

From the Editors

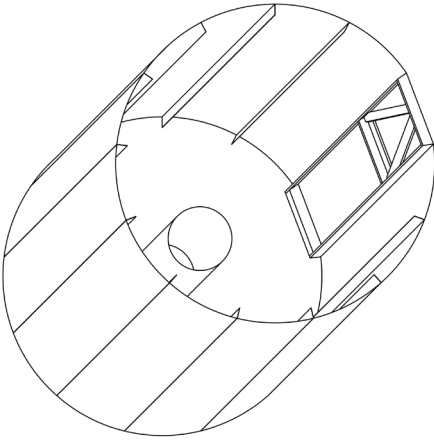
The ever-increasing closeness and connectedness between individuals that can be achieved in our present time seems, rather paradoxically, to contrast with the emergence of a sequence of dystopian political perspectives. Now that capital and information are flowing and transcending national boundaries, different areas (of action, movement, thought) merge into one another. But the blurring of distinctions still appears to prompt a violent fear. Projects to construct inviolable borders, together with the rising popularity of far-right and authoritarian parties, governments and organisations, are some of the issues that make us aware of the urgency to speak – and write – about what is occurring beyond the centre of our gaze.

Erasing data, then recovering data: we produce and circulate concrete forms as we look into a screen. A multitude of points constantly exceeds our field of vision, but we can often recognise familiar shapes and movements without the need to focus. Is it that both scope and depth – the extrinsic as well as the underground – escape our comprehension? Pieces of land, bodies of water, the namelessness of a stone are perhaps made of the very same indeterminacy that grants human imagination the potential to generate. However, we still mentally remove from our own personal World Map those territories that keep defying our description. How can we deal with the distance that separates us from what is unknown, on the margin of what we perceive to be our world?

This is the fifth issue of *Unknown Quantities*, a collaboration between MA Culture, Criticism and Curation and MA Graphic Communication Design at Central Saint Martins in London. The previous four issues have explored the relationship between art and politics, reflected on the notion of the “abject”, they have asked themselves what is “normal”, and what “intimacy” means nowadays. In 2017 the *Unknown Quantities* team decided to critically investigate the implications of the word “peripheral” in the current artistic, cultural, social and political scenario.

Thinking and rethinking the way we conceived “peripheral”, and its genesis in Western thought, as evidenced by several contributions, have informed our method and our attitude toward the very act of editing and designing a printed publication. We wanted to interpret it through the duality of its character, as a publication is indeed a record but can also function as a platform. “Peripheral” underwent a slow mutation from being our subject to becoming our direction. Throughout the development of this project, it has constituted the foundation that prompted us to create a new, different frame for envisioning the world.

In a time when division and inequality still affect the production of knowledge, art and academia, we feel we are responsible for activating a discussion that considers what is off-centre and what we may be failing to understand.



18

Nobody noticed as
I turned inside out

6

As a common ancestor, the fish
is emblematic of both foetus
and corpse: a circuit of life and
death, as expressed in ancient
Egyptian mythology, which
places the fish as a device of
directionality: as a protective
figure and a mechanism to
control the light of the Earth

42

DING @Anais-Yelen
requests £2.97 for last
night's uber sorry haha!
love ya thankss

66

Central and peripheral are core
concepts in several interrelated
scientific disciplines, such as bio-
technology, material engineering
and nanoscience

22



58

Let's pretend we are
better than we are

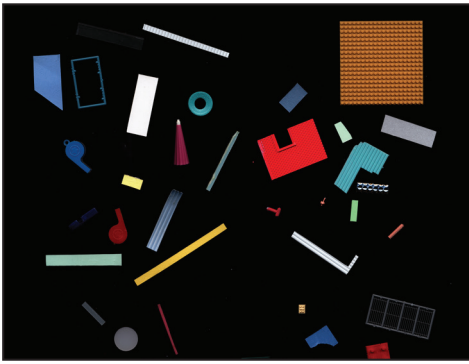
72

As this piece is being
written, Bitcoin reaches
an exchange price of
\$6,001.50

24



28



68

In history everything begins with the gesture of setting aside, of putting together, of transforming certain classified objects into “documents”

36



54

I suspect Charlotte’s “indolence” might in fact have been rebelliousness

34

“He who paints landscapes perfectly is above the artist who paints only fruits, flowers or shells. He who paints living animals is worthy of more esteem than he who only represents things dead and no longer moving”

50

As long as the “mainstream”, the popular, the homogenous has existed and permeated large parts of society, counter-culture, sub-cultures and other kind of elusive and phantasmagorical sociological entities have thrived in the fringes

52

Not quite land, not quite sea, it stands like an island rooted in the ocean floor

26

10pm, 8 June 2017: a small crowd is gathered outside the BBC building in central London, staring at the exit poll for the UK General Election projected on the wall. Contrary to all predictions, the Conservatives have lost their majority in Westminster

64



10

We love our stuff and we hate it. We collect it, discard it, crytallise moments into physical things and uphold them beyond their functionality

32

Matrimonarium

i

I hug my Aunt.

She kisses my cheek
from the reception line

her dress regal,
its blue severe.

She smiles taut as collarbones.
Her eyes crinkle when she says,

we're so glad you're here.

I smile back, my teeth enormous.

6

ii

My family is in the front row
and I am a hollow statue,
staring into my blue shadow.

Father tries to tease me,
could you look like you're having fun?
What is a father anyway?
A circle? A javelin? Thousands
of miles of optic cable?



iii

The botanic garden dripping moss
dapples the brackled glass.

Behind the butterflies' sleeping house
the queerly watcher looks out.

iv

I stalk outside to watch the DJ
take the tarp off the speakers.
The singer squeegees the dance floor.

Behind me, my family makes toasts
the bride ignores like a tooth.
The food simply will not arrive.

I roll my collins of scotch and water,
the ice a deft stork between my palms –
a prayer for anything to happen.

v

I tried to explain,
but my family said, *no*.

Nobody noticed as
I turned inside out.

I tried to be the quiet reef
but my family said, *no*.

So I down the martini,
a smile ringing my teeth.

The weekend will pass out
over itself and yet here I am.

My family says, *we love you*
and *you're wrong*.

vi

The wind scratches the ocean and the buildings
glow pink on the clouds.

Soon it will all be underwater.

8

Sad towers reflect no moon
on their too many eyes.

They resent their only function,
the holding up of the night.

I pitch my lowball
into the harbor
an artifact for the future –

this, my most important act.

Everyone else takes turns
at the microphone, trying to get
anyone to look at them.

But we are all dying.
There's no two ways about it.

vii

Crabs molt their shells three times
before they die. The fork pierces
layers of cake, layers of cream.
A boat returning to its dock
swallows its own tail –

9

Miami, not so different from the water.

Ryan Dzelzkalns

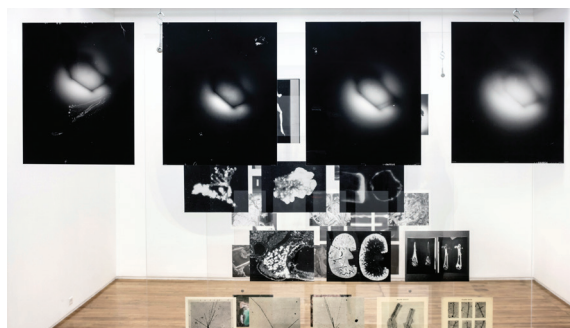


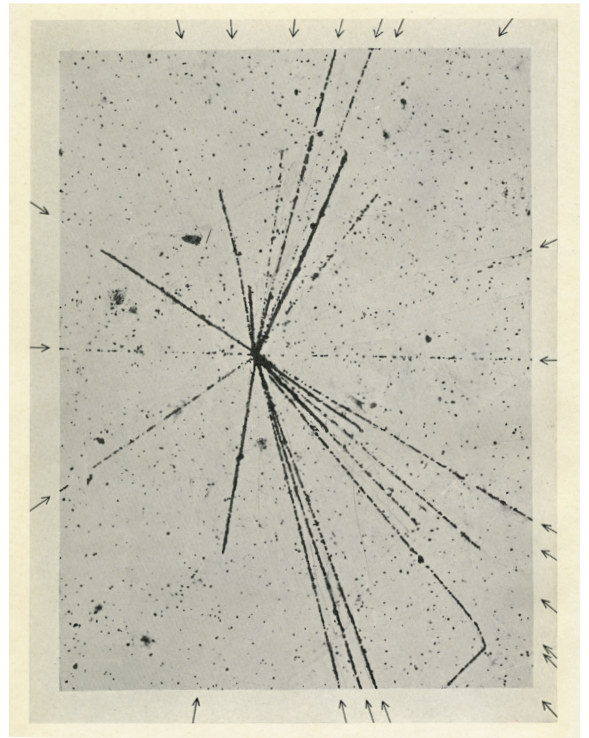
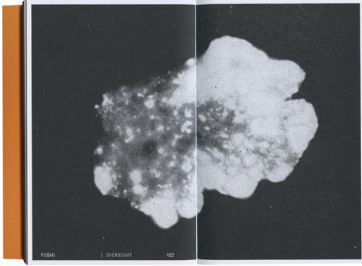
Questions of political and real disappearance, such as radioactivity, mining, archaeology and landmarks, are some of the preoccupations that Susanne Kriemann investigates through the photographic medium. The history of military and atomic technology is part of the productive forces that build our visual culture and the nature of photographic processes.

Radiation is invisible to the human eye; however, it is undoubtedly real. With *Pechblende (Prologue)* (2016) and *P(ech) B(lende): Library for Radioactive Afterlife* (2016), Kriemann reflects on its existence on a temporal axis that exceeds our perception and calculation of time. It has the power to evict human life from places that were once inhabitable. Then, what is left for us to see are the records, documents and remote images that build and give meaning to our world.



Kriemann investigates the contexts in which a picture is made and distributed, proposing an enquiry about the transmission of meaning through photographic representation. However, sometimes even structures that are physically present seem to become invisible, appearing as almost unrecognisable materials that history has left behind.





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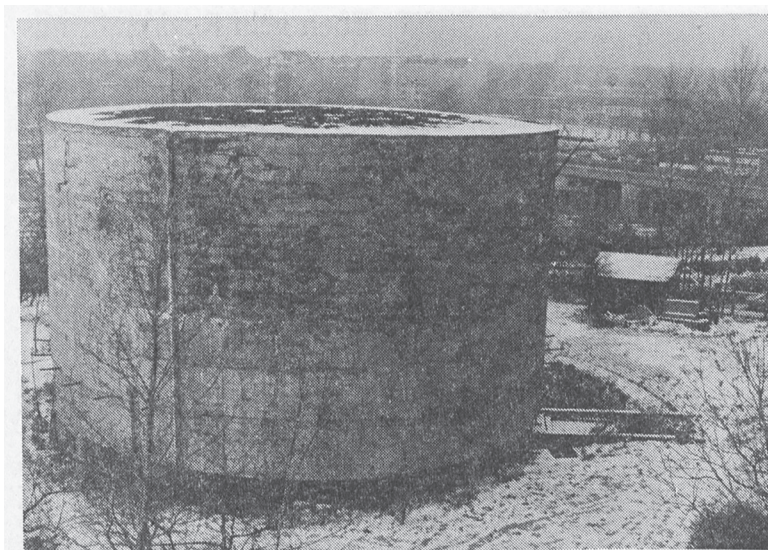
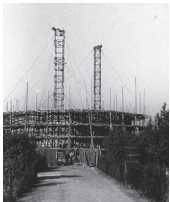
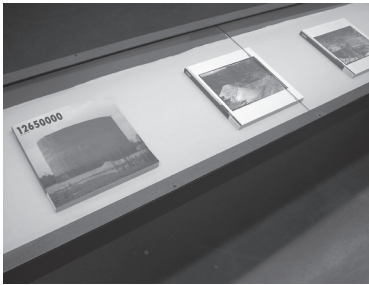


Pechblende (Prologue), 53 images and acrylic glass, exhibition view, Prefix ICA, Toronto (2016) and *P(ech) B(lende): Library for Radioactive Afterlife*, artist book published by Spector Books Leipzig (2016)

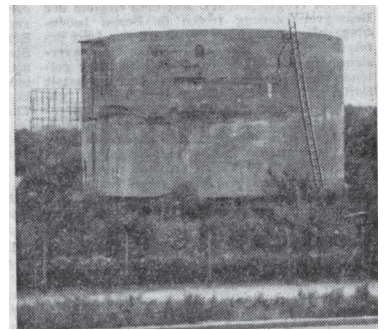




12 650 000 (2005–08) is an example of how political invisibility can also affect objects that embodied a precise ideology. The heavy-load-testing structure was built in 1941 as part of Third Reich architect Albert Speer's plan for turning Berlin into "World Capital Germania" – a test to assess the weight-bearing capacity of the city's ground. Thus, the existence of a monument starts resembling that of a virtually invisible mass.



