

REPRESENTATION UNDER ATTACK



A PUBLICATION OF L'INTERNATIONALE BOOKS

REPRESENTATION UNDER ATTACK

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INTRODUCTION

Following the attacks on the creators of the controversial satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* in Paris in January 2015, the shootings at a debate on free speech in Copenhagen, the punishment of the rights activist and blogger Raif Badawi in Saudi Arabia, and the subsequent massive civil mobilisation, the cultural field is forced to process the significance of these events and their wider implications for our work. In Paris and many other instances across continents, representation itself came under attack. Arguably, the field of representation has been in crisis for some time, yet the current context demands that we consider this crisis from different perspectives and historical frameworks. As the public platform of a confederation of museums and art institutions, *L'Internationale Online* has commissioned a series of opinion pieces that comment on this complex situation in order to start a wider discussion from different cultural and geopolitical contexts. We invited contributors to consider the issues at stake: from questions of manipulated archives and how access to historical documents might play a role in attacks on

representation, to what kind of manipulation and victimisation strategies attacks such as these engender.

While working on this special issue, *L'Internationale* was confronted with another intricate and tragic case of the politics of representation. A few months after the Museo Reina Sofía was subjected to legal attacks due to the work of *Mujeres Publicas* in the exhibition *Really Useful Knowledge*, the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA) became embroiled in a struggle surrounding the censorship of the work of Ines Doujak and John Barker in the exhibition *La bestia y el soberano* (*The Beast and the Sovereign*). To our great regret, the fire turned inward, where a conflict between the director and curators about the contents of the exhibition resulted in the resignation of the director and the dismissal of the two curators. The museum now finds itself searching for new leadership and direction. *L'Internationale Online* will publish comments on these events in the coming months.

In her contribution “The Myth of Unfamiliarity” based on the attacks on *Charlie Hebdo*'s editorial



team or the less recent “war on terror”, Banu Karaca exposes how power shapes the conditions of production and circulation of images. She proposes to consider free speech as a terrain of struggle in which freedom of expression is in constant need of discussion in terms of power, place and history.

Theoretician Anej Korsika decides to grasp the deeper historical rootedness and ideological substance of so-called “freedom of speech” and its media and social visibility in his contribution “Bourgeois Censorship: No Representation Without Taxation”. Korsika points to a few examples taken from the recent history of controversial censorships related to the freedom of information circulation (Edward Snowden, most notably), and to the well-known but still “horrific discrepancies” between the media coverage and response to the events such as the *Charlie Hebdo* attack or Boko Haram’s slaughter of 2000 people in northern Nigeria. The question for him lies in “how to make the social body self-conscious and build such forms of self-representation and self-understanding that will breach the everyday consensus and representations as reproduced and imposed by mass media”.

In “Syria as a Global Metaphor”, Yassin al-Haj Saleh places under-representation within contemporary Syrian society under scrutiny. This occurs

with regards to the labour of the Syrian citizens, their political participation, and the conceptual and aesthetic representation of their reality. Al Haj Saleh takes the Syrian example as a metaphor for a global crisis of representation, one which needs a global solution. “Modernist forms of representation need to be replaced, and the first step towards reconstructing an alternative field of representation is recognising that the responsibility is global”, he writes.

Observing the brutality of the “politically expressive selfie” in Western democracies, André Lepecki analyses a form of fascism in “Under Attack (or Expression in the Age of Selfie-Control)”. “The difference between fascist formations of expression now and in 1939 is simply this: it is no longer the masses that are pushed by power to express themselves in pogroms, book burnings, lynchings even when they are denied rights of free expression; but rather it is that monstrous apparatus of subjectivity known as the Self that is constantly pressed to express.”

The international initiative Agency’s artistic contribution, “Assembly (L’Internationale)”, reports on a legal case in Australia. An indigenous elder was charged with theft of the Australian Coat of Arms, while he claimed his action was in response to the fact that his people had never been asked for the right to use images of two animals that are sacred to them. His



lawyer's attempt to transfer the case into the field of copyright law turned out to be unsuccessful.

Through the lens of “Representation Under Attack”, *L’Internationale Online* offers the first in a series of transversal presentations of L’Internationale’s member institutions’ collections and archives. The selection of several artworks and events, compiled by Diana Franssen (*L’Internationale Online*, Van Abbemuseum) with help of Sezin Romi (SALT), Igor Španjol (MG+MSUM), Jesús Carrillo (*L’Internationale Online*, MNCARS), Lola Hinojosa (MNCARS), Jan De Vree (M HKA) and Nav Haq (*L’Internationale Online*, M HKA), looks critically for evidence of actions that highlight the limits of museological and bureaucratic protocols in relation to artistic freedom from the perspective of the institutions themselves.

Among the authors invited to blog for *L’Internationale Online*, both Tamara Díaz Bringas, who analyses Tania Bruguera’s current charges in Cuba, and Nazım Hikmet Richard Dikbaş, who writes about “the Saturday Mothers”, relatives of the Armenian intellectuals who were killed during 1990s in Turkey, bring concrete examples of the complexity and currency of attacks on the field of representation.

—Editorial Board of *L’Internationale Online*



REPRESENTATION UNDER ATTACK

UNDER ATTACK
(OR EXPRESSION
IN THE AGE OF
SELFIE-CONTROL)

ANDRÉ LEPECKI

The description of one of the basic principles through which fascism implements and sanctions violence was given point blank by one of its most astute observers, Walter Benjamin. Writing in 1939, he observed how fascism grants “expression to the masses — but on no account granting them rights”. It is not too farfetched to say that this is a situation we are perhaps heading towards in our Western democracies where one is constantly *encouraged* (not to say coerced!) to endlessly *express*. The difference between fascist formations of expression now and in 1939 is simply this: it is no longer the masses that are pushed by power to express themselves in pogroms, book burnings, lynchings even when they are denied rights of free expression; but rather it is that monstrous apparatus of subjectivity known as the Self that is constantly pressed to express. Or, more accurately and contemporarily, the selfie is granted endless opportunities, but not necessarily the rights, of expression.

Why is it that the self is being reified and pushed from all sides of power (governmental and corporate)

to constantly be in a state of *expression*? And why is this self-expression at the core of the entire corporate-governmental machine of screenal ‘social-networking’ — where the entire Internet is turned either into a 24/7 mall of *everything* imaginable, or into a platform for an apparently unstoppable expressive proliferation of selfie-images?

Might it be that this double movement is the necessary slow infusion of a *multitudinal fascism*, a fascism for our current times where the people or the masses no longer hold as *expressive* political categories? A fascism in which the main concern is to ensure that life and subjectivity does not find *freedom of expression* but gets mesmerised in and by a weak image of freedom understood as the corporate offering of screenal occasions for ventilating to the world so many *self-centred expressions*? Might this corporate-governmental offering of opportunities for self-expression as expression of nothing other than selfies, be the necessary operation that power finds to mask the otherwise blatant corrosion of rights in our Western democracies (human rights, civil rights,



worker's rights, rights on freedom of expression) — a corrosion that has been implemented as badly and barely justifiable 'exceptional measures', or 'temporary emergency measures' by our democratically elected governments and that remain in effect not for weeks, not for months, not for years, but for decades? Indeed, the vast majority of contemporary Western democracies confirm Giorgio Agamben's diagnosis made already twenty years ago: they exist by implementing a regime of permanent exceptionality, of permanent executive and legislative lawlessness. This is how the implementation of torture and target assassinations, secret surveillance and extraordinary renditions, the starting of wars without legally declaring war, and the defrauding of public treasuries in order to exceptionally secure corporate private profits also express a self-centred logic where above all politics must be a politics of little selves and their self-centred violences.

In the highly policed zones of corporate- and governmentally encouraged self-expression (YouTube, Facebook, Google+, Instagram, Twitter, whatever), where control and disciplined technologies of subjectification fuse with such extraordinary efficiency in a new theatrics of the self, an image of freedom (of expression) gives itself to view as an endless stream of more or less grotesque, more

or less innocent, selfies expressing nothing other than individualistic self-expression. Brian Massumi reminded us a few years ago, that when we "ask an individual to express him or herself, what comes out is a cliché". In this case, the maximal cliché of our contemporaneity is the individualisation of maximal violence. In this sense, I see no difference in nature between so-called 'Middle Eastern' violence and 'Western' violence; European neo-liberal violence and South American governmental violence; Muslim fundamentalist violence and European nationalist violence; police violence and gang violence; violence against representation and violence against participation. All of these violences produce and promote, express and reproduce the conditions under which the proliferation of the fascist multitude — fragmented, aestheticised, individualised — appears as a generalised political-aesthetic project for exercising not freedom of expression, but above all, the multitude's selfies. Between them, only degrees and modes of suffering change.

Ours is then the age of proliferating little freedoms, so necessary for the permanent securitisation of life typical of the 'control societies' identified by Michel Foucault and theorised further by Gilles Deleuze. What neither one of them could have anticipated in the late 1970s or in the late 1980s, is that





British Prime Minister David Cameron, US President Barack Obama and Denmark's Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt pose for a selfie during the memorial service for Nelson Mandela in Johannesburg, South Africa. December 10th, 2013. Courtesy Vantage News.

those many little freedoms that societies of control implement to insert ever more control at the very heart of subjectivity, turning control into self-control, would find a new expressivity thanks to the transformation of the old ‘Self’ — that discipline had both to build and to supervise — into a proliferation of individualised selfies — that above all must permanently produce images of themselves. Just as Deleuze commented to Antonio Negri on how, “compared with the approaching forms of ceaseless control in open societies, we may come to see the harshest confinement as part of a wonderful happy past”, it may very well be that one day we will regard the Self as a structuring component of an order of sociability and subjectivity more resistant to fascism than its little insidious-expressive version, the multitudinal selfie. Thus, compared to what Benjamin had witnessed in the 1930s, it is no longer the masses, but the multitude that becomes the vehicle for a contemporary reinsertion of fascism’s fundamental mechanism: to grant the opportunity for expression (of the personified self), but not the right of expression (of articulated, impersonal, and critical-political alterities).

And what can a little self, a selfie in the age of epideictic paroxysms, do once it finds spaces for little expressive freedoms even if these spaces exist in the hyper-supervised, highly policed, corporate

electronic-panopticum? Most often, it affirms to the maximal degree, it imposes with shameless fundamentalism, its utter self(ie)-convictions. “Come and express yourselves to the World!” — this is the call that almost no one seems to be able to resist. We are confronted with a very odd situation: thrown into the vortex of total individualism under the name of self-determination, self-righteousness, or self-justice, the proliferation of actions where personal convictions are opportunistically set into motion in a simulacrum of sociability known as ‘social networks’ result in the organisation of individual acts of extreme violence emerging as *another* side of the multitude, its electro-photo-micro-fascism. No longer organised guerrilla *groups*, no longer terrorist *cells*, but more and more lone or solitary, self-centred agents of revenge, more and more selfies corporealised in non-screenal life in order to affirm through their individual violent acts, against life and against art, that the selfie is not impotent, that it is not just an image, that it has the capacity to impose total violence — in the name of fundamentalist religiosity (*Charlie Hebdo*) or in the name of extreme-right national politics (Anders Breivik in Norway).

The brutality of the politically expressive selfie (whether in Islamist or neo-Nazi militancy, whether in racist police brutality in the United States or



European neo-colonialist racisms) is not unprecedented in its choreographies and imaginations. Decades of Hollywood movies and TV series have not only conceived and rehearsed its scenarios of utter violence and violations (whether by governments or by solitary wolves taking justice in their hands), but most importantly, such monomaniacal repetition of the same has constructed *acquiescent subjectivities*, a kind of *somnambular subject* for whom absolute violence taken by an individual has been reified as pertaining to the very condition of being human. Here, once again, images and imaginations function in tandem with our particular formations of selfie-expressions of violence. Indeed, from the most innocent of animated movies for children to the most explicit Hollywood thrillers, there has only been *one* plot over the past three decades. It goes like this: regardless of who you are and where you live, how polite, educated, sensible, ethical, innocent, fragile, coward you are, one day — delicate princess in some castle or scarred war veteran isolated in some cabin in the woods, white middle class housewife in New York City or black successful doctor leading a happy bourgeois life in Los Angeles —, one day you will find yourself in a situation in which you will have to take matters in your hands and perform an act of unthinkable violence that you had never thought you

would be capable of — an act against the law, but in the name of justice. It matters little if this action is the little girl pushing some wicked witch into a bottomless fall, or the good doctor stabbing to death his foe in a bloodbath of close combat. Violence is for all to take, to partake in, and in partaking, to enact, one day, given the right *opportunity*. Deadly violence is the avatar of the selfie, it's potential energy. This is how the state of exception becomes a personal politics of the selfie.

It may be too pessimistic a view. But, it may also be that “The organization of pessimism is the only order word which prevents us from perishing,” as Pierre Naville wrote already in the 1920s in *La Révolution et les intellectuels*. Indeed, before the recent obscene usurpation of ‘hope’ and ‘yes we can’ and against the corporate-governmental impulse to ‘connect the world via the Internet’ as a way to more policing, and against the demands to ‘express oneself’ as the normative aesthetics of the individual, it may be useful to critically activate the word “pessimism”. Here, we return to Walter Benjamin, cartographer of fascisms. Already in 1929, in his essay on Surrealism, Benjamin sees pessimism as an urgent project: political, theoretical, critical and aesthetic. “Pessimism at all levels. Yes, certainly and totally. Suspicion about the destiny of literature, suspicion



about the destiny of freedom, suspicion about the destiny of European man, but above all triple suspicion before all accommodation: between classes, between peoples, between individuals. And unlimited confidence on IG Farben and in the pacific development of the Luftwaffe...” In a horrific twist that further reminds us how pessimism is never radical enough, Michael Löwy makes this devastating comment regarding Benjamin’s only two glimpses of “confidence” or optimism in 1929: that not even Benjamin — “the most lucid of pessimists” — would foresee that IG Farben would develop the infamous Zyklon B component, used in the gas chambers of Nazi death camps, and that the Luftwaffe would start raining hell over most of Europe just a few years later.

Before the world wide web of extreme and deadly attacks on art and freedom, on art as expression of freedom, on art as practice of freedom, a grounded, methodical and radical pessimism might offer a way out of the fascism of expressing selfies. As Löwy writes: “Benjamin’s revolutionary pessimism (...) has nothing to do with fatalist resignation. It is evidently not a contemplative sentiment, but of an *active pessimism*, ‘organized’, practical, turned completely towards the objective of *impeding*, by all means possible, *the advent of the worst*.” Radical pessimism as a joyful force affirming a new assemblage between

art and thought, art and politics, politics and freedom, art and freedom — an assemblage that nevertheless must not be confounded with a new, if negative, disguise for optimism, particularly the optimistic selfie expressing its little freedoms of extreme violence 24/7.

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BOURGEOIS CENSORSHIP: NO REPRESENTATION WITHOUT TAXATION!

ANEJ KORSIKA

What exactly is under attack when freedom of speech is under attack? At first glance this appears to be a simple, even trivial, question, one so strongly rooted in common sense and so self-evident that even children could answer it. Indeed they could. In *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, Georg W. F. Hegel wrote: “... in the case of various kinds of knowledge, we find that what in former days occupied the energies of men of mature mental ability sinks to the level of information, exercises, and even pastimes, for children...”. Freedom of speech does appear to be such a pastime.

