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WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

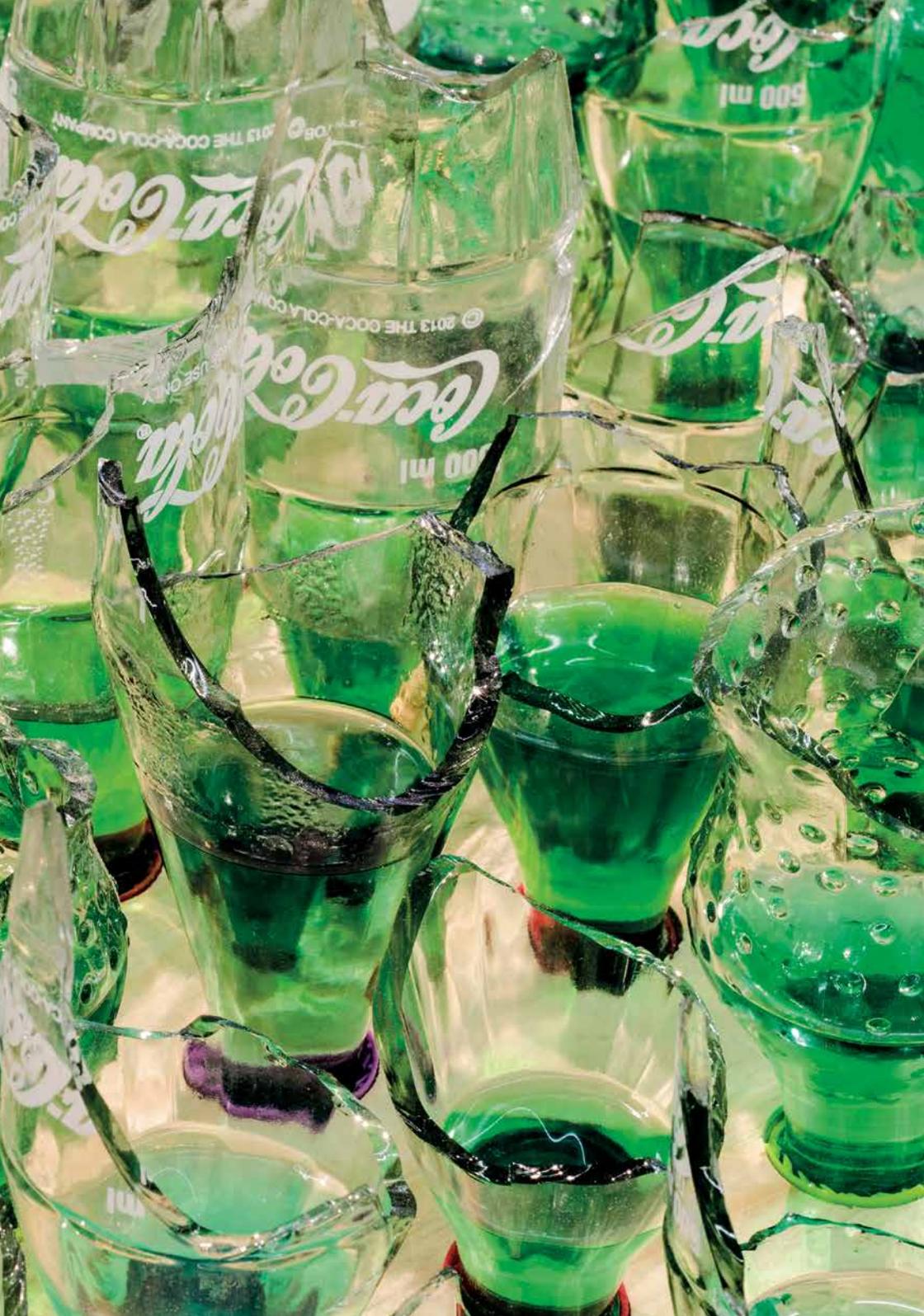
RACISM AND OWNERSHIP
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WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

THE CONDITIONS OF RACISM AND OWNERSHIP

Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic*

Angela Anderson, Peggy Buth, Tania Candiani, Danica Dakić, Anna Daučíková, Fokus Grupa, Robert Gabris, Lungiswa Gqunta, Laure M. Hiendl, Hristina Ivanoska, Karrabing Film Collective, Stephanie Misa, Elaine Mitchener, Elizabeth Povinelli, Ines Schaber, Widows of Marikana

In her text “Whiteness as Property”, published 1993, legal scholar Cheryl I. Harris writes about the formation of property relations along racial categories.¹ Racism not only dispossessed Black people, it also defined ownership itself as a right reserved for *white* identity. What Harris addresses in the context of the United States has a prehistory in older conceptions of the liberal subject. As the owner of itself, the liberal subject is not only involved in the production of *race*, it is also significantly shaped by the urge to possess. It is against the background of the so-called “possessive individualism” that today’s racist relations as well as the process of reification must be thought of.² For the making of objects cannot be detached from racialized questions of ownership – things only become what they are through the possibility of their capitalist appropriation and their circulation as a commodity.

The exhibition project *Whiteness as Property* attempts to question property relations that are saturated with racism from an economic, materialist perspective. It shows instruments for addressing possessive individualism and investigates whether the art field can serve as a source of alternative models of possessive subject/object relationships that are critical of racism. The focus of the exhibition is on critical aesthetic practices developed in relation to property and possession. It shows artistic positions which challenge the taken-for-granted nature of the historical and contemporary ownership of always already racialized subjects and objects through specific

¹ Cheryl I. Harris, *Whiteness as Property*, *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 106, No. 8, p. 1707, 1993.

² C. B. MacPherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*, Oxford University Press, 1962.

examinations of things and materials. On the one hand, artistic practice has an investigative function through its examination of racialized property relations; on the other hand, techniques are implicitly developed here that demonstrate how subjects lose their sovereignty through the handling of objects, how they acquire a life of their own and cannot be transformed into things. Crucial to the artistic practices assembled here is that they focus on the affective implications of possession, without romanticizing the lack of it. Rather, artistic practice acts as a field of experimentation in which the multi-layered character of possession becomes visible first: we are often inevitably not in possession of ourselves and at the same time possessive of others. Nevertheless, is it possible to find an ethical dimension of property and possession? Can a form of subjectification be developed that is not based on the right to own, but is aware of the importance of collectivity for the formation of property relations and thus has the potential to combat racism from an economic direction?

The conference accompanying the *Whiteness as Property* exhibition is dedicated to the specific knowledge of the participating artists. A conference of artistic research, the event provides an opportunity for an in-depth exploration of possessive individualism and racialized property relations from the perspective of aesthetic production. For two consecutive days, the artists will present and discuss their practices with a broad audience.

0. Introduction

A perspective on property relations that is critical of racism seems to be rare in the present. While historical materialism sought to examine the conditions of production of objects, and thus also their racist foundation in possessive individualism, New Materialisms ask how material can speak on its own or from within itself.³

Recent explorations of the material in art promise a new positioning of the present, one that is said to emerge from directly manipulating the things that surround us. New Materialism allows things to assert a new essentialism, implicating that they are irresolvable. We currently provide things with a power that allows them to refer to a world that is outside of their own historical setting. A not easily identifiable ghostly presence seems to determine the aesthetics that define the new (artistic) things. But can we simply assume a “ghostly” thing, without asking where the desire for such shifts comes from? For this reason, the analysis and contextualization of the framework of production is not to be suspended; rather, the question arises of how to think together the relationships between established aesthetic methods of processing material (alienation, appropriation, or montage of visual and discursive signs) with material uses that have not yet been established.

The exhibition project *Whiteness as Property* once again inquires into the present relationship of theory and practice to the material beyond processes of racialized dispossession and starting at a juncture where desires for the ghostly converge with desires for language and signification. It is precisely here that language quickly comes under the general suspicion of being a disciplining instrument of description and communication, meaning that the abundance of desires and imaginings that strive to create a direct correspondence between things and their supposed statements must be examined. For although it appears that things are in possession of themselves, there are actually very concrete individuals who possess them and determine how they speak.

Thus, the necessity of a contemporary interrogation of the material must itself be an economic necessity if it is to critique the liberal, racist subject: Can the object still be separated from its commodity form? Is it possible to overcome possessive individu-

3 Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (eds.), *New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency, and Politics*, Duke University Press, 2010.

alism through the processing of material, or is this not precisely the point where new things emerge that can take on new but familiar paths of commodity circulation? Unless current conditions of production are analysed, any critique of material appropriations runs the risk of being affirmative, that is, of confirming that we are surrounded by such an abundance of commodities that we can only be concerned with their management.

In Frederick Douglass' book, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, a Black woman who has been reduced to an object of slavery, finds ways to resist her *white* male owner.⁴ The so-called Aunt Hester pursues love relationships that do not conform to the ideas of slavery, much less to those of patriarchy, choosing her own love objects and entering the field of objectification as a subject. Most of Aunt Hester's relationships, however, are undercut, or rather, as a Black woman, she is reduced to being a mother in heteronormative kinship relations and often negated as a desiring subject. Fred Moten describes Aunt Hester exactly in this way, by focusing merely on her scream, which ostensibly makes her a resistant object, but in reality deprives her of her voice.⁵ Aunt Hester's actual, historical act against the system of slavery, is nonetheless a good example of how the racist and sexist aspects of possessive individualism can be limited.