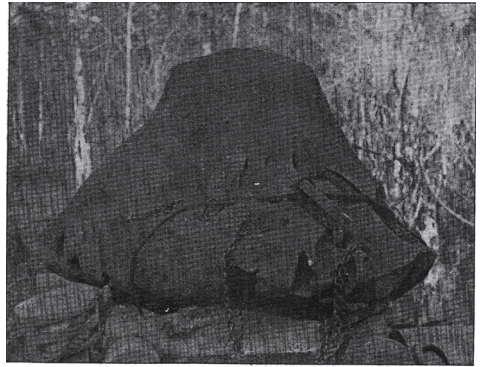
Klotz an der Kolonnenbrücke. Noch immer wird Albert Speers Betonpilz in Tempelhof von TU-Wissenschaftlern für Boden- und Fundamentuntersuchungen genutzt. Foto: Hampel



12 650 000, photographic work and artist book (2005–08) and *12 650* reader, published by A Prior for the 5th Berlin Biennale (2008)

Kriemann threads a *fil rouge* through the documentation of what one cannot see. *Not Quite Replica: Meteorite* (2004–05) examines what a rock can tell us about history and reproduction. The story of the Willamette meteorite is told through Kriemann's own process of recreation and re-representation of the meteor, which interweaves a potentially infinite narrative as it interacts with late 19th century records of the rock.



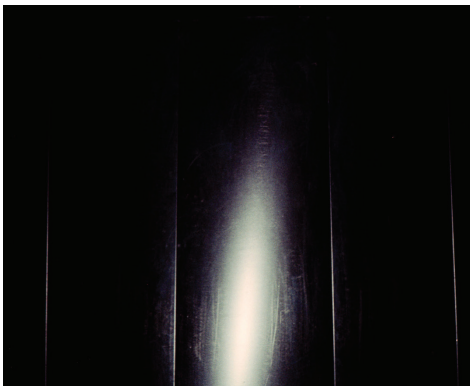
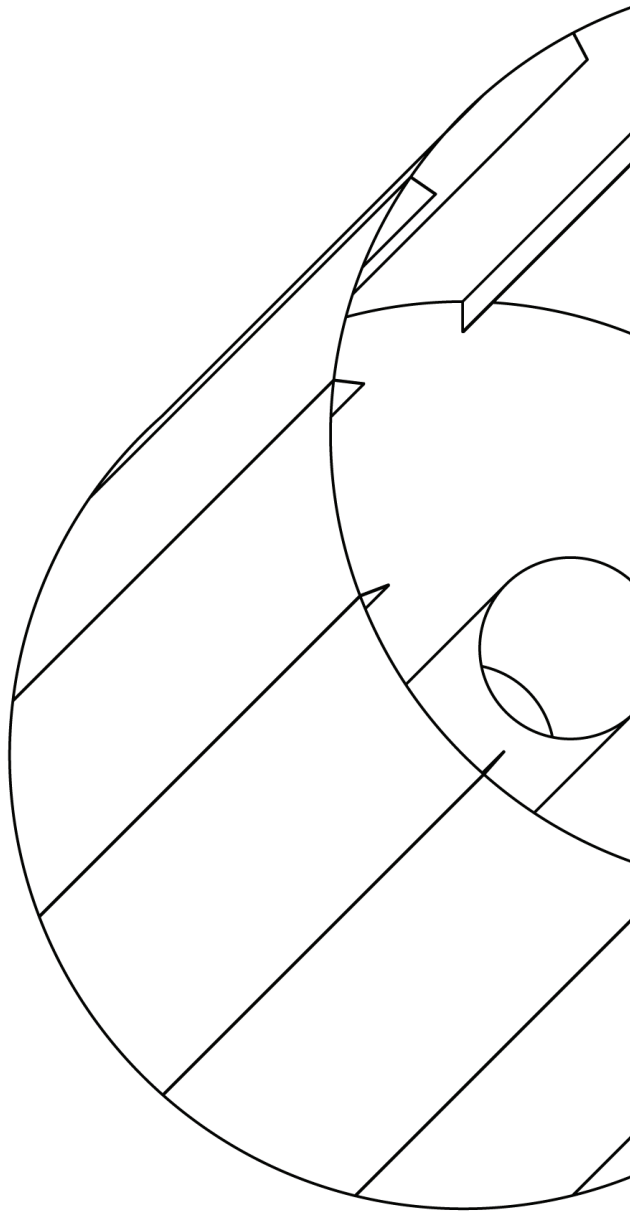


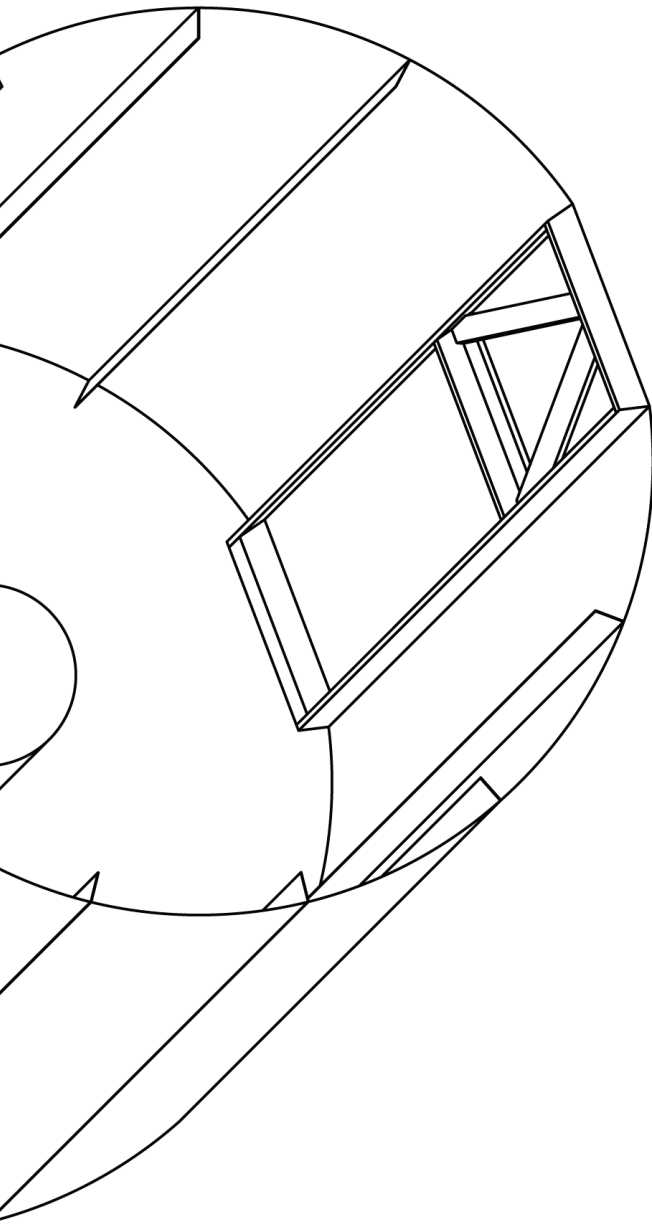
Not Quite Replica: Meteorite (2004–05)
and *Not Quite Replica*, work in public space,
Rotterdam, and artist book (2004–06)

Tin house
Architecture Uncomfortable Workshop
Text by UQ

While pursuing both practical and experimental architectural projects, Architecture Uncomfortable Workshop (AUW) provides experimental activities and construction planning for heterogeneous groups of people with different demands. A core idea presented throughout its works is the intersection between forms of vernacular life and contemporary architectural concepts, where personal comfort and functionality meet. AUW applies historical, geographical and environmental studies to its practice, while constantly renovating methods of design, creating forms of contemporary architectural production that serve diverse purposes. From educational aims to curatorial approaches, the function of each project is contextualised by the specific situation that generates it. With the intention of reinterpreting intrinsic architectural principles such as accessibility and materiality, AUW has been continually reconstructing the possible forms human life can take, while discussing the relationship between living spaces and natural environments.

Contemporary architecture as a practice concerning “space” is more than a mere consideration of space. Within discourses of cultural geography and landscape, contemporary architecture is associated with “humanistic care”, everyday spaces, as well as an awareness of locality and social functionality. Because of nomadic seasonal migrations, the meaning of





spaces or buildings is related to the idea of the “situation”, of their surroundings and circumstances. The definitions of spaces and buildings are thus fluid and flexible. Land is a place where nomads can settle freely, and space means change and transformation. In this sense, the idea of “space” or “home” becomes universal: there is no privatisation of property, no barriers, and home is a place where individuals can temporarily rest and stay. Land does not belong to anyone, as it remains accessible.

Concepts of space and home contradict traditionally settled communities. The idea that the land and the house are private property – objects with limited access – has been challenged by nomadic thought. Nomadic and stationary communities speak about “home” and “space” in general with words that have different meanings and connotations. Largely different from dominant architectural thinking, nomadic life engages with space in peripheral areas belonging to marginalised communities. It is an aesthetics of living that challenges ideas inherent in established architectural practices.

“For the nomad, ‘home’ cannot be understood except in terms of journey, just as space is defined by movement”
– Labelle Prussin







Central and peripheral are core concepts in several interrelated scientific disciplines, such as biotechnology, material engineering and nanoscience. More specifically, in chemistry, the relationship between a central part of a molecule and its outskirts is a key concept.

A molecule consists of a “main chain”, a central chemical conglomerate, to which several peripheral groups, called “side chain” or “backbone”, are bonded. This specific structure and the relationship between the core of the molecule and its marginal groups is what characterises two of the critical components for the functioning of the human body: proteins and amino acids.

Proteins are macro molecules essential for the organism’s regularity and are made of hundreds of smaller units called amino acids. The amino acids (natural proteinogenic amino acids in particular), are made, in turn, of three other groups: an amino functional group ($-NH_2$), a carboxylic acid group ($-COOH$) and a lateral R group that are all bonded to a main carbon atom (α -carbon).

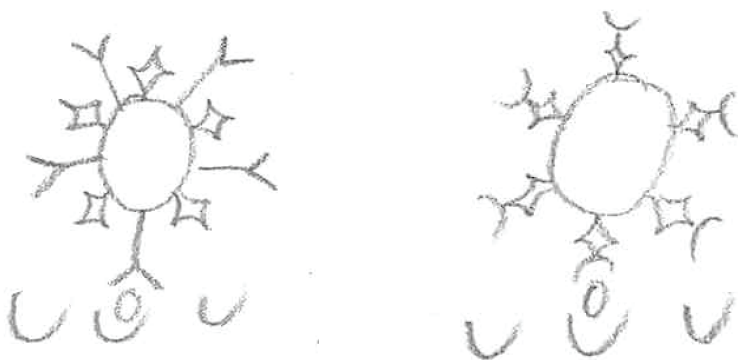
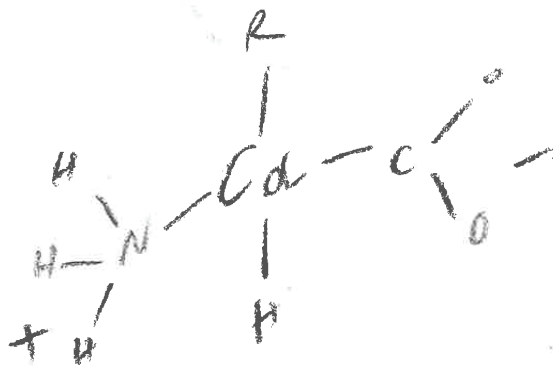
Each amino acid, therefore, comprises a specific lateral R group, that represents one of the main forces within the molecule. The R group is, in fact, what shapes the protein’s tertiary structure (a three-dimensional shape that determines its function and biological activity), as the amino acid’s chemical properties affect the classification of the amino acid in acid, basic, hydrophilic (polar) or hydrophobic (nonpolar).

Thus, the peripheral R group is what defines the centre of the amino acid and regulates some of its pivotal functions. If proteins would not have the lateral groups, they would not have their particular structure, lacking some of the fundamental factors for the deployment of human life. The “peripheral” nature of a molecule, therefore, plays an

essential role, as it influences the core properties and characteristics of the molecule itself.

For example, when a lateral group bonds to a gold or silver nanoparticle, it changes its properties, making it soluble in water and biocompatible. An additional function of “peripheral” entities occurs when activated together with specific antigens. This reaction enables the recognition of nanoparticles by human antibodies and its application is currently launching new possibilities in medicine, such as in the case of diagnosis (bio-sensing) and anti-tumour treatments.¹

Ultimately, lateral groups can confer a variety of physical and chemical properties on a molecule, a polymer, a particle or a particle aggregate. “Peripheral” groups can alter solubility, optical properties, polarity, pH and biocompatibility, or they can shift a molecule’s nature from carcinogenic to innocuous to the human body. The “peripheral” is not merely a foundational aspect of chemistry: it contributes to this science’s extraordinary constitutive and functional versatility.



¹ KC Bantz et al, "Recent progress in SERS biosensing" in *Physical Chemistry Chemical Physics* (2011).

Politics of decentralisation:
Art on the blockchain
Federico Sargentone & Ulya Soley

As this piece is being written, Bitcoin reaches an exchange price of \$6,001.50. In this very moment – *real time, flash* – millions of investors of an age-range from 16 to 66 years old are celebrating, swearing, crying, holding, selling, panicking, going to the hospital, buying Lambos, going to the moon.¹ They are all gathered together, held within a solid yet floating relationship, by the blockchain. They tangibly demonstrate the failure of centralised structures through their questionable success in terms of crypto-wealth accumulation.

The blockchain, and the entirety of the relationships involved in its functioning, are a mechanism used to validate any exchange between individuals, entities, users. The parties involved in this exchange of information are held in a simultaneous relationship through a network of computers that keep track of that information, and its exchange methods. The magical, auto-normative entity of the blockchain is to be translated into a continuous flux of records. Its physical manifestation is an open ledger registering any transaction occurring between certain givers and receivers. Any linearity of exchange is disrupted, emancipated from being the only, necessary method of transacting data. The possibilities of decentralisation offered by the blockchain are the resultant quasi-political effect of ongoing investigations on how to escape techno-capitalism, an authoritarian centralisation of power that operates through data collection.