This very appearance is however, highly misleading and a sign that we are already deep in the realm of ideology. Not that we could ever be outside it, as Louis Althusser would add. When a certain social norm achieves the status of an axiom, even a dogma, it becomes clear that it is itself one of the bedrocks of an ideology that makes the norm a matter of common sense. Something so strongly embedded in general consciousness becomes a matter of children’s wonder. Only children can afford to question such truths,

until they become self-evident for them as well, until ideology and its apparatuses have done their job. What better ideological defence is there than posing a fundamental problem as a non-problem *par excellence*, it is an art of hiding in plain sight. Freedom of speech is such a problem, worth unravelling.

The massacre of *Charlie Hebdo* editorial staff is an event that offers an entry point in our effort to grasp the deeper historical rootedness and ideological substance of so-called “freedom of speech”. A rare sight of political unity followed the attack, a march that “united” Angela Merkel, Benjamin Netanyahu, Mahmoud Abbas, François Hollande and dozens of other high-ranking politicians. If anything they reinforced the belief that freedom of speech is so inherent in the system that it transcends unbreachable political differences. Less than a year after a horrendous siege of Gaza, both Netanyahu and Abbas took it as their duty to participate in the march and condemn the attacks. It was a telling political manifestation that showed just how unipolar the world we are living in is. The very same streets that saw the protests of



May 1968 have now witnessed the unforeseen political unity and universal devotion to the freedom of speech...or so it seemed.

Under the surface however, a more sinister face of this “political unity” reveals itself. How something is represented and the issue of representation as such is at the very heart of the matter. Historically freedom of speech and other bourgeois rights, i.e. freedom of press in general, freedom of religious conviction, freedom of gathering etc., are all inextricably tied to the issue of social visibility. A new vision of society was built through the struggle for the universal rights of everyone and the dismantlement of divine rights of any one person. An abstract vision turned towards the future, as well as a concrete vision turned towards the present. How society was visualised and represented as such began to change dramatically as the transformation from feudalism to capitalism was taking place. Eventually it became possible for many different voices to get their social representation and visibility. The social body grew new mouths through which new and competing perspectives began to emerge. Polyphony took over where monotone once prevailed. One can hardly imagine the wheel of history turning back and shutting these newly emerged mouths, especially when the ruling elites so energetically protest on

their behalf and for their right to be represented (as was the case for *Charlie Hebdo*).

Again, with closer inspection, this polyphony appears to have a very monotonous core, the common denominator of all the different voices appears to be very similar. Despite many voices speaking, only a few are actually heard and have a decent representation. Where there was once silence imposed by very visible and well-represented authorities, such as the monarch in the time of feudalism, a cacophony of a multitude of voices now prevails. This cacophony still performs a very similar function as the modern sovereign, i.e. prime minister, president etc. It is just background noise, like the sound of television or radio that we don't actually listen to and doesn't affect us, but we can claim is always there. The ruling voices thus still enjoy an immensely predominant representation, while still being able to claim that the cacophony of different kinds of noises that form its vocal background never stops. The efficiency of such rule is perhaps even greater than it would have been if contemporary forms of power only resorted to traditional means of coercion and subjugation. Not that there is any lack of these.

Past years have shown that despite fundamental changes in the structure and technology of power, when push comes to shove even governments that





Free spech, by FUKT. Newtown, Sydney. Courtesy Richard Tulloch.

proclaim themselves to be proponents of liberal democracy don't hesitate to employ more traditional means of coercion. At least three such notable cases are well-known and documented, the case of Bradley Manning, Julian Assange and Edward Snowden. All three have called upon themselves the wrath of the most powerful democracy of all, the United States of America, after revealing disturbing confidential information that revealed how free the contemporary freedom actually is. Especially the case of Snowden and the unimaginable almost sci-fi surveillance performed by the N.S.A. (National Security Agency), revealed that governmental control, especially one performed by the most “advanced and powerful democracies” in the world, creates entirely new and much more disturbing patterns of control and representation among government and its citizens.

From the perspective of everyday life, especially as represented by mass media and the media industry, the above-mentioned cacophony of voices can be grasped and articulated. Though citizen journalism, alternative and crowd founded media do exist, they permanently face hardships such as lack of funding, lack of professional infrastructure etc. Many of these can be breached with the ingenuity, devotion and pioneering spirit of their creators, but they obviously have their limits. No alternative media

production can compete with the mainstream giants such as CNN, Fox, BBC, Reuters and others. Their voice is substantially more powerful, not just due to professional infrastructure and framework, but especially because they are able to determine what is and what is not worth reporting about. One striking example was during the case of *Charlie Hebdo*. While justifiably condemning it, mass media almost completely ignored, and in any case did not devote any way near similar attention to, the slaughter by Boko Haram of some 2000 people in northern Nigeria that occurred at the same time as the Paris attacks. Such horrific discrepancies happen daily and are, at the end of the day, conscious editorial decisions, especially because they form a consistent pattern that repeats itself over and over again. In turn, these editorial decisions are conditioned by the socio-economic interests of the ruling elites, both those with political as well as those with financial power. From their perspective, this pattern in fact shows some “rationality”. Of course, these elites have no interest in giving critical and alternative voices the hearing they deserve and of course their vital interests are much more endangered by the death of twelve in Paris than the death of 2000 in Nigeria.

Netanyahu and Abbas jointly marching for “freedom of speech” thus actually marched for the



freedom of the existing system to reproduce itself, for its vital interests to be safeguarded. Another perspective from which to grasp the cacophony of the many voices and their representation are the practices of the American N.S.A. The common argument against being too worried about state surveillance was that nobody would actually take interest in our boring lives and that one has nothing to fear if he or she does not do anything illegal. With Snowden's actions, such conceptions have lost their ground. There is no single mind or a decision-making body that separates interesting and potentially illegal activities from the harmless everyday life of average citizens. At least in this regard, the U.S. government is absolutely indiscriminatory — each and everyone is surveyed. Simply because each and everyone can be, the technology for such unimaginable data gathering exists and is intensely used. The information' is then stored and can be extracted at will, more so, these digital voices and footprints don't need to be just a cacophony of millions and millions of voices, the governmental agencies can make very good sense of them. Their power to use meta-data and synthesis to form a very clear representation of a certain voice is breathtaking.

The well-known American slogan during the independence movement against the colonial yoke

of the United Kingdom was: “No taxation without representation”. As such it can embody the whole bourgeois emancipatory project and a critique of feudal reign that eventually had to give way to a new production system, i.e. capitalism. Turning the slogan around, “No representation without taxation”, illustrates the contemporary, bourgeois forms of subjugation and censorship. One can speak, but whether one will be heard and actually represented remains a matter of accepting the specific bourgeois taxes that are in stark contrast with their declared goals and ideals. Mass media are “taxed” and impregnated by capitalist ideology and are, like other industries, internally structured as a factory. There is always an owner that wields immense power over the whole production process (the most striking example being Rupert Murdoch and his global media empire) and there are ordinary workers who have nothing to sell but their labour power, i.e. articles, reports, analyses etc.

Bourgeois freedom of speech is like Franz Kafka's parable “Before the law”. Man waits in front of the door to gain entry to the law, but the doorkeeper keeps telling him that he cannot enter just yet. Waiting for weeks, months and years he eventually waits so long that he is about to die. Asking the doorkeeper why no one else wanted to enter, the doorkeeper answers: “No one else could ever be



admitted here, since this gate was made only for you. I am now going to shut it”. This embodies the tragedy of contemporary forms of wider media representation, of the content that would produce something new, instead of just reproducing the old. It is as if we are all condemned to permanently wait in front of the doors of representation only to have them closed and access denied. Perhaps these doors can be broken and torn down as was the case in the series of upheavals known under the name of Arab Spring, in the ongoing protests against austerity measures in European Union, or in the case of the massive Turkish protests? None of these has actually brought about the fundamental change people were and still are aspiring for, if anything they have shown that old power structures are much more resilient than one would imagine. Perhaps even more importantly they showed the immense power people yield when they gather and struggle for a common cause.

Social networks proved an effective means of mass communication and mobilization. The real challenge is how to channel and articulate this discontent and anger further, how to make the social body self-conscious and build such forms of self-representation and self-understanding that will breach the everyday consensus and representations as reproduced and imposed by mass media. One thing

is certain; only people themselves will be able to produce people’s media.

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REPRESENTATION UNDER ATTACK

SYRIA AS A GLOBAL METAPHOR

YASSIN AL-HAJ SALEH

The Syrian population has long suffered from under-representation. Three instances of under-representation can be pinpointed: it occurs with regards to their labour, their political participation, and the conceptual and aesthetic representation of their reality.

These are interrelated. Devaluing labour was associated with crippling the political power of the labour community. By labour community I mean the majority of Syrians living off their work in contrast to rentiers, power holders and their kins, and administrators of corruption mechanisms. The process of devaluing labour was also associated with reducing the political agency of the public, while empowering the familial and oligarchic authority. This authority depends on sectarianism as a tool of governance and as a source of easy political revenue. These processes were accompanied by the censorship of the ways Syrians express themselves, and the conceptual and artistic representation of the reality/ unreality compound (the possible, the hoped-for, the dreamed-of, the ideal) which they live in. This has involved incapacitating artists, writers and cultural

workers, and subordinating them to the dominant network of the wealthiest and the politically powerful.

For decades, the independent means and venues of expression were banned, and the public means of expression were “nationalised”, imposing what Kelly Grotke named a “depopulated discourse”¹ which stripped speakers of their personal tone, and ostracised those who maintained theirs. The most prominent Syrian writers have published their works outside the country, or have lived abroad. The writer who resisted and crossed the assumed red lines underwent varied levels of threats and deprivation, ranging from threatening security calls to passport denials and travel bans, all of which I and many Syrian writers and artists have experienced directly. In some cases, ostracisation reached imprisonment for years.

1. Kelly Grotke is a writer and intellectual historian, and 2015-6 Fellow at the Cornell Society for the Humanities. In 2010, while working at the Erik Castrén Institute of International Law and Human Rights in Helsinki, she visited Syria, and looks forward to returning someday. Grotke K. 2014, “What gets lost: Impetus”, *Humanity*, blog, 10 June, viewed 7 April 2015, humanityjournal.org/blog/what-gets-lost-impetus.

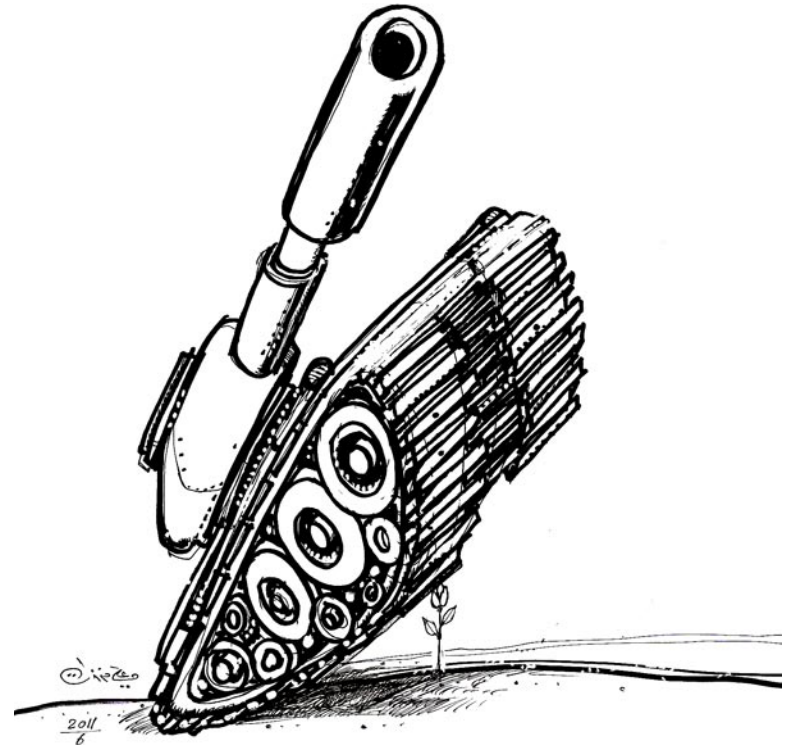


The Syrian revolution that erupted in 2011 showed the concealed connection between these three levels of under-representation and challenged them. Syrians protested against tyranny, and expressed themselves as people who want to overthrow a regime that deprived them of politics. They attacked the “thieves” who robbed them, especially Rami Makhoulf the owner of Syriatel, a mobile network provider and numerous other “modern” projects. As a cousin of Bashar al-Assad, he represents the bond between “obscene wealth” and kinship to the ruler. The protestors represented themselves: they used Makhoulf’s mobile phone cameras to share photographs and videos on social media networks, and send them to satellite television channels; they bore banners with their demands and chanted in

peaceful demonstrations that lasted for 15 months (from March 2011 until July 2012); they produced articles, posters, graffiti, films, songs, paintings and cartoons.

The regime responded brutally. The internationally-known Syrian cartoonist Ali Ferzat was kidnapped early on in the revolution, severely beaten up, his fingers broken, and abandoned in a remote

2. For useful information: Halasa M. 2012, “Ali Ferzat: In His Own Words. On art, censorship, freedom and the revolution in Syria”, *Nafas Art Magazine*, July, viewed 7 April 2015, universes-in-universe.org/eng/nafas/articles/2012/ali_ferzat.



Ali Ferzat made this drawing after his broken fingers healed, 2011. Photograph: Ali Ferzat/Mosaic Syria Ali Ferzat.

place.² A large number of the young members of the Coordinating Committees, who coordinated protest activities and organised the media coverage of the demonstrations and the regime’s violent reactions, were arrested and tortured, and many of those who survived had to flee the country. The artist Asim Basha

3. Samar Yazbek, *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*, trans. M. Weiss, Haus Publishing, London, 2012.

4. Samih Choukeir's song, "Ya Heif", viewed 7 April 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVC-hPDky7M

could hardly reach his hometown of Yabroud to store his sculptures in a safe place. The actor Fares al-Helou witnessed the art workshop he had been working on for years being shattered. Since his life was at risk in Damascus, he was forced to seek refuge in France. The nov-

elist Samar Yazbek had to flee to France where she published her book *A Woman in the Crossfire: Diaries of the Syrian Revolution*.³ Samih Choukeir was told by regime agents that he cannot return to the country unless he disowns his song "Ya Heif" (loosely translated: O Shame).⁴ Now he lives in France. The actress Mai Skaf was advised to leave the country. She was told that the advice came from Bashar al-Assad himself. The actor Zaki Kordillo and his son Mehyar were detained two and a half years ago. Their conditions and whereabouts remain unknown. There is still no information about the poet Nasser Bondok, who was arrested over a year ago.

A large number of citizen journalists were killed. In some cases, the last thing they filmed was their own murder by a sniper's bullet. The fate of Mohamed Nour Matar is still unknown. His camera was found charred after a car was exploded by Da'esh (ISIS) in Raqqa targeting the Free Syrian Army in August 2013.