Indeed, possessive individualism sees the liberation of the subject in the abolition of attention and affective labour. Liberalism is based on a concept of freedom that envisages the absence of external obstacles for the subject, that is, an absence of any form of difference. This absence ensures that a subject that is in possession of itself is able to develop its power unhindered. Elisabeth Povinelli writes in her book *Economies of Abandonment* that the late liberalism in which we currently find ourselves has developed a form of government that decisively determines life and death by developing techniques of turning away, of abandoning; techniques, in other words, that are beneficial to the possessive individualist denial of emotional and affective labour.⁶ The opposite of the (late) liberal fixation on possession would therefore be to reclaim the relationships that have been stolen from us all by the ideologies of commodification. Accordingly, not possession but attention would be the primary attribute of a subjectivity that differs from objects, possibly also creates them, allowing them, however, to experience appreciation instead of devaluation.

4 Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave*, Anti-Slavery Office, 1845.

5 Fred Moten, *In the Break: The Aesthetics of the Black Radical Tradition*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003.

6 Elizabeth A. Povinelli, *Economies of Abandonment: Social Belonging and Endurance in Late Liberalism*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

For Marx, the labour carried out between subject and object was a process of consciousness, an active processing, a way of learning with the senses that produces experience in the first place. In her book *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*, Isabelle Stengers reminds us that Marx exposed capitalism as a mystifying practice, a concealment of conditions of production that negates labour and is unable to recognise the aspects of attention and affective labour between subject and object.⁷ While Marxism focused on the study of conscious processes, an additional perspective must be included in the present to understand the productivity of the unconscious – it is necessary to continue examining those mystifying processes that obscure the social function of production processes, especially those that can only comprehend subjectivity through dispossession. This is also linked to the production of those cultic images that prevent us from entering into a relationship with the object, and instead of objects and subjects merely produce cult figures. This process, however, is not artistic work, but an absorption of art through ideology.

The *Whiteness as Property* project is interested in those artistic practices that question the meaning and function of objects and strive to change their status within discourses. As such, the interventions of the works shown here are interventions in language; they allow for a structural incision into the historical conditions of production and represent a rethinking of property relations based on *race*.

1. Crafts and Ghosts

Working with materials seems to have returned after a long period of criticism of studio practices. This is, however, neither a matter of returning to bourgeois forms of expression or technical skills as part of the artistic profession, nor to the non-conceptual production of two- and three-dimensional works of art. Rather, the self-image of the artist has undergone a shift in which the *crafting* of one's identity and history is inextricably linked to the making of the object.

Boundaries of gender, sexuality, or ability are integral aspects of these works. The studio artist, who may have appeared male and Eurocentric in his origins, has been replaced by a plethora

7 Phillippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*, Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

of artistic personalities whose differences are inscribed directly into their material practices. However, the simultaneous productions of authorship and object do not want to be understood merely as phenomena of the present, but strive to have an effect on the historical writing of previous images of artists. They challenge the stubbornly universalistic in the artist portrait, which has operated unquestioned for so many decades, to take a new position. Possessive individualism's claim to apply to all is likewise questioned here. Indeed, achieving social equality through universal freedom for all is a liberal narrative that compresses differences into a seamless fabric and produces the very opposite: massive social inequality. As early as 1995, in her book *States of Injury*, Wendy Brown examined the ways that liberal discourses transform political identity into private interests, that is, private property, producing normative social identities.⁸ How do artistic processes today intervene in liberal discourse and their notions of ownership tied to identity?

A contemporary reflection on property relations must include a massive shift in the modernist dichotomy of abstract and concrete. While modernism and postmodernism found transcendent categories only in the abstract, current artistic positions concerned with possession and thingness increasingly search for ideological ghosts or traces of repressed forms of spirituality in the object itself. These disputes, too, look back to history and ask whether there may not always have been ghostly or spiritual things in the figurative. The minimalist insistence on objective representation in art, bound by physical laws, had a component of the transcendent from the beginning. This is precisely what was brought up as a criticism against the supposedly neutral sculptures of minimal art: the representational cannot achieve a reduction of the spiritual. And so artists with an interest in the objective increasingly devote themselves to that substance which cannot be grasped organically. Described as a spirit or ghost, these are the moments that artists intentionally do not want to exclude from their production process. "The ghost is an invention of the spirit," said Derrida for the time of post-socialism and was thus able to expose that the ghost of communism had always originated from the fear of capitalists.⁹ What spectres do we currently have to take a closer look at in order to unmask possessive individualist ideologies? What disavowed work on spirituality can be released in the process?

⁸ Wendy Brown, *States of Injury, Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995.

⁹ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, New York: Routledge, 1994.

It is no coincidence that the materials used in this context are culturally and economically charged: Glass, textiles, or wood become carriers of messages charged with linguistic association. Lungiswa Gqunta constructs a lawn of broken bottles, addressing the restrictions imposed by private property, especially the unequal distribution of property between Black and *white* people in South Africa. The minimalist installation *Lawn* bears the weight of ownership relationships shaped by the apartheid system, but also references enclosure as the historical beginning of the appropriation of land. This is juxtaposed with the figurative paintings of the Widows of Marikana, which narrate the murder of the Marikana miners from the perspective of the ongoing racist exploitation of resources. In both cases, the history of Black women is made accessible because of their marginalization; both practices, that of abstracting and that of representing, are methods of invoking and dispelling the spectres of racism.

Karrabing Film Collective also reflects on the historical conditions of a contemporary, racially motivated, social inequality through resource extraction and the resulting property relations. In their documentary science fiction film *The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland*, indigenous people are empowered to resist through their ghostly presence in an environment destroyed by colonial land grabs. Similar empowerment also occurs in the absence of physical representation, in Robert Gabris's illusionistic installation *You will never belong into my space!* Gabris uses photographic distortion and colour filters to create a fictional space that addresses the dispossession of Roma in Europe. Stereotypical notions about the dispossessed play a role here, exposing the confluence of racist ideology and property distribution as a struggle for political and social presence and representation. The difficulty of representation appears as elusive text in the work of Hristina Ivanoska, who examines mythical Macedonian figures and their impact on the present. The focus is not only on the moment of inscription into history (or lack thereof), but also on the structures of forgetting, which often go unnoticed.

What all these works have in common is their fragile approach to an identity, which is not characterized by the definition possessive individualistic ego, but can instead define a space for its own subjects and objects, succeeding in radically questioning racist and sexist property relations.

2. Extracted and Synchronized

Instead of a modernist continuation of the romantic glorification of nature, contemporary artistic practice specifically points to the rationalization to which the planet is falling victim. The extraction of resources, the exploitation of labour, and the destruction of ways of life that cannot be subordinated to the logic of profit put an end to illusions of an industrial improvement of living conditions for all. This return to Marxist and materialist considerations of ownership and possession of resources and labour gives these artistic works a new aesthetic and political status by repeatedly highlighting the problematic of continuing to use the still prevailing values of the Enlightenment that justify reason-led exploitation. At the same time, this return also explores the continuations of a Kantian aesthetic of experience as a criterion of evaluation in the mostly synchronized significations of body, voice, and environment that surround us.

A currently often studied text of the Enlightenment is certainly John Locke's *Second Treatise on Civil Government* from 1690,¹⁰ in which Locke defines the use and exploitation of land not as something that all citizens are free to do, but as a necessity. For unused land, wasteland, is a waste of nature itself. The Enlightenment herewith lays the foundation for thinking of the absence of humans in the landscape as emptiness. Anything that lies outside the anthropocentric perspective is thus not given any significance.

A fundamental questioning of land appropriation based on lawful use is outlined by Brenna Bhandar in her book *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*.¹¹ In it, Bhandar explores how the capacity to possess as a precondition of modern subjectivation was simultaneously posited as a colonial strategy. For the ownership of land and resources to which we are subjected to this day was decisively grounded in colonialism. This still shapes today's problems of a globally unequal society and ongoing effective racialized property relations, which are abstracted and repressed in possessive individualism.

The works on view in this exhibition have all followed the traces of colonial production, whether to address the exploitation of raw materials, examine the global distribution of wealth, or trace the contemporary pathways of global trade. Angela Anderson's

¹⁰ Hans Jörn Hoffmann (ed.), *Zwei Abhandlungen über die Regierung*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977.

¹¹ Brenna Bhandar, *Colonial Lives of Property: Law, Land, and Racial Regimes of Ownership*, Duke University Press, 2018.

installation *Post-Social Sea* shows the routes taken by luxury yachts, the owners of which are often significantly involved in the extraction industry. The map that emerges points to the ongoing global redistribution of property in favour of a new *whiteness* and shows how the racialization of property is a process taking place right before our eyes. The fact that *whiteness* has always been a feature of wealth is also shown by Fokus Grupa's research into sugar production in the Habsburg monarchy. While they relied on colonial connections in the Caribbean, they were able to establish a system of labour exploitation that was largely shaped by fantasies of slave labour. Tania Candiani explores this reality in her project *Songs of Labor. Work Songs*, confronting the abandoned sugar plantations in Cuba with contemporary voices that re-enact the songs from the time of slavery and suggest a transhistorical resistance. We hear a very different kind of voice in Stephanie Misa's installation *Untitled (Sakada)*: an exoticizing, racially charged melody that seeks to seduce us into taking possession of otherness. It reminds us that the voice can never exist independently of signification, it is always subject to relations of domination. Which voice evolves at the margins of colonial exploitation, in the dispossession of bodies and resources? Laure M. Hiendl's composition *Songs for Captured Voices* (performed by Elaine Mitchener) provides a possible answer. The composition was developed using voice recordings made of prisoners of war in the German colonies during the First World War from the Humboldt University in Berlin. These captives were literally robbed of their voice.

The multiple ideological synchronization processes – between body and voice, between human being and environment, and so forth – are dissected and reassembled here with analytical precision. They open up other perspectives on already existing, historically stabilized, and often not yet questioned knowledge, without themselves becoming an extraction.