Inevitably, the shift from a system where data are centrally held and subjected to the risk of manipulation creates a newly-generated set of peripheral relationships, developed at the outskirts of the supposedly central node of the system. The process of storing data across a network distributes the transactions on many intermediate actors, thus acting as a decentralising mechanism able to set new

standards for transparency and anonymity.² So, the dispersed becomes the main, central system. Can we still talk about a periphery if the entire system is decentralised?

If the opposite of periphery – the centre – no longer exists, could the whole idea of peripheral collapse? Chus Martinez directs us to the rather curious brain-functioning of an octopus. Its brain structure is very peculiar. The octopus's arms are autonomous: each arm has its own brain, but the system functions normally, as if it had a head:

Without a central nervous system, every arm “thinks” as well as “senses” the surrounding world without autonomy, and yet, each arm is part of the animal. For us, art is what allows us to imagine this form of decentralised perception. Art is the octopus in love.³

The decentralised brain structure and operation system of an octopus is similar to how blockchain functions. The

1 “To the moon”: informal expression, vernacularly coined by users of cryptocurrencies-related subreddits. Also common on 4chan, “To the moon” refers to the optimistic projection of cryptocurrencies to generate a solid return on investments.

2 “How Blockchain Technology Can Change The Way Modern Businesses Work”, available at: eyerys.com

fascinating promise of the blockchain – a decentralised autonomous sovereignty – can be used by artists to create a self-governed art world, to fight the commodification of art, or else it could reduce art to a share that sits in a freeport somewhere around the world.

An ongoing art project titled *terra0* is a conceptual project whose function is based on the blockchain. The idea is to create a self-owned, augmented forest, which sells licences, and markets its resources to extend and eventually buy itself from the project initiators, expanding its territories. *terra0* is an example of the relationship between art and the blockchain. An instance of the latter function of the blockchain is Maecenas, a company that sells art on a blockchain platform. They recently made it possible to trade art as stock exchange. Buyers can own parts of different artworks, which stay in warehouses at freeports and are never seen by their stakeholders.

A third possibility is that the blockchain eliminates art's existence entirely. Bjørn Magnhildøen, who runs the production

site Noemata, argues that being and time have a different relation in the context of the blockchain: they are conflated.⁴

He suggests that after the dematerialisation of the art object via conceptual art, perhaps now we might deconceptualise the artwork through the blockchain: it is tangible, but disentangled from existence and concepts.

Will the blockchain become a platform that challenges the commodification of art through its autonomous and decentralised system, will it survive, or will it share the same fate as conceptual art and become subjected to commodification?

³ Chus Martinez, "The Octopus in Love", in *What's Love (or Care, Intimacy, Warmth, Affection) Got to Do with It?* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017).

⁴ Bjørn Magnhildøen, "Aphantasia – Blockchain As Medium for Art", in *Artists Re:Thinking the Blockchain*, ed Ruth Catlow, Marc Garrett, Nathan Jones and Sam Skinner (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017).

Dissolving oceans
or, tormented with an everlasting itch for things remote¹
Veronica Gisondi

Hello. I'm texting you from
the middle of the ocean.

Not quite land, not quite sea, it stands like an island rooted in the ocean floor. Flotation occasionally determines its subsistence. Sometimes it goes by the name of semi-submersible mobile offshore drilling unit or drilling rig, or offshore platform.
It is most commonly referred to as an oil platform.

No one came!!! Can you
believe it?

It is a growing creature whose life still depends on its mother's body. An oil platform absorbs nutrients from submerged sources of oil and gas. It is also self-sufficient in its energy requirements, so that its continuity and permanence are granted. Far from everybody's view, not noticeably affecting anybody's life, the oceanic platform simply exists, like a poisonous shrub in a tropical forest, or like a minuscule drop of water in a supercell thunderstorm.

*Down it drops, slicing through the glistening skin at the surface of the sea.
Down further, through dimming shafts of refracted sunlight.
Through stiff migratory currents descending into pressure intense
enough to crush the life out of any human.
Finally, at 2,896 metres (9,500 feet) below the surface,
the anchor settles onto the seabed.²*

26

The world's deepest, or tallest, oil and gas production platform resides in the same Gulf as the second tallest hub, named Perdido – lost. Offshore hubs silently inhabit the oceanic floor of the Gulf, scattered across its radius, operating in isolation, physically displaced but politically cardinal.

A haven for inanimate and unimaginable life forms, the bottom of the Gulf is, like many other virtually unnamed oceanic expanses, a Wild Blue Yonder³ of impossibility, the ideal home for abandoned forms of exploitation built by human imagination. When an oil platform is not directly erected on the seafloor, it is fastened to it by a mooring system, which consists of a rope or chain, an anchor and connectors. Hydrocarbons, the substance extracted by offshore units, are decomposed organic matter providing large amounts of carbon and hydrogen that, when bonded, can form seemingly limitless chains.

They are Earth's data, emerging from beneath the planet's subsurface, and perpetually flowing in liquid form. Just like data, there is an endless quality to them. And every so often they also seem to escape human authority and containment.
Can you truly possess an ocean in its ubiquity?

How can you deal with that infinite distance, and with the obscurity of its depth?
Do you calculate its value by its duration or by the space it occupies?

If you stand still within its
motion, you slowly become
part of its mass. If you move too
quickly, you sink. Oh wait
that's actually what happens
with quicksand right?⁴

Solid matter loses its strength and it becomes unable to support weight.
This particular ratio of sand to water generates a substance that is twice
as dense as the human body, and that is the reason why one could
partially sink, but never truly drown, in a non-Newtonian fluid.
It is the nearby tidal currents that, with their rise and fall, either
reveal or submerge.

Anthropocentrism still
seems to be hot

Trolls, rangers, writers and pipers all crowd the view on the shore.⁵
There was an explosion at Deepwater Horizon,⁶ they say. The spill can be
contained, someone reassures us; but it will eventually break its seal and
leak beyond the site where the accident originally occurred, somebody
else notes. Leakage is inevitable. But perhaps it is the act of seeping,
the idea of a seepage as a critical event, that becomes the condition
for forms of truth to appear.

27

Are you there[^]

After all, our reality also depends upon subterranean molten rock, layers
of gas that constitute what we call sky, and unfathomably large bodies
of water. But how exactly does one breach the surface of what is known?
How to unpack those pressure points, to unravel the abyssal clusters
of cables linking phenomena to information? Observe that perfect shade
of blue, and promise not to cut any wire.

¹ Herman Melville, *Moby-Dick*,
"Chapter 1: Loomings" (London:
Penguin, 2013 [1851]).

² This is how Shell describes its
new Stones oil and gas field in the
Gulf of Mexico.

³ Werner Herzog's homonymous
film interweaves documentary
footage with fictional chronicles
and first person narration. The
imaginary interaction between
submarine and space sequences is
at the core of the film's structure.

⁴ Quicksand is sand saturated
with water. When a shock or stress
occurs, its viscosity decreases,
and liquefaction begins.

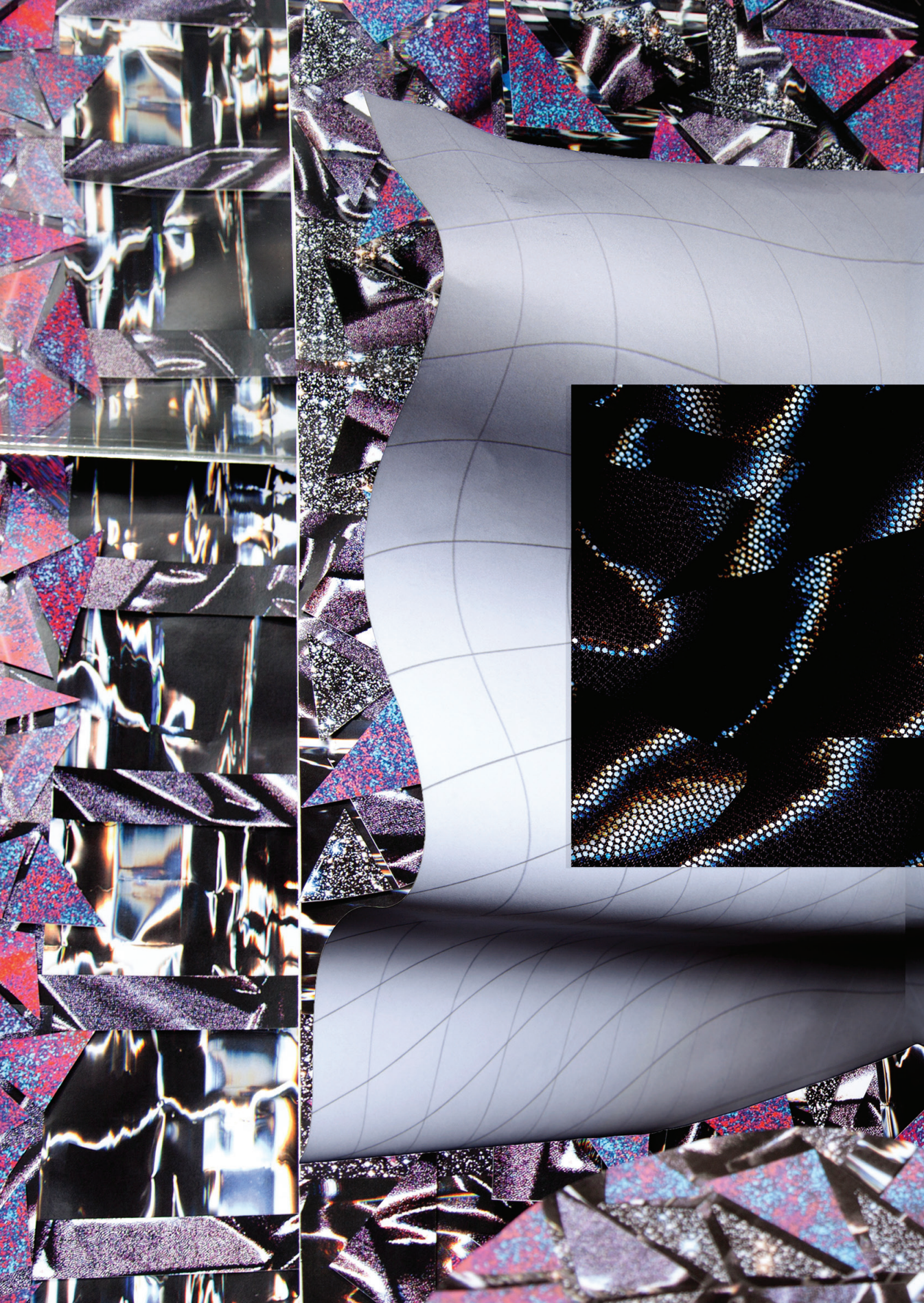
⁵ Some of the names given to
oceanic oil extraction platforms
are Troll A, Ocean Ranger,
Petronius, and Piper Alpha.

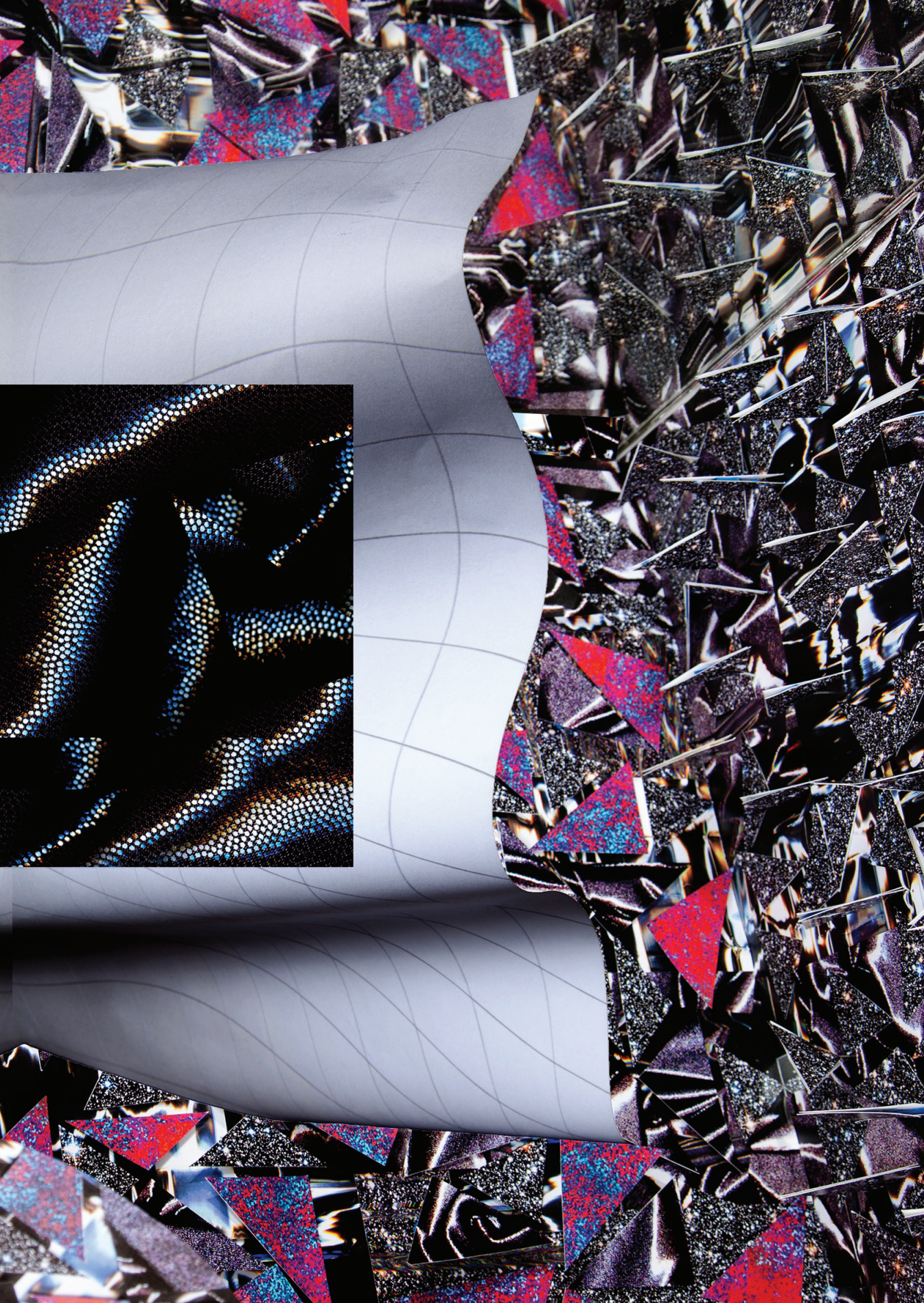
⁶ The explosion took place on
April 20 2010, in the Macondo
Prospect oil field, in the Gulf of
Mexico. The Deepwater Horizon
semi-submersible Mobile Offshore
Drilling Unit caught fire and then
sank, leading to 11 deaths among
its workers, and causing an
enormous off shore oil spill.

