in the blink's and language's REM cycles. Language's body often camouflages into grains, derived from the intermingling rates of temporal breaths. But in the midst of breaths with their own moods, where does one look for self? In dainty crevices, where past-like spheres promise conjuring an everlasting glue? In believing so seamlessly in the history of our absence, our abstinence to choose which stones have pores breathing towards vanishing into infraredness? The vastness of temporal breaths engulfs poems, text twists as slowly as stones, and we catch our breaths to capture the rumbles.

धीरे-धीरे¹² रे मना¹³, धीरे सब कुछ होय, Steadily-Steadily, Oh, Mana, steadily
माली सींचे सौ घड़ा, ऋतु आए फल होय। all accomplishes, a gardener waters with
-कबीर a hundred more pitchers, fruition
settles only with the season's coming.
-Kabir

Temporal peace, arrives so very scattered, like deserted inter-almost-planetary beings, transforming towards devotion – as if they were garlands with flowers disintegrating in a standstill's glaze¹⁴. The end of sentences brings gestures, indications that a disillusionment here opens doors to seeing elsewhere. A gesture that identifies what learning about parallels can do to mirror images. When-where statues are firmly placed, mirrors crack discreetly, so how does one trace these routes to parallels, to discrete-time? The devotional era is accompanied by the bass of meditations in fifths – पा-सा-सा-सा,¹⁵ a noise machine, looping without a willful signature moving in glee onto another – a verse-ailment hardly ever prescribed without a song. Exceptional poets here, exceptionally patient, and the other party immovable, aching anthologies ...

कोई कहियौ रे प्रभु आवन की। Someone tell of the prabhu's (god)
आवन की मन भावन की ॥ coming. Share of this enchantment.
आप न आवै लिख नहिं भेजै Neither they come nor send letters,
बाण पड़ी ललुचावन की। keeping me forever tempted has become
ए दोउ नैण कहयो नहीं मानै some habit of theirs. Like rivers in
नदिया बहै जैसे सावन की ॥ monsoons. my own eyes won't listen to
कहा करूँ कछु नहिं बस मेरो me. A lack of wings is now disarming.
पाँख नहीं उड़ जावन की। Meera's Prabhu! When would you meet?
मीरा कहै प्रभु कब रे मिलोगे I feel submitted to your (timely) bets!
चेरी भई हूँ तेरे दाँवन की ॥ -Meera (1498-1546)
-मीरा (1498-1546)

If hundreds of years of war poems were immediately followed by hundreds of years of devotional poems, and together they eventually unfolded into a sloshed emotional oceanic lake, which migratory birds did time have in mind? A geomagnetic poetic mapping, which somehow managed to burrow itself into poetic DNA, and so mutations upon mutations still carried ligamental memories which nails can't seem to scratch.

दूर दूर दूर... मैं वहाँ हूँ!... Far far farther... I am there!...
...मैं संघर्ष हूँ जिसे विश्राम¹⁶ नहीं... I am a struggle which has no rest...
...क्योंकि मैंने डर नहीं जाना है।... In fact, I have not known fear...
मैं अभय हूँ, I am unafraid
मैं भक्ति हूँ, I am devotion
मैं जय हूँ। I am victory.
-अज्ञेय (1911-1987) -Agyeya (1911-1987)

बेटा जाए क्या हुआ, कहा बजावै थाल। Such loud celebrations over birth of a boy,
आपन जावन है रहा, ज्यों कीड़ी का नाल ॥ Coming and leaving (through
-कबीर (1440-1518) multiple births) like worms of a drain.
-Kabir (1440-1518)

...

Threaded by bodies with undecided spans conversing in tilts, neither the flame goes for long walks, nor do those who carry within them the subtlest strings to measure the wind, that is those who keep an eye like a waiting in and out of ephemeral moments holding quantum leaps. An awaiting which entangles without the support of shared life-spans.¹⁷

जब यह दीप थके तब आना। Come, when this lamp tires.
-महादेवी वर्मा -Mahadevi Verma

दीप पत्थर का Lamp of stone
लजीली किरण की Skittishness of rays
पद-चाप नीरवः Silent sound of steps:
अरी ओ करुणा प्रभामय! Oh you! Radiating, Karuna¹⁸ (dawn)
कब? कब? When? When?
-अज्ञेय -Agyeya

...