3. Production and Repression

David Lloyd conceives of a so-called “social life of things”, a community beyond the subject–object relation that is not based on property.¹² Although such a community is supposed to affirm difference, it is very negative about perception: “Perception is possession, a destructive appropriation of the thing as one's

¹² David Lloyd, *The Racial Thing: On Appropriation, Black Studies, and Thingliness*, *Texte zur Kunst*, Issue No. 117, March 2020, “Property/Eigentum”, pp. 74–97.

object.”¹³ This equation of perception with processes of appropriation stands in radical contrast to those artistic processes that have recognized reappropriation as their supreme principle of political intervention. Not only the historical montage in film, graphic design, photography, or installation should be mentioned here as the principle of a different concept of property, but also appropriation art, which has been decisively intervening in possessive individualistic relationships since the 1980s. Thereby, the analysis of the unconscious relations of production, which must mostly be suppressed in the production of an individual, plays a role until today.

But how does this form of (artistic) appropriation differ from that which transforms things into objects in order to make them consumable? Don't the resulting (artistic) objects themselves become circulating commodities again, in line with the often justified criticism of art's participation in markets and their profit-oriented politics? The idea of shared production, of the collective, has definitely not destroyed the logic of possessive individualism, but it has given it a very bitter taste. “Their intimacy seems a bit shady,” writes Elisabeth Lebovici about the artist trio General Idea, which co-invented and decisively shaped the art of appropriation.¹⁴ The intimacy between subject and object does indeed seem dubious, if not uncanny, when it multiplies through re- and re-appropriation. But this is precisely the unconscious aspect of private property that would remain obscured without this form of appropriation, that is, through the specific use of perception as an instrument for reclaiming what has been lost.

In her installation *Moscow/Sunday/Women*, Anna Daučíková shows us the face of reproduction, the work done by women to maintain the modern state as a production apparatus we would otherwise not encounter in this form. At the same time, in *Upbringing by Touch* she demonstrates how appropriation can be thought of as a relationship – the embraced object is a sheet of glass that makes the body seem fragile. In Peggy Buth's montage of the signs of a workers' struggle in the newspaper, “*Wes' Brat ich ess, des' Lied sing ich noch lange nicht*” *Chor Tor 1 Rheinhauen*, a language becomes visible that does not find a place in the possessive individualistic writing of history, the language of the longest strike in German post-war history. Something similar takes place in Danica Dakić's analysis of collective labour

¹³ Ibid. 86.

¹⁴ Elisabeth Lebovici, *Trouble dans le genre*, in: *General Idea: A Retrospective 1969–1994*, Frédéric Bonnet (ed.), Paris–Musées and JRP/Ringier, 2011. p.87.

in socialism in her video installation *Čistač/The Cleaner*. Although collective labour gave way to the individual form of production, two war refugees continue to pursue their utopian ideas. In the photo and video installation *picture mining*, Ines Schaber also follows on the trail of unconscious production processes. The former sites of extraction were, of all things, housing those picture archives that appropriated and sold images from the public domain.

Artistic practices are dedicated to the repressed processes of production, to the uncomfortable, obscured, and not-yet-articulated scenarios that liberal possessive individualist ideologies cannot allow. In doing so, they create new spaces of engagement, spaces that can actually rethink subjectivation and ownership.

REFLECTIONS ON WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

Cheryl I. Harris*

I. Chattel

Chattel (Black) is the fusion of race and property – embodied as always essential and forever disposable.

II. Time

Hard time.

8 minutes and 46 seconds is an eternity. Centuries without a breath.

III. Home

Home is not a haven. You can be shot eight times in your home, in your bed. Before anything. Before you can breathe.

IV. Terra nullius

A walk in the pandemic. Dappling sunlight through the leaves. A quiet street in early morning. The symphony of birds. The air as clear as the sky is blue. A bucolic scene that conjures security, tranquility, timelessness. It was always meant to be. But it is a mirage: the tableau was born in theft, and theft continues to sustain it. Through violence, the land and the people are transformed into property, into commodities, abstracted into investments, financial products, and debt instruments.¹

Protected by law, this property regime is reassured of its logic and projects a raceless façade.

* Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation Chair in Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, University of California Los Angeles School of Law. My thanks to the editors at the *Harvard Law Review* for the opportunity to seek and reflect on connections between past and present. My gratitude also to voices of protest who point towards possible futures.

1 Black bodies were cast as living currency around which were built valuation systems, insurance, financial products, banking institutions, and other forms of financialization central to the development of racial capitalism. See, e.g., Eric Williams, *Capitalism And Slavery*, 1944, (discussing the constitutive role of new world slavery in developing industrial capitalism); Calvin Schermerhorn, *The Business Of Slavery And The Rise Of American Capitalism, 1815–1860*, 2015, p. 2. (“North American capitalism developed in the context of an Atlantic system of exchange most recognizable perhaps in the transatlantic slave trade and the systems of indebtedness responsible for its contours.”); Matthew Desmond, In Order to Understand the Brutality of American Capitalism, You Have to Start on the Plantation, in *The New York Times Magazine*, 14 August 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/08/14/magazine/slavery-capitalism.html> [<https://perma.cc/D398-XEZK>] (noting that “[t]o raise capital, state-chartered banks pooled debt generated by slave mortgages and repackaged it as bonds promising investors annual interest ... – bonds ... [that found] buyers in Hamburg and Amsterdam, in Boston and Philadelphia”).

V. The Weight

[H]istory is not the past. It is the present. We carry our history with us. [...] If we pretend otherwise [...] we literally are criminals.
– James Baldwin, 1965²

But it is not so: the racelessness of the façade is a myth. We know this because the incommensurable weight of the unreckoning is pressing down. The heft of history is too heavy to toss aside, to float away.

VI. Preexisting Conditions

A rupture – a break in the façade – is erupting from intersecting pandemics, each reflecting intersecting systems of domination and extraction.³ Power organizes hierarchies. Inequality is not the product of dysfunctional culture, or the biology – the “comorbidities” – of misbehaving, undisciplined bodies: rather, racial regimes construct and exploit vulnerabilities.⁴ These are preexisting conditions, embodiments, material manifestations of exploitation. This is a feature of racial capitalism.⁵

VII. Here and There

The pandemic is global and universalizing. The pandemic is locally targeted and differentiated. Dissolving the notion of secure borders and the boundaries of property, the virus demonstrates the capacity to disrupt key presumptions, that threat can be reliably marked through phenotype and emanates only from specific racialized bodies. Like state sanctioned racial terror, danger is free floating, ubiquitous, and hidden: it is at once anywhere and nowhere.

VIII. Maps

Yet, systems of racial/spatial ordering persistently track the prevalence and lethality of the pandemic.⁶ Zip codes do more than encode maps; they tell stories.⁷ Black geographies,⁸ Latinx spaces, “ghettos,” “barrios,” – all places where “others” live – are structurally deprived of the means or opportunity to protect,

2 James Baldwin, Black English: A Dishonest Argument, in *The Cross Of Redemption: Uncollected Writings*, 2011, p. 154.

3 Professor Kimberlé Crenshaw defines intersectionality as “an analytic sensibility, a way of thinking about identity and its relationship to power. Originally articulated on behalf of Black women, the term brought to light the invisibility of many constituents within groups that claim them as members but often fail to represent them.” Kimberlé Crenshaw, Why Intersectionality Can’t Wait, in *The Washington Post*, 24 September 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/intheory/wp/2015/09/24/why-intersectionality-cant-wait> [<https://perma.cc/HGD7-TKCP>]. Intersectionality critiqued the erasure of Black women’s experience in antidiscrimination law and antiracist racist and feminist politics as exemplary of deficiencies of the traditional antidiscrimination paradigm:

Underlying this conception of discrimination is a view that the wrong which antidiscrimination law addresses is the use of race or gender factors to interfere with decisions that would otherwise be fair or neutral. This process-based definition is not grounded in a bottom-up commitment to improve the substantive conditions for those who are victimized by the interplay of numerous factors. Instead, the dominant message of antidiscrimination law is that it will regulate only the limited extent to which race or sex interferes with the process of determining outcomes. This narrow objective is facilitated by the topdown strategy of using a singular “but for” analysis to ascertain the effects of race or sex.

Kimberlé Crenshaw, Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics, in *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1989, p. 139, 151, (using an intersectional analysis to assess how Black women are marginalized, not in service of marking particularity for its own sake, but to unmask how systems of power interact and operate to produce subordination).

4 Professor Ruth Wilson Gilmore defines racism as “the state-sanctioned and/or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death.” Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden*

Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California, 2007, p. 247.

5 Professor Cedric Robinson’s seminal work, *Black Marxism*, considers “the encounter of Marxism and Black radicalism” to more carefully analyze the relationship between race and capitalism:

The development, organization, and expansion of capitalist society pursued essentially racial directions, so too did social ideology. As a material force, then, it could be expected that racialism would inevitably permeate the social structures emergent from capitalism. I have used the term “racial capitalism” to refer to this development and to the subsequent structure as a historical agency.

Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism*, 2000, p. 2.

6 See Andrea N. Polonijo, How California’s COVID-19 Surge Widens Health Inequalities for Black, Latino and Low-Income Residents, in *The Conversation*, 30 July 2020, <https://theconversation.com/as-covid-19-surges-in-california-black-latino-and-low-income-residents-face-higher-death-rates-why-health-inequality-is-widening-143243> [<https://perma.cc/WHZ5-VCTN>].

7 See Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Postal Service, in *The Untold Story of the ZIP Code*, 2013, p. i, https://www.uspsoig.gov/sites/default/files/document-library-files/2015/rarc-wp-13-006_0.pdf [<https://perma.cc/WHZ5-VCTN>]. (“The code was originally intended to allow mail sorting methods to be automated but ended up creating unimagined socio-economic benefits as an organizing and enabling device. The ZIP Code became a social tool for organizing and displaying demographic information, a support structure for entire industries such as insurance and real estate, and even a representation of social identities. ...”).