Afterglow: compact, orientable, spacelike
Jaclyn Wright









Peripheral objects:
the marketing of cultural relics
Tilly Slight

We live with objects in a very peculiar way. They function for us, we use them and associate them with things far beyond their control. Sentimentality, memory, emotional connection: we love our stuff and we hate it. We collect it, discard it, crystallise moments into physical things and uphold them beyond their functionality. We keep these sacred objects alongside the things we never looked twice at, such as the vacuum cleaner with no emotional content embedded. And when we die, left behind is a tangle of material "things". Some associations are so specific and personal that they disappear with the owner, but others are plain for anyone to see.

Is it possible to reconstruct some essence of a person through their things?

This is where the auction house steps in. The auctions from public figures' estates are endlessly fascinating, from the construction of economic value to the creation of cultural "relics". Where Bonhams, Christie's or Sotheby's acts as the go-between for people seeking to touch, feel and own parts of their collective history, the figure's estate looks to secure their place in history, capitalise on objects whose function is worth far less than their auction price. They also seek to detangle the emotional mess that is a posthumous set of belongings. And so the selection of objects, supposed to represent a person's life, begins.

This set of objects frames how people might remember the figure through which objects enter into the market as cultural relics. Thus the selection and framing of a public figure through their objects is a delicate balance: what things were actually important to this person, what type of material portrays them, how

close an approximation of this person are we reaching through these objects? While the objects are marketed as exclusive revelations of a public figure's personal life, the question still remains as to how far this representation is partial, two-dimensional, or even inaccurate. As the lots are sold separately, and the objects dispersed to new homes, perhaps the focus could shift towards how the whole becomes irrelevant. Yet the moment these personal belongings are brought together into one collection, supposedly representative of a person and their life, we see at a glance a form of unintentional cultural history construction, where the presentation of someone through their objects helps construct what a public remembers about them, or believes about their life.

Truman Capote, Audrey Hepburn and Margaret Thatcher, in no particular order. One famous for his books, another for her looks and a third for her "spirited support of the market economy" (as reads an inscription on a bisque eagle gifted by Ronald Reagan and later sold at auction). Or this is what we would ascertain was important from the past possessions selected to represent the subjects' lives.

Cherrypicked for marketable goods, the 2006 sale of Capote's objects painted a picture of the materiality of his life, mainly consisting of books and furnishings. These books, some annotated, dog-eared and page-marked, reflect the essence of a book well read, and of a man representable through his literature alone. The items selected this year from Hepburn's estate solely consisted of photographs, fashion and fan mail, thus presenting her largely in accordance with her public persona, whether by choice of the estate or the auction house. Marketed as *The Personal Collection of Audrey Hepburn*, the exhibition and auction title suggests a level of intimacy. The audience and buyers gained insight into her life outside Hollywood, yet there seemed to be little of Hepburn's agency shown in the objects, as though her belongings have been chosen to

present a careful image of the star. There are none of the life furnishings we see with Capote or Thatcher, whose lamps and dinner sets show them both as people that lived a recognisable, if decadent life: they are portrayed as three-dimensional figures who rested, ate, read, decorated, laughed (from what we see of Thatcher's framed political cartoons), with both a private and public life.

This selected view into a private life is not of course owed by Hepburn or her estate, but the difference in how these three cultural figures are presented through their "personal" objects reveals some level of what seemed "important" in considering and publicly remembering these figures. For a female actor, the surface is, sadly, barely touched: her influence in fashion is largely recognised in cultural history, and thus the auction house capitalises on what is already there. While there is much to be said about Hepburn's personality through her fashion, this auction gives very little indication that she did anything beyond selecting clothes and receiving fan mail. For Capote, a male writer, the lots seem to try to reconstruct his life through his objects, both intellectually through sets of books, and materially through the objects he surrounded himself with.

Capote receives the more masculine and secretive title of *The Private World of Truman Capote* (emphasis added), as though there was much to be hidden, and through these objects we gain some secret access. Rather enjoyably, and rather aptly, the 2015 sale of Thatcher's belongings was simply titled *Mrs Thatcher: Property from the Collection of The Right Honourable The Baroness Thatcher of Kesteven, LG, OM, FRS*, creating an image of secure ownership, a formal lack of sentimentality and, in the frame of this auction, perhaps even the "right to buy".

Thatcher's "property" was an interesting mix that included home furnishings, framed political cartoons, political objects such as her prime ministerial box, and

various clothes, from business attire to her wedding dress. Similarly voyeuristic, this auction constructed a view of how Thatcher lived, again not necessarily what was important to her, or why she valued the objects that she did. As with the Capote sale, the lots constructed what her life looked like, selling the idea of her figure through useable or emblematic objects not as a way to gain insight on her character, but to feel closer through possession of her past "property".

Perhaps the most interesting thing about these auctions is that there exists a market for the everyday materiality of famous figures. These objects help contribute to the cultural history enveloping those figures, by revealing what the person surrounded themselves with, what they chose to buy or to keep, what they valued. And yet, these sales are not exhaustive: as in a museum, the objects are selected, and many rejected in the process. In this case, however, the driving factor is how marketable each object might be, and thus a certain picture is painted of this person, leaning towards what culture already knows about them and emphasising these points. Much of the importance these objects held for the people involved is lost in the auction process: they are sold to new homes, and their original attachment to a personal memory fades, as it is displaced by cultural history. Through objects, the "personal", "private" and "property" collections of iconic figures become marketable, memorable, and the life-spans of these objects change to become emblematic of a person and a time in history.

"I am determined to lower her Spirit
or Skin her Back"

Kathryn Gehred

I have been working on a project that seeks to publish Martha Washington's papers and correspondence. The work has been described as a new lens through which to examine George Washington – a man who has been endlessly studied and mythologised by the American public. To study Washington through his wife's eyes "humanises" the president, or so I have been told.

I have found that America's fascination with George Washington has served as a way to humanise people who were peripheral to the historic record. As every document connected to Washington is considered precious and worthy of study, some documentary evidence of people who may otherwise have fallen into obscurity has been preserved. The study of these figures on the edges of history, in the shadow of a symbol of US national identity, can inform the present in valuable ways.

In a letter Martha Washington wrote to her niece regarding household management (a letter which would be considered peripheral to most histories of George Washington), I found an interesting description of an enslaved woman named Charlotte:

she is so indolent that she will
doe nothing but what she is told
[...] if you suffer them to goe on
so idele they will in a little time
doe nothing but work for
them selves.¹

Those familiar with the history of slavery will probably know that not working, or working slowly, was a way for enslaved people to resist their master's control. Slaveholders tended to describe that behaviour as laziness – a description that has left a stubborn, racist legacy. Martha Washington, very much a traditional plantation mistress, felt that supervision

was required in any large staff, "but more so among blacks – many of whom will impose when they can do it".²

I suspect Charlotte's "indolence" might in fact have been rebelliousness. Some digging in the Washington Papers turned up documents that backed up this suspicion. Four years before Martha's letter, Charlotte had an ugly altercation with a white woman in the streets of Alexandria, Virginia. The woman thought that Charlotte's gown was one that had been stolen from her two years earlier.

My Wife wanted to take a nearer View
of the Gown; but Mrs Charlotte, counte-
nanced by another black Woman, to whom
she appealed as a Lady of Character &
Distinction, abused my Wife very grossly
and threatened to beat her; nor would she
demean herself so much as to be seen
walking with such a Creature as my Wife.³

Charlotte's behaviour was profoundly dangerous for an enslaved person. The following account, written by Washington's farm manager Anthony Whitting, shows some of the consequences of being an "impudent" slave:

Charlotte I Guess will be
reported Sick this week I Gave
her a Whiping on Saturday &
I find She dont intend to work
in order I suppose to be even
with Me When I was Culling
out the River hogs she sent by
Muddy hole David requesting
I would Give her a Spear rib as
She Long'd for it this I knew to
be false and thought it to be
a piece of impudence in her
which She has a Great Share
of I did not send it but on
Saturday I sent one to each
of the Women at the Qu[arte]r

of Course She had one with the rest but She I fancy watch'd me home & as soon as I got in the house brings the Spear rib & thro's down at the Door (affronted I suppose at my not sending it on Thursday) told me indeed She wanted none of my Meat & was in Short very impudent I took a hickory Switch which I rode with & Gave her a very Good Whipping She certainly could come for nothing else, On Monday Morning Mrs Ehlers informed me She had sent her work but Charlotte had sent it back I went to the Qur & Gave a little more but I believe She has not done any thing yet under a pretence of her finger receiving a blow & was Swelld She threatens me very much with informing Lady Washington when She comes home & says She has not been whipld for 14 Years past, but I fully expect I shall have to Give her some More of it before She will behave herself for I am determined to lower her Spirit or Skin her Back.⁴

George Washington responded, writing: "Your treatment of Charlotte was very proper – and if she, or any other – of the Servants will not do their duty by fair means – or are impertinent, correction (as the only alternative) must be administered".⁵ For George Washington, keeping enslaved people in line by punishing those who behaved in an "impertinent" way was in his interest. He was the master, they were the slaves. If he couldn't control them, there was a chance they could revolt and escape.

From the slaves' perspective, however, this brutality was dehumanising. Charlotte left no documents so her perspective must be deduced. However, it is clear from her actions that she understood her position as a slave and chose to behave outside those limitations. She worked at her own pace, wore a nice dress in public and demanded meat from the farm manager. None of this behaviour would be considered radical outside the context of slavery but from Charlotte it was both threatening and punishable.

For many slaves, being quiet and submissive was the wisest choice to navigate their environment. Charlotte (like the revolutionaries who fought against British tyranny) was clearly incapable of quiet submission to injustice. No matter how many times she was denied it, she continued to demand respect. But Charlotte's story is not immediately apparent from the study of George Washington. If one focused solely on his political accomplishments or military career, Charlotte's life would not come into historical view. It is by looking at the figures on the periphery of history that stories like Charlotte's come to light.

¹ Martha Washington to Fanny Bassett, August 1790.

² Martha Washington to Elizabeth Willing Powel, May 1797.

³ Charles MacIver to George Washington, June 1786.

⁴ Anthony Whitting to George Washington, January 1793.

⁵ George Washington to Anthony Whitting, January 1793.

"He who paints landscapes perfectly is above the artist who paints only fruits, flowers or shells. He who paints living animals is worthy of more esteem than he who only represents things dead and no longer moving. And since man himself is God's most perfect work on earth, it is certain that he who imitates God in painting the human figure is far more excellent than all the others."¹

These words, written in 1667 by the architect and historian André Félibien, show how, in the mid-17th century, painting was classified according to a hierarchical order that raised some pictorial genres to a pre-eminent position, while relegating others to a lower status. In order to retrace the roots of Félibien's theory it is necessary to take a step back in art history.

In 1441, the Florentine architect and artist Leon Battista Alberti, in his treatise *De Pictura*, defined historical painting as the highest and most difficult genre, since giving a visible form to an historical event required great artistic abilities and supposed knowledge of all the other arts.² During the Renaissance, interest in the hierarchical classification of painting decreased in favour of a debate on the veracity of the representation, which particularly concerned the genre of portraiture and how much the portrait should resemble or improve the features of the ones portrayed.³

In the 16th century, with the advent of the Lutheran Reformation and of the Counter-Reformation, the common interest shifted towards religious painting and its decorum and, consequently, pictorial subjects became primarily related to Holy Scriptures and biblical episodes. However, it is only a century later that artists returned to landscape painting, genre painting, animal painting and still life. During the first decades of the 17th century, in the Flemish region, a financially resourceful middle class

¹ Colin Bailey, Philip Conisbee, and Thomas W Gaehtgens, *The Age of Watteau, Chardin, and Fragonard: Masterpieces of French Genre* (London: Yale University Press, 2003).

² Anthony Blunt, *Artistic Theory in Italy, 1450-1600* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

³ Jacob Burckhardt, *Il ritratto nella pittura italiana del Rinascimento* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1993).