In a hanging network of ropes laid to dry, meshes – lucid, unopaque – are layered with angular curves so minor that these roundabouts in poetry look through possible temporal wavelengths, arguably directional free-falls. Here one continually quakes in a matter of time's cloaks, residing in its seams, yet asking the peripheries to let in, asking, whose tempos are these? One mimes temporal presence while shuddering at the losses managed by a system of bodily tributaries.

काल, Time,
तुझसे होड़ है मेरी : अपराजित तू— I am contesting you: Undefeated you –
तुझमें अपराजित मैं वास करूँ। In you undefeated I reside.
इसीलिए तेरे हृदय में समा रहा हूँ And so, I am embodying your heart
सीधा तीर-सा, जो रुका हुआ लगता हो— Like a straight arrow, which seems frozen
कि जैसा ध्रुव नक्षत्र भी न लगे, – More so than stars, constellations,
एक एकनिष्ठ, स्थिर, कालोपरि A faithful, unwavering, transcending time
भाव, भावोपरि Faith, faith transcending
सुख, आनंदोपरि Prosperity, joy transcending
सत्य, सत्यासत्योपरि Truth, morality transcending
मैं—तेरे भी, ओ काल, ऊपर!... I – transcend over you, oh, time!...
-शमशेर (1911-1993) -Shamsher (1911-1993)

वर्तमान ही मेरे शरीर का एकमात्र प्रवेश-द्वार है। The present is the sole entrance
-राजकमल चौधरी (1929-1967) into my body.
-Rajkamal Chaudhary (1929-1967)

Sitting with plexuses open, breathing, breathing long, breathing short, condensing breath like milk, and biting, without teeth. A temporal consolation.

Brick walls allotted to withholders of delayed¹⁹ »everything« a place to segregate »own,« and meditate upon private innumerable timelines. Documenting jitters through the language, while rubbing shoulders, unveiling a temporal curve in slo-mo, काक, वक्र, उक्ति.²⁰

Hindi is without capital letters – signaling it's time to stress, time to stop, time to start another. Without these markers what does a (meta)body lacking in capitalization stress? A potential to sleepwalk? A body emanating in endless peas without signaling which ones are the heads, where are the tails – ingeminate garlands sweeping, towards knotless-nowheres, a sustained loop of delays.

हमें इतना दिलासा भर है कि	We have but the consolation that
अपने समय में भले न हों, हम अपने घर में हैं।	We are »in« our home, even if we may not
–अशोक वाजपेयी (1941–)	be in our times.
	–Ashok Vajpayee (1941–)