Samih Choukeir's song, "Ya Heif", viewed 7 April 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=eVC-hPDky7M

The Syrian diaspora was the precondition for the emergence of what can be called tele-cinema. The director Ossama Mohammed, who has been living in France since May 2011, made his film *Silvered Water. Syrian Self Portrait* (2014) based on "a thousand pictures and a picture" uploaded to YouTube by Syrian activists, many of whom were anonymous, as well as on videos captured by Wiam Simav Bedirxan, who lived in besieged Homs until she was forced to leave the country in 2014.⁵ Muhammad Ali Atassi did the same in his

5. Badt K. 2014, "Filming Killing: 'Silvered Water, Syria Self-Portrait' by Ossama Mohammed and Wiam Simav Bedirxan", *Huffington Post*, The Blog, 22 November, viewed 7 April 2015, www.huffingtonpost.com/karin-badt/filming-killing-silvered_b_6203380.html.



Silvered Water. Syria Self-Portrait, a film by Ossama Mohammed and Wiam Simav Bedirxan (Syria and France, 2014). https://youtu.be/a9Mo6OUF_Hg



Our Terrible Country, a film by Muhammad Ali Attessi and Ziad Homsy (Syria, 2014). <https://youtu.be/QJM1gCUNUJI>

documentary film *Our Terrible Country* (2014) where Ziad Homsy took the responsibility of filming in Douma, Eastern Ghouta and Raqqa, before he moved to live in exile, as well.⁶

On the other side, there is a professional machine toiling to produce the representations that the regime wants the world to see. A pro-regime Syrian filmmaker, Joud Said, used a regime tank in Homs to make a film criminalising the revolution. Writers, poets and artists appear on the official media platforms where they cannot say a single word about the chemical massacre, the explosive barrels and torture in the security branches. The pro-regime British journalist, Robert Fisk, was able to ride in an armoured car embedded within the regime's army as it stormed the town of Daraya and committed a massacre killing more than five hundred locals in late summer 2012. At the same time, Fisk was granted "unprecedented access" to a high-security Syrian prison and was allowed, by the intelligence services, to interview prisoners who told the narrative that pleases the Syrian regime.⁷

6. Bello G. 2015, "Syria in its Own Image. Grace Bello interviews Mohammad Ali Attasi", *Guernica*, 16 February, viewed 7 April 2015, www.guernicamag.com/interviews/syria-in-its-own-image/.
7. For a critical evaluation of some of Fisk's articles: Allaf R. and Saleh Y.H. 2012, "Syria dispatches: Robert Fisk's independence", *Open Democracy*, 14 September, viewed 7 April 2015, www.opendemocracy.net/yassin-al-haj-saleh-rime-allaf/syria-dispatches-robert-fisks-independence.

8. For more knowledge about the human rights activists abducted in Douma, see many articles, statements in many languages, photos, graffiti, on this dedicated blog: douma4.wordpress.com/, viewed 7 April 2015.

The abduction of human rights activists and the most credible “documenters” of the crimes committed mainly by the regime, Razan Zeitouneh, Samira al-Khalil, Wael Hamadeh and Nazim Hammadi, by Islamist Salafists aimed to impose a particular political and informational representation of Eastern Ghouta, an Islamist one.⁸ The traders linked to the same group accused of kidnapping the four activists have the monopoly on food supplies. This connection is not surprising.

The cultural field of representation is inseparable from the fields of economic and political representation, and one can't be studied in isolation from the others.

I am trying to point out a reality that has now lasted for two generations, undermining the political, material and cultural “security” of the life of Syrians. Da’esh (ISIS) builds on this long-standing confiscation of all forms of representation: the political representation of the public, the just representation of human labour, artistic and intellectual representation. Likewise, Da’esh annihilates women’s images and voices, preventing them not only from representing themselves, but also from being themselves.

Da’esh is not an alien phenomenon, coming from another planet. On top of being the byproduct of a prolonged deprivation of representation in the region (Iraq, Syria, Gulf States...), it is also the outcome of the under-representation of the region at international level. As well as that of many unsolved problems of a monotheistic religion, Islam. Da’esh, and the Islamist ghost as a whole, is a power in this world and from this world.

The attacks on the field of representation are one aspect of a global crisis of political, economic and cultural representation. The crisis in democracy manifests itself in different ways: in the existence of large misrepresented, or completely unrepresented, areas and populations in the world, such as the Middle East and the territories of the Russian “Empire”. This crisis also appears in the deeply undemocratic nature of the international system, exemplified by the Security Council and the Group of Eight (G8). Furthermore, this crisis emerges in the oldest centres of democracy. In the centralised republican French and the multiculturalist Anglo-Saxon model, development of the security apparatus takes precedence over creating new genuine forms of political representation and participation in a time of growing global hybridisation. In addition, there is a crisis in representing human labour embodied in the neo-liberal policies and the



dismantling of syndicates and workers' unions; as well as a crisis in culture expressed by postmodernism and the rise of nihilism.

In this sense, Syria is a metaphor for a global crisis of representation. This global crisis needs a global solution: a global reconstruction of the field of representation which is exposed to attacks from within; it is not a matter of defending it against alien barbarians. Modernist forms of representation need to be replaced, and the first step towards reconstructing an alternative field of representation is recognising that the responsibility is global; the enemies are from this world; they came from within, not from without. So it is not us versus them. It is us versus us. Secondly there could hardly be a better beginning than justice in the Middle East, especially for Syrians, Palestinians, Iraqis and Kurds. If you want to do something useful but do not know where to start, recognise and be in solidarity with their struggle for representation.

Translated from Arabic into English by Murhaf Fares.



REPRESENTATION UNDER ATTACK

THE MYTH OF UNFAMILIARITY

BANU KARACA

Je marche, mais je suis conscient de la confusion et de l’hypocrisie de la situation.¹

(Slogan held up on a poster by a participant
during the Paris “Unity March”, 11 January 2015)

The attack on the cartoonists and the editorial team of the satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo* on 7 January 2015 and the two days of violence that followed it have produced outcries and protests around the world. News coverage and commentaries have wrestled with the event, at times escaping to facile assessments, and at others, attempting nuance and calling against oversimplification. One assessment, however, stood out quite early on, and is likely to hold ground: the notion that this was an attack on freedom of expression. Questioning what was the

‘ultimate’ target of these acts of violence has been especially poignant, and, perhaps particularly complicated for those working in

1. “I am marching, but conscious that this situation is full of confusion and hypocrisy.”

the field of arts and culture. By raising the question of the ultimate target, I do not mean to discount, dehumanise or abstract the lives that were lost, the persons who were killed in the offices of the magazine, the police officers, and the hostages at the kosher supermarket, but to open up a series of issues that the attacks have painfully brought into focus. I want to suggest that it might be helpful to think about the attacks as aiming against the entrenched conditions that enable a certain repertoire of representations and their circulation, beyond the question of whether publishing depictions of the Prophet Muhammad is right or wrong. Some of these issues might seem self-evident at first, but are still worth unpacking with regards to their less scrutinised facets.

The attack on *Charlie Hebdo* was not iconoclastic in the sense that it did not aim to destroy specific images – a possibility foreclosed by the fact that they had long been distributed as well as by their reproducible quality – but against the producers of these images, to kill, annihilate them. One could argue that the attack was hence deterrent in nature, designed



to discourage future images. But this possibility seems too narrow, and I will try to detail this point in a moment. The attack was at once precise and yet arbitrary in its address, not only because it involved victims that were not formerly selected but who by way of their duty, or coincidence, were caught in the line of fire (although surely the singling out of the kosher deli for hostage-taking was intentional). This arbitrariness of violence is manifest in that it met primarily unarmed persons, civilians who were going about their everyday lives. As such, the Paris attacks – albeit on a different scale – mirrored the experience of civilians in the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, wars that have been legitimised in the name of freedom, democracy and human rights. Their deaths have been grieved differentially – or not at all (Butler 2008); they have been made invisible in categories such as “collateral damage” that are portrayed as unavoidable in operations of war and in the “targeted killings” of “imminent threats” through drone strikes. Or, more recently in Syria, they appear to us as anonymous victims of seemingly ‘incomprehensible’ and ‘utterly foreign’ sectarian violence. Collapsing the purported difference between war and terror, the Paris attacks drew on a repertoire that is quite familiar to us, even if under divergent ideological propositions. Not unlike the leftwing armed struggles in

Europe, the United States and Japan of the 1960s and 70s, they “brought the war home” (Varon 2004). This was after all what the militants of the Red Army Faction in Germany, the Weather Underground in the U.S., and the Red Brigades in Italy sought to do. They brought the Cold War, mostly fought through proxies in South America, Asia and the Middle East, into the centres of the ‘West’.

First Al Qaida, and now ISIS, have reminded us once more that every war is also a war of images (Sontag 2003). Although the image production of the ‘war on terror’ in its latest incarnation is more controlled than previously (exemplified by the restrictions on showing returning coffins of U.S. military personnel), infrared pictures of bombings and drone strikes, of prisoners in orange jumpsuits and sensory deprivation gear at Guantanamo Bay, just as the images of the World Trade Center are all part of war-making, terrorism and counter-terrorism. The Paris attacks produced their own kind of images, representational vehicles of disturbing efficacy that added another layer to the visuals of ISIS’s violent exploits posted on social media that include executions of journalists and aid workers, and atrocities against local populations. If we see representation – the image – at the centre of the Paris assaults, then it is in this rather complex configuration.



To consider the attacks in Paris, and shortly after, in Copenhagen (14–15 February 2015), as ‘war brought home’ works against the puzzlement expressed by the ‘West’ that suggests that such violence is both ostensibly foreign and unconnected to its own sphere, and territory. As Teju Cole has noted with regard to this puzzlement in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* attacks: “[...] at moments when Western societies consider themselves under attack, the discourse is quickly dominated by an ahistorical fantasy of long-suffering serenity and fortitude in the face of provocation” (Cole 2015). This ahistorical fantasy has led to identifying the Paris attacks as assaults on free speech which is considered to be an accomplishment of the Enlightenment and thus – so the argumentation goes – at heart a European value. To cling to this argument, however, is to (re)invest in the “grand illusion” of Europe (Judt 1996). The invocation of thus construed ‘European values’ has helped facilitate the project of Europe (and its political manifestation in the European Union) by obscuring its very own violent collective past: the history of class divisions, religious warfare, the atrocities of colonialism, two World Wars, and the complicities in National Socialism and fascism across the continent. It relegates violence to ‘barbarism’, exerted by those who are not us, who are far away, and who



Chto Delat? Study, Study, and Act Again, 2011–2014. Photo: Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid / Joaquín Cortés, Román Lores.

appear to us only as aberrations in our midst. This aberrant quality tends to be projected onto the figure of the ‘immigrant’, who is deemed either ‘incapable’ or ‘unwilling’ to integrate into the majority society. These constructions deny that what we call freedom, liberty, and welfare is predicated on histories of violence that continue to reverberate in wars abroad and structural violence at home, that these histories of violence in their colonial and imperial formations have long connected us – and intimately so – with seemingly far-flung places around the globe. ‘Our modern values’, and the privilege constructed from

them, are indebted to these histories of violence that are in constant need of disavowal. It is this denial that keeps the myth of unfamiliarity with the Other and with violence intact.

The expletive that this was an attack against free speech is not dissimilar from George W. Bush's infamous post-9/11 formulation that "they", i.e. the terrorists, "hate our freedom". Seemingly more sophisticated, the discourse of free speech as an intrinsically European value – and a fulfilled one at that – remains nonetheless wedded to asymmetrical representations of the world, of 'West' and 'East', Christianity and Islam. Talal Asad and Roger Owen once aptly described these kinds of representation as seeking "to describe Islamic political life by looking for absent kinds of concepts – 'liberty,' 'progress,' 'humanism' which are supposed to be distinctive of Western civilization" (Asad and Owen 1980, p. 35). Postcolonial theory has argued that it is in asymmetrical representation that power lies. It strikes me that, more than anything else, power was at the heart of the Paris attacks. Amongst the images produced by the attackers is a video recording in which Amedy Coulibaly talks about the coordination of the impending assault, before attacking the kosher deli: "You get to decide what happens on Earth? Is that it? No. We are not going to let it happen. We are going to fight."²

This question of power shapes the conditions of the production and circulation of images that I referred to above.

However, postcolonial and feminist critiques have also taught us that we can work against notions of radical alterity by revealing forgotten histories, obscured encounters and connections that allow us to understand the past and envision the future in a different manner. The phenomenon of the Islamic State has been the latest instalment of configurations of violence that show us that learnt ignorance of history is no longer a luxury anyone can afford, that we need to account for the conditions that have enabled its emergence, conditions that are rooted in colonial encounters as much as in the "Green Belt doctrine" of the Cold War.

Artistic expression has been a powerful vehicle in enacting these critiques of representation, recovering these connections, and opening imaginative horizons. Yet, the institutional outlets for arts and culture have had greater difficulties in this process, especially in their search for funding (on European Union level and beyond) where ideas of 'multiculturalism' and 'tolerance' still abound and continue to frame the field, regardless of individual intentions. These frames are themselves entrenched in the "global hierarchy

2. The video can be accessed at www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jan/11/paris-gunman-amedy-coulibaly-allegiance-isis (viewed 7 April 2015).



of value” (Herzfeld 2003) that continues to pervade the transnational circulation of contemporary art through dichotomies of ‘East’ and ‘West’, ‘ethnic art’ and ‘art proper’, ‘artistic centres’ and ‘peripheries’. These dichotomies persist despite Edward Said’s *Orientalism* (Said 2003) and the critiques of visual representations of the Other it has inspired, and despite the fact that the end of such hierarchisations has been postulated many times over.

These conditions have a certain seductiveness that calls us back to well-rehearsed positions of privilege, positions which demand political transformation without putting ourselves at risk. But giving into this call leaves us trapped within the liberal framing of freedom of expression which, infused with the performative repertoire of ‘tolerance’ (Brown 2006), ultimately skirts questions of justice and equality, displacing them instead onto discourses of diversity.

This is not to say that freedom of expression is not under attack, for it is under attack across borders and in different manifestations. Censorship (on- and offline) and restrictions on freedom of information present grave impediments to a whole range of rights struggles of very real and great urgency today. But rather than presupposing that free speech is a clearly defined ‘thing in itself’, a determinable endpoint, it might be helpful to see it as a terrain of struggle in

which freedom of expression is in constant need of discussion in terms of power, place and history. It is in this struggle, in creating the conditions for debate along these parameters, that freedom of expression is located. Thinking of free speech in this manner might be a way out of its liberal trappings, a way in which we can march without a sense of hypocrisy, and, perhaps, a way to break indeed unfamiliar ground.

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**CHAINED REACTION:
FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION,
HISTORICAL CENSORSHIP
AND OPPOSITION
MOVEMENTS**

NAZIM HIKMET RICHARD DIKBAŞ

Introduction

A number of interrelated observations are made by thinkers who want to form an opposition movement in Turkey, which would both develop a thought/praxis that can propose definitions, analyses and solutions to real problems, and appeal to the wider masses. Oft-repeated, and sometimes tainted with pessimism, I would like to begin by summarizing these observations:

- a. The thought and praxis of opposition parties/movements, whether small or large, although different in terms of content on appearance, does not differ in form, style or approach from that of the ruling party. This is a problem we confront not only in the outlines of their policies, but also, and perhaps as a more burning issue, in their internal organization and communication.
- b. There is a tendency to act as if the present government is the source of all current problems.