8 Professor Katherine McKittrick describes Black geographies as follows: “These black geographies, while certainly not solely inhabited by black bodies, are classified as imperiled and dangerous, or spaces ‘without’/spaces of exclusion, even as those who have *always* struggled against racial violence and containment populate them.” Katherine McKittrick, On Plantations, Prisons and a Black Sense of Place, in *Social & Cultural Geography*, 2011, p. 947, 951, (citations omitted).

to provide shelter (in place), their occupants always in fraught relation to place, to property, to rights. The places are erased, renamed, redeveloped, improved. Sometimes there are traces.⁹

IX. Mourning for Whiteness

One of William Faulkner's most famous and controversial novels, *The Sound and the Fury*, took its title from Shakespeare's *MacBeth*.¹⁰ MacBeth's soliloquy is a bitter lament, characterizing life as "but a walking shadow, a poor player/ That struts and frets his hour upon the stage/ And then is heard no more: it is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing."¹¹ Faulkner's novel, told through the voices of multiple characters, relates the dissolution and unraveling of the Southern aristocratic Compson family over a period of thirty years at the early part of the twentieth century. The story recounts their loss of material privilege, family, integrity, sanity. But it is more: As the incomparable Toni Morrison also teaches, it is a tale about race, the declining value of whiteness, and the crisis that attends its diminution.¹²

Morrison's essay, entitled *Mourning for Whiteness*, written in the wake of Trump's election in 2016, describes the contemporary manifestation of Faulkner's tale in Trumptime.¹³ She notes that while Black enslavement buttressed the meaning and value of whiteness, "in America today, post-civil-rights legislation, white people's conviction of their natural superiority is being lost. Rapidly lost. There are 'people of color' everywhere, threatening to erase this long-understood definition of America. [...] The threat is frightening."¹⁴

She continues:

In order to limit the possibility of this untenable change and restore whiteness to its former status as a marker of national identity, a number of white Americans are sacrificing themselves. [...]

So scary are the consequences of a collapse of white privilege that many Americans have flocked to a political platform that supports and translates violence against the defenseless as strength. These people are not so much angry as terrified, with the kind of terror that makes knees tremble.¹⁵

9 See, e.g., Abby Phillip, A Permanent Reminder of Wall Street's Hidden Slave Trading Past Is Coming Soon, in *The Washington Post*, 15 April 2015, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morningmix/wp/2015/04/15/a-permanent-reminder-of-wall-streets-hidden-slave-trading-past-is-comingsoon> [<https://perma.cc/94NE-H6U5>]. The African Burial Ground was unearthed when construction commenced in 1991 on a new federal office building. See National Park Service, *History and Culture*, <https://www.nps.gov/afbg/learn/historyculture/index.htm> [<https://perma.cc/CHY9-VZXS>]. As predicate to building, federal law requires an archeological site review. In this case:

Preliminary archaeological research excavation found intact human skeletal remains located 30 feet below the city's street level on Broadway. During survey work, the largest and most important archeological discovery was made: unearthing the "Negroes Burial Ground" – a six-acre burial ground containing upwards of 15,000 intact skeletal remains of enslaved and free Africans who lived and worked in colonial New York. The Burial Ground's rediscovery altered the understanding and scholarship surrounding enslavement and its contribution to constructing New York City. The Burial Ground dates from the middle 1630s to 1795. Currently, the Burial Ground is the nation's earliest and largest African burial ground rediscovered in the United States.

Id.

More recently, the commemoration of the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre highlighted the history of the Greenwood district, also called "Black Wall Street." See generally Tulsa Historical Society and Museum, *1921, Tulsa Race Massacre*, <https://www.tulsaahistory.org/exhibit/1921-tulsa-race-massacre> [<https://perma.cc/86V4-MMUQ>].

Following the arrest of a young Black man who had been on an elevator with a white woman, despite the absence of any evidence of wrongdoing, the media and rumor mill inflamed local white mobs, who then threatened to take him from official custody. Armed Black citizens surrounded the courthouse and temporarily thwarted the attack, retreating back to the Greenwood district when they came under fire. In the early hours of June 1, 1921, white mobs descended on Greenwood. Not only did the authorities not assist the residents; but they also deputized and armed a corps of all white men, many of whom were earlier part of the mob, to "restore order." Along with the state National Guard, these men violently removed and arrested Greenwood's Black residents, effectively leaving the area open to plunder and arson. Estimates are that between 150 and 300 Black men, women and children were killed by private and state-sanctioned violence. Nearly all the structures in the area were destroyed. No one was prosecuted for these crimes. For a definitive and powerful treatment of this history, see Alfred L. Brophy, *Reconstructing The Dreamland: The Tulsa Riot Of 1921 – Race, Reparations, And Reconciliation*, 2002.

10 See William Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, act 5, sc. 5, l. 2381–85.

11 Id.

12 See Toni Morrison, Mourning For Whiteness, Aftermath: Sixteen Writers On Trump's America, in *The New Yorker*, 6 November 2017, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/11/21/aftermathsixteen-writers-on-trumps-america#anchor-morrison> [<https://perma.cc/T5CF-L9DR>].

13 See id.

14 Id.

15 Id.

Morrison invokes another Faulkner novel, *Absalom, Absalom!*,¹⁶ to illustrate the visceral nature of this fear and the racial terrorism it produces. In the novel, Quentin, a member of the Compson clan (who commits suicide in *The Sound and the Fury*), retells a story told to him of a fallen Southern white patriarch. The tragedy unfolds when the patriarch's son, Charles, learns that the person seeking to marry his sister is their long-lost half-brother. While troubled by this circumstance, Charles, the brother, reluctantly comes to accept the relationship, notwithstanding its incestuous character. However, when Charles later learns that the brother-fiancé is part Black, Charles kills him to prevent the marriage of his Black half-brother to their white sister. For Morrison, this story at the heart of the novel reflects the terror that accompanies the loss of whiteness. And, so she argues:

William Faulkner understood this [terror] better than almost any other American writer. In *Absalom, Absalom*, incest is less of a taboo for an upper-class Southern family than acknowledging the one drop of black blood that would clearly soil the family line. Rather than lose its “whiteness” (once again), the family chooses murder.¹⁷

Morrison thus marks the 2016 election as reflective of a moment of white panic, a break, a breakdown, at once political, affective, and institutional. The outcome of the 2016 election is not history but a present anxiety – a reminder that indices of public disapproval do not portend transformation. How should one reckon with the fact that the misdeeds, malfeasance, and racist distemper of the Trump administration are well known, but, for a significant percentage of the (white) population, have not proved disqualifying?¹⁸

X. Starvation Wages

Whiteness does not confer immunity from disaster on all white bodies, however. Poor and working-class whites suffer greatly in all areas; the gap between them and wealthier whites is profound, and, by all metrics, growing.¹⁹ “White,” “poor,” and “sick” are words that can and do converge. Yet, whiteness mitigates risk through racial/spatial structures that sort probabilities and distribute access and opportunity. Thus, while Trump’s exhumation of the promise to protect the suburbs²⁰ and “our way of life”²¹ may seem hopelessly retrograde, the point is that the

- 16** William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!*, 1934.
- 17** Morrison, supra note 12.
- 18** Recent polling data shows a clear majority of voters disapproving of Trump's presidency, see Gallup, *Trump Job Approval*, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/203207/trump-job-approvalweekly.aspx> [<https://perma.cc/Z5P9-CJSP>] (showing fifty-six percent disapproval in tracking averages on July 23, 2020), and despite criticisms of his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, he still is ahead of or tied with his presumptive opponent, former Vice President Joe Biden, in several key states and appears to have a firm hold on approximately forty percent of voters. See Real Clear Politics, *General Election: Trump vs. Biden*, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/general_election_trump_vs_biden-6247.html [<https://perma.cc/93XD-QSRJ>].
- 19** See, e.g., Rakesh Kochhar & Anthony Cilluffo, Income Inequality in the U.S. Is Rising Most Rapidly Among Asians, in *Pew Research Center*, 12 July 2018, <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2018/07/12/income-inequality-in-the-u-s-is-rising-most-rapidly-among-asians/> [<https://perma.cc/C4LR-KG26>] (discussing the rising inequality within different racial groups, including whites).
- 20** Annie Karni, Maggie Haberman & Sydney Ember, Trump Plays on Racist Fears of Terrorized Suburbs to Court White Voters, in *The New York Times*, 29 July 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/29/us/politics/trump-suburbs-housing-white-voters.html> [<https://perma.cc/A37X-KZND>].
- 21** President Donald J. Trump, *Remarks at the 2020 Salute to America*, 4 July 2020, (transcript available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefings-statements/remarks-president-trump-2020-salute-america/> [<https://perma.cc/3DB3-ZGRE>]).

spatial allusion is readily legible as a racial geography of exclusion. Everyone knows what this means.²² Everyone knows who is being hailed.

The relationship of the white working class to whiteness has long been debated. W. E. B. Du Bois described the consequence of racial segregation as a political and economic success, through which the often meager wages paid for white labor under capitalism are supplemented by “a public and psychological wage”²³ – the wages of whiteness. The notion of a public and psychological wage is not metaphoric or abstract. While not easily measurable in currency, white workers received a material advantage relative to the precarious conditions of Black life. In contrast to their Black counterparts, white workers enjoyed the ability to move through public space. Moreover, as Du Bois argued, white workers operated with the knowledge and expectation that the coercive apparatus of the state – police, the courts, the law – would represent and be responsive to white interests.