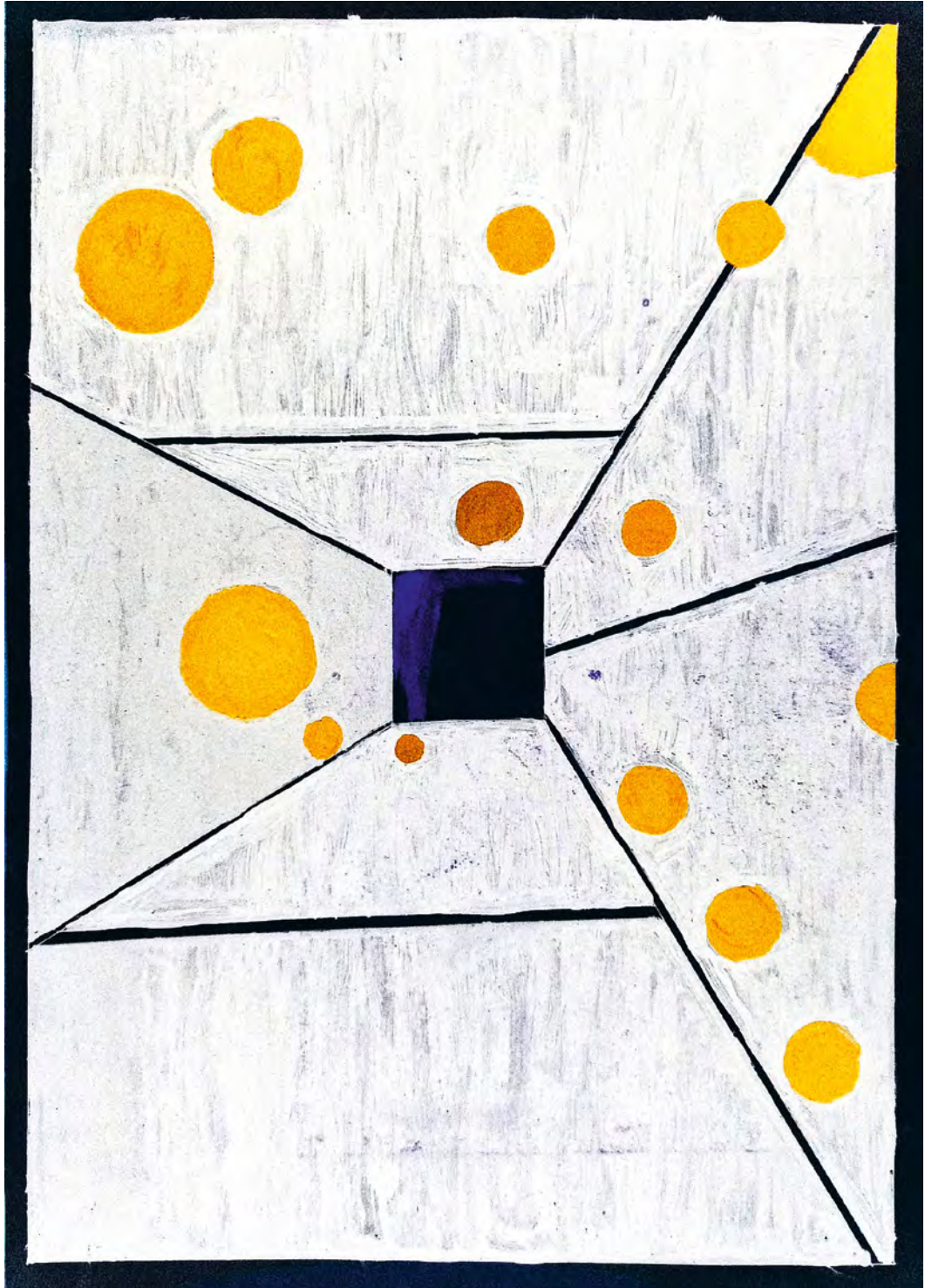
...

...उदय ²¹ -अस्त ²² दिनकर का,	The risings and settings of sun,
तिमिर-हर के अंतर से	From the heart of every mirk
तिमिर का उद्गम	The origin of mirk
और तम के हृदय से	And the marking light
निशानाथ का प्रकाश,	From the heart of darkness,
सब है स्वाधीन...	Each is independent...
–निराला (1896–1961)	–Nirala (1896–1961)

कालचक्र²³, जीवन चक्र, दुश्चक्र, सौर चक्र, सुखद चक्र, दमन-चक्र, अग्नि-चक्र, वणिक चक्र, ब्रह्म-चक्र, नेत्र चक्र, ऋतु चक्र... चक्र²⁴/
Cycles,²⁵ of the legs, of the brain, of the ovaries, of the wind, of the ocean ... them too
– independent.

...जैसे इन जगहों में पहले भी आया हूँ	... As if I have come to these places
बीता हूँ।	before as well
इन बनती-मिटती छायायों में तड़पा हूँ	passed before.
किया है इंतज़ार	Have suffered in these emitting-elapsing
दी हैं सदियां गुज़ार	shadows
बार-बार	Awaited
इन खाली जगहों में भर-भर कर रीता हूँ	Have traversed centuries
रह-रह पछताया हूँ	Time and time again
पहले भी आया हूँ	Have voided in these vacant places
बीता हूँ।	Have regretted ever and anon
–कुंवर नारायण (1927–2017)	Have come before as well
	Have passed before.
	–Kunwar Narayan (1927–2017)

A hypnotic familiarity encircles dizzyingly, walks alongside shadows, echoing – buzzing, like fingerprints buzz engraving onto callouses, as if a wooden shaft disintegrates yet the engraving lives on – साया.²⁶ These places/points of disorienting disenchantments hardly ever engrave their own memories upon us, leaving only a sense of making-unmaking relaying to origin points not of this world, lucidly coexisting with ours, dreamscaping in a wake-centric civilization.