(The trouble is, the same tendency existed in the previous period, and the one before, and the...)

- c. 'A return to the past' is frequently proposed as an alternative. (Yet what exactly this past, or ancien régime, is or was, remains unclear.)

Freedom of Expression

The list could go on, additions could be made to each argument. In this article, I will try to focus on a fundamental issue that lies at the heart of this state of affairs, namely, access to information. The right and freedom to access to information is directly related to the freedom of expression. Freedom of expression is generally perceived as a freedom related to expressing views here and now, and there are many obstacles in front of immediate freedom of expression in Turkey that deserve long debate, however, the problems I listed briefly above indicate that the issue runs deeper, and



that we need to look at the formation stage of views—both those of the government and opposition—and how their structure and style takes shape.

In my previous blog I discussed how a number of issues – the right to the city, environmental consciousness, the protection and expression of identities, bottom-up administration as opposed to top-down administration, and the coexistence of different ideas within the social movement—that were previously trivialized and often not even considered as subject matter of politics assumed a leading position both in thought and practice during the Gezi resistance, and that this had initiated a critical transformation. However, it would be unfair to expect this transformation to spread across a wider, and more permanent field of opposition, and it would also mean overlooking the concrete obstacles that stand in the way of such a development. We need to look at these obstacles that prevent the expansion of the civilian field.

Censorship and Disinformation

The Gezi resistance grew around a just cause, many different sections of society took part in the resistance, and it was said that many people were

becoming politicized for the first time. As for the government's/state's response to Gezi, widespread and systematic disinformation regarding the events was a method applied by the authorities that drew an incredulous reaction perhaps as much as intense police violence. Fabricated stories about protesters attacking a woman wearing a headscarf in the Kabataş district of Istanbul, or protesters entering a mosque with their muddy shoes caused great aggrievement among protestors, of course, protestors also made fun of these slapdash, inconsistent stories, but when the pro-government mainstream press presented these claims as unquestionable facts, and refused to retreat even when concrete evidence proved otherwise, the sense of injustice was exacerbated.

The protection of police violence with a shield of impunity on the one hand, and this incessant wave of disinformation on the other, with the addition of large-scale corruption scandals that emerged in the months following Gezi—which the government tried to repel and cover up with similar disinformation methods—and repeated failures in a foreign policy based on a faux-heroic discourse and shady collaborations are the most recent achievements of the current government. At this point, and in contrast to the traditional press that is to a large extent



loyal to the government’s line, the role of the Internet and social media, where information can circulate freely, in providing information and critique is invaluable. The question, then, is this: Is this landscape a new one? Does this almost complete disregard, distortion and falsification of information, accompanied by systematic persecution against those who want to access and propagate information constitute a nightmare that Turkey has faced for the first time during what the government has proudly coined the era of a ‘New Turkey’?

Official history

In modern nation-states, national identity is shaped around a narrative of official history, and let us not fool ourselves, it is not possible to claim that even states considered most economically and socially ‘developed’ have managed to face all the terrible pages in their history, and treat all minorities and identities in an equal manner. As the protests that began in the USA following the protection of the police officer responsible of Mike Brown’s death grow, in Turkey today, the court case of Ali İsmail Korkmaz, murdered in Eskişehir by the police during the Gezi resistance continues under shameful circumstances. There is

a clue for the purpose of this article in the fact that while pro-government mainstream media in Turkey remains completely silent regarding the trial of Ali İsmail Korkmaz, or the trials of other protestors murdered or injured during Gezi, it provides wide coverage of the protests in the USA as if to say, “See, it happens over there, too.”

We could extend the list of trials the mainstream media never covers: The cases of the Saturday Mothers, who gathered for the 500th week in Galatasaray Square in Istanbul last month, are among them. The Saturday Mothers, formed by the relatives of people who lost their lives in around 800 cases of forced disappearance that took place between 1992 and 1996, were presented with the Hrant Dink Award last year: Hrant Dink was an Armenian journalist and leading intellectual who was murdered in 2007 in Istanbul, in front of Agos, the newspaper he founded, and his assassination is also among cases which remain unresolved. When the Saturday Mothers, and those who stand in solidarity with them, meet every week, they do not only commemorate and carry the images of their own relatives, but also of many other people who lost their lives because of state violence, including the Armenian intellectuals who were summoned from their homes on 24 April 1915, that is recognized as the date the Armenian Genocide began,



and murdered; Mustafa Suphi, the leader of the Communist Party of Turkey, and his comrades, who were murdered in 1921, and the author Sabahattin Ali, who was murdered in 1948, at the Bulgarian border.



Saturday Mothers of Turkey, on their 422th gathering, commemorated 220 Armenian intellectuals detained and vanished by the order of Ottoman officials in 1915. Image taken from İstanbul - BIA News Desk. www.bianet.org/english/minorities/146209-saturday-mothers-commemorate-armenian-intellectuals-of-1915

The commemorations carried out by the Saturday Mothers with stories, photographs and the participation of people from different generations point to a different history, a history radically different from the official history that began to take shape before

the establishment of the nation-state, and was finalized within a rigid discourse in the Republican period and imposed upon the public as the one and only version of history beginning from childhood through the system of national education. One could say that certain adjustments have been made to this narrative during the terms of different governments, but these adjustments are defined and restricted by a struggle for political power and proximity to the state. The Union and Progress Party was persecuted by and eventually dethroned Sultan Abdul Hamid II, however, Talat Pasha, one of the party's leaders, once boasted, regarding the Armenian Genocide, that he had "in 3 months sorted out a problem Abdul Hamid could not in 30 years" thus exposing the continuity of their policy. The current President Tayyip Erdoğan, during his term as Prime Minister, once took part in journalist Mehmet Barlas' television programme, where, eager to blame the CHP - the former ruling party, and the main opposition during his term—for all past evil, included the September 6-7 1955 Istanbul Pogrom against minorities, which was planned and implemented by the state, among the crimes of the CHP. When Barlas hesitantly whispered that the Pogrom had taken place during the term of the Democrat Party led by Prime Minister Adnan Menderes—often proudly named by Erdoğan as his party's political

predecessor—an uneasy silence pervaded the studio.

Today, the pressure and control the state and government exert over information is broadening beyond the most critical and central field of history. In addition to the imposition of the narrative of official history, both the institutions and content of modern education and the press face censorship, or distortion. This is not a new process; it is the continuation of and a new stage in a restriction that has been in force for a long time. Censorship targets an increasingly wider field, from school course books to the publishing sector, and from traditional media to the Internet. In recent days, we have witnessed the prohibition of the entry of popular comics magazines into prisons, the blockage of access to the Vagina article of Wikipeidi, the Turkish Wikipedia, and a blanket ban in the press on reports regarding the four ex-cabinet ministers involved in the corruption scandal.

There is a direct connection between the deletion of information carried out by official history and these more current processes, and this connection needs to be indicated. Real democracy does not take root when what is said to be a bad or inaccurate narrative by one group of people is replaced by what is said to be a good and correct narrative by another, it is established only when all obstacles before access

to information are lifted for all citizens, and especially that information they will refer to when forming their identity, history, and world. In our current age, when material restrictions regarding access to information are being lifted thanks to new means of communication, in order to strengthen this awareness that will take shape around the freedom of expression and the right to access to knowledge, we must expose censorship applied not only today, but in the past, too. Opposition movements can then decide which of their current views and practices they will leave aside, and which of them they will carry into the future.

#freedom of expression
 #right to access to information
 #Gezi
 #Ali İsmail Korkmaz

Posted on November 26, 2014.



**CLUB SILENCIO
AND THE EMPTINESS
OF THE SQUARE
(REGARDING TATLIN'S
WHISPER)**

TAMARA DÍAZ BRINGAS

In a memorable scene from *Mulholland Drive*, the main characters walk into Club Silencio just as a magician on stage is warning against the illusory nature of representations. “*No hay banda!* There is no band”, he says. The words “there is no band” were echoing in my ears recently as I tried to accompany *Tatlin's Whisper* #6, which Tania Bruguera began around 30 December and the Havana's Plaza de la Revolución.

“There is no band” could be a reference to the lack of broadband on the island; the limited Internet access that was certainly a barrier to spreading the call for participation in Havana. Nobody found out, nobody was listening. Nonetheless, in the absence of communication networks, word of mouth is a powerful weapon in Cuba. In 1989, word of mouth and a couple of posters were all it took to spread a call for participation in the baseball game that brought together a substantial number of artists, critics, curators, art student and other agents from Cuba's art world. A cursory comparison of these two gestures, both of which were calls for freedom of expression,

inevitably leads to a pessimistic reading of the present situation: “There is no band.”

To reread the past in order to imagine another possible future. To look to actions such as *La plástica joven se dedica al béisbol* (Young Artists Take up Baseball) in order to open up the possibility of collective, political expression. This was the aim of a recent text¹ about the Ball Game and about some works, exhibitions, and contexts in Cuba in 1989. But the Cuban art scene changed beyond recognition with the exile of almost an entire generation of artists and the consolidation of an art market that was undreamed of in the eighties. Even so, I think that revisiting the Ball Game in relation to the recent call for participation launched by Tania Bruguera can help us to interrogate the silence.

Although the Ball Game was organised in response to a series of episodes involving the censorship of exhibitions and projects, it would not have been possible without an arts community that shared

1. Tamara Díaz Bringas, “Nine Innings in 89”, *Art Journal*, Summer 2014: <http://artjournal.collegeart.org/?p=5429>





Ball Game, La Habana, September 24, 1989.
 Photograph Kattia García Fayat.

interests, discussions and critical strategies, and that had by then recognised a shared malaise and was attempting a common stance. In this sense, the demand for freedom of expression implicit in the Ball Game is intensified in *Tatlin's Whisper*. But there's a big leap from Echeverría stadium to Plaza de la Revolución, just as there's a big leap from metaphor to literality, from oblique to direct criticism, from a curveball to a straight pitch, from ambiguity to frankness, from antagonism against the art institution to demands for political participation.

Tatlin's Whisper is an artistic action that addresses us as citizens first and foremost. After

the announcement of the restoration of diplomatic relations between the United States and Cuba on 17 December last year, Tania Bruguera published a letter addressed to Obama, Raúl Castro and Pope Francis in which she, as a Cuban, demanded a space for participation in the decisions that affect our lives. She ended the letter with an invitation to participate in a symbolic updating of her performance *Tatlin's Whisper #6*, which had been held at the Wifredo Lam Centre during the 10th Havana Biennial in 2009. On that occasion, the work consisted of a podium, a microphone and one minute free of censorship for anybody who wanted to take the floor, as well as one white dove, two persons in military uniform, and 200 cameras. This time, it was reduced to one microphone that would remain open for 90 minutes in Plaza de la Revolución at 3 pm on 30 December. The artist's arrest along with almost seventy others before the scheduled performance reduced—or better still, expanded—the performance to an idea.

This time, political art is trying to interrupt the order of things. It is trying to disrupt designated roles that determine who can speak, when and where, which discourses can be heard and which become noise. The action did not take place, but even so its effects are certainly being felt. It seems to me that one of the most important of these is the way the

2. Juan Antonio Molina, "Tania Bruguera: El arte de la postguerra": <http://paginaenblando.blogspot.mx/2015/01/tania-bruguera-el-arte-de-la-postguerra.html?zx=45e91a9838fb5b8c>
3. Marlene Azor Hernández, "El aldabonazo de Tania": <http://www.cubaencuentro.com/opinion/articulos/el-aldabonazo-de-tania-321457>

work addresses each and every Cuban as political subjects. Not without some violence, *Tatlin's Whisper* forces us to get involved. "Power faces the opening up of a symbolic space in which every intervention is a form of participation"², art critic Juan Antonio Molina wrote recently. Beyond its summoning of the State, I think that Tania Bruguera's wake-up call³ con-

cerns us all. Nonetheless, it seems difficult to come together as an "us" in a fragmented social space in



Tania Bruguera, *Tatlin's Whisper* #6 (Havana version), 2009.

which suspicion prevails over trust and individual interests triumph over any idea of a common sphere. This neglect of the communal can be seen in Cuba's art scene, inside and outside the island.

On the afternoon of 30 December, the pro-government online channel Cuba Hoy filmed a video glorifying the Plaza de la Revolución going about its usual life, with its usual tourists having their photos taken against a backdrop of Jose Martí, Camilo Cienfuegos and Ché. "The only unusual thing" the presenter said with unbelievable cynicism, "is that some people and the foreign press actually believed the farce announced by Tania Bruguera and her team: can anybody see them? Because I can't." The square and the revolution as a political souvenir: that's we can see. But *Tatlin's Whisper* does not just call for the symbolic reappropriation of the square, the microphone, the podium, the place of enunciation; it calls for the becoming square, agora, democratic space of a place that is hyper-ideologised but empty of politics. A place where politics is choreographed but not practiced. Nobody saw Tania Bruguera's performance, but it took place nonetheless. Even in its impossibility, the gesture of the artist and the platform #yotambiénexijo (I also demand) made it possible to imagine another kind of square, to imagine a situation in which anybody could speak. Demanding

myself to have a little hope, I go back to David Lynch's film and now they are saying: "No hay banda, and yet we hear a band."

Posted on January 18 2015.



HAVANA TRIBUNES

TAMARA DÍAZ BRINGAS



Una tribuna para la paz democrática, Antonia Eiriz's powerful 1968 work, has been repeatedly invoked in relation to works by Tania Bruguera such as *Autobiography* (2003) and *Tatlin's Whisper # 6* (2009 and 2014). An empty tribune is placed before the spectator. In Eiriz's painting, an amorphous crowd waits for somebody to speak. They are only spectators. But for that brief space of time, the person standing in front of the painting assumes the place of the speaker. The five microphones point towards us, seemingly inviting us to shed the role of observer and to participate. Unlike previous works by Eiriz such as *El vaso de agua* (The Glass of Water), in which the distorted and somewhat monstrous figure of the speaker engulfs the space of the painting, this 'tribune' positions the place of enunciation outside, in the space that corresponds to us, or to our absence.

In what sense was this gesture perceived as a threat in Cuba in 1968? What ghosts did it provoke? There was no public call for participation in that work, no allotted number of minutes to speak, and nobody

1. Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba (National Union of Writers and Artists of Cuba).