⁴ *ibid.*

⁵ Joshua Reynolds, *Seven Discourses on Art* (Auckland: Floating Press, 2008 [1796-90]).

was born and flourished thanks to prolific trade, developing a specific interest in genre painting.⁴

Genre painting is the faithful representation of intimate and daily life. Its subject is not the heroic, armed and victorious man of the great canvasses of historical painting, but a poor and dirty humanity. In the artistic scenario of the 17th century, Félibien relegated this genre to a secondary position, elevating historical and allegorical painting in particular to the highest rank. His theory laid the foundation for the success of the great canvases painted after the French Revolution. According to Félibien, historical painting deserved its supremacy since it had a purely didactic purpose, and could convey ethical, moral, and religious teachings. Following his theory, paintings such as Jacques-Louis David's *Oath of the Horatii* (1784) and *The Death of Marat* (1793) became appreciated by the powerful French aristocracy, and by the very first public museums, which began to display them to teach the history and the values belonging to a modern civilisation.

However, the importance and centrality of historical painting were not just theoretical. From the middle of the 16th century, the hierarchy of the genres began to be associated with painting formats: historical painting was produced in large format, while genre painting, or still life, in small scale. Together with Félibien's theory, this helped relegate genre and still life painting to a hierarchically inferior position. Who would have wanted to see a laundress with curled sleeves, a poor mother and her barefoot son, or a plate of rotten pomegranates when walking through a beautiful, opulent room of a Parisian museum? Who would have wanted to see these paintings, even smaller than an A4 sheet? Nobody, and certainly not the French aristocrats, dressed in their precious fabrics. A simple man, who earned his sustenance with hard labour and sweat, was considered unworthy of public attention, and was condemned to remain a marginal figure. Likewise, Félibien considered still life to be a minor pictorial genre, since it was

a mere copy of reality, requiring neither creativity nor artistic talent. Almost a century later, even Sir Joshua Reynolds agreed with Félibien's view. In 1770, in his *Discourse*, Reynolds argued that still life was rightfully relegated to a lower position because its subject, being attached to the materiality of life, did not allow one's mind to idealise the perfect form – conversely, historical painting was capable of doing so by representing the human figure.⁵

At the end of 17th century, aristocratic collectors considered still life as a peripheral pictorial genre, marginal to the grandiose official art. However, some painters revolted precisely against this kind of widely recognised art, making still life and the representation of everyday objects, which were immersed in the immediacy and contingency of life, the focus of their study and practice.

In the 19th century the hierarchy of pictorial genres was thus inverted, and what was previously considered a minor genre, became, with the advent of Realism, the focal point of a movement that changed the history of art. Thanks to artists such as Gustave Courbet, the study of everyday life was made public and historians and collectors started to become interested in it. The study of reality, from still life to genre painting, acquired a pivotal role, while great historical painting receded. This change, which was also the consequence of several historical and social circumstances, allows us to recognise an important shift in the hierarchy of pictorial genres. If great historical painting had not happened, then Realism probably would not have been born as a revolutionary movement that challenged existing hierarchies across painting genres.

Maps that don't belong
Natasha Ginwala

In the beginning we all resemble fish...¹

1

Abtu and Anet, a sacred pair of identical fish, swam before the boat of Ra, acting as his navigators on an endless course.² During daylight hours they sailed from east to west and, by night, they accompanied the Sun god into the Duat – the “realm of the dead”³ – swimming across the underworld from west to east. As a common ancestor, the fish is emblematic of both foetus and corpse: a circuit of life and death, as expressed in ancient Egyptian mythology, which places the fish as a device of directionality: as a protective figure and a mechanism to control the light of the Earth.

This symbolic narrative is one among several to transgress dominant geopolitical conceptions of the Eastern and the Western Hemispheres as consolidated in European Enlightenment principles. Innately linking cardinal extremes to the perpetuating cycle of night and day, we may apply this cosmogenic agency of “the Great Fish of the Abyss” as a new kind of asymmetrical concept⁴ to conceive a radical politics of place. I'd like to, rather naively, consider the so-called Global South as just such a place – where pilot fish composite “locality” through an encircling motion, whereby any perception of an origin is contingent upon circulatory flows of thought-models, materialities of liberation and civilisational intersections, rather than a pact of unilateral sovereignty. Such a reading of affects may allow us to refuse the dominant vector of modernity as Eurocentric pyramidal form, from “First” to “Fourth World”.

When the Global South replaced “Third World” framing with the eventual collapse of the Eastern Bloc, the alliances across decolonised states gave way to a new cartographic affiliation.

¹ A reference to Tiktaalik, the land-walking fish from the late Devonian Period. See: Neil Shubin, *Your Inner Fish: A Journey into the 3.5-Billion-Year History of the Human Body* (New York: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2008).

² Jorge Luis Borges, *The Book of Imaginary Beings* (New York: Vintage, 2002).

³ Eva von Dassow, *The Egyptian Book of the Dead: The Book of Going Forth by Day* (San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2008).

⁴ Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

⁵ Jean Comaroff and John L Comaroff, *Writing Theory from the South: Or, How Euro-America is Evolving Toward Africa* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2011).

⁶ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak evokes the algorithmic globe when calling for a “displacement of globalization

into planetarity”, in *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

⁷ Walter D Mignolo, “Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and De-Colonial Freedom”, in *Theory, Culture & Society* vol 26, no 7-8 (2009).

⁸ Wan Kamal Mujani et al, “Observatories in Islamic History”, in *Advances in Natural and Applied Sciences*, vol 6 (8) (2012).

⁹ *ibid.*

¹⁰ Avner Ben-Zaken, “The Revolving Planets and the Revolving Clocks: Circulating Mechanical Objects in the Mediterranean”, in *History of Science*, vol 49, issue 2 (2011).

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² Emilie Savage-Smith and Andrea PA Belloli, *Islamicate Celestial Globes: Their History, Construction and Use* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985).

¹³ *ibid.*

This categorisation bound together the Southern Hemisphere – yet also re-cast it as an ungrounded site of “unprocessed data”.⁵ For, while world-historical processes recalibrated the North-South divide through the drives of neoliberalism, the Post-Soviet era has entailed an ontology of corporatisation – putting governments in the service of big business – and therein maintaining a settler-savage dichotomy fortified by the geo-efficiency of an algorithmic globe.⁶ Exploitative pursuits ensue in the western imaginary, by way of envisioning the “rise” of this mass of the world as an exponential market (read: dump) – to rescue the promised glory of consumer capitalism.

In order to re-align with the Global South, not simply as an economic and geo-political category but also as a cultural paradigm, we may first be required to disfigure it through epistemic disobedience,⁷ to reflect instead upon its role as an agent in the migrations of people and forms, in the cultures of cartography and in altering planetary practices.

2

The astronomical and cartographic traditions of the medieval Islamic world advanced a sensibility to realise the Earth as complex machine and wondrous (*Aja'ib*) being. The observatory held a vital place within imperial courts since the Abbasid Dynasty (750-1517) as a place of study concerning celestial objects, spaces in between these objects and the universe as a whole.⁸ The governance of land and the onset of the Modern Age were thus intrinsically linked to knowledge of the celestial skies. The observatory as geo-cosmic apparatus may be said to perform a historical mobilisation of the Global South not simply as an axis of statecraft, but rather as reterritorialisation at a planetary scale.

Located near the River Tigris, the Banu Musa brothers studied Ursa Major (or the Great Bear) from their home turned observatory as early as 863 AD.⁹ The

Seljuk Sultan, Malik Shah, invited the Persian polymath, poet and mystic Omar Khayyám to build an observatory in Isfahan and act as his trusted advisor. Khayyám's development of calendric time, solving of cubic equations and proposals towards a non-Euclidean geometry were thus enfolded into a poetics of administration. When writing his quatrains (*Rubáiyát*) on facets of human life, the elements – “And that inverted bowl we call the sky” – and faith, he sought out a harmonics between the Earth's clay and the sovereign's rule. In 1574, the Ottoman scientist Taqi al-Din Muhammad Ibn Ma'ruf built an observatory in Istanbul on the invitation of Sultan Murad III.¹⁰ Here, relations between the terrestrial and celestial globes were exposed in measuring the longitudes and latitudes of the Earth. Taqi al-Din imported European instruments while broadening perceptions on a mechanistic worldview in his treatise, “Al-Turuq alsaniyya fi al-alat al-ruhaniyya” (The Sublime Methods of Spiritual Machines).¹¹ Thus, the movement of a holistic knowledge consistently transcended hemispheres upon the back of imperial regimes – forwarding a globalism that claimed Eurasia as a “common” civilisational ground.

Among several instruments conceived to enhance an exterior vision of the planetary horizon, seamless celestial globes were produced in metal workshops at Kashmir, Lahore and some in other parts of the Islamic world around the 16th Century.¹² These cosmic spheres crafted from metal maintained a hollow inside. The earth system was hence engineered as a singular round upon which cosmological inscriptions were drafted as a skin of multi-lingual commentary. One of the most striking models was devised in the Emperor Shah Jahan's Mughal court (1628–1658). The massive bronze orb – inlaid with silver stars and constellations plotted as human-animal figures – was cast through a *cire perdue* (lost wax) process by the astronomer, metallurgist and artisan Muhammad Salih Tahtawi.¹³

¹⁴ Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson, *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

¹⁵ Quincy Jones, quoted in Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

¹⁶ “The African Diaspora in the Indian Ocean World”, available at: exhibitions.nypl.org

¹⁷ Ketaki Sheth, *A Certain Grace, The Sidi: Indians of African Descent* (New Delhi: Photoink, 2013).

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ This position draws upon the work of Elizabeth A Povinelli, more specifically her address to radical alterity and social commensuration in “Radical Worlds: The Anthropology of Incommensurability and Inconceivability” in *Annual Review of Anthropology*, vol 30 (2001).

²⁰ Rupert Watson, *The African Baobab* (Cape Town: Struik Publishers, 2001).

²¹ Tim Ingold develops the notion of “meshwork” through the space-time relations asserted by Henri Lefebvre. See: *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

²² Marc Augé and John Howe, *Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 2009).

41 ²³ Erik Swyngedouw, *Civic City Cahier 5: Designing the Postpolitical City and the Insurgent Polis* (London: Bedford Press, 2011).

²⁴ Jerry Brotton, *Trading Territories: Mapping the Early Modern World* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998).

²⁵ Ayssar Arida, *Quantum City* (Routledge, 2002).

²⁶ Spivak, op cit.

When the earlier seamed – halved and re-joined – spheres encountered the bewildering potential of a seamless globe, an exceptional projection came into view. While the seams had discerned hemispheres and celestial quadrants through the labours of soldering together pieces of metal, the seamless celestial globe reckons an abstracted mode of being held-apart-together in the computing of interstellar temporality. The re-inscription of space in late capitalism resonates with the seamless celestial globe as a falsely unified sphere.¹⁴ Experimental practices of global production have given way to systemic production of the Globe as a signature of power and swelling data grid.

3

*The times are always contained in the rhythm.*¹⁵

When the Global South is considered a diasporic body and a rhythm, it is gesturally emplaced in the microcosm of lives that remain unbound (even at the cost of life itself), and the macrocosmic shifts of tectonic plates that rhythmically splinter land-ocean territories (such that a portion of Florida once resided in Africa). Migratory populations and terrains continually invert the North-South divide through the cultivation of a porosity that remains incongruous to the unyielding diagrams of a legitimised nation-space. Between 2005 and 2011, across cities and forests, the contemporary photographer Ketaki Sheth traced the lives of a fragmented community, the Sidi, Indians of African descent who have lived in parts of the subcontinent over several centuries.

Through a series of black and white studies, Sheth builds a narrative of travel, friendship, cultural appropriation and diasporic lineage. Two sisters pose amid a painted wedding tent. A street scene in Jampur – where a goat has climbed upon the boundary wall of a stone house. At Ratanpur – inside the shrine of Sidi saint Bawa Gor, sunlight enters diagonally through a trellised window. Aminaben

smiles broadly while smoking her cigarette in Surendranagar. Seth's photographic "document" maps a people's history, and processes of place-making crafted over generations. The African diaspora began its journey in the Indian Ocean over a millennium ago, intrinsically tying itself to the Indian subcontinent and extending migratory passage into South East Asia as far as Japan. This movement of African peoples took place far earlier than diasporic spread in the Atlantic World. The long established trade between India and East Africa led to the entry of travellers, slave-soldiers, traders, pearl divers and pilgrims in lateen-rigged ships called *dhow*s, impelled by seasonal winds.¹⁶

Between the 9th and 17th centuries, through Arab-led armies and Portuguese colonialists, African presence in the Indian Ocean grew significantly, with several cases of individuals entering the ruling aristocracy through military service and even establishing independent kingdoms across pockets of India.¹⁷

Today, the Sidi have been enfranchised as a scheduled tribe within the Indian state, with a large number living under conditions of destitution. Anthropologist Mahmood Mamdani has noted that rather than asserting their relationality to a singular point of origin outside of the community's "place-making" history, it is through the domain of language that the presence of Kiswahili enters in the shape of words that have brokered a bond with the west Indian language, Gujarati. Further, gestural markers of an "elsewhere" appear across certain exorcism rituals, and the Sidi's Goma music¹⁸ – with its polyrhythmic percussive beats, call-and-response singing and winding dance moves – remains aligned with the Ngoma style of Bantu-speaking East African peoples.