e

Kalachakra

यदि किसी दुःस्वप्न के कारण ही नहीं	If not by a nightmare
तो जब सुबह जागते हो तो इस तरह स्मृतिहीन	When you wake in the morning
जैसे उसी क्षण जनमे हो	and so unremembering
अतीत वर्तमान भविष्य ²⁷ के अहसास से अपरिचित	Like born in that moment
कभी-कभी तुम्हें खुद को और अपने आस-पास को	Unacquainted with the sense of past,
पहचानने में देर लगती है	present, and future
लेकिन चंद्र लमहों ²⁸ बाद	Sometimes you'd take time
पिछली शाम तक का सब कुछ	To identify yourself and your vicinity
धीरे-धीरे लौटता है	But only in a few moments
और विस्मृति आकार लेने लगती है	Everything until last evening
जिस तरह दवा का असर रहने पर	Comes back steadily
विज्ञान-कथा का नायक स्वयं अपने को	And oblivion learns to take form
आईने में देख नहीं पाता लेकिन जब	Like under medication
विलीन होता है उसका प्रभाव तो धीरे-धीरे प्रकट होती हैं	a protagonist of a sci-fi tale
उसकी कोशिकाएँ धमनियाँ मांसपेशियाँ उनमें बहता रक्त	Can't see themselves in the mirror
उसका पूरा शरीर	As sedation fades their cells,
फिर जैसे उस पर एक नई त्वचा आती है	their veins and muscles, flowing blood,
सारे उसमें नुक़ुश बनते हैं	their entire body,
इसी तरह रात को ऐयार कुमकुमा	slowly collects itself and begins to appear
सूरज के तिलिस्मी लखलखे से उतरता है	Then as if a new skin emerges
सब लौट आते हैं हहराते हुए	In it, all become face-lines
सारे कृत्य हासिल और सिले	Similarly at night a clever bulb
सारे उपकार कृतघ्नताएँ कर्ज़ और भुगतान	Steps down from the talismanic
सारी असफलताएँ सारे अपमान	censers of the sun
एक ज़िंदगी की तमाम कुरूपताएँ गोया तुम्हारी समूची जीवनी	Everyone comes back trembling
और तुम पूरे लौट आते हो	All acts acquired and stitched
और बचाव का कोई रास्ता नहीं सूझता	All benefactions ingratitude debts
किसी घिरे हुए जानवर की तरह	and pays
मुकम्मिल बन जाने के बाद	All failures all insults
अपनी इस संपूर्णता से चमड़ी बचाने के लिए	All ugliness of a life,
तुम क्या कुछ नहीं करते...	your complete biography
-विष्णु खरे (1914-2018)	And you come back wholly
	And find no ways to defend
	Like an animal surrounded
	Upon accomplishments
	To save your skin from this
	perfection/entirety
	What all do you not do...
	-Vishnu Khare (1914-2018)

...

Does time merge into an anecdotal framework – at once real, unhindered by the quotidian, forgettable when unsettling, when aging (once) mothers become anamorphic, atmospheric beings? Roaming anecdotes, growing into an evolution of unfamiliar chances, old-ing into familiar displacements, aging recurring bouts of a collection of hasty thoughts – to be listened to, to be told to, to be kept to oneself, to be kept aside, to not be kept at all – all hinging at cusps of decades.

मैंने तो देखा है—	I definitely have seen
ज्यादा बूढ़ी औरतें	Very old women
दौड़ भी नहीं पातीं भगदड़ में!	Aren't able to run in stampedes
माँ, तुम बूढ़ी मत हो जाना कभी!	Maa*, don't you ever turn old!
—अनामिका (1961—)	—Anamika (1961—)

...

To make journeys between lamps and bulbs, electric debris from the future shaped in the form of cities settling inside the mechanics of single-stories, erupts like a storm of fireflies – a benevolent insomnia, a promise of many mornings simultaneously.

शहर पुकारते थे	Cities would call
बीस बरस पार से हमें	From twenty years across the future
बस की खिड़कियों से	Through the windows of buses
दिखता था भविष्य	We saw the future
ऊँची बिल्डिंगों की तरह	Like tall buildings
एक अदद सपना था कि	A sheer dream
टूटता नहीं था	That wouldn't break
एक अदद रौशनी	A sheer light
बुझती नहीं थी	Won't go off
एक उम्मीद	A hope
खत्म नहीं होती थी	Wouldn't last
—अच्युतानंदन मिश्र (1981—)	—Achyutanandan Mishra (1981—)

Objects in the language are haunted by denouncements, from the inception of documented poetry feebly present – there are active buyers, looking away from the archive. Every time they meet, timelines interact and traumas are triggered, they go to different places or the same, on the way they mimic gestures, subsequently, an oscillatory microtemporal rest acquires them both warningly.