Although much has changed, the current iteration of racist populism is built on that belief. Despite evidence that this belief may be misguided or betrayed, the underlying institutional structures are built to reinforce it. Whiteness as property undergirds a white subjectivity that is induced to reject any sense of connection to Blackness. Instead, white subjectivity is constructed in antagonism to, and perceives itself as victim of, Blackness. As Professor Derrick Bell describes, the fact that the face at the bottom of the well is Black operates as racial reassurance for those outside the white elite.²⁴ Racial capitalism fosters a white coalition between elites and the majority of whites, who reside outside the charmed circle but tend to identify their race, rather than their class position, as the cause of their predicament.

The presumption had been that illuminating shared interests would create common ground across racial divides to support progressive, redistributive social policy. As the position of working-class people has eroded, particularly since the “Golden Age of Capitalism,” the dire conditions have further eroded the advantages of whiteness. However, the argument for transformation has been undermined by racially encoded discourses of corruption, fraud, and undeservingness that have legitimated the hollowing out of an already partial and weak care infrastructure.²⁵ The neoliberal paradigm of public austerity and financialization

22 Sometimes, the racial meaning is clear. Justice Harlan's dissent in *Plessy v. Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), similarly rejected the state's argument that de jure segregation did not constitute unconstitutional discrimination under the Equal Protection Clause because it treated Blacks and whites equally through a rule of prohibition:

It was said in argument that the statute of Louisiana does not discriminate against either race but prescribes a rule applicable alike to white and colored citizens. ... Everyone knows that the statute in question had its origin in the purpose, not so much to exclude white persons from railroad cars occupied by blacks, as to exclude colored people from coaches occupied by or assigned to white persons.

Id., p. 556–57 (Harlan, J., dissenting).

23 As Du Bois put it:

The political success of the doctrine of racial separation, which overthrew Reconstruction by uniting the planter and the poor white, was far exceeded by its astonishing economic results. The theory of laboring class unity rests upon the assumption that laborers ... will unite because of their opposition to exploitation by the capitalists. ... This would throw white and black labor into one class. ... [But i]t must be remembered that the white group of laborers, while they received a low wage, were compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference ... because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools. The police were drawn from their ranks, and the courts, dependent on their votes treated them with such leniency as to encourage lawlessness. Their vote selected public officials, and while this had small effect upon the economic situation, it had great effect on their personal treatment and the deference shown them.

W. E. Burghardt Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 1945, p. 700–701.

24 See generally Derrick Bell, *Faces at The Bottom of the Well*, 1992.

25 See generally Ian Haney López, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked the Middle Class*, 2014.

are the presumed cure. Public goods and services are replaced by debt. The result is that some whites are dying of whiteness.²⁶

XI. Expectations

It is commonplace that the system of property in the United States is intimately tied to race. Beginning with Eric Williams' 1944 classic, *Capitalism and Slavery*,²⁷ generations of historians have marshaled evidence and retold the story that the foundations of modern society were built through slavery. While the framework of settler colonialism is of more recent vintage,²⁸ the insight that colonialism is a system of racialized domination and economic exploitation is an idea that goes back at least as far as Du Bois. Yet, these fundamental truths resist remembering.²⁹ The relationship between present forms of property and this history often is presented as unfortunate, but too remote in time to factor in any significant way into the present.

At one level this can be attributed to the perennial question of the contemporary relevance of historical events, but temporal remoteness may not be the only reason that the racial foundations of property remain so persistently obscure. These continuities are resisted through the assertion of expectations. Expectations and, specifically, settled expectations are inscribed and reinscribed through racial hierarchy and are recognized in law as property. Legality places the power of the state behind particular expectations and legitimates them, notwithstanding their violent racial origins. Legality has material and conceptual consequences: as signified in Jeremy Bentham's famous aphorism, expectations affirmed as property are not physical but metaphysical; a "mere conception in the mind,"³⁰ forming intrinsic value so that "our property becomes part of our being."³¹ This intimate, affective tie is mutually constitutive of both property and "our being" – of subjectivity. And this subjectivity takes the concept of property deep into the heart of race and race deep into the heart of property.

Time and time again, the law elevates and ratifies (white) expectations with regard to property. Yet these determinations fail to liquidate the claims of the racially dispossessed.

26 See Jonathan Metz, *Dying of Whiteness: How the Politics of Racial Resentment is Killing America's Heartland*, 2019, p. 1–8, (describing how white racial resentment fueled opposition to policies such as gun control, expanded health care benefits, and state education funding that ultimately reduce life expectancy and well-being for whites).

27 See Williams, *supra* note 1.

28 See Patrick Wolfe, Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native, in *Journal of Genocide Research*, 8, 2006, p. 387–388. (Describing settler colonialism as a particular form of colonization in which settler colonizers rely on the logic of elimination in service of the construction of a new society on expropriated Indigenous land; settler colonists “come to stay” as “invasion is a structure not an event”).

29 See Greg Grandin, Capitalism and Slavery, in *The Nation*, 1 May 2015, <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/capitalism-and-slavery/> [<https://perma.cc/M5HP-3NTT>] (describing ever recurrent scholarly focus on the relationship between capitalism and slavery).

30 Jeremy Bentham, *Theory of Legislation*, translation R. Hildreth, 2nd ed. 1871, p. 112.

31 *Id.*, p. 115.

XII. “I’ll take that box of reparations.”

– Cassandra Wilson, from the song *Justice*³²

Of necessity, asserted expectations of the dispossessed challenge and threaten to undo established expectations. Legality, reflecting the enforcement of expectations as property, is tied to predictability, and protection of the value of future expectations, which presumably cannot be radically disturbed. Stability is a paramount value, claiming both moral and economic ground, outweighing other normative and justice concerns regarding racial dispossession.

But legal regimes cannot forestall crisis. Indeed, they may precipitate and fuel crisis. The denial of claims of redress, often expressed through the language of property as repayment for debts owed, has not foreclosed the demands for justice.³³ Indeed, these demands repeatedly erupt, grounded in the refusals of the dispossessed to accept the existing baseline and the racialized expectations on which they are based. The dominant consensus, cultivated by decades of colorblind racial ideology, has long asserted that the way forward to building support for change is to minimize the role of racial oppression. In fact, in demanding attention to the specifics of the conditions and precarity of Black life, in building, in organizing around the basic notion that Black lives matter, radical visions emerge that open up pathways to transformative change.³⁴

XIII. Coda

When you see something that is not right, you must say something. You must do something. Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part to help build what we called the Beloved Community, a nation and world society at peace with itself. [...] Continue to build union between movements stretching across the globe because we must put away our willingness to profit from the exploitation of others.

– John Lewis, 2020³⁵

32 Cassandra Wilson, Justice, on *Belly of the Sun*, Blue Note 2002.

33 Martin Luther King, Jr. expressed the idea this way:

One hundred years [after Emancipation] the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. [...] In a sense we've come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our Republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men – yes, black men as well as white men – would be guaranteed the unalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. [...] It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note. [...] Instead of honoring this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check, a check which has come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bankrupt. [...] So we've come to cash this check – a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security of justice.

Martin Luther King, Jr., *I Have a Dream*, speech delivered at the Lincoln Memorial, 28 August 1963, (transcript available at <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/ihaveadream.htm> [<https://perma.cc/N34B-BD3P>]).

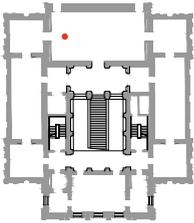
34 The demands of the "Vision for Black Lives," developed through organizing coordinated by the Movement for Black Lives, represents the radical imagination that connects the struggle against the exploitation and destruction of Black life to transformation of the social and economic order. See The Movement for Black Lives, *Vision for Black Lives*, <https://m4bl.org/policyplatforms/> [<https://perma.cc/4YYG-QTUT>].

It is, as historian Robin D.G. Kelley described it, "a plan for ending structural racism, saving the planet, and transforming the entire nation, not just Black lives." Robin D.G. Kelley, What Does Black Lives Matter Want?, in *The Boston Review*, 17 August 2016, <http://bostonreview.net/books-ideas/robin-dg-kelley-movement-black-lives-vision> [<https://perma.cc/X7QV-TJBR>].

35 John Lewis, Together, You Can Redeem the Soul of Our Nation, in *The New York Times*, 30 July 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/07/30/opinion/john-lewis-civil-rights-america.html> [<https://perma.cc/C2EZ-K75F>].