2. “Antonia Eiriz: una apreciación”, interview with A.E. by Giulio V. Blanc, *Art Nexus*, July-September 1994.

ever actually said a word. Perhaps the mere insinuation that *anybody* could be in the place of the speaker was problematic. Antonia Eiriz had submitted her ‘tribune’ to the National Salon in 1968, where it came close to winning a prize until the Stalinist literary critic José Antonio Portuondo, Vice President of the UNEAC¹ at the time, appeared on the scene and condemned the work of one of the greats of Cuban art. After that episode, the artist withdrew to her home in Juanelo, where she taught and worked on papier-mâché and community theatre with local residents from her neighbourhood. She did not go back to her painting and assemblages, or exhibit again, for over twenty years. In an interview published in 1994, shortly before her death in Miami, Eiriz said: ‘When they made those comments, describing my paintings as “conflictive”, I ended up believing them. *La tribuna* for example, was on the point of winning an award but it didn’t because of the criticism. One day I saw all the paintings together for the first time in many years. I said to myself: this painting expresses the moment that I live in. A painter who is able to express the moment she lives in is genuine. So I absolved myself”.²

In that same year, 1968, a poem dedicated to Antonia Eiriz was included in the book *Fuera del Juego* by Herberto Padilla, which won that year’s Premio Julián del Casal Poetry Prize, awarded by an honest jury that did not bow to the pressures of the UNEAC. Its publication in Cuba was preceded by a reproving note in which the ‘management committee’ expressed its disapproval of these books (including Antón Arrufat’s *Los siete contra Tebas*), which it deemed ‘ideologically contrary to our revolution’, and its belief that ‘this poetry and this theatre serve our enemies, and its authors are the artists that they need to fuel their Trojan Horse when Imperialism decides to implement its policy of direct military aggression against Cuba.’ The episode known as ‘the Padilla case’ began with a book of poems, an award being questioned, and ended up with jail, the author’s self-incrimination, international condemnation by numerous intellectuals who had until then considered themselves sympathisers of the Cuban Revolution, ruptures, exiles, and so on.

There are so many years, but, alas, so few differences separating the disembodied authority of that text by the ‘management committee’ and these: ‘Official Note from the Council of Fine Arts’ and ‘Statement by the President’s Office of the Visual Artists’ Association of the UNEAC’, both released on



29 December last year, on the eve of the public call for participation in an action in Plaza de la Revolución organised by Tania Bruguera and the platform *yo también exijo* ('I also demand'). In both texts, the nameless authority that signs these official declarations refers to the action as an 'alleged' and 'so-called' performance. While the first says that it is 'unacceptable' due to its 'manipulation in counterrevolutionary media outlets', the second denounces the fact that 'the initiative has been broadly disseminated by the counterrevolutionary media.' Monkey see, monkey do. Monkey obey.

Antonia's 'tribune' is now conjured up again through Tania's, not just because of the gesture that the two works embody, but also because of the similar institutional censorship that they both came up against. The effects of the censorship are fortunately not the same in the case of the two artists, nor are the contexts in which their practices unfold: the place of the artist has changed, and so has the international visibility and support that is possible today. In a sense, I like to think that Antonia Eiriz's silence can still be heard in *Tatlin's Whisper*, and in so many other voices. 'Cuban art of recent years is in debt to her art as the art of no other country is: in its critical spirit, in its active sorrow, in its constant non-conformist vocation, the singular mastery of Antonia Eiriz is present

in Cuba as nowhere else", wrote the art critic and teacher María de los Ángeles Pereira in a posthumous tribute to the painter.

A few years ago, as part of his project *Galería I-Meil*, which involves occasional graphic and text interventions sent via email, the artist Lázaro Saavedra shared an image of Antonia Eiriz's *Una tribuna para la paz democrática*. It was a powerful gesture. The image was sent in 2008, which was the fortieth anniversary of the year that first saw, and soon forgot, the painting. But it was also the year in which Fidel Castro officially announced that he would not accept the position of President of the Council of State and Commander in Chief. Accordingly, on 18 February, the newspaper *Granma* published the last "Message from the Commander in Chief": "I am not saying goodbye to you", he wrote, "I only wish to fight as a soldier of ideas. I will continue to write under the title 'Reflections of comrade Fidel'. It will be another weapon you can count on. Perhaps my voice will be heard."

In 2008, the empty tribune may have drawn attention to the absence of that voice whose inflections, accents, and emphasis had repeatedly stood for public discourse in Cuba for almost half a century. Rather than an empty podium awaiting the commander, however, *Una tribuna para la paz democrática*



can be seen as a space that could be occupied by anybody—although not without antagonisms. I'm not really sure whether this was my reading of Antonia Eiriz's work before the last *Tatlin's Whisper*. Now it seems natural to me.

Posted on February 9, 2015.



A DANGEROUS STATE

TAMARA DÍAZ BRINGAS



Nazario, Drawing published in *El País*, 20 November 1977

Over two months after her initial arrest on 30 December 2014, the artist Tania Bruguera remains in Havana, where she has been released with charges and had her passport confiscated. A prosecutor will have to rule on the charges against her: incitement to disorderly conduct, disobedience, and incitement to commit a crime. In a statement on 4 February this year, Bruguera spoke out against the fact that for all practical purposes there is no separation of legislative, executive and judicial powers in Cuba, resulting in the extreme vulnerability of citizens like herself who are ‘victims of the abuse of state power’.

But a cursory look at the current Cuban criminal code, which includes concepts such as ‘pre-criminal social dangerousness’ suffices to show that the vulnerability of citizens is actually written into the legal apparatus itself. This is the letter of the law: Law No. 62, *Chapter XI: Dangerousness and security measures*: ‘ARTICLE 72. Dangerousness refers to an individual’s particular proclivity to commit crimes, as shown by behaviour that expressly contradicts the norms of socialist morality. ARTICLE 73. 1. Danger is

considered to exist when any of the following indicators of dangerousness is observed in the subject: a) habitual drunkenness or dipsomania; b) drug addiction; c) anti-social behaviour. 2. Anyone who habitually breaks the rules of social coexistence through acts of violence, or by other provocative acts, violates the rights of others, or who by his or her general conduct violates the rules of social co-existence or disturbs the order of the community, or lives as a social parasite from the work of others, or exploits or practices socially reproachable vices, is considered to be socially dangerous by virtue of such anti-social conduct. ARTICLE 74. Furthermore, dangerousness is considered the condition of the mentally disturbed individuals and of those mentally retarded should, by virtue of this reason, neither have the power to understand the scope of their actions nor to control their behaviour, insofar as they represent a threat for the security of individuals or of the social.'

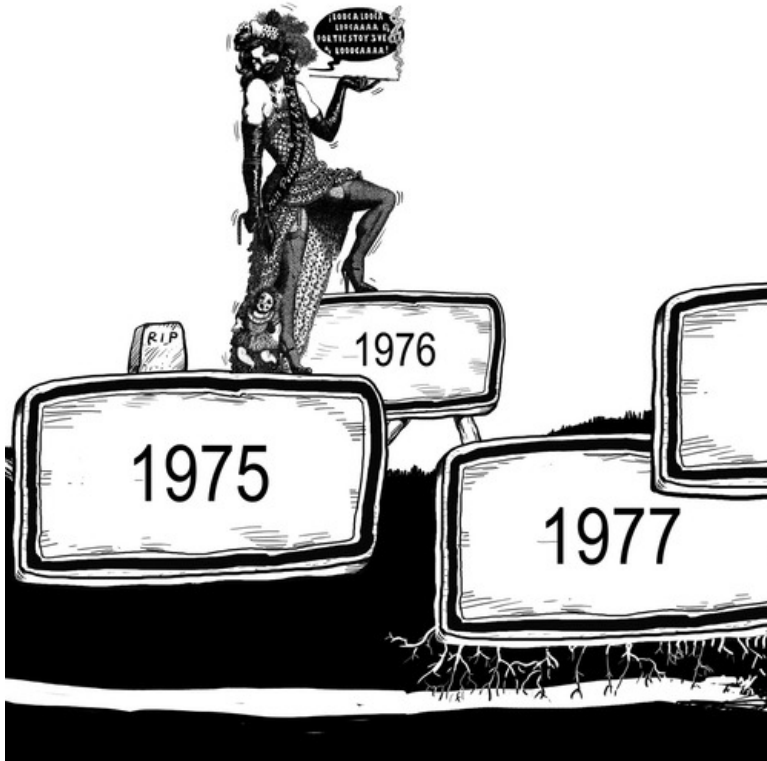
Further along, the same law lays down *the pre-criminal security measures* in ARTICLE 78: 'Whoever is declared to be in a state of dangerousness in the corresponding process shall be subject to the most appropriate of the following pre-criminal security measures: a) therapeutic measures; b) re-educational measures; c) measures of surveillance by the agencies of the National Revolutionary Police Force.'

In the final years of Franco's dictatorship, the Spanish criminal code expanded its web of control through the *Law of Dangerousness and Social Rehabilitation*, which was enacted by Francisco Franco in August 1970 to replace the *Vagrancy Act* that had been passed in 1933, and which expanded the notion of dangerousness to include: habitual vagabonds, homosexuals, prostitutes, illegal immigrants, drunkards, drug addicts, beggars, the mentally ill. The security measures stipulated by the law included confinement in 'a place of work', 'a re-education centre', or 'an internment centre until cured', 'remedial isolation', and 'submission to surveillance by the authorities', among others.

As soon as the dictatorship ended, various groups and activists fought these provisions, forcing a series of amendments to be made until it was finally abolished in full in 1995. This abolishment had been one of the principal political demands in Spain in the seventies. To this end, the first demonstration by gay, lesbian, and trans groups against the 'Law of Social Dangerousness' took place in 1977.

Curiously enough, a similar legal device was enacted in Cuba ten years later, borrowing the status of a 'dangerousness' and the assumption of a 'proclivity' for crime. From this legal vantage point, political dissidents are construed as dangerous subjects.





Antonio Gagliano, fragment of the 'MetaMap' produced in the framework of the workshop *Social Dangerousness. Sexual Minorities, Languages and Practices in 70s and 80s Spain*, directed by Xavier Antich and Beatriz Preciado in the 2008-2009 MACBA Independent Studies Programme (PEI).

And while the 1987 Cuban legislation does not directly mention homosexuality, it has nonetheless been criminalised in practice through the ambiguous potential for interpretation of the meaning of

'socialist morality'. In addition, with varying degrees of condescension, both laws include the 'mentally ill' or 'insane' person. Moreover, in both Franco's Spain and Castro's Cuba, the security measures applicable to 'dangerousness' range from therapy to intensive surveillance.

As Michel Foucault pointed out in his series of lectures entitled *Abnormal* at the Collège de France in 1974-75, the notion of 'danger' and of the 'dangerous individual' is used to justify the link between the medical and legal institutions, creating the theoretical core of the medical-legal expert opinion. The supposedly 'dangerous' individual is criminalised and also pathologized (either before or after). Some people would take Tania Bruguera's announcement that she was planning a performance in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución to be a sign that she is crazy. Where fear prevails, political disobedience appears like madness.

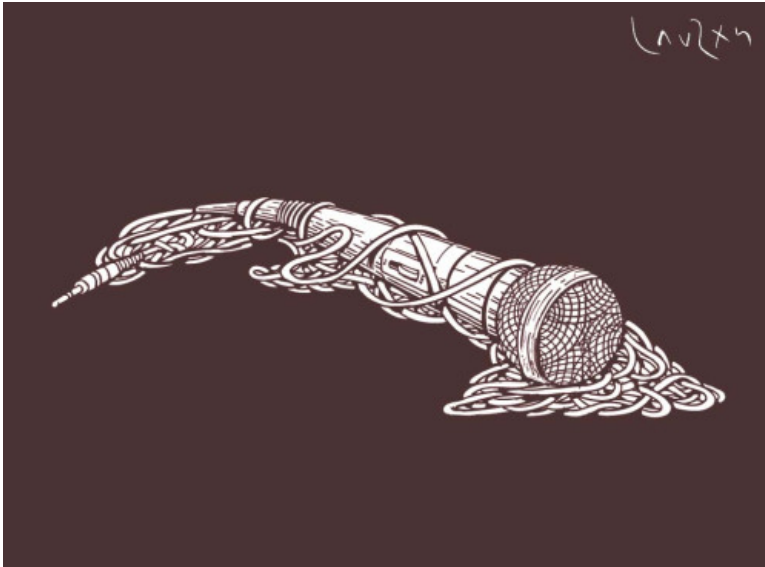
"Crazy, crazy, crazy, I'm three times craaaazy for youuuu...", sang *Miss Social Dangerousness* in a famous cartoon by the illustrator Nazario, one of the leaders of the protests by gay groups in Spain back in 1977 when Spain's legal apparatus was challenged by *sexual minorities*.

Posted on March 9, 2015.



WHO SAID FEAR?

TAMARA DÍAZ BRINGAS



Life has made them ill, they are victims
of a strange illness called pressure,
disillusionment, disgust,
called—dare I say it?—FEAR.
But... who said fear?

Virgilio Piñera, *Presiones y diamantes*, 1967

According to a widely told story, Cuban writer Virgilio Piñera publicly declared his fear during one of the meetings at the National Library of Havana in June 1961 that gave rise to Castro’s famous speech *Words to Intellectuals*, which would consequently frame Cuba’s cultural politics under the doctrine ‘Within the Revolution, everything; outside the Revolution, nothing.’ Guillermo Cabrera’s account of the incident is the most poignant and frequently repeated version. During one of these gatherings of artists and writers chaired by Fidel Castro following the censorship of the film *P.M.*, ... ‘suddenly the most unlikely person, all timid and hunched, stood up looking as if he were about to run away, stepped up to the speaker’s microphone, and said: “I’d like to say that I feel very afraid. I don’t know why I feel this fear, but that is all I have to say.”’

Perhaps these were not his exact words; perhaps they are mix of the courage shown by Piñera, the memories of Cabrera Infante, and the desire of those who invoked them like a charm in the decades that followed. In any case, the image of that fragile

body taking the floor and speaking his fear took on the status of truth among us. As the author of *Vidas para leerlas* recalls, Virgilio Piñera expressed what many others felt but did not dare to state publicly. In a small gesture, in a couple of sentences, the almost inaudible murmurings of anxiety, moods and whispers were expressed in the form of public discourse.

I allow myself to imagine a related story, in which the microphone, accustomed to passionate speeches and ovations, suddenly froze as it amplified the word ‘fear’. Stowed away in a corner of the library, more than five decades of dust settled on its case before a new impetus invited it to take a few steps outside of its lair, into Plaza de la Revolución. Our protagonist never made it out into the square on 30 December last year, but fiction allows us to revisit certain connections between the cultural field and political power in Cuba. A different set of cultural policies would probably have been implemented if those gatherings in 1961 had given rise to words *with* intellectuals rather than words to intellectuals.

We are now far from that moment of intense negotiation when many of the artists and writers gathered at the National Library shared a forthright support for the revolutionary process. As the bolero says, ‘nothing remains of yesterday’s love...’, what little support remains now is hardly forthright and by no

means revolutionary. After many of its members fled into exile or hideouts, the arts community’s official relations with the authorities are now down to little more than stale cultural bureaucracy and a few well-known figures who may or may not be convinced but are certainly not very convincing. At this stage, the field of negotiation is looking more like a stagnated game board, where each piece knows its allocated place and the narrow margins it can move within.

But let’s go back to the story of the microphone that tried to break out of the art scene and make itself heard in a more public arena, in the Plaza itself. As we know, neither the microphone nor Tania Bruguera made it to the supposed ‘agora’ on 30 December, because she was arrested by the State Security Forces. Meanwhile, rumours of a ‘dissident artist’ grew. Given the lack of news in Cuba’s official media outlets, the visibility of Bruguera’s call for participation and the effects it unleashed has depended on blogs, independent newspapers, publications in exile, the international press, and social media. And in view of the local art community’s lukewarm support, counter-information groups and political activists have stood by Tania during her long process in Havana.