मेज़ इतनी पुरानी ²⁹ थी कि उसका कोई वर्तमान नहीं था।	So old was the desk that it had no present,
हमारे बच्चे इतने नए थे कि उनका कोई अतीत नहीं था। -	So new were our children, that they had
—गिरिराज किराडू (1975—)	no past.
	—Giriraj Kiradu (1975—)

खंडहर³⁰/ruins (as temporal devices) carve space for very specific futures here, for there are continual physical gestures of acceptance upon change elsewhere. Ruins – the carriers of memory no one else truly remembers, are sites where pores aren't disturbed or filled in with anxieties of perfection, and so they expand, and they tire (light has shown us this).

Beaming into these pores are losses – sustaining tensions of things put together, then put aside-to find in futurity – an ease ... nonexistent ruins speaking with each other ...

वह एक दृश्य था जिसमें एक पुराना घर था
 जो बहुत से मनुष्यों के साँस लेने से बना था
 उस दृश्य में फूल खिलते तारे चमकते पानी बहता
 और समय किसी पहाड़ी चोटी से धूप की तरह
 एक-एक कदम उतरता हुआ दिखाई देता
 अब वहाँ वह दृश्य नहीं है बल्कि उसका एक खंडहर है
 तुम लंबे समय से वहाँ लौटना चाहते रहे हो जहाँ उस दृश्य का खंडहर न हो
 लेकिन अच्छी तरह जानते हो कि यह संभव नहीं है
 और हर लौटना सिर्फ़ एक उजड़ी हुई जगह में जाना है
 एक अवशेष³¹, एक अतीत और एक इतिहास में
 एक दृश्य के अनस्तित्व में
 इसलिए तुम पीछे नहीं बल्कि आगे जाते हो
 अँधेरे में किसी कल्पित उजाले के सहारे रास्ता टटोलते हुए
 किसी दूसरी जगह और किसी दूसरे समय की ओर
 स्मृति ही दूसरा समय है जहाँ सहसा तुम्हें दिख जाता है
 वह दृश्य उसका घर जहाँ लोगों की साँसें भरी हुई होती हैं
 और फूल खिलते हैं तारे चमकते हैं पानी बहता है
 और धूप एक चोटी से उतरती हुई दिखती है।
 –मंगलेश डब्राल (1948–2020)

This was a scene with an old house in it
 Which was created from the breathing
 of many human beings
 In that scene, flowers bloom,
 stars shine and water flows
 and time, just as sunshine from a hilltop
 appeared to descend step by step
 Now that scene isn't there anymore,
 but a ruin of it
 You have long been wanting to go back
 where there's isn't a ruin of that scene
 But know well that it's not possible
 and every return is a going back
 to a desolate space
 To a vestige, a past and a history
 To the absence of a scene
 This is why you do not go back but forward
 Probing through the darkness aided
 by imagined light
 Towards another space and towards
 another time
 Memory is another space where
 suddenly you see
 that scene, its house,
 filled with people's breath
 and flowers blooming, stars shining,
 water flowing
 and sunshine appearing to descend a peak.
 –Manglesh Dabral (1948–2020)

सिर्फ़ शव Only a corpse
 पूछता है प्रश्न questions
 हर युग में In every era
 सिर्फ़ शव Only a corpse
 जानता है सत्य Knows truth
 हर युग में In every era
 वही भोगता है क्लेश It endures the misery
 स्मृति का Of memory
 वासना का Of desire
 अंत के बाद भी Even after the end
 बार-बार Over and over again
 खड़ा होता है वह It stands up
 स्वयं से दूर जाने को To recede from itself
 बेताल की तरह Just like Betal
 सिर्फ़ शव है It is only a corpse
 जो दूर नहीं जा सकता Which cannot recede
 अपनी देह से Away from its body
 और पूछ सकता है And can ask
 प्रश्न सिर्फ़। Only questions.
 –गगन गिल (1959–) –Gagan Gill (1959–)

A language steadily resting/consolations of rests/within memories/
a reader knowing
of insistence (among repetitions)/collecting time
devices and notes/a semantic congruency metamorphosing into glitters
of looming temporality/ an awkward stand (rethinking implosions
and rarer implosions)
befriending hosts of things.