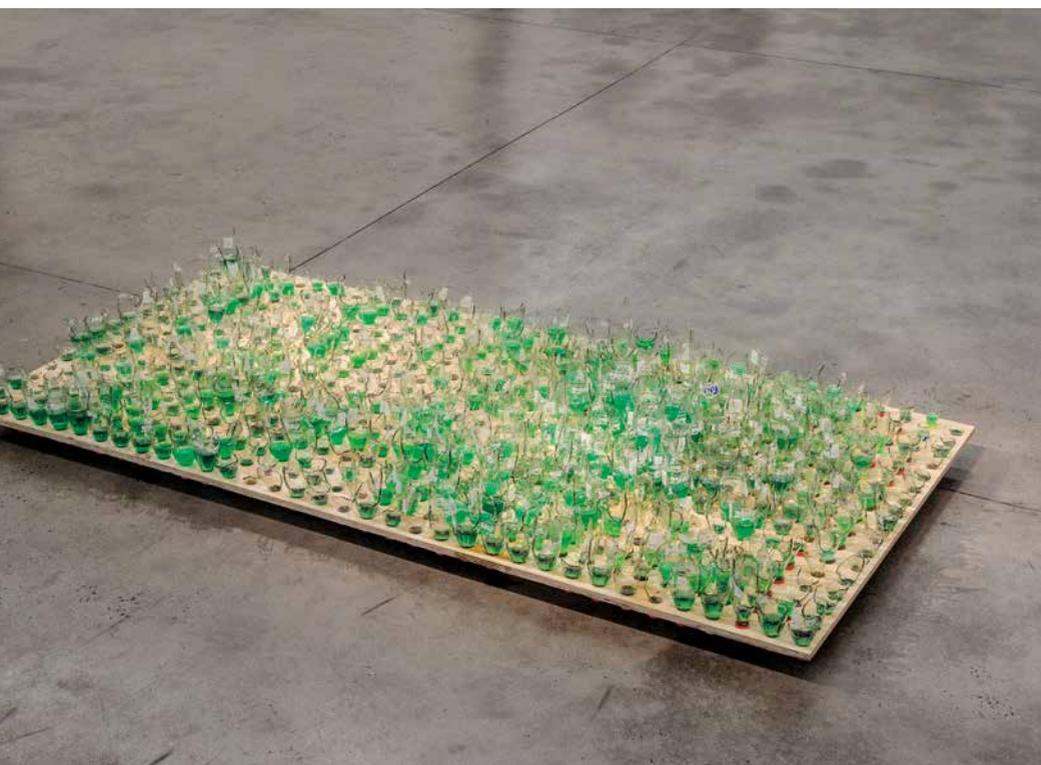
LUNGISWA GQUNTA

Lawn, 2016
Wood, broken bottles, petrol,
dimensions variable



Lungiswa Gqunta's installation *Lawn* addresses property relations in South Africa, which are characterised by a history of racial violence. A landscape of broken bottles filled with petrol, the lawn acts as a symbol of possessive individualist privilege in the suburbs. Broken bottles are also associated with diverse forms of protest (think of Molotov cocktails or when mounted on fences). *Lawn* marks a space of its own, just as the lawn marks a piece of private property. At the same time, the installation blocks the path in the exhibition space, making it hard to reach the passages and doorways, evoking the history of enclosure as the starting point for taking land into possession. Gqunta recreates the physical effect of a space defined by ownership inside the art institution. The installation thematizes access and access restriction, perpetually permeated by racism within the exhibition space. Who has access to spaces, who can enter unhindered, and how much effort is necessary to occupy a space? *Lawn* reminds us that freedom of movement, ignorance, and inconvenient detours play a large role in racialized property relations.





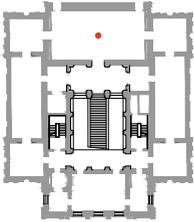
Lawn, 2016





ROBERT GABRIS

You will never belong into my space!, 2021
Photo print on wall, 300 x 500 cm

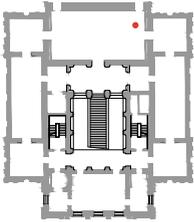


Robert Gabris' installation *You will never belong into my space!* shows a space that does not exist – it is built entirely based upon the imagination of Roma domestic spaces in Slovakia. This creates a surreal stage that reflects back the racist assumptions of European majority societies. In these imaginings, the homes of the dispossessed, the Roma, who are forced to live in cramped quarters not only in Slovakia, are filled with mystical objects of kitsch, superstition, and magic. The imaginings are very present in the public perception through news coverage. The model of the home is distorted, its dimensions exaggerated by photo enlargement, reflecting back the distortions of reality.

HRISTINA IVANOSKA

Broken Document Breaks Out Into Poetry, 2022

- *Fairy Hair, 2016/2017*
4 wooden objects, graphite and colorless wax on walnut, each 30 x 30 x 2 cm
- *Document Missing: Performance No. 10 (A Needlework), 2021*
Thread and graphite on wool and wood, 270 x 700 cm
- *Document Missing: Performance No. 11 (A Mural), 2022*
Pigment on wall, dimensions variable



Ivanoska works with Oscar Hansen's the theory of Open Form, which questions hierarchies through the construction of new forms in order enable participation for everybody. The moment in which structures become visible, as texts on surfaces or left at the edge of unrecognisability is central to Ivanoska's practice. The wooden objects in *Fairy Hair* investigate the "samovila", Macedonian mythical figures from the time before Christianisation, which we encounter only as a trace of an engraved text. The word "samovila" refers to an independent woman (*samo* = own, *vila* = will) who communicates mostly with other women, scaring men. In more recent times, "samovila" was also known as a word for plants considered weeds. Robust walnut wood is the carrier of this text, which is barely legible and develops its own meaning. The text establishes a genealogy of the destroyed history of Eastern European women. This continues in the textile work and a mural from the *Document Missing* series, inspired by Catherine Malabou's *La plaisir effacé: Clitoris et pensée* – testimonies of resistance against the patriarchal possession of women. Ivanoska validates handicrafts as a medium of political and social value. She embroiders, paints, and engraves, recording personal observations that inflame confusion, frustration, limitation, and emotional struggle. Domestic work and rituals are closely related to intimacy, isolation, and contemplation, with solid links to female identity. Individual efforts to substitute privacy for public space and fight inequality have barely been recognised or, in most cases, simply been forgotten over time.

НАСИЛСТВО
МАНИПУЛАЦИЈА
СЕКСУАЛНОСТ
КРИТИКА
ПАТРИЈАХАТ
ПОТЧИНУВАЊЕ
СТЕРЕОТИП
ТИРАНИЈА





Hristina Ivanoska

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Museum of Women Stories, 2015

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Easy Accumulation of Capital, 2019

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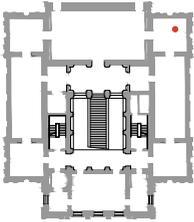
Fairy Hair, 2016/2017

ANGELA ANDERSON

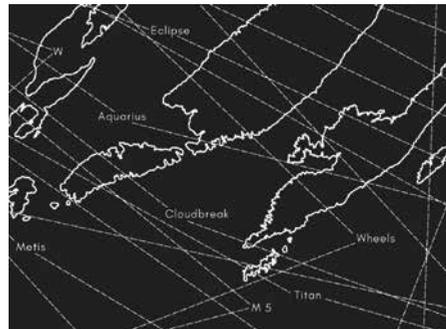
Post-Social Sea, 2022

Cartographic drawing, dimensions variable

Video, colour/sound, 16:9



Just as contemporary satellite technologies have made it possible to trace intercontinental trade routes, it is also possible to track the paths of private vessels and luxury yachts. In Angela Anderson's installation *Post-Social Sea*, the profit side of these global trade routes is made visible. The accumulation of wealth one faces in this alternative mapping project is often the result of destructive extraction industries, and – even more often – connected to tax avoidance through mailbox companies that obscure ownership and thus the profits generated by exploiting both humans and the non-human. The installation counters the elite's desire for opacity by exposing boat values, tax haven country flags, and places they travelled. *Post-Social Sea* puts a special focus on the literal and de-facto privatisation of nature in the Mediterranean, particularly in the area of former Yugoslavia, where the transfer of commons into private property is highly visible to the local population, yet remains out of the focus of global attention. Taking advantage of the dismantling of former socialist structures has facilitated the accumulation of wealth by certain well-connected individuals and turned formerly state-owned land on the Adriatic coast into enclaves for the super-rich. *Post-Social Sea* makes it possible to see how two uses of nature cynically complement each other: the exploitation of resources and the right to enjoy and consume remaining unspoiled natural areas.





Post-Social Sea, 2022



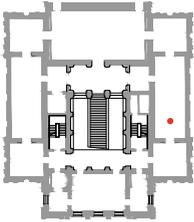
Sounds of Labor. Work Songs, 2019

TANIA CANDIANI

Sounds of Labor. Work Songs, 2019

Single-channel-video, colour/sound, 16:9, 13:17 min

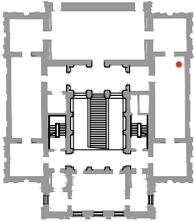
18 photographs, unframed, inkjet print on handmade paper, 20 x 30 cm each



Tania Candiani's installation is part of the larger project *Sounds of Labor*, in which Candiani follows her interest in finding the prevailing sound of labour processes. *Work Songs* is a performance and video project in which Candiani has reconstructed the slave songs of Cuban sugar plantations through a long research process. These songs are no longer sung by the local population because they are too painful reminders of slavery, but they exist in the cultural memory of the elderly people. The live performance took place in the former colonial palace Residencia estudiantil Galbán Lobo, a house that once belonged to the aristocratic families of the island and was closed for years before Candiani obtained permission to open it for the performance. Inside the palace, murals show the production process of the sugar industry, while outside on the "hacienda", the large estate, colonial wealth is still seen in close proximity to the slave barracks. The performance, recorded for the video installation, took place in the ruins of the old plantations along the Valle de los Ingenios in Sancti Spiritu. The presence of the choir at these sites is not for commemoration, but confronts the exploitation of labour through slavery, which aimed to make workers the property of colonial domination, with that difference that is expressed precisely through the voice. For it is not only the quality of the voices that constitutes the slave songs, but also their potential for resistance, the impossibility of a complete colonial appropriation of body and voice. Tonadas Trinitarias is a choir that has been recognised as a cultural institution since performing Candiani's piece. The work was produced for the Havana Biennial 2018, curated by Ibis Hernandez Abascal.

FOKUS GRUPA

Vedutas from the Palace of the Privileged Company of Trieste and Fiume, Rijeka, 2020–2021
Mixed media, dimensions variable



The installation by the artist collective Fokus Grupa shows wall paintings from the former administrative headquarters of the Privileged Company of Trieste and Fiume, Rijeka, which had a monopoly on industrial sugar production in the Habsburg monarchy. The paintings are depictions of slaves, which at first glance seem unusual in this context, as the Habsburg monarchy did not have colonies. However, the research by Fokus Grupa looks at the colonial investments of the Habsburg Monarchy through their connections to the merchants of Antwerp, who administered the company and participated in its profits as shareholders. Originally hung in the Vedute Salon in a late Baroque palace in Rijeka, Croatia, these depictions of slave labour show an idealized global trade, which not only illustrates visions of colonial connection, but also shows that slavery was a manifest part of these visions. Slave labourers, seemingly Asian, shackled and with bent backs, are watched over by gendarmes – the scene exposes a fantasy while at the same time obscuring the reality of slavery. For although the Austro-Hungarian Empire had no colonies of its own, raw sugar was imported from the Caribbean, where it was produced by slave labour. The former administrative headquarters of the Privileged Company of Trieste and Fiume, Rijeka, a cultural heritage site which as of recently houses the City Museum of Rijeka, is thus at the same time a site of colonial heritage.