Practices that are considered ‘activist’ in other contexts are ‘dissident’ in Cuba. Activists are denied the political agency that could emerge through



interaction with other similar actions or movements. Dissidents are publicly identified, discredited, and criminalised in worn out operations of social and symbolic isolation. The Cuban government has zealously exerted control over language use, so that terms such as ‘human rights’ have become unmentionable. And the epithet ‘citizen’ is now used only by police officers addressing a suspect or demanding documents. According to this logic, we are only ‘citizens’ in relation to a certain presumption of guilt.

It is thus unsurprising that the official vocabulary has replaced ‘activism’ with ‘dissidence’, a notion that, Wikipedia tells us, was used particularly in reference to the Stalinist purges from the 1930s onwards, and in Eastern Europe after World War II. In an essay about Soviet dissidence, I found a further clarification of the term, for which *The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* (1993) adds a new meaning: ‘A person who openly opposes the policies of a totalitarian regime.’

I believe that Tania Bruguera’s action needs to be understood in the framework of the long history of the relationship between art and activism, as a practice that gives precedence to social action. But I think that it would also be fruitful to occupy the idea of artistic dissidence. It seems to me that the concepts of ‘political art’ and ‘critical art’ are understood very loosely in today’s Cuba. They can include anything

from somewhat subversive gestures to political commentary transformed into the innocuous style of the market. Instead of that safety zone with stipulated limits and transgressions, the notion of dissident art could draw attention to the relative lack of artistic projects that *openly* oppose the politics of a totalitarian regime. Instead of avoiding the term dissidence and acquiescing to its official criminalisation, I suggest reclaiming it and affirming the radical nature of its dissent. And its radical fear – the fear of the writer, the artist, the activist, the citizen, the exile. ‘I’d like to say that I feel very afraid.’

Posted on March 29, 2015.



ZERO FOR CONDUCT

TAMARA DÍAZ BRINGAS



‘My boy, the disciplinary committee has agreed, under pressure from your soft-hearted teacher [...] to excuse your behaviour. Especially as you have spontaneously decided to offered your apologies. Apologies which are worthless unless repeated before your peers. We are waiting. Come now, what do you want to say?’ Tabard answers: ‘Sir, I say bull!’ In the next scene, the boys are no longer sitting obediently at their desks but running amok in the dormitory of the boarding school. And Tabard, raising a flag, proclaims: ‘War is declared! Down with teachers! Down with punishment! Up with revolution!’ In this memorable scene from *Zéro de conduite* (1933), Jean Vigo encapsulates the moment at which a disciplinary system comes up against its point of rebellion.

This second episode begins with a military parade of militiamen, tanks, and weapons of war in Havana. Fidel and Raúl Castro salute the marchers. Behind them, we can make out the poet Nicolás Guillén. The martial images alternate with footage of Susan Sontag speaking in a library: ‘Is it the militarisation in Cuba? Maybe that too. If homosexuals in

such countries are identified with women, i.e., as weak elements, and the country's ideology is focused on strength, and strength is associated with virility, then male homosexuals are viewed as a subversive element. It's an element that in itself implies that power isn't the only goal of adult life.' Later, when asked about 'the silence of certain left-wing groups', she answers: 'I think one of the left's weaknesses has always been a difficulty in dealing with questions bearing on moral and political aspects of sex. [...] The discovery that homosexuals were being persecuted in Cuba shows, I think, how the Left needs to evolve. It's not just a serious case of injustice that must be exposed, but something that compels people to take note of a lapse in the attitude of the so-called left that goes back a long way.' This interview is part of *Conducta impropia* (1984), a documentary by Néstor Almendros and Orlando Jiménez Leal about the persecution of homosexuals in Cuba.

A third episode, this time in Ernesto Daranas' film *Conducta* (2014), takes us back to the classroom, to a primary school in Havana where a meeting is taking place between a teacher, the director, some inspectors and sundry civil servants. The group is discussing whether to send a particular boy to a 'school of conduct', a supposed 're-education' centre for minors with criminal backgrounds or living

in situations of extreme social vulnerability. In the fictional film, the teacher, Carmela, defends young Chala, who lives in a highly precarious situation, in the care of an alcoholic mother. Carmela: 'The school of conduct will be another mark against him in life. It alienates, whether we like it or not. I was his mother's teacher, I've been his teacher for the last three years, I know him better than any of you.' Inspector: 'But we can't begin such a serious process and then back down three weeks later.' Carmela: 'You're thinking about what it will do to your reputation. I'm thinking about what it will do to the boy's reputation.' Inspector: 'Carmela, you know you are held in great esteem, but there's been a series of problems in your classroom. You have to realise that we can't allow it.' Carmela: 'Excuse me, but you don't allow anything in my classroom. I started teaching here before you were born.' Inspector: 'Perhaps that's too long.' Carmela: 'Not as long as the leaders of this country. Do you think that's too long?'

A similar idea of conduct runs through these three scenes of confrontation with the arbitrariness and violence of disciplinary systems. And we could add a fourth episode: The *Cátedra de arte de conducta*, which was active in Havana from 2002 to 2009. This educational programme conceived and produced by Tania Bruguera as a project for political



and aesthetic change and a space for collective discussion and social action in Cuba takes its name from those very same ‘schools of conduct’. But the glossary of the project adapts the definition to its own ends: ‘In Cuba, institutions which intend to reform or rehabilitate minors with social conduct problems, that is, disability to respect and obey the norms and rules established by the social systems.’ One of the main fields of work of the programme and its participants was to challenge those rules or laws, testing their margins and blind spots. Many of the works and exhibitions produced as part of Arte de Conducta revolved around barter, the black market, the literal or subversive application of the law, and the activation or disclosure of social relations. Through workshops, debates and exercises, the projects brought into play numerous critical tools for acting in the gap between legality and legitimacy.

The Cátedra de Arte de Conducta officially wound up in 2009, the year in which Tatlin’s Whisper #6 infiltrated the Havana Biennial. I like the idea of seeing both projects side by side, with their different temporality but a similar desire to bring about subjective and political change. For Tania, ending the educational programme also meant creating a void that was supposed to generate new desires. When Claire Bishop wrote that ‘the aim is to produce



a space of free speech in opposition to dominant authority (not unlike Freire’s aims in Brazil) and to train students not just to make art but to experience and formulate a civil society,’ she was referring to Arte de Conducta, but we could also read it in relation to Tatlin’s Whisper.

Recently, this space for freedom of speech has been restaged in numerous venues and museums around the world. The action that was censored in Havana in late 2014 has spread to New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Rotterdam, Eindhoven, Paris, Rome, and other cities. In a gesture of solidarity with Tania Bruguera, Danilo Maldonado and

all those facing charges for exercising their right to freedom of expression, the organisation Creative Time coordinated a global day of action on 13 April, and it has since proliferated around the world. The contagion effect has not yet reached Cuba, where the government's tight control over information prevents its viral spread through squares and networks. Information is a threat to a system that operates like a kind of autoimmune disease, attacking its own social body rather than protecting it. Nonetheless, as in *Zéro de conduite*, a disciplinary regime based on fear and punishment can boil over.

Posted on April 27, 2015.



REPRESENTATION UNDER ATTACK

ASSEMBLY (L'INTERNATIONALE)

AGENCY



thing 001635 (*Australian Coat of Arms*)



Thing 001635 (Australian Coat of Arms)

Following the creation of the Federation of Australia in 1901, King Edward VII granted the first official coat of arms of Australia on 7 May, 1908. The coat of arms was inspired by the 1805 Bowman Flag. On 19 September, 1912, the coat of arms was changed when King George V granted the design which remains until today. The Australian Coat of Arms consists of a shield composed of six parts, each containing a symbol for one of the state. The shield is supported by two animals, the kangaroo on the left and the emu on the right. The crest consists of the seven-pointed gold Commonwealth Star, a symbol of national unity. At the base of the shield is a scroll on which the word Australia is printed on a background of sprays of golden wattle.

In front of television cameras on 27 January, 2002, Kevin Buzzacott, an elder of the Arabunna people, removed the sculpted bronze Australian coat of arms from the western pillar outside the Old Parliament House in Canberra and took it to the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy is an embassy set up by indigenous activists on the lawn of the parliament since 1972. During celebrations to mark the embassy's thirtieth anniversary, protestors removed the Australian coat of arms from the old Parliament House. Buzzacott argued that the Commonwealth had never asked the indigenous peoples permission for to use the totem Emu and Kangaroo animals in the coat of arms. He reclaimed his tribes' Emu and Kangaroo totems.

On 27 January, 2002, Buzzacott was charged with theft. Buzzacott said he was

compelled to do this as an Arabunna elder and a custodian of heritage:

How can the custodian steal what Arabunna law says he must protect and what has been appropriated from his people?¹

Buzzacott's lawyer, Len Lindon, claimed that the court was not entitled to exercise sovereignty over the descendants of the first inhabitants of Australia and furthermore that it had no jurisdiction due to its association, and that of all Australian judges, with the crime of genocide with respect to the Commonwealth Government's 2002 International Criminal Court Act. On 30 January, 2002, the indigenous leaders in Australia and the representatives of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy lodged a writ in the High Court to prevent the Commonwealth from using depictions of the kangaroo and the emu on the Australian coat of arms, on any state property or publication. Wadjularbinna Nulyarimma, a member of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy, stated that the indigenous people have a duty of care for animals, and to make sure they are plentiful. He said this care extended to the use of images:

We have now reclaimed our sacred Emu and Kangaroo, from the coat-of-arms of the colonizers. We now reclaim what is rightfully ours, our culture, our sacred symbols, our spirituality, our right to practise our ancient religion and be governed by our laws.²

¹Lara Pullin. The queen v's Kevin Buzzacott verdict and sentence, Green Left Discussion, 2005.

²Stephen Brook. Aboriginal tent embassy declaration, Australian, 2002.

Neville Williams, a Wiradjuri Elder and land rights activist member of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy stated:

The prosecutor Mr. White speaks about the crown coat of arms, the kangaroo and emu, but this is about kinship for us, and culture, which is inherited and handed down through the generations. Our cultural objects are the footprints of our ancestors, who walked the land from when time began.³

Because the activists of the Aboriginal Tent Embassy considered these animals to be sacred, they perceived the use of them to promote the Australian state to be detestable. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy stressed that under the Australian law, copyright can only be transferred in a written license. They claimed that the Commonwealth had no document evidencing the transfer of any copyright or other intellectual property rights with regards the kangaroo and the emu graphic. ⁴ Furthermore, the Aboriginal Tent Embassy noted that:

the [Commonwealth]'s own Constitution Act provides that any compulsory acquisition of property must be on just terms and implicitly provides that any purported compulsory acquisition with no terms at all (as in this present case) is constitutionally invalid.⁵

³Lara Pullin. Aboriginal elder convicted for reclaiming cultural symbols, Green Left Weekly, 2005.

⁴Wadjularbinna Nulyarimma ex rel. Aboriginal Tent Embassy v. Commonwealth, High Court writ., 2002

⁵Matthew Rimmer. Australian Icons: Authenticity Marks and Identity Politics, Indigenous Law Journal, Vol. 3, pp. 139-179, Fall 2004

On 1 June, 2004, an indictment accused Buzzacott of theft. During a preliminary hearing, judge Terrence Connolly heard Buzzacott's arguments on certain points of law concerning the charge. Len Lindon first argued that the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory lacked jurisdiction to deal with the matter. He submitted that the Commonwealth of Australia had no lawful jurisdiction over the first peoples of geographic Australia nor over their lands and laws. Further, Buzzacott's lawyer sought to disqualify the judge and all Australian judges from the matter because of their association with the crime of genocide. This was the first case where the domestic law on genocide, created by the Australian parliament in 2002, was invoked in order to gain admission to the International Criminal Court. But judge Connolly refused to permit the intervention of persons of Aboriginal descent or to permit evidence to be given on what is alleged to be genocide. Connolly also rejected the claim of copyrights by the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. He stated that copyright law requires an expressive work to be fixed in material form and that although copyright law might protect particular artistic expressions of kangaroos and emus, it would not cover all possible expressions of these animals. It was also rejected because the High Court had ruled in a previous case that the constitutional provision dealing with "acquisition of property on just terms" does not extend to intellectual property. Judge Connolly was of the view that all the arguments put forward had no substance and he ordered that the matter should proceed in the

city Marks and Identity Politics, Indigenous Law Journal, Vol. 3, pp. 139-179, Fall 2004



normal manner for setting down for trial. On 17 September, 2004 the *Queen v. Buzzacott* court case was heard at the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) in Canberra. Judge Connolly held that:

This court cannot bring into question the basic principle of law underlying its own existence that there is but one sovereignty over the geographic entity of Australia and that the exercise of that sovereignty is governed by the Constitution of Australia so that in the case of an offense allegedly committed within the Australian Capital Territory this court has jurisdiction to try the case no matter what the racial or ethnic origin of the accused. [...] It is clearly not possible, in a court established pursuant to the constitution, being a court created to exercise part of that sovereignty vested in the Crown [...] to challenge the sovereignty of the court.⁶

The court rejected all of Buzzacott's claims. Kevin Buzzacott appealed. On 3 February, 2005, Lindon submitted two affidavits of Wadjularbinna Nulyarimma. Lindon requested that the information contained within the stated affidavits be kept secret as they contained sacred information which was yet to be approved for public dissemination by the Gungalidda elders and further that the material be sealed and viewed only by the judge. On 1 March, 2005 the *Queen v. Buzzacott* court case was heard at ACT

⁶Queen v. Buzzacott, 2004

Court of Appeal in Canberra. Judge Gray held that:

On the question of jurisdiction it can be seen that apart from the basic assertion of error on the part of Connolly J, the proposed grounds of appeal do not offer any reason why Connolly was in error in concluding as he did [...] References that are made in the proposed grounds of appeal to the International Criminal Court and to fundamental human rights do not provide grounds for demonstrating that Connolly erred in rejecting the arguments that were put to him on this aspect [...] Each of the other matters relied upon in the proposed grounds of appeal [...] are not matters which raise any question of substance and are interlocutory matters of an essentially procedural character. [...] In my view, the proposed grounds of appeal have no prospect of succeeding before the Court of Appeal. In any event, for the appeal to proceed on the matters sought to be agitated, it would constitute an unnecessary fragmentation of the criminal trial process.⁷

Kevin Buzzacott's appeal was rejected and referred back to the Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory. During the next hearing on 4 April, 2005, Buzzacott explained that the animals on the coat of arms belonged to his people and that no consent had been given to the Commonwealth to use them. He told the jury he did not steal

⁷Queen v. Buzzacott, 2005

the bronze plaque and that he was simply reclaiming what was rightfully his. He then picked up the coat of arms, which was on exhibit in the trial, and tried to leave the court room. Judge Connolly ordered court officers to prevent him from leaving. After calm was restored to the court, the trial continued. On 5 April, 2005, Buzzacott refused to appear as he was forcibly arrested at the Aboriginal Tent Embassy. On 6 April, 2005, the conclusion of the *Queen v. Buzzacott* court case was heard at the Supreme Court of ACT in Canberra. Addressing the jury, Buzzacott's lawyer Len Lindon stated:

Buzzacott, pleaded not guilty to stealing the coat of arms [...] Mr Buzzacott (and other indigenous people) say their lands were taken without their consent, their laws overridden and their cultural objects taken without consent.⁸

Lindon said that nothing had been forthcoming to show that the approval had been sought from indigenous people for the use of images of the kangaroo and emu which had been around long before European settlement. Prosecutor Jon White said:

We say it is nonsense to say that Aboriginal people have some kind of copyright in these animals.⁹

After that, the jury took about four and a half hours to find Kevin Buzzacott guilty of stealing the coat of arms from a pillar on Old Parliament House and he was given a 12-month good behaviour bond.