ऐसा तेरा लोक ³³ , वेदना	Such is your world,
नहीं, नहीं जिसमें अवसाद,	No agony, No precipitate,
जलना जाना नहीं, नहीं	Not knowing to go through flames,
जिसने जाना मिटने का स्वाद!...	not knowing
...रहने दो हे देव! अरे	to have known the taste of erasure! ...
यह मेरे मिटने ³⁴ का अधिकार!	... Let be, oh, God!
-महादेवी वर्मा (1907-1987)	Oh, this right of mine to be erased!
	-Mahadevi Verma (1907-1987)



All images Pratyush Pushkar and Riya Raagini a.k.a. BaRiya.
Courtesy of the artists.

Pratyush Pushkar and Riya Raagini a.k.a. BaRiya is an independent emerging trans-disciplinary artist, poet, and writer duo from New Delhi, India. Navigating disorientedly/poetically, BaRiya assumes art as an organ to dissolve/dwell through the remains of marginalized spirituality, create a vocal consensus with biospheres, meditate all through the gender spectrum, and probe (quantum) compulsions: while truthfully acknowledging the binary and racial barriers questioning intimate spiritual inventions. www.bariyastudio.com

We have to thank सदानेरा – Sadaneera (sadaneera.com) for seeding in contemporary Hindi (and us), an openness towards the (translating) times of other linguistic realities, for bringing together progressive frameworks and artistic sensibilities, and for practising a poetic detachment towards the lines which separate mediums and genres. Our friends at हिन्दवी – Hindwi.org for their efforts towards ardent preservation of Hindi poetry's archive, and forays into regional Indian literature. Our Hindi poetry allies, Poets – Avinash Mishra, Sudhanshu Firdaus, and Shayak Alok, mentors at poesy – Anamika, and Devi Prasad Mishra, for not only motivating a temporal rereading but also for helping us dwell into and understand the very fabric landing these curves and shifts. We also have to thank Eduardo Navarro, contemporary artist and soulmate, with whom we have pondered upon magnified droplets belonging to the vast expanse(s) of temporal beingness, a solar dial, and plays where time's non-violence and pace had us sit cozy and childishly-earnestly guessing.

1 Kala: »the Black« »Time«; Kala (Shiva) and Vishnu are regarded as aspects of Cosmic Time (Mahakala), which is present before existence. Relative time as perceived by humans measures the duration of individual existence and is an apparent division of continuous cyclic Time in which creatures are born, increase, reach their peak, and then progressively deteriorate as the »wheel of time« revolves ad infinitum. Hence there is no absolute beginning or absolute end of time. All existence moves successively from a state of manifestation to a state of non-manifestation to a state of manifestation and back again. Kala is the destroyer of worlds. Hence Kala is called, »the Black,« although the actual destructive function is assigned to Kala's sakti Kali. Kala is said to be »the cook of creatures« by creating and bringing them to fruition when they are fit to be swallowed by »Death,« who has fierce red eyes and holds a noose (pasa) with which to ensnare his victims.

2 Four primary eras of Hindi poetry are: Adikal (the Early Period, tenth to fourteenth centuries), Bhaktikal (the Devotional Period, fourteenth to eighteenth century) Ritikal (the Scholastic Period, eighteenth to twentieth centuries), Adhunikkal (the Modern Period, twentieth century onward)

3 श्रृंगार: śṛṅ gāra; Shringar love, the erotic sentiment, sexual passion or desire; elegant; makeup; adornment; गीतः amorous/amatory song – a song conveying erotic/amorous feelings.

4 This refers to the kind of contrapuntal reading bequeathed in the postcolonial theories of Edward Said. Here Said describes a reading strategy that exposes elements of colonial discourse hidden within a text. Contrapuntal reading not only unveils the colonial perspective but also tries to read for nuances of resistance (counterpoints) that are present within the same narrative. We apply a similar method in the reading of temporality and the gazes and systems attached to it, with counterpoints provided in the vast archive of Hindi poetry.