Vedutas from the Palace of the Privileged Company of Trieste and Fiume, Rijeka, 2020–2021



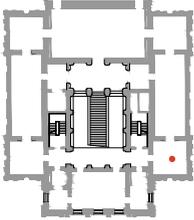
STEPHANIE MISA

Untitled (Sakada), 2012/2022

Video, colour/sound, 16:9, 8 min

Archive photos (dimensions variable)

Prints (dimensions variable), vinyl record, record player



In the installation *Untitled (Sakada)*, we hear the hula song “Little Brown Gal”, composed in 1935 in Honolulu, Hawaii. The problematic lyrics are interspersed with the voice of the artist’s grandmother, who grew up in Hawaii in a time when it was a US colony, and not an official state. Originally from the Philippines, the family was relocated to Hawaii in 1920 by the US-led Philippine colonial government so that the artist’s great grandfather Cayetano Ligot could act as the Philippines’ first Labor Commissioner in Hawaii. The colonial connection established a commodity: knowledgeable farmers from the sugar plantations in the Philippines, previously run by Spanish colonizers, were capitalized on by the US to work on the sugarcane plantations in its new acquisition of Hawaii. The accompanying video merges ethnographic archival footage (a commentary on the colonial movement shown by speeding up and slowing down both image and sound) with images of the brutal Hanapepe worker’s strike and Misa’s personal family photographs.

Untitled (Sakada), 2012/2022



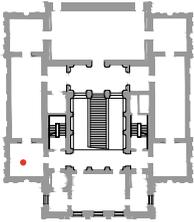
ANNA DAUČÍKOVÁ

Moscow/Sunday/Women, 1989–1990

24 c-prints, unframed, black/white, 50 x 40 cm each

Upbringing by Touch, 1996

5 c-prints on aluminium, 80 x 82 cm each



In the installation *Moscow/Sunday/Women*, Anna Daučíková shows the absurdity of modernist working times. While Sunday is considered a day off for workers, it is an extremely busy day for women, who do the invisible work of caretaking. At the same time, Sundays open the public space to an almost complete absence of men. In Daučíková's installation, the woman from Eastern Europe, a racist leitmotif of the 1990s, turns from a figure marked by patriarchal possessive individualism, to one that can selectively escape it. In *Upbringing by Touch* we see an intimate relationship, a body embracing an interface, a glass plate that brings the viewer of the image into close proximity, as if the distance to the person depicted has been completely eliminated, yet at the same time made recognizable. Here, the separating screen, the display of the image, marks the impossibility of taking possession of the female body, but at the same time also the production site of an ownership that does not produce a possessive individual, but a connection to the object, a relationship.



Moscow/Sunday/Women, 1989–1990



Upbringing by Touch, 1996



PEGGY BUTH

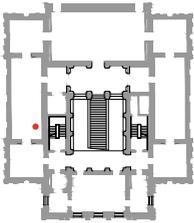
“Wes’ Brot ich ess, des’ Lied sing ich noch lange nicht” Chor Tor 1 Rheinhausen

From the three-part work series: *Vom Nutzen der Angst*, 2019/2022

Newspaper, 51 x 35 cm, 8 pages, 4-colour, 2nd edition

Concept: Peggy Buth und Till Gathmann

Editor: Susanne Holschbach



“Wes’ Brot ich ess’, des’ Lied sing ich noch lange nicht” Chor Tor 1 Rheinhausen is part of the series *Vom Nutzen der Angst* (*The Politics of Selection*). In this installation, Buth focuses on the Krupp AG corporation and the labour struggles in the German cities of Essen and Duisburg-Rheinhausen. Text and image material from the corporation’s newspaper is brought together with flyers and magazines published by the striking workers in a montage that includes song lyrics from the worker’s choir, founded during the protests. After Krupp AG announced the closure of the steel factory in Duisburg-Rheinhausen in 1987, a labour struggle began that lasted until 1993, the longest strike in Germany’s post-war history. Just as the steelworkers’ struggle represents a revolt against Krupp AG’s practices of possessive individualism, Buth’s montage shows a revolt against the order of signs of possessive individualism by placing the language of the dispossessed (or those to be dispossessed) into the larger context of capitalist production, ideology, and liberalism.

WES' BROT ICH ESS', DES' LIED SING' ICH NOCH LANGE NICHT

**Chor Tor 1
Rheinhausen**

1987

1987

—1988

1988

1988

1988

1988

Liedbuch des Chores

1988

Liedbuch des Chores

1988

—1993

1993

“Wes’ Brot ich ess, des’ Lied sing ich noch lange nicht” Chor Tor 1 Rheinhausen, 2019/2022

WES' BROT

ICH ESS',

DES' LIED

SING' ICH

NOCH

LANG!

NICHT!

Chor Tor 1 Rheinhausen

Grundsätze für den Chor „Tor 1“ Rheinhausen

1 Der Chor ist in Hinblick auf seine Geschichte und seine Aufgabenstellung im Rahmen des Vereins „Leben und Arbeiten“ in Rheinhausen ein politischer Chor.

2a Mitglied des Chores kann jeder werden, der Freude am Gesang hat (keine Altersbeschränkung) und sich mit den Zielen und Programmen des Chores einverstanden erklärt.

2b Ausdrücklich ausgenommen werden Mitglieder radikaler Parteien und Organisationen.

3 Lieder und Programm: Über Lieder und Programm entscheidet der Chor in demokratischer Abstimmung. Vorschläge dazu können von jedem Chormitglied gemacht werden.

4 Auftritte: Der Chor entscheidet über der Annahme oder Ablehnung von Auftritten nach entsprechender Diskussion und Überprüfung der terminlichen und technischen Voraussetzungen. Grundsätzlich abgelehnt werden Auftritte bei Parteiveranstaltungen innerhalb eines aktuellen Wahlkampfes.

5 Organisation und Leitung: Eine Chorleitung im engeren Sinne gibt es nicht. Die Organisation liegt in den Händen von den gewählten Organisatoren und den gewählten Stimmsprechern. Diese Wahl kann auf Antrag auf jeder Versammlung des Chores neu erfolgen.

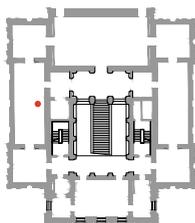
5b Die künstlerische Leitung des Chores hat Annegret Keller

5c Sprecher des Chores und Verbindungsleute zum Vorstand des Vereins „Leben und Arbeiten“ sind im Regelfall die gewählten Organisatoren, es kann aber auch jedes andere Chormitglied als Sprecher des Chores fungieren.

DANICA DAKIĆ

Čistač/The Cleaner, 2019

Single-channel video, colour/sound, 16:9, 17:33 min



Čistač/The Cleaner is part of the Zenica Trilogy, a series of works in which Danica Dakić investigates the utopias of the Bosnian city of Zenica (lit. “pupil” of the eye). Not only was Zenica a burgeoning industrial centre in socialist Yugoslavia, it was also an architectural model of a modern metropolis. Since the Bosnian War, it has experienced the downsides of modernity in the form of extreme environmental pollution and collective resignation. In *Čistač/The Cleaner*, the artist follows Ismet Safić, who has been voluntarily cleaning the streets of Zenica every day for more than twenty years. Ismet’s brother Adil appears as a second protagonist and narrator. With the sounds of a hospital dialysis machine in the background, Adil describes his brother’s work, his own political commitment, and how his body is being cleansed by the machine. In their own way, the two brothers, who came to Zenica as war refugees, are assuming responsibility for shaping their environment in the face of disillusionment, loss of property, and unemployment. An oversized model of Walter Gropius’s unrealized *Total Theatre*, on display in the urban space, opens another venue for reflecting on the individual and the city, progress and machine. Dakić uses the artistic means of documentary film and staging to envision a utopian Zenica together with her unsung heroes – a poetic and political act of social activation.



Čistač/The Cleaner, 2019



picture mining, 2006

INES SCHABER

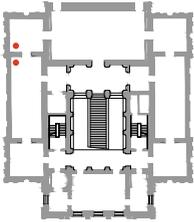
picture mining, 2006

6 photographs, black/white, framed, 48 x 58 x 2 cm each

Selected from Lewis Hine's series *Coal mines. Child labor at coal and zinc mines in the United States* made for the National Child Labor Committee, Library of Congress, Washington, DC

9 photographs, framed, 129 x 94 x 4,3 cm each

Video, colour/sound, 3:2, 14 min



Ines Schaber's work *picture mining* examines the rights of use and ownership of images, using the example of a series of photographs taken by Lewis Hine in 1911 as part of his work for the US National Committee Against Child Labor in the USA. Schaber traces who used and exploited the images and how. Part of the investigation includes a trip to a former limestone mine not far from where Hine photographed a group of children working in a coal breaker. The former limestone mine, now used to store and preserve films, photographs, and documents, was also used for some time by Bill Gates's stock image company Corbis to store their photographic originals. In addition to this collection, the agency mainly sold digital rights to online images (including the rights to Lewis Hine's series of child miners). *picture mining* thus overlaps various representations of labour and exploitation, the work with coal and lime, and the exploitation of the representation of images of such labour today.