⁸Queen v. Buzzacott, 2005

⁹Lara Pullin, The queen v's Kevin Buzzacott verdict and sentence, Green Left Discussion, 2005



**“REPRESENTATION
UNDER ATTACK”
THROUGH THE LENS
OF THE COLLECTIONS
AND ARCHIVES
OF THE MEMBERS
OF L’INTERNATIONALE**

This first online presentation by the confederation of L'Internationale of their collections considers the collections and archives through the lens of “Representation Under Attack”. This chapter is the result and effect of the use and mode of reading of archives and collections to find traces of attacks and controversial approaches towards art and artists in relation to artistic freedom in all its forms. At the same time, it looks critically for evidence of actions that demonstrate the limits of museological and bureaucratic protocols from the perspective of the institutions themselves. These limits intentionally, or not, limit artistic freedom.

—*Diana Franssen,*
Member of the Editorial Board L'Internationale
Online, Curator at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven



From the collection of Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

Pablo Picasso, *Guernica*, 1937

Oil on canvas,
349 cm × 776 cm

Following the dictator Francisco Franco's death in 1975, the Spanish Ministry of Culture started the devolution process for *Guernica*, Pablo Picasso's master piece, which had been on custody in the Museum of Modern Art in New York collection since 1944, having travelled around Europe and the United States in 1938 and 1939. The painting had been commissioned and paid for by the Spanish Republic in 1937, to encourage international support for the Republican cause during the Universal Exhibition in Paris that year. Considering the outcome of the Spanish Civil War, Picasso often expressed his will not to return the painting to the Spanish authorities until the end of Franco's dictatorship and the restoration of democracy in Spain.



Fig. 4 EL PERIÓDICO. Madrid edition, September 11, 1981.
Photo: Abizanda / Iborra. Archive S.I.T. (Museo Reina Sofía)

In 1981, *Guernica* arrived in Madrid amidst great expectations and excitement from the media. Its return represented a key moment in the “Transition”, the process of restoration of the democratic State. Because of its political meaning and symbolic value, the painting functioned as a metaphor for the return of democracy itself.

Given the political assessment that the arrival of the work implied, and the fragility of the new democratic regime, the authorities were afraid that the painting could be attacked by fascist supporters. To

prevent any possible attack, the transfer from the airport to the Casón the Buen Retiro (the palace next to the Museo del Prado, which was its first location) was executed with great security measures. Surrounded by police and civil guard corps members, *Guernica* was installed and displayed inside a box of armoured glass, with the surveillance of armed civil guards to prevent possible shooting or stabbing attacks. This protection urn could also be interpreted inversely as a way to protect the fragile social consensus of the Transition from the powerful partisan content of the work. Symptomatically, its shape resembled a ballot box. Fig. 4

—*Jesús Carrillo,*
Member of the Editorial Board, MNCARS, Madrid

Grup de Treball

**(F. Abad; J. Benito; J. Carbó; A. Fingerhut;
 X.Franquesa; C. Hac Mor; I. Julián; A. Mercader;
 A. Munné; Muntadas; J. Parera; S. Pau;
 P. Portabella; À. Ribé; M. Rovira; E. Sales;
 C. Santos; D. Selz; F. Torres; M. Costa)**
*Treball col·lectiu que consisteix en verificar
 la distribució de 44 professions entre 113 persones
 segons una nota apareguda últimament
 a la premsa [Collective Work Consisting
 in the Distribution of 44 Professions among
 113 People Based on an Item in the Press], 1973.*

Seven typed sheets of paper, 29,5 × 21 cm each
 Donation of Grup de Treball, 2009

The origin of this work can be traced to a key historical event in the fight against Franco: the police arrest of 113 members of the Catalanian Assembly, which two members of the Grup de Treball belonged to, and which included representatives of political parties and clandestine trade unions, as well as professional organisations and neighbourhood associations. This mass imprisonment took place in October 1973, inside the Santa Maria Mitjancera church in Barcelona. Using a language close to that of visual poetry, the work consists of a list that indicates the

professions of all the 113 detainees. The artists use a pronounced seriality and formal schematism, in line with the semiotic language of so-called “ideological conceptualism”, which conceived artistic work as an instrument of agitation. The piece was included in the catalogue of the 1973 *Terrassa, Informació d'Art* (Terrassa, Information of Art) exhibition, a folder or dossier-type publication, a format which the group most commonly presented their works in. This exhibition formed part of a series of meetings organised by the Grup de Treball at different locations throughout the Catalan territory. These meetings focused on the idea of instituting a type of exhibition based on communication and information as a means to defend the social purpose of art. With this as a premise, the works were displayed next to stands full of reference books and photocopies that were available for the public, who in turn were expected to participate dynamically and reflexively. Fig. 5

—Lola Hinojosa,
Curator at MNCARS, Madrid

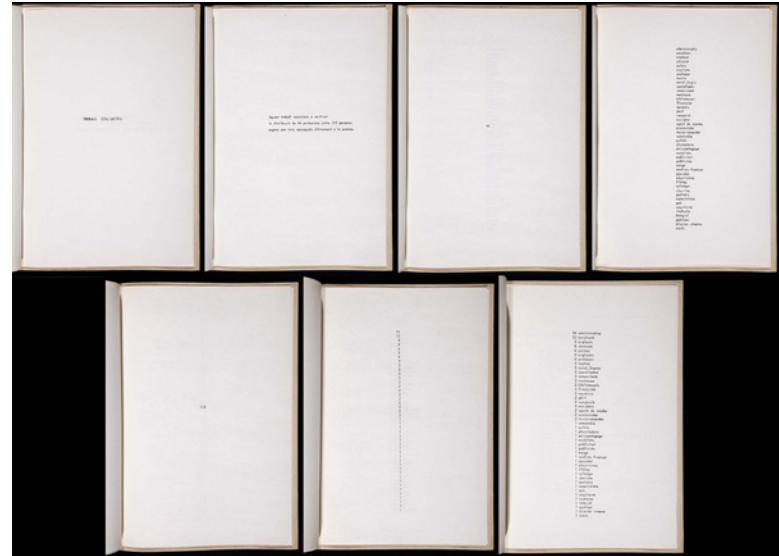


Fig. 5 Grup de Treball, *Treball col·lectiu que consisteix en verificar la distribució de 44 professions entre 113 persones segons una nota apareguda últimament a la premsa* (Collective Work Consisting of the Distribution of 44 Professions among 113 People Based on an Item in the Press), 1973. Collection Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. Donation of Grup de Treball, 2009.

From the collection of M HKA, Antwerpen

0110—Fire alarm

In 2006, the radical rightwing party Vlaams Belang—previously called Vlaams Blok which had been disbanded because of its overt racism—was threatening to gain absolute majority in the city election in Antwerp, the largest city in Flanders. The elections would turn out differently and prove to be the beginning of the demise of the party which has now shrunk to irrelevance. The cultural sector was of key importance in this turnaround. The main event was a series of free concerts in Antwerp, Brussels, Charleroi and Ghent, to promote tolerance and make a stance against racism, extremism and gratuitous violence. The initiator of the 0110 event was the renowned Antwerp rock band dEUS who performed in their home city for the first time in many years. On 10 October, the events were broadcast live on several television and radio stations and changed the atmosphere in the city. M HKA was the press centre for the Antwerp event. Painter Luc Tuymans rightfully thought the visual arts scene was not being very effective, and that an offensive attitude was needed

following the concerts. M HKA proposed to take the notion of an emergency fire alarm literally and to turn it into a collective artwork. Artists were able to make inscriptions and many institutions set off their fire alarm at 3pm on Thursday 5 October, three days before the elections. The artist organisation NICC coordinated this initiative and more than a hundred museums, art centres and academies across the country participated. This became front page and prime time news. *Fig. 1*



Fig. 1 0110—Fire Alarm. Painter Luc Tuymans explains the initiative to the press in front of Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen. October 5, 2006. Image copyright: M HKA

Moussem Collaboration

When the organisation of Belgian citizens of Moroccan origin asked M HKA for support regarding visual arts in 2006, they mentioned that they actually considered all the major cultural institutions to be entirely theirs. M HKA responded by proposing that they take over the museum for part of a season; what would they do then? The Moussem organisation responded that it would offer space to the smaller communities, which it did in 2007 in the period it 'owned' M HKA (15 March-20 May). This free zone included an Afghan New Year party one weekend, a reunion of people coming from Argentina on another, and so forth, with their own events and small exhibition programmes on each occasion. For one year, a group of young people—Moussem Club—analysed the museum's collection with the artist Charif Benhelima and the museum staff. Together they prepared an exhibition titled *UNTITLED* in which Moussem Club presented their own selections, arguing why they had chosen certain works on small video screens. During the *Mawazine Festival* in 2010, this exhibition travelled to Rabat in Morocco. Moussem also proposed an exhibition of work by artists relating to Morocco, both living there and abroad. This was continued by various acquisitions, including a



Fig. 2 Khaled Hafez. *Revolution*, 2006. Collection Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, MHKA.

series of key works by Hassan Darsi and work by the Egyptian artists Khaled Hafez and Amal Kenawy that were presented. In his three-screen video *Revolution* (2006), Hafez designates ideology as one of the strongest forms of belief. Both a businessman and a religious fundamentalist are represented here as revolutionaries, in reaction to which a third protagonist, a soldier, kills them. The work functions as a classic triptych with three promises (social equity, liberty, unity)—promises that revolution cannot keep. Morocco, just like Egypt, is indeed a mental space, not a territory. Fig. 2



Fig. 3 Jacques Lizène. *Rapport d'un voyage*, 1973. Collection Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, MHKA.

Censored Work by Lizène Reconstructed

Calling himself the “mediocre little master from Liège”—a Belgian twist on Filliou’s “genius without talent”—Jacques Lizène donated a key work to the Gordon Matta-Clark Foundation in 1980: *Documents*

rapportés d'un voyage au cœur de la civilisation banlieue 1973, 74 et 75. The work consists of two parts: a narrative framework on the one hand, in which the rigorous black-and-white aesthetic resembles the standardised documentary tropes of “information art”, and Robert Smithson’s original post-industrial wasteland is replaced with the banlieue of Liège. On the other hand, a quasi-monochrome white bed sheet displaying the near-invisible traces of the artist’s nocturnal masturbatory activity is a crass reminder of the pertinence of the body in all overly intellectualised art. When this work was first shown at the ICC (International Cultural Center, the institution that preceded M HKA) in the late 1970s, a local censor actually ordered its removal from the exhibition. When reassessing its collection of post-Second World War avant-garde, M HKA found that it held the original photos. They asked the artist to reenact the work, which he agreed to do. This white-on-white monochrome is now testament to suburban loneliness within the collection. Tellingly, censorship was no longer an issue when a far more graphic exhibition of Lizène’s work was organised at the museum in the spring of 2009. Fig. 3

—Jan De Vree, Curator at M HKA, Antwerpen and Nav Haq, Member of the Editorial Board *L'Internationale Online*, Curator at M HKA, Antwerpen

From the collection of the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

Jonas Staal (1981 Zwolle, The Netherlands)
Politiek kunstbezit II: Vrijdenkersruimte, 2010

paintings, posters cartoons, documentation, timeline
Purchase: 2011, Inv.nr. 2993

In 2008, the liberal-conservative Popular Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the extreme nationalist Freedom Party (PVV) opened the Freethinkers' Space. In their offices in The Hague, they created a space for provocative art, cartoons and other public opinions that aggressively critiqued Islam and were considered problematic or even censored by civil society.

When a left-liberal Groen Links (Green Left) MP, Tofik Dibi, challenged them also to include works criticising the leader of the populist PVV Geert Wilders and the expressly pro-Israel stances of both parties (the PVV more so than the VVD), the PVV quit.

In 2010, artist Jonas Staal decided to reactivate and continue the original Freethinkers' Space for an exhibition at the Van Abbemuseum. The project was later acquired by the museum for its collection.

The project entitled *Art, Property of Politics II: Freethinkers' Space* consists of artworks, a publication with documentation and accompanying texts, the Freethinkers' library and recordings of the opening speeches by the founders Mark Rutte (VVD) and Fleur Agema (PVV).

In 2012, Jonas Staal re-enacted the space in several locations. At the Van Abbemuseum, Groen Links MP Jesse Klaver and Eindhoven city council member for the progressive liberal D66 Rogier Verkrout put together an exhibition with examples of art, opinions and events that touched on issues of censorship.

The original Freethinkers' Space contained works by Theo van Gogh, Gregorius Nekschot, Ellen Vroegh, Aram Tanis, Jaffe Vink, T., Internationale Socialisten, Kurt Westergaard and Gerrit van Kralingen. *Fig. 6 and 7*



Fig. 6 and 7 Jonas Staal, *Politiek kunstbezit II: Vrijdenkersruimte*, 2010. Installation with paintings, posters, photo's, cartoon, documentary, time line, publication. Courtesy Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Photographer: Bram Saeys.



From the archive of the Van Abbemuseum

An invited action group

Futurologists 2000's *Requiem for a Defence Budget* (1970) in the exhibition "Georg Grosz The Face of the Ruling Class" (1 May 1970 - 14 June 1970)

In Spring 1970, former Van Abbemuseum director Jean Leering gave contemporary meaning to a Georg Grosz exhibition entitled *The Face of the Ruling Class* by combining it with a presentation by Futurologists



Read the Masks. Tradition is not Given ,
<https://vimeo.com/53495267>

2000. This was the name used for the occasion by a radical left-wing action group, the Nijmegen offshoot of the national De Kabouters (The Gnomes, as in garden gnomes) movement, which also operated under the names of Omroep (2000) and Commune 2000.

Requiem for a Defence Budget was an installation comprising four coffins each containing a bundle of forged 2000 guilder banknotes, worth four billion guilders, or the equivalent of the Dutch defence budget. The government supported America in the Vietnam War at the time and opposed the Second Chamber's appeals to urge America to end the bombing. Forged banknotes had often been used before as 'social dynamite' by the Orange Free State (the political mouthpiece of De Kabouters) during playful happenings in Amsterdam, in order to express their scorn for money, commerce and capitalism. These activists were arrested on various occasions for disseminating printed matter that bore a striking resemblance to 1000 guilder banknotes.

On 12 May 1970, only a few days after the exhibition opened, the notes were seized by the Eindhoven police and Jean Leering had to defend the ideology behind his invitation in court.

This social and political engagement was placed in a historical context alongside Grosz's work, and gained additional overtones due to the presence

of the action group challenging the museum as an ostensibly value-free institution. Apparently the judicial powers also had authority within protected museum boundaries. Fig. 7 and 8

Zwarte Piet, Yes or No. Can we talk about it?