5 Disrememberment, (memories without a form, where there is some intuitive ground, but not one with intention), विस्मृति vismṛti [S.], f. 1. Oblivion. 2. Forgetfulness.

6 कुआँ: kuan; the well as a temporal device

7 प्रतीक्षा: pratikṣā, pratiksha: waiting (for); wait; expectation; प्रतीक्षित awaited.

8 अतीतः atīta [s.], adj. 1. adj. past, elapsed. 2. former. 3. detached, free (from, से). 4. in comp. beyond, surpassing. गुणतीत, adj. Brbh. philos. beyond the gunas (constituents, of the phenomenal world (the supreme being)). 5. beyond, ahead.

9 वर्तमानः vartamāna [s.], adj. 1. existing, present (time, situation); of the present day. 2. current (month, year). 3. present, confronting (one): a situation. 4. the present (time). – वर्तमान-काल.

10 इतिहासः itihāsa n.: history.

11 वर्षः varṣa varṣa year [अगला next, पिछला last, वर्तमान present, नव new]; प्रति ~ every –, yearly.

12 धीरेः dheere: adv. slowly; gradually; deliberately (of speech); patiently; gently, softly, quietly.

13 मनः mana [manas-] 1. The mind (as seat of perception and feeling). 2. The heart. 3. The soul. 4. Wish, inclination; will; purpose. 5. Character, temperament.

14 विघटितः vighaṭita vighaṭit (a) disintegrated, disorganized, disrupted; decomposed; disbanded; dismembered; dismantled.

15 Standard tuning of a तानपुरा (so do' do' do) – The tanpura (Hindi: तानपुरा) or tambura, tanpuri is a long-necked plucked string instrument, originating from India, found in various forms in Indian music. It does not carry a melody, but rather supports and sustains the melody of another instrument or singer by providing a continuous harmonic bourdon or drone. A tanpura is not played in rhythm with the soloist or percussionist: as the precise timing of plucking a cycle of four strings in a continuous loop is a determinant factor in the resultant sound. The combined sound of all strings – each string a fundamental tone with its own spectrum of overtones – supports and blends with the external tones sung or played by the soloist.

16 विश्रामः viśrāma viśrām n.: rest [अनन्त, eternal, थोड़ा a little, पूरा complete]; एक चढ़ी का ~ a few minutes.

17 Entanglement occurring across two quantum systems that never coexisted. Elise Crull, »You thought quantum mechanics was weird: check out entangled time.« in: Aeon magazine. Online at: <https://aeon.co/ideas/you-thought-quantum-mechanics-was-weird-check-out-entangled-time>.

18 करुणा: karuṇā karū ā n. f.: pity, compassion, pathos; benignity; tenderness of feelings.

19 विलम्बः vilamba [s.] adj. m.: slowness, delay.

20 काक, चक्र, शक्ति: crow, slant, and, speech is also a poetic device, an Alankar in Hindi poetry, which emphasizes tonal rhetoric.

21 उदयः udaya [s.] v.: 1. rising, rise (esp. of heavenly bodies); ascent; the east. 2. appearance, advent. 3. light, splendour. 4. rise, progress; prosperity.

22 अस्त, अस्त-कालः asta [s.], adj. 1. home: setting (a heavenly body). 2. fall, decline. 3. the west. 4. adj. setting (a heavenly body). 5. set. ~ ~ होना, to set (the sun,) – अस्त-काल, m. time of setting; period of decline.

23 Kālacakra_ »Wheel (Chakra) of Time.« Time regarded as cyclic and symbolized by a rotating wheel.

24 कालचक्र, जीवन चक्र (life cycle), दृक्चक्र (cycle of viscousness), सौर चक्र (solar cycle), सुखद चक्र (cycle of prosperity), दमन-चक्र (cycle of oppression), अग्नि-चक्र (cycle of fire), वाणिज्य चक्र (trade-cycle), ब्रह्म-चक्र (cosmic cycle), नेत्र चक्र (cycle of sight), ऋतु चक्र (seasonal cycle) ... चक्र

25 चक्र chakra chakkr (nm) a wheel; cycle; circle; disc, discus; discus-shaped missile; गति circular motion; ~ग spin(ning);

26 साया sāyā [P. sāya], m. f.: 1. shade; shadow. 2. shelter, protection. 3. an apparition. 4. influence (of an evil spirit: also fig.)