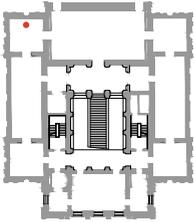
Hine's photographs usually focus on the faces of the people he depicts. It is socializing photography, guided by the belief that making social problems visible can play a role in changing them. Hine's photographic subjects are usually looking directly into the camera – they address the viewer without accusing or asking for sympathy. Hine creates portraits of people who had previously not been shown in photographs, or have hardly been represented at all. For Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, to whom Schaber refers in her work, faces are “abstract machines” of white surfaces and black holes, norm-making machines that repeatedly establish references to a norm face. Seen this way, Hine's portraits could be described as images of limit-faces, of borderline faces that – at least in Hine's time – challenged the familiar face and its norms.

See Ines Schaber,
Notes on Archives 3.
Picture Mining, Berlin:
Archive Books / Graz:
Camera Austria, 2019.

WIDOWS OF MARIKANA

Bodymaps, 2013/2014

14 paintings, framed, oil pastels and food colouring on paper, each 100 x 80 cm



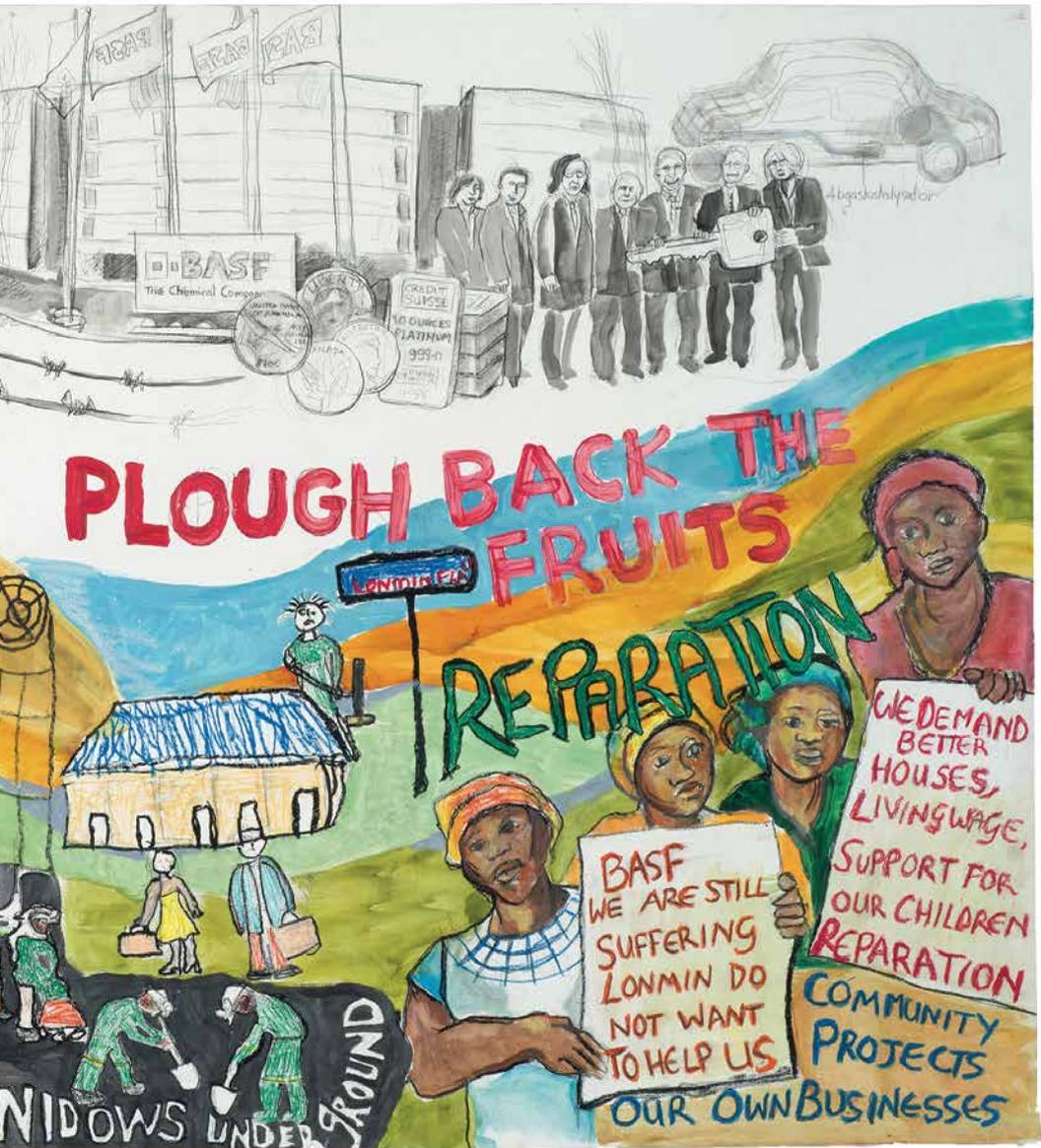
The Widows of Marikana work with means of visual storytelling. The collective consists of the partners of mine workers, who were shot dead by police in Marikana, South Africa in 2012. The voices of the relatives were marginalised in the aftermath of the massacre and not invited to participate in the investigation commission. In their own words, they were “treated like stones”. With *Bodymaps*, created in collaboration with artist and activist Judy Seidman, they have gained attention and a voice. The paintings take the body outlines of the artists as a starting point – the bodies speak with facial expressions, posture, arm position, the use of colour. The new cartographies created in this way restructure the space of racist exploitation of resources for the global economy by foregrounding the role of Black women in this exploitative system. The widows tell of their struggles to be compensated, and how they were forced to accept the invitation to replace their husbands in the mine to support themselves and their children. The images of the widows of Marikana level accusations at European resource policies: Platinum, one of the world’s most valuable metals, is a component of every automobile’s catalytic converter. BASF, the world’s largest manufacturer of catalytic converters, is the Marikana mine’s primary customer. The work of the widows of Marikana tells the story of how the people who dig this precious metal out of the earth for a flagship German corporation live in slums without running water, electricity, or sewage. The new cartography is a practice of Art for National Liberation, a movement that emerged during the liberation struggle against apartheid in South Africa.



Ntombizile Mosebetsane, from the series *Bodymaps*, 2013/2014



Widows of Marikana
Plough Back The Fruits, 2015
150 x 280 cm





The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland, 2018

KARRABING FILM COLLECTIVE

The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland, 2018

Video, colour/sound, 16:9, 26:29 min

Screening: 25.3.2022

In a dystopian world poisoned by industrial waste, Australia's indigenous people are the only ones who can survive – only *white* people are attacked by toxic mud, indigenous people are spared. *Mermaids* is a futuristic film which tells of the horrors of environmental destruction and lasting effects of colonial dispossession. It is constructed using hyperreal images from the present that show the colonial and industrial exploitation of the continent. These images are bathed in colour filters and infused with the narratives of mystical beings, shifting reality to an in-between space that allows the colonial and racist foundations of possessive individualism to be reflected. There is the story of a boy separated from his family to perform experiments upon him, highlighting the cruel politics of re-education through the separation of indigenous families throughout the last century. But there is also the story of a recurrent looking away by state-supported systems (such as health care), which draws attention to late liberalism as a technology of government.

HIENDL, KNAK, REIFLER AND BERGMANN

Songs for Captured Voices, 2021

60 min.

Concept & Composition: Laure M. Hiendl

Concept & directed by: Philipp Bergmann, Thea Reifler

Text: Gökusu Kunak

Vocals: Elaine Mitchener

Performance: 25.3.2022

The performance *Songs for Captured Voices* features the voices of soldiers from the British and French overseas colonies who were interned in the Brandenburg prisoner-of-war camp Wünsdorf during the First World War. Hiendl, Knak, Reifler and Bergmann worked with sound recordings made at the time by linguists for pseudo-scientific purposes, which are accessible in what is now the Lautararchiv of the Humboldt University in Berlin. While little is known about the individuals whose voices were recorded, vocal archives of the present serve to establish their identity with more precision. The Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF – Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge) started using voice recognition software to determine the origin of refugees in 2017. This involves the recognition of dialects, creating racist attributions that have political consequences for the asylum seekers. In this project, the artists trace the history of the racialized classifications of body and voice, and the property relations associated with them. While detainees were literally stripped of their voices in order to create a racially based vocal archive, the patterns of classification derived from this are now translated into digital tools that perpetuate the racist colonial order of the past in a migratory regime. *Songs for Captured Voices* will be performed by Elaine Mitchener, an experimental singer, dancer, and composer.







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Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic* and Alexandra Gamrot

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Žarko Čulić (p. 38), Dmitri Djuric (p. 70–71),
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Hayden Phipps und Whatiftheworld Gallery
(p. 4–5, 33), Zoran Shekerov (p. 39),
VG Bild-Kunst Bonn (p. 59), Davor Žižić (p. 40)
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Exhibition
WHITENESS AS PROPERTY

Racism and Ownership
Künstlerhaus,
Gesellschaft bildender Künstlerinnen
und Künstler Österreichs
12.2.–6.6.2022

Curated by

Ana Hoffner ex-Prvulovic*
after the text of the same name by Cheryl I. Harris

Organisation

Peter Gmachl

Production

Vinzent Cibulka, Gerald Rossbacher
and Art Consulting & Production

Communication, PR, and Art Education

Alexandra Gamrot, Julia Kornhäusl, Daliah Touré

The Künstlerhaus thanks the artists for their works
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Artistic Research Conference

Künstlerhaus,
Gesellschaft bildender Künstlerinnen
und Künstler Österreichs
25.3. and 26.3.2022

Panel discussions with the artists of the exhibition
Screening of *The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland*
(2018) by the Karrabing Film Collective

Performance by Elaine Mitchener: *Songs for Captured
Voices* (2021), musical theatre by Laure M. Hiendl,
Göksu Kunak, Thea Reifler und Philipp Bergmann.

In cooperation with Universität Mozarteum Salzburg.