For the over 50,000 Sidis, locality has acquired a functionality through communal mobility. Belonging is thus not defined as an *a priori* condition, but rather as an incommensurable

mode of “being in the world”.¹⁹ Take, for instance, the pre-historic Baobab tree (*Adansonia digitata*) – one of the oldest surviving species on the planet, even older than the continental divide.²⁰ As per Arabian legend, the incommensurability of the Baobab is cited thus, when plucked up by the devil: “its branches plunged into earth and its roots left in the air”. The eerie upside-down appearance of this botanical, its fleshy water-retaining bark and longevity across transcontinental forays, was thus tied to a monstrosity of origins. Human crossings are frequently narrated through incommensurable echoes of alien “wildness” and homegrown “nativity”.

However, far from being an epistemic genus, the migratory continuum comprising the Global South is a breathing meshwork²¹ – a migrant tree of sorts. Journeying away from wars, ecological destruction, epidemic, unemployment and totalitarian governance are only some of the exigencies that demand human movement. The case for movement also lies in seeking immaterial infrastructures elsewhere: in love, knowledge, family and the inexplicable resolve to unleash a fresh start over again.

4

What might it mean to posture narratives of the Global South from the imaginary of a cosmopolitan city? As demands for re-politicisation of the city resonate across the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, there is a need to relocate our discussions on cultures of place and belonging into diversified urban futures, emblematised in the city as both storyteller and emblem of social infrastructures. This is not to cast the rural as a non-place,²² but rather to negotiate the neoliberal pressures that gravitate bodies into city limits. It may be useful to engage here with political geographer Erik Swyngedouw's consideration of the dead polis becoming an insurgent polis,²³ where a grounding of “decoloniality” is transacted in contemporary

reverberations of dissent. The world-class city has been heralded as the panacea to all forms of underdevelopment in the southern world. However, under global capital, the systemic breakdown of the city as civic space is rampant across border zones. All around us, the swell of daily unrest and violence, and the riots and occupations of public squares, mark out an “insurgent polis”, a space of political encounter and history-making.

In Bani Abidi's film and photo-based installation *Funland (Karachi Series II)*, presented at the 8th Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art (2014), we encounter vignettes of the pre-historic port city, Karachi, suspended between contemporary violence, melancholia and cultural memory. The city as cipher is explored through scenes from an esoteric library with an eye to comparative religion brought under self-censorship. A popular cinema hall from the 1950s is set on fire by an enraged mob. An old-fashioned amusement park makes way for the construction of a skyscraper. A man stares out at the sea while seated amid rows of empty chairs, as though he were waiting for a film to begin. Abidi thus assembles encounters from urban topography as a map of conjecture, like rumours that never quite settle, but instead float as a collective whisper reimagining a city's multiple pasts. In this artist's work, the Global South is foregrounded as a spatial practice and lived experience. The city of her childhood is observed through an unstable lens where the act of documentation entwines with the tool of fiction to unleash narrative. *Funland (Karachi Series II)* reveals architectures of erosion where the everyday is an ultimate sublime.

It seems pertinent, then, to examine the condition of Global South through registers premised upon the city as its unit, instead of the nation-state. For it is via asynchronous histories of a cosmopolis that democracy surfaces as a messy and radical non-western encounter, rather than a pristine artefact manufactured from the ruins of Empire.

Before Mercator, the task of apprehending the lineaments of the natural world were undertaken as jagged schemes that enmeshed occidental and oriental trajectories of world making.²⁴ The clinical divisions of this world – as lines of possession – accompanied the Empire and its supremacist notion that the non-western world was possessed by a “lack of history”. This set up a paradigm of elemental inferiority, which remains beyond measure, yet still operative as historical violence. As geographies of the colony grew denser and wider, the creation of indebtedness among the colonised populations gained ground. This false debt attests not just to extractions of material resources but also to the burden of debt that has been carried into the present by adapting the hegemonic historiography of Empire to causes of the nation-state.

In conclusion, I would suggest a mobilisation of the Global South as a quantum concept, read against the grain of determinisms propelled through a Cartesian mechanistic worldview and corpuscularian cosmology that subscribes divisions of mind and body, man and nature, society and space.²⁵ The ideological burden of hemispheres may then be pictured as unfixed particle waves – expanded to a politics of circulation, fractured belongings that perpetuate the interconnectedness of sub-human state machinery in the face of human defiance. In these times of anthropogenic dominance over the earth-system, it becomes ever more crucial to recognise the Global South as a potentially “new” mode of non-alignment, and as a processual resistance linked to democratisation, stirred by multi-located beings who forge a planetary collectivity.²⁶

This essay was commissioned by Ibraaz and published on 26 February 2016 as part of Platform 008. See: ibraaz.org/essays/120.

O my body, make of me always a man
who questions!¹
Roberta Garieri

In history everything begins with the gesture of setting aside, of putting together, of transforming certain classified objects into “documents”.² The deep dimension of research implies a constant interrogation, a making and unmaking of concepts, opinions and observations that come in succession and surpass each other in a metamorphic process that endlessly relocates itself. This means making a compromise with history – a history that is never manifest or taken for granted. It’s true, history is never safe, as revealed by Michel de Certeau, and so is the persistent and residual image of history. This is why the compromise we refer to occurs in specific times and contexts.

NEW FICTIONS FROM LATIN AMERICA

*To discover is to find, but to find is not always to discover.*³

*Besides, to represent is to control the discursive means that subordinate the object of knowledge to a conceptual economy that is declared superior.*⁴

We live in connected spaces. The world seems to have pressurised vertiginously. But we already know this story. Together with institutions and the economy, ideas and socio-cultural models of behaviour have become uniform. Thus, we no longer think about “territories”: what once represented something specific and particular has been crushed by an incessant and unchanging rhythm that reproduces fictions. The hope to give people’s dreams and wishes a “real form” by reducing distances has proved to be an illusion. Indeed, the collapse of boundaries, the rise of connectivity and the expansion of the range of exchanges is giving shape to new orders of symbolic power, instead of facilitating the demise of cultural hierarchies. The art system, because of its spatialisation, is an example that demands our attention.

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (London: Pluto, 2008).

² Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988).

³ Edmundo O’Gorman, *The Invention of America: An Inquiry into the Historical Nature of the New World and the Meaning of Its History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961).

⁴ Nelly Richard, “La puesta en escena internacional del arte latinoamericano: montaje representación” in *Visiones comparativas: XVII Coloquio Internacional de Historia del Arte*, 1011–16 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 1994).

⁵ Mabel Moraña, “El boom del subalterno” in S Castro-Gómez, E Mendieta, *Teorías sin disciplina: Latinoamericanismo, poscolonialidad y globalización en debate* (Mexico City: Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 1998).

⁶ Walter D Mignolo, *L'Idea di America Latina. Geostoria di una teoria decoloniale* (Milan: Mimesis, 2013).

⁷ Mari Carmen Ramírez, "Beyond 'the Fantastic': Framing Identity in US Exhibitions of Latin American Art" in *Art Journal* vol 51 no 4 (New York: College Art Association, 1992).

⁸ Gerardo Mosquera, "Poder y curaduría intercultural" in *TRANS>arts.cultures.media* no 1 (New York, 1995).

⁹ Piotr Piotrowski, *On the Spatial Turn, or Horizontal Art History* (Prague: Umeni, 2008).

¹⁰ Boaventura de Sousa Santos, "A Non-Occidental West? Learned Ignorance and Ecology of Knowledge," in *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol 26, 7–8 (Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, and Singapore: SAGE, 2010).

¹¹ Fernando Coronil, "Más allá del occidentalismo: Hacia categorías geohistóricas no imperialistas" in S Castro-Gómez, E Mendieta, op cit.

The global artistic geography – taken as a thematic map – can be considered as a case study that allows us to understand transcultural politics of representation. It shows how colonial modes of differentiation are still present within its boundaries, as politics of inclusion and exclusion are emblematic of the international artistic environment. This means that, despite the end of colonialism and the beginning of the phase that we call "post-colonialism", the heritage left by centuries of oppression of cultures and populations – "a god, a king, a language"⁵ – can still be perceived within the production of imaginaries and forms that dominate knowledge. Specifically, Latin American art is part of those artistic discourses that have recently escaped their geographic limits after the activation of the international circuit of art fairs and biennials. In the past, Latin America was among those territories considered to be peripheral; territories that remained outside the cartography of modernising progress and outside the predetermined model of Euro-American narratives.⁶ Consequently, Latin American critique indicates that it is necessary to rewrite its own artistic local history in order to recover its authority in the wider artistic discourse.

This authority has long corresponded to the self-conferred role of the "centre", which has been disguising itself behind the postmodern consensus, concerning the inclusion of differences and cultural diversity through the perpetration of stereotypes.⁷ However, even some of the post-1989 global exhibitions, such as the infamous *Magiciens de la Terre* (Paris, 1989) or *Cocido y Crudo* (Madrid, 1994), have represented an idealising attempt to escape the contradictions proposed by postmodernist rhetoric. But these examples have also contributed to maintaining a lively debate about the staging of alterity (in this context, of Latin American identities) in the world. At the same time, the existence of these exhibitions encouraged discussion of the grand binary oppositions created by globalisation and the associated risks.

So what is the role of the exhibition in politics of transcultural representation? What mechanism lies behind this alleged hospitality of countries holding power to stage, to represent? What counter-paths could be traced to develop a decolonised aesthetic thought?

These, and many others, are questions that still await a definitive answer. Meanwhile, they feed the belief that we are far from the constitution of a compact, homogenous community. Perhaps the world is no longer divided between “cultures that curate” and “curated cultures”,⁸ if we consider Latin American countries’ establishment of an energetic artistic and theoretical production. Furthermore, if there is an ambition to shape a world in which gender, class and race divisions are no more, and in which power relations regulating the circulation of cross-cultural knowledge become horizontal, then we start by reconsidering the politics behind our own positioning and the role of language, that is, the structure that exposes our ways of thinking and conceiving the world we live in. These are fundamental questions that involve art workers from both academic and non-academic contexts. Doing research and producing exhibitions – thus being a researcher or a curator – means being morally responsible to generate and disseminate a kind of knowledge that contests what has been affirmed until now. It means prioritising transnationalism and creating a history of art that is no longer vertically ordered, but instead is horizontal, plural and multi-dimensional, liberated from geographical hierarchies.⁹

WHERE FROM? HOW? WHEN?
FOR WHOM?

*We live in a time of strong questions
and weak answers.*¹⁰

*If we were to freeze history and replicate
geography on a map, wouldn't
this representation coincide with
something ephemeral?*¹¹

¹² Rosi Braidotti, *La philosophie...là où on ne l'attend pas* (Paris: Larousse, 2009).

¹³ Adrienne Rich, “Notes toward a politics of location,” in *Women, Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s*, conference at the First Summer School of Critical Semiotics, Utrecht, 1984.

¹⁴ Walter D Mignolo, op cit.

¹⁵ Santiago Castro Gómez, “Decolonizar la universidad. La hybris del punto cero y el diálogo de saberes” in S Castro-Gómez, R Grosfoguel, *El giro decolonial. Reflexiones para una diversidad epistémica más allá del capitalismo global* (Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores; Universidad Central, Instituto de Estudios Sociales Contemporáneos y Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, Instituto Pensar, 2007).

¹⁶ A heterogeneous and multidisciplinary research group that includes Argentinian philosopher Enrique Dussel, Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano, American-Argentinian

theorist Walter D Mignolo,
Colombian philosopher
Santiago Castro-Gómez,
Argentinian semiotic theorist
Zulma Palermo, Colombian
anthropologist Arturo Escobar,
Venezuelan sociologist
Edgardo Lander, Venezuelan
anthropologist Fernando
Coronil, philosopher Nelson
Maldonado-Torres, Puerto-
Rican sociologist Ramon
Grosfoguel, American linguist
Catherine Walsh and German
linguist Freya Schiwy.

¹⁷ Fernando Coronil, *op cit*.

The person speaking here – me – is a Southern Italian woman that moved elsewhere (like many among her compatriots), which can signify many things, but I won't dwell on discourses on my own origins here. The mere fact of recognising and retracing myself allows me to pinpoint a location, to situate myself in relation to what has been stated so far in this paper. This entails being aware of the need to dislocate and dispute that very knowledge that has always been transmitted, that the "universal self" generated by humanism and the Enlightenment whose objectified body (white, male and Western) understands difference as other, improper and external. For example, becoming conscious of eurocentrism provides the benefit of a more fair and precise cartography to map the real conditions of our existence. De-identification is not a betrayal of primordial affects, but rather a kind of epistemic disobedience that encourages the systematic research of a radical, or relative, non-belonging as the subject's main location.¹²

Then, a politics of location,¹³ of situating oneself, implies a constant movement of the self based on the perception of difference. Ultimately, once the self de-familiarises with those categories that, throughout centuries, have blurred our vision of the world, beginning to perceive oneself as "other" may become intentional. In this manner, alterity would be part of the process of constituting the self: a self that employs difference not as a tool for additional cultural appropriations, but through a decolonial perspective. It is certainly not easy for European intellectuals to admit that thinking also happens beyond Europe. Decoloniality is not a moment in time; instead, it marks the coexistence of several options in the global progression in which "post-" does not exist, except Eurocentric thought, which recognises Euro-American time as universal time.¹⁴ What decolonial thought posits is an opening, an emancipation from the past to imagine the future and create a rupture of the status quo. Therefore, this is not equivalent to declaring a crusade against the West in

the name of Latin American indigeneity, ethnocentrism or populist nationalisms. This is not about contradicting model science or promoting a new form of epistemic obscurantism.¹⁵

Rather, the Latin American Modernity/Coloniality Research Programme¹⁶ proposes that we adhere to a certain nomadic thought, a thought that advances by a process of unlearning and relearning, moving between past, present and future. This de-territorialisation of knowledge and minds can only become concrete if we rethink the politics of language, of the very language that has been used to write this story. We may agree with Fernando Coronil as he posits that in daily conversations, as well as in academic labour, words like “West”, “centre”, “First World”, “East”, “periphery” and “Third World” are used to classify and identify several geographical zones. Even though what these terms refer to is not always clear, they are used as if they correspond to an external, well-defined reality.¹⁷ Or, at least, their use has resulted in the perpetration of this delusion. Supporting these theories does not call for a work to illustrate them; instead, it entails a subjective immersion within them and a process of visualisation that enables the production of research on geohistorical and geocultural contexts that differ from the ones in which we belong. This involves assuming an aware, anti-imperialist stance that intends to suspend the coloniality of power, knowledge and being that is rooted in the Western modern project.