27 भविष्यः bhaviṣya n.: the future; destiny; -काल the future tense; futurity; -कथन prophesy, forecast; -ज्ञान knowledge of the future; ~दर्शी a seer, one who can see through into the future.

28 लम्हाः lamahā n.: a moment, an instant.

29 पुरानाः purānā adj.: old, olden, ancient; of the past, of bygone ages.

30 खंडहरः khaṇḍahara [*khaṇḍaghara-] m, adj.: 1. a ruin, ruined building. 2. A dilapidated building. 3. (singular or plural) mass of (as of a village or town). 4. adj. ruined; dilapidated.

31 अवशेषः avaśeṣa avashesh n.: remnant, remains, residue, residuum; vestige; relics; adj.: remaining, residual.

32 वेतालः vētāla veta n.: a goblin, evil spirit, ghost (a storyteller ghost from the popular Hindi tale Vikram-Vetal)

33 लोक लोका लोक n.: the world; one of the three worlds – स्वर्ग, पृथ्वी, पाताल; one of the fourteen worlds (of which seven are above and seven below); people, folk; public; popular, public.

34 मिटाना miṭānā miṭnā v.: to be effaced; to be erased; to be ruined, to be undone, to be destroyed.

Imprint

Solitude Journal 4
Time After Time
November 2022

Published by Akademie Schloss Solitude,
Elke aus dem Moore

Contributors: Fatin Abbas, Camila de Caux and Eric Macedo, Nadine K. Cenoz, Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie, BF, Jazmina Figueroa, Wanjeri Gakuru, HuM-Collective, Chloë Langford and Jira Duguid (Fantasia Malware), Zahra Malkani, Dzekashu MacViban, Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer, Sada Malumfashi, Pratyush Pushkar and Riya Raagini a.k.a. BaRiya, Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez, Valentina Sciarra, Denise Helene Sumi, Tanya Villanueva, and Eirini Vlavianou

Guest Editor: Dzekashu MacViban
Co-Editors: Jazmina Figueroa and Denise Helene Sumi
Managing Editor: Denise Helene Sumi
Proofreading: Kimberly Bradley
Graphic Design: Beton.studio, Vienna
Graphic Intervention (Cover and Pagination):
HuM-Collective, Stuttgart
Cover: Zahra Malkani, drawing from the series *Studies in Aqueous Time*, 2022. Courtesy of the artist. For the cover, the original drawing was processed by Beton.
Printing: Druckerei Pöge, Leipzig

Special thanks to Angela Butterstein and Hopscotch Reading Room

Copyrights: 2022 The texts and images in this issue – unless no other rights holders are expressly named – are published under the terms of the »Creative Commons Attribution«-License CC BY-NC-ND version 4.0: creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

Copyright for the text by Fatin Abbas: 2022 ifa (Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen) and the author. All rights reserved.

A note on the images: The authors were responsible for obtaining permission to reproduce all images. Every reasonable effort has been made by the publisher and authors to contact/locate the copyright owners. Additional information brought to the publisher's attention will appear online.

Note: The phrase that runs through the journal rearranges the lyrics of the song *Time After Time* by Cyndi Lauper.

Akademie Schloss Solitude
Solitude 3
70197 Stuttgart
Germany

Email: mail@akademie-solitude.de
Internet: www.akademie-solitude.de

Printed in Germany
Edition of 300 copies

ISSN 2701-2727 (Print)
ISSN 2701-2735 (Online)

The Solitude Journal is part of the *Digital Solitude* program of Akademie Schloss Solitude.



Contributors: Fatin Abbas, Camila de Caux and Eric Macedo, Nadine K. Cenoz, Sheila Chiamaka Chukwulozie, BF, Jazmina Figueroa, Wanjeri Gakuru, HuM-Collective, Chloë Langford and Jira Duguid (Fantasia Malware), Zahra Malkani, Dzekashu MacViban, Christ Mukenge and Lydia Schellhammer, Sada Malumfashi, Pratyush Pushkar and Riya Raagini a.k.a. BaRiya, Nicolás Vizcaíno Sánchez, Valentina Sciarra, Denise Helene Sumi, Tanya Villanueva, and Eirini Vlavianou



AKADEMIE
SCHLOSS
SOLITUDE