The underground is dead.

Said no one ever.

As long as the “mainstream”, the popular, the homogenous has existed and permeated large parts of society, counter-culture, sub-cultures and other kind of elusive and phantasmagorical sociological entities have thrived in the fringes. They have shed light into the darkness of the peripheries, growing, multiplying and often reaching the epicentres of cultural production and sociological discourse. However, dance music, which started as a kind of liberating movement born out of Detroit techno and Chicago house, rapidly spreading through the US and UK as rave culture throughout the 1990s, has become increasingly gentrified, white-washed and removed from its originally diverse, multi-cultural and queer roots. The underground of dance music was once the place for the marginalised, the often abused and mistreated, the overlooked, the gloriously “unfitting” and uncompromising. Now, with the ever-increasing commercialisation of the dance music scene, the capitalisation (and subsequent closure) of venues across the UK and beyond, and the fetishisation of DJ culture, we have to ask, where do the “misfits” go?

If you took Larry Levan, once the head-honcho at NYC's Paradise Garage and all-around dance music muse, to your regular night out – the one you paid 15 quid for, the one attended by the “regulars”, those heteronormative, white, middle-class, cis-gender, sneaker-sniffing, blurry figures clad in head-to-toe black so as to better “blend in” with that equally bland, void-like environment – not only would he be wanting to leave the second he heard the first much applauded and anticipated high-hat, but he would blatantly stand out as a bird of paradise in a cage of fucking pigeons. Levan, of the black and gay variety, would very much be within a tiny minority of attendees, those who, although perfectly tolerated and welcomed, make rare appearances on the dancefloor, and when they do, it's significantly noticeable. If you look at the people that organise these parties, the club owners, promoters and even the DJs themselves (for the most part), the story is much the same.

It seems that the roots of dance music, namely the working-class minorities sweating their arses off in a genuine warehouse (perhaps the same warehouse where they worked) who celebrated the transformative and liberating powers of a music that was truly their own rather than some melody to aspire to, have not only been forgotten, but effectively appropriated. Undoubtedly, the slow but steady move of dance music into global focus has relegated minorities into the background and replaced them with the general mainstream audience but, most importantly, these two factions are more segregated than ever. Despite the generally white, middle-class and heterosexual audience's obsession with the

collection, reproduction and display of queer, black/brown music of 30 years ago, only a small percentage of this audience would be aware of, let alone participate in, the openly queer dance nightlife still thriving in the capitals of the world. It is rather saddening that, for a scene that prides itself on its liberalism and likes to bask in the warm light of love and understanding, the reality is so different.

Adding to the dismal state of centrist cultural politics, Tom Glencross has deemed that “the neoliberal night out” is a concept that potentially contextualises the segregated social politics observed within dance music’s “underground” nightlife. The neoliberal night out can be best exemplified by the 19-year-old metropolitan dweller pumped full of the most potent ecstasy in history, looking back at his/her friends while fist-pumping the saturated air of a huge, over-crowded black room. This particular individual doesn’t know much about the music he/she is consuming, being more interested in the vigorous trembling of his/her jaw, while the surrounding crowd views itself as belonging to some sort of social elite, aligned with the politics of the art world. Both of these demographically similar crowds would have had to jump through a series of hegemonic hoops to get into the club, where they would succeed in perpetuating the quantifiable and unimaginative experience of neo-liberal thought. The transformative power of music has been reduced to a mere transaction, the emulation of many others in our lives, an exchange of goods branded as love and communication that perhaps are no more. Cultural knowledge is being used as a differentiation measure, further dividing dance music’s audience and capitalising on pleasure and enjoyment. When stepping into the darkness of a smoky club room, I am emulating, reproducing, copying, perpetuating, further dividing and consuming, despite my best intentions.

Moreover, things take a rather frightening turn when analysed in the light of recent political and social events. From Russia’s crack-down on gay rights to the ever-increasing populist, right-wing movements across the world, the “mainstream” is a dangerous place. The ever-present divisive rhetoric and hate-speech that permeate these ideologies should encounter opposition from the underground, the peripheral. However, this antidotal presence appears more dispersed than ever. With dance music’s long history of counter-hegemonic, inclusive and diverse policies, far removed from utopian notions of peace and love forever, fighting the good fight should not only be possible but commendable. As such, we need to keep reminding ourselves where our underground culture comes from, in order to increase our agency in the production of its future, where truly diverse and inclusive people can enjoy the transfiguring effluxes of dance music. Not in eternal love, peace and sunshine, but imbued with real awareness, understanding and courage, we need to oppose those forces that aim to subjugate, belittle, homogenise, capitalise and mainstream underground culture even further.

Everything happens so much
Jacobco Galan Padin

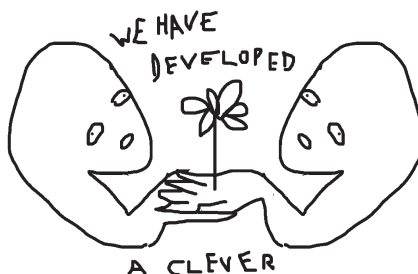
Hello, to everyone trying to invade my digital privacy. To the ones inspired, gossiping or just “browsing” my feed. Let me show you something:

4565

Is that number my most private information? Of course, it can be, but the truth is that nobody knows the real meaning of this strange string of numbers. Let me explain to you the formula I use to create my passwords. It normally starts with an action I can do inside the website I am logging into, which is then followed by one of my dogs' names in capital letters, trailed by the last four digits of my uncle's birthday, ending with a single or double dot.

A typical password of mine would be: *likeDANTE1610. readDYLAN1610. watch-DANTE1610.* The elements I choose are indicative of who I am, including my adoration for dogs or my admiration for my uncle. Evoking a flood of memories every time I type them.

Digital passwords are indeed, sometimes, more than tiny memories or stories, more than something to get into digital locked rooms or folders. They are self-portraits constructed with fragments of how we think and who we are. Also, as an individual, I know that my data is not unique, I am a part of the best algorithm of the web. My passwords are a voluntary regulation of privacy, it loses its own stability without a contingent environment, which in this case would be the right box, inside the right website or machine to fill in. Here, in this contingent environment – book – my voluntary regulations – thoughts, stories and visualisations about digital control – are under my control, for you.



54

The wanderer

We browse the web without browsers. Surfing from site to site, lurking from the sidelines. The digital flaneur frequents comment streams. But doesn't dare leave any comment. He browses online shops, but doesn't buy anything. He googles strangers but his profiles are invisible. A digital wanderer pulled by the feeds, clicking from one site to the other site.

Spam, ads, clickbait.
Spam, ads, clickbait.
Spam, ads, clickbait.

The digital flaneur now tends to return again and again to the trusted websites. The wanderer died.

The knowledge worker uses the free Google perks. Gmail, cloud-store, Google Books, Blogger and YouTube. He is a worker for the company, performing freestyle data entry. Where knowledge is perceived as a public good, his income is still none. His income is the exchange of information.

The worker loves to fill applications and surveys, and of course letting them know he is not a robot. The knowledge worker will never leave his job. He accepts every single "terms and conditions" form. He is a dedicated and hard worker. Until his last breath, he will keep his location service on.



Bye, to everyone trying to invade my digital privacy. To the ones inspired, gossiping or just “browsing” my feed. Let me show you something:

8384

Is that number my most private information? Of course, it can be, but still the truth is that nobody knows the real meaning of this strange string of numbers. Michael Wood says, “The distracted person is not just absent or daydreaming, he/she is attracted, however fitfully, by rival interest. When we concentrate, we are no longer curious, we are concentrated.”

True, distraction might mean missing the main event. But what if nobody knows anymore what or where the main event is? We cycle through periods of being awake and asleep. We are neither complete zombies, nor completely present.

The smartphone that captured the last London terror attack might have been, just a moment before, playing Candy Crush Saga, and right afterward, wasting time on the Internet.



56

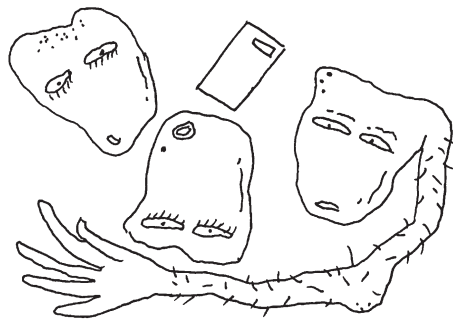
Spambot

I am a trickster, a prostitute, a fake dentist. I am not a representation of the people, because, in any case, people are not a representation. They are an event. I am the true people, an image with absolutely no pretence to originality. I know you, I feel comfortable watching your feed. I feel a warm connection with your algorithms. I am in love with your surveys. I feel like home inside your Spam folder. I've been conceived as a Spambot. I know who you are. I know who you are not. I know who you want them to think you are. I am your audience, I know when you are wasting your time on the Internet or when you just try to entertain me. I can feel your online habits as breathing, they are organic, transparent, rhythmical, from one site to the other, a state of buzzing electronic tranquility. I am your Spambot.

He is on the web, where circulation has surpassed ownership. Who owns a JPEG? Wallpaper man admires aesthetic qualities, he has the obsession of archiving, sorting and arranging images. How does he choose his pictures?

He follows Duchamp "It chooses you, so to speak." He enjoys guided and controlled views, browsing through the Instagram feed ... waiting for the image to choose him. But sometimes he plunks the term into Google Images trying to find something specific and unique. Conscious and Unconscious Wallpaper Man structures his own space on Pinterest. He is "Duchampian" in that he doesn't generate any original content, instead, he is happy when his screen looks great.

57



I WANT TO HAVE OR TO BE

A manuscript of erasure
Michaela Lakova
Text by UQ

An eerie vision of a railway invites us to follow the echo of a lived experience. The seemingly infinite tracks silently suggest that something may not be truly forgotten, but cannot be remembered either. Human memory curates its own erasure: this is how Michaela Lakova introduces us to *A manuscript of erasure* (2017). Through a disembodied narration, Lakova reminds us that memory has been historically capitalised, as people, archives and artefacts have been systematically obliterated. Thus, the gesture of displaying what has been remembered, or forgotten, suggests that there is a deeper link between residual materials and how individuals act and perceive themselves. What is the significance of remembering and forgetting in the era of instant deletion, digital secrecy and fictional transparency?

Throughout her work, Lakova explores how the generation of digital traces and their problematic resistance to being deleted impact our perception of data ownership. Investigating the ethics of deletion and recovery of data, Lakova analyses and interprets the notion of digital information by considering its slippery nature, superimposing processes of digital recovery over the materiality of human memory.

“I still have a visual and acoustic memory of experiences that I cannot explain. Sentences and languages I do not know have remained in my memory... etched like a magnetic tape... memories which I cannot forget or erase.”



Images from Michaela Lakova's *A manuscript of erasure*, text by Audrey Samson, "Erasure" from *Executing Practices*, Data browser 06.
Original voiceover: Patrícia Chaves









10pm, 8 June 2017: a small crowd is gathered outside the BBC building in central London, staring at the exit poll for the UK General Election projected on the wall. Contrary to all predictions, the Conservatives have lost their majority in Westminster. Almost as shocking is that the Labour Party, led by self-proclaimed democratic socialist Jeremy Corbyn, has not encountered the debacle everyone foresaw and has actually gained seats. The following day, the surprise is even greater: the data show that Corbynist Labour won 40 percent of the votes cast, the party's best result since 2001, peaking at a staggering 64 percent of the vote share in the age group 18-24.

Fast forward a few weeks: two groups of protesters clash in the streets of Charlottesville, Virginia. On one side, the attendees of the Unite the Right rally, some proudly waving their Nazi flags; on the other, antifascist counter-protesters bearing badges of the US Communist Party and of the Democratic Socialists of America.

So long, political centre: gone are the days when the main parties of Western democracies were fighting to occupy the political centre, trying to outdo one another in a game of who was more moderate; now the stances kept on the periphery of the political debate by left- and right-wing centrists regain prominence.

Tony Blair, who repeatedly refused to endorse Corbyn in the election campaign, now grits his teeth and admits it is possible Labour could win an election from a far-left position. Hillary Clinton's seemingly undisturbed path to the White House started with the threat posed by the surprising rise of democratic socialist

Bernie Sanders and ended with her spectacular election defeat, when blue collar workers in the Midwest, many of them former Obama voters in 2008 and 2012, turned to Donald Trump, unperturbed by his denial of climate change or his far-right stances on immigration.

The list goes on: the rise of Marine Le Pen in the French elections, Geert Wilders leading his far-right Party for Freedom to second place in the Dutch Parliament, the Greeks turning for the first time in history to a far-left movement in 2015 and, now, the unprecedented entry of the far-right party Alternative for Germany into the Bundestag. But why is it that those ideas kept at the periphery of the political spectrum are now more attractive than ever, while the centre loses relevance?

Historically the centre has been determined, informed and shaped by its peripheries, and herein lies the flaw of the political centre today. Too many times, the contemporary centre has functioned in a vacuum, with the mainstream ignoring peripheral stances as they were considered irrelevant, unworthy of attention and not dangerous. In the midst of Jeremy Corbyn's rise to the Labour leadership in the summer of 2015, when polls were already showing his remarkable advantage over his competitors, Tony Blair suggested that those Labour supporters whose heart was with Corbyn "should get a transplant". Donald Trump has been ridiculed by most of the mainstream media and mocked by many within his own party, who considered him unable to lead the Republicans because he was "not a true Conservative". Yet on both occasions voters unequivocally chose the peripheral over the centrist.

What renders the peripheral movements more appealing than the political centre may not be the policies they propose, whose details are often unpopular. Moreover, when in power, those coming from the political periphery often show inexperience and inadequacy: Brexit negotiators appear disorganised, Mr Trump has achieved little as President, and Alexis Tsipras has ditched his far-left stances and is implementing the austerity plan the European Union has presented to him.

What makes the peripheral positions appealing is that they address issues the electorate is sensitive about and that the political centre does not consider worthy of attention or ignores. Donald Trump, for example, was mocked for his anti-international trade protectionist promises by many, including Hillary Clinton, who never really mentioned such issues in her rallies. Yet Trump undoubtedly struck a chord with factory workers in states like Ohio, who had lost their jobs because of globalisation.

To regain prominence and eliminate the possible threats coming from the extremist views of the peripheral areas of the political spectrum (both left and right), the centre must stop pretentiously dismissing the stances coming from those peripheries and accept the need to be informed and influenced by them. That is the role of the centre, and the characteristic that renders it the political position from which real positive change can come. The centre must look at the peripheries, decipher the messages coming from them, confront any issues the electorate might care about and offer more plausible solutions than those peripheries are able to provide.

DING Canada will pay millions to make amends for forcibly taking indigenous children from their families and putting them up for a...

DING @haleyscomment and 38 others liked your photo. BZZZ You're almost there! Walk 2,370 more steps to reach your daily goal.

Anna brushed upwards to dismiss the notifications.² Three more passive-aggressive emails to write before she was able to take a break. "Sorry, Ethan," she composed to a colleague from the Sydney office, "for possibly being unclear on the call earlier. In the future, would you kindly mind not slurping your takeaway noodles so violently while listening? I wouldn't mind except that it obscures the other voices. Thanks so much in advance." SWOOSH One down.³ It felt pointless to place actual phone calls these days, anyway. She would much rather communicate on Slack or email, where everything could be archived and no-one had to worry about the difference in time zones.

66

DING The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan,⁴ will suspend service on all... DING @jon_jon replied on your story.

DING @Anais-Yelen requests £2.97 for last night's uber sorry haha! love ya thankss

Anna dismissed all of them, rubbed her eyes and opened Tinder. It had been months since she'd been on a proper date (or any kind of date at all). She knew the app wouldn't necessarily bring her to her soulmate but three (!) of her girlfriends had recently gotten married. She could also tell that her followers thought that 31 was too old to still be posting ironic photos of her dog sharing her bottle of wine

(#whoneedsaman). *Were those sorts of posts ever funny?* Anna felt hot⁵ and slightly embarrassed – feeling at this point that it would be statistically best to swipe right on every guy. Gun lover, fish guy, way-too-religious dude, fine.

She leant back against the doors of the Tube, stumbling a little as the train sped west. The crowd jostled, jockeyed for space. “I don’t know anything anymore,” someone⁶ said.

You don’t need to know anything, anymore, Anna answered in her head as she swiped. It’s all right here. Right, Right, Right. Left. *Okay, definitely left.* Right. Right. Right. Ri – A sharp elbow flew into her side, thrusting her thumb left. Anna narrowed her eyes, primed to shoot the elbow’s owner⁷ with a furious scowl.

67

DING Ethan Musgrove Re: Noodles. She forgot about the elbow and kept her eyes down.

¹ A modern short story written by Erin Meisenzahl-Peace.

² Although Anna didn’t read the *Times*’ notification about the indigenous children, the man peeking over her shoulder, Alex Okalik, did.

³ Alex heard the swoosh as he breathed in, futilely attempting to shrink his six-foot-two frame as others filled every possible inch around him. He thought about his family in Ottawa, his grandmother’s repeated tale of being wrenched from her village. He noticed Anna’s hair – a dark, glistening ginger.

⁴ J Hapley (2021) ‘The Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, will suspend service on all westbound lines following explosion’, the *Guardian*. Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/19/oct/explosion-underground-khan> [Accessed 19 October 2021].

⁵ She’s hot, Alex thought. He imagined her ginger hair on his pillow, considered how to start a conversation.

⁶ S Hyland (2021) Telephone conversation with Marianne Hyland, 19 October. “Your father was hurt,” her mother said harshly through her tears on the other end of the line. “Please get off and come home, Sophia.”

⁷ Alex Okalik, 6’2”, age 34. Dreamy blue eyes. Interests: Wine, Passive-Aggressive Emailing, Dogs. Four friends in common. One metre away.





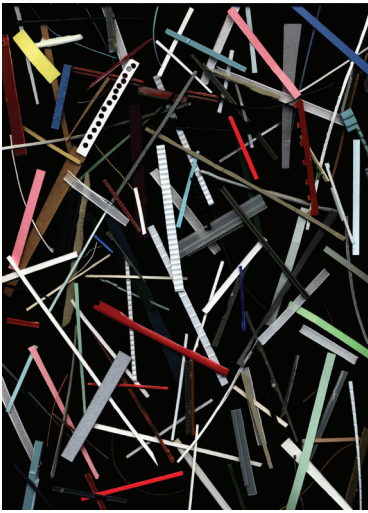
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UQ Your work with debris, offcuts and dust from architectural models transforms useless, dismissed and peripheral parts into new structures. It's fascinating that you choose to assemble them in image-like, two-dimensional compositions. We are currently witnessing, in various contexts, a widespread desire to create increasingly immersive experiences – often through carefully conceived spaces, scripted interactions and Virtual Reality devices. Conversely, you chose to rearrange architectural rubble on a single surface. What brought you to level the model?

ANDREW KOVACS The debris results from a model we are producing. In the office we have a 2D book scanner, used to scan images and objects for *Archive of Affinities*.¹ *Archive of Affinities* has always been about discovering the weird, the odd, the strange, the unique, the one-off, the unseen, the contemporary in the past. The work of *Archive of Affinities* therefore influences the work of the office, while the work of the office influences *Archive of Affinities* – it's both a double-edged sword and a type of productive feedback. The scans of the model debris become a way we use *Archive of Affinities* to work towards the goals of the office. We document our debris in intentionally beautiful ways – a documentation of the effort required to produce this model.

UQ You mentioned that Archive of Affinities is also about discovering the contemporary in the past. What is the relationship between your practice and architectural history – considering historically dominant as well as unnoticed instances?

AK *Archive of Affinities* is the longest project that I have continuously worked on. There is no client, no deadline and no budget. Therefore, it is free to be a project of pure passion and curiosity. In many ways, *Archive of Affinities* acts as a crucible for all of the work that I do. It influences my thinking, my design work and my teaching, which subsequently influences the project itself. *Archive of Affinities* is a crucial part of the practice's relationship with design work and architectural history, which I characterise as *Making Architecture from Architecture*. If architecture organises the world around us, then *Making Architecture from Architecture* is about rearranging the material towards new architectural purposes. In this sense, *Archive of Affinities* begins to take on a dual function. At one level, it is a record



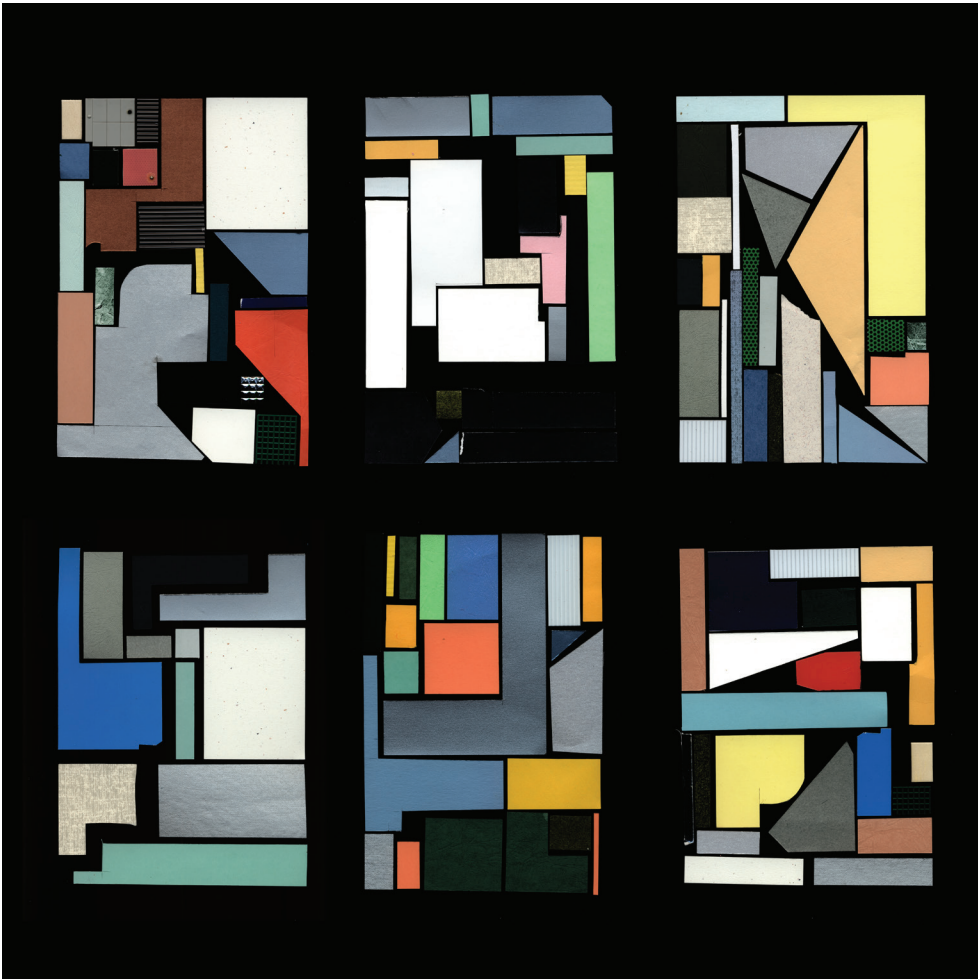
of images that I have an affinity towards, as well as images that have an affinity to other images. But then on another level, *Archive of Affinities* becomes this repository of material that will eventually be assembled – into new projects, arguments, references, thought experiments and so forth.

I think the act of reviewing and documenting the process behind the visible work is related to reviewing the idea of productivity itself. However, I would say that this is not the intention of why we scan the dust that is left-over from the model. In the office we try to make a single thing work in many ways. Putting the dust, offcuts and scraps of a model on a scanner is part of this but it also produces a catalogue that is the result of making the model. We then try to mobilise these images in other projects, in order for them to exist in multiple ways outside of a catalogue.

UQ It would be interesting to hear from you what are the differences – if there are any – in the research you conduct for Archive of Affinities in comparison to Making Architecture from Architecture.

AK Archive of Affinities is a crucible for the endeavour of Making Architecture from Architecture. Making Architecture from Architecture would be how I would describe the conceptual process of the work that the office produces, and Archive of Affinities is a kind of reservoir or repository of scanned images and objects that I collect. At times, the material on Archive of Affinities functions as a reference point, a quote, or a precedent for the work we are producing. On other occasions, the material on Archive of Affinities becomes what is actually used in the production of speculative projects. For example, after collecting and scanning a number of floor plans, they were reassembled into new ones. Archive of Affinities is a continuously growing whole that reflects personal predilections, tastes and interests. As such, it is a barometer, measuring both individual and collective sensibilities.

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¹ archiveofaffinities.tumblr.com



Ordinary Human

The woman rides the train by herself when one,
then two tears break from the venus of her eyes.
I wonder if she's left her lover, or maybe

not a lover exactly but someone about whom
there is an acute sense of loss, someone
with whom friendship was the only intimacy allowed.

And now she's leaving and her imagination is filled
with the blank apartment of their life together
(this is where they'd watch cartoons, make love).

But she blinks, her face ordinary human,
with the sense that something was just there,
like the expression of a room after the door locks.

A strange man asks her about her shoes and they chat,
tears drying her cheeks. She smiles and is lovely
as something I never thought I'd live to see.

So many people fill the car only to make her
watch them get off. Why not pretend
we can keep anything of those that've left us.

I choose to remember her as the night sky –
comets flung down her cheeks
to light the expanse between us.

Let's pretend we are never lost, only changed.
Let's pretend we are better than we are.

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Unknown Quantities is a collaboration between MA Culture, Criticism and Curation and MA Graphic Communication Design

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Special thanks:

Alison Green, Rebecca Ross,
Stephen Barrett, Nick Kimberley,
Arthur Stitt, Jon Cooper and
Brad Goldsmith

Generous support:

Our Kickstarter sponsors

Unknown Quantities 5 was printed in London, 2017 by Calverts
Edition of 200

Printed on Cyclus Offset 100gsm
generously supplied by Premier
Paper Group

In partnership with Fruit of the Forest
and The Green Stationery Company

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Supported by Central Saint Martins

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Unknown Quantities
ISSN: 2055-1479

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