Petra Bauer and Annette Krauss's *Read the Masks. Tradition is not Given* (2008–9), in the exhibition *Be(com)ing Dutch* (24 May 2008 - 14 September 2008)

In the past fifty years, there have been various protests against the depiction of Zwarte Piet (Black Peter) in the traditional Sinterklaas (Saint Nicolas) festivities in The Netherlands. Its colonial past and racist structure has been brought to the surface. The feast of Sinterklaas is one of the most celebrated Dutch traditions. In mid-November, Sinterklaas arrives to The Netherlands by boat (an event broadcast on national television) to bring gifts to the children. He is accompanied by numerous Zwarte Pieten, his black-faced assistants with red lips and dark curly hair. While this tradition is cherished in the collective memory of The Netherlands—and by the country's retailers—, the problematic aspects of the figure of Zwarte Piet have only rarely been discussed in the

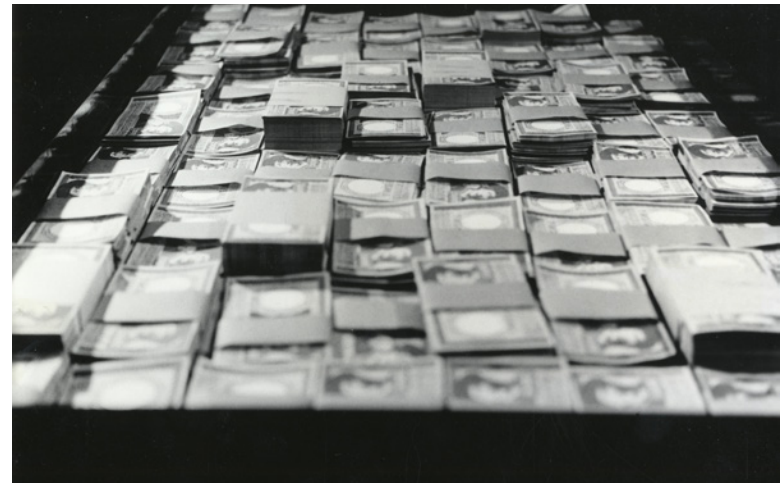


Fig. 7 and 8 Futurologists 2000, *Requiem for a Defence Budget*, 1970. In the exhibition: Georg Grosz. *The Face of the Ruling Class* (May 1 1970 - June 14 1970). Courtesy: Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven; Photographer: Van den Bichelaer

From the archives of SALT, Istanbul

It was a time of conversation

It was a time of conversation was a research project exhibited at SALT Galata (Istanbul, 2012) and SALT Ulus (Ankara, 2013). The project began with the extensive research and compilation of archives concerning three exhibitions that took place in the first half of the 1990s in Turkey: *Number Fifty / Memory/Recollection II*, *GAR*, and *Globalization—State, Misery, Violence*. *It was a time of conversation* reevaluated these curatorial and collective projects, which were all organised during a period when art itself emerged as an object of knowledge, intersected with other disciplines such as sociology and politics. It referenced curators, sociologists, artists and specialists who within their independent fields were beginning to understand artistic practice as a “form of conversation”. *Number Fifty / Memory/Recollection II* was curated by Vasif Kortun in 1993. When the exhibition banner was replaced by a poster for a political party, Kortun and the participants decided to close the exhibition prematurely. *GAR* was organised at the Ankara Railway Station in 1995, a collective initiative

by the involved artists. The works included in *GAR* were removed by the Station Directorate a day after the exhibition opening. Curated by Ali Akay in 1995, *Globalization—State, Misery, Violence* focused on state violence, violence against the state and violence among individuals responding to the political situation in Turkey at the time. Using the archives of these three exhibitions as a departure point, *It was a time of conversation* offered a new perspective on art in Turkey during the 1990s. The archives of these exhibitions became accessible at SALT Research and an e-book was published. Fig. 10





Fig. 10 From the exhibition *It was a time of conversation*, SALT Galata, 2012.
Photo: Mustafa Hazneci.



Fig. 10 From the exhibition *It was a time of conversation*, SALT Ulus, 2013.
Photo: Cemil Batur Gökçeer.



Fig. 10 Ahmet Müderrisoğlu, *Untitled*,
Globalization-State, Misery, Violence exhibition (Istanbul), 1995. SALT Research,
Exhibition Archive of Turkey.



Fig. 10 From the exhibition *GAR [Railway Station]*, Ankara Railway Station, 1995.
SALT Research, Exhibition Archive of Turkey.



Scared of Murals

The exhibition *Scared of Murals* that took place at SALT Beyoğlu in 2013 originated in the digitisation of the archive of Ahmet Öktem's work which is accessible at SALT Research. *Scared of Murals* was a research project examining the politicisation and unionisation of artists between 1976 and 1980. A plethora of documentary material was presented in the exhibition, restaging elements from specific exhibitions that took place during this period, and particularly the *1. Mayıs Sergisi* [First May Exhibition] organised by the Visual Artists Association. The project revisited issues of artists' rights, involvement and collaborations with workers' unions, and the function and positioning of art in the public sphere. Öktem had photographed the First May Exhibition in 1977. The interviews with artists and with people who experienced the Massacres on 1 May 1977 on Taksim Square led in due course to further research on the artists' unions and the processes of politicisation at that time. All of these materials have become part of SALT Research. Two research publications brought together articles on cultural production, state politics, censorship and artists' unions between 1976 and 1980. Fig. 11

İsmail Saray Research Project

The artist İsmail Saray (b.1943, Kütahya) holds a crucial place in the advanced art of the 1970s and early 80s in Turkey, as a pioneering artist in conceptual practice. The significance of his work has yet to be duly acknowledged in local and international art history. There were very few texts, no books, and no exhibition catalogues on Saray's practice. An in-depth collaboration with the artist, İsmail Saray project was comprehensive, two-year research comprising the identification of materials, archiving and digitising. The project began with assembling and securing the artist's complete archive, as well as unearthing various artworks kept by Saray's fellow artists. A digitised archive composed of works, documents and other materials became accessible to the public through SALT Research. The exhibition *From England with Love, İsmail Saray* at SALT Galata and SALT Ulus in 2014 introduced the first phase of research. An e-book in parallel with the project will be published. Fig. 12

—Sezin Romi,
Programmer at SALT, Istanbul





Fig. 11 From the exhibition *Scared of Murals*, SALT Beyoğlu, 2013.



Fig. 11 Preparation of paint for the murals (Konyaaltı, Antalya) SALT Research, *Scared of Murals* Archive.



Fig. 11 Kuşadası Culture and Arts Festival, 1980. SALT Research, *Scared of Murals* Archive.



Fig. 11 13th Antalya International Film and Arts Festival, 1976. SALT Research, *Scared of Murals* Archive



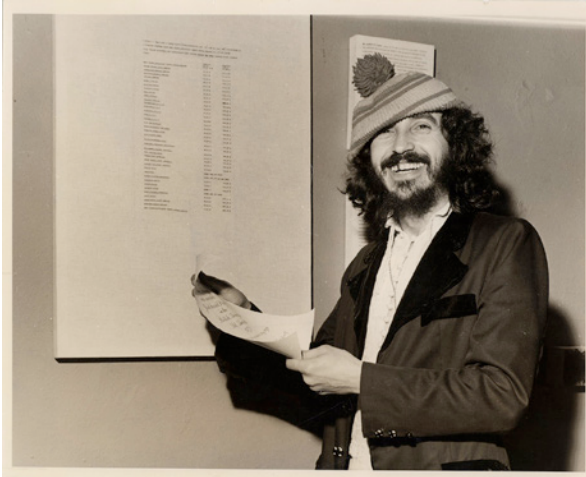


Fig. 12 İsmail Saray, in front of his work *Eros* that received a British Airways Art Award, 1973. SALT Research, İsmail Saray Archive.



Fig. 12 İsmail Saray, *ER-DAMU-UTU-SU*, Paris Biennale, 1977. SALT Research, İsmail Saray Archive.

Fig. 12 İsmail Saray, *Envoy*, 1972. SALT Research, İsmail Saray Archive.



Fig. 12 From the exhibition *From England with Love*, İsmail Saray, SALT Ulus, 2014-2015. Photo: Cemil Batur Gökçeer.



Fig. 12 İsmail Saray, Royal College of Art, 1970-1973. SALT Research, İsmail Saray Archive.



From the collection of MG+MSUM, Ljubljana

**Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša,
*Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav, 2007***

digital prints, 70 × 106 cm, 70 × 111 cm, 70 × 87.5 cm
Collection of Moderna galerija, Ljubljana

Soon after changing their names to that of a former Slovenian Prime Minister, the three Janez Janšas staged their first show entitled *Triglav* at the Mala galerija in Ljubljana (2007), dedicating it to the local tradition of collective practices. They presented the 1968 performance *Mt Triglav* by the group OHO and its two reenactments: the one by the group Irwin in 2004 and their own in 2007. Crucial to all three groups of artists was the significance of Mt Triglav (meaning the “three-headed” mountain) as a Slovene national symbol. Three members of the OHO group “enacted” Mt Triglav by draping black fabric over their bodies so that only their heads jutted out. Just like the three peaks of the mountain, the middle head was higher up than the lateral two, which were more or less level. The action was carried out in the centre of Ljubljana, and affected the passersby primarily with



Fig. 13 Janez Janša, Janez Janša, Janez Janša. *Mount Triglav on Mount Triglav, 2007*. Digital prints, 70 × 111 cm
Courtesy Moderna galerija, Ljubljana.

its absurdity in comparison with ordinary day-to-day socialist life. The group Irwin chose the same location for their reenactment of the performance, but intended it primarily for the lens of the camera: crucial in their case was the artefact—a good-quality, nicely framed photograph. The material dimension of the work underscored the underrated status of the neo-avant-garde line in the history of Slovene art, as well as the absence of a developed art market and related interest in a professional and standardised presentation of art. The three Janšas had their photograph taken similarly draped in black fabric, but

on the mountain itself, and subsequently had the photograph printed on paper that had newspaper sheets from the three leading Slovenian dailies on the back; they were interested in the newspapers as chroniclers of various state anniversaries and events important on state level. *Fig. 13*

—*Igor Španjol,*
Curator at MG+MSUM, Ljubljana



BIOGRAPHIES



Agency

Agency is an international initiative that was founded in 1992 and has office in Brussels. Agency constitutes a growing list of controversies called “list of things” that resist the split between the classifications of nature and culture. This list of things is mostly derived from juridical processes and controversies involving “intellectual property” (copyrights, patents, trade marks, etc...) in various territories around the world. The concept of intellectual property relies upon the fundamental assumption of the ontological division between culture and nature and consequently between expressions and ideas, creations and facts, subjects and objects, humans and non-humans, originality and tradition, individuals and

collectives, mind and body, etc.... Each “thing” or controversy included on the list witnesses a hesitation in terms of these divisions. Agency invokes these “things” from its list via varying “assemblies” inside exhibitions, performances, publications, etc... Each assembly speculates on a different question, selecting a series of cases and precedents. Those questions as a whole explore in a topological way the operative consequences of the apparatus of intellectual property for an ecology of art practices and their modes of existence.

Yassin Al Haj Saleh

Born in Raqqa, Syria, 1961. A political prisoner between 1980 and 1996 for being a member in a leftist party opposing the tyrannical regime of Hafez Assad. A journalist writing in newspapers and magazines in the Arab World (never in Syria). An author of four books: *From Syria Under Shades: Insights from within the Black Box*; *The Myths of the Letters: A Critique of Contemporary Islam and a Critique of the Critique*; *Salvation, O Guys: 16 Years in the Syrian Prisons*; and *Walking on One Leg (About Syrian Politics, Political Economy, and Identity)*. Participated in five books about Syria or Middle Eastern affairs, issued in Lebanon and Egypt. A founding member of al Jumhuriya group that thinks and writes about Syrian affairs since March 2012. Left Syria in October 2013, and lives now in Istanbul. A founding member of Hamish (fringe), the Syrian Culture House in Istanbul.

Tamara Díaz Bringas

Tamara Díaz Bringas (Cuba, 1973) is a curator and researcher. She was the scholarship holder of MACBA’s Independent Study Program (PEI), Barcelona (2008–2009) and holds a B.A. in Art History from the Universidad de La Habana (1996). From 1999



to 2009 she was curator and editorial coordinator at the independent project TEOR/ética, San José, Costa Rica. Her co-curated exhibitions include: *Playgrounds. Reinventing the Square* (with Manuel J. Borja-Villel and Teresa Velázquez), Museo Reina Sofía, Madrid, 2014; 31 Bienal de Pontevedra: Centroamérica y el Caribe (with Santiago Olmo), Pontevedra, 2010; *The Doubtful Strait* *(with Virginia Pérez-Ratton), TEOR/ética, San José, 2006. She has edited several books and written essays for catalogs and publications including **Art Journal, Artefacto, Tercer Texto, Arte contexto, Atlántica, Art Nexus, Bomb Magazine*. She is a member of the independent research platform Península. Colonial Processes, Art and Curatorial Practices. Díaz lives and works in Madrid.

Nazım Hikmet Richard Dikbaş

Nazım Hikmet Richard Dikbaş was born in Leeds, England, in 1973. He graduated from the Department of Sociology at Istanbul University, and completed his MA in Continental Philosophy at the University of Warwick. A member of the music group Zen and art collective Hafriyat, he has held three solo exhibitions, *Expecting Pleasure to Solve Problems* (2009), *New Forms of Rest and Entertainment* (2011) and *Unprogressive Soul*

(2014) and has taken part in several group exhibitions. *Private Lessons*, a compilation of his drawings first exhibited at the 12th Istanbul Biennial, was published in 2012. He has translated, among others, works of Vladimir Nabokov and Flannery O'Connor into Turkish, and Orhan Pamuk and Hrant Dink into English. Since 2007, he has taught at the Departments of Visual Communication Design and Art and Cultural Management at Istanbul Bilgi University and currently teaches the course «Art and Dissidence» at the Cultural Management Postgraduate Program. He lives and works in Istanbul.

Banu Karaca

Banu Karaca is a Visiting Assistant Professor of Cultural Studies at Sabanci University. Her work centers on political anthropology, art and aesthetics, nationalism and cultural policy. She is currently completing a manuscript entitled “Decivilizing Art: Cultural Policy and Nationalism in Turkey and Germany,” which examines the entrenchment of art in state violence. Some of her recent publications interrogate the politics of intercultural exchange programs in the EU (*International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 2010), current modes of art censorship in Turkey (*New Perspectives on Turkey*, 2011; Toplum ve



Bilim, 2012), and Istanbul's 2010 Cultural Capital of Europe tenure (*The Cultural Politics of Europe*, 2013). Banu is the co-funder of Siyah Bant, a research platform that documents censorship in the arts, and continues her research on the possibilities and limitations of art in reconciliation processes.

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Anej Korsika

Anej Korsika (1985) is a PhD. student at Faculty of Arts at the University of Ljubljana. His research interests include: commodity form, abstract labour, capitalist crisis, history of workers struggles and socialist policies, especially Bolshevism. He was active in various student struggles and participated in the occupation of Faculty of Arts. From 2009 to 2011 he was the editor of a student newspaper *Tribuna* and is currently a member of editorial board of the magazine *Borec (Fighter)*. He is a member of program board of Institute for Labour Studies and coordinator for International Cooperation at the Initiative for Democratic Socialism (member of United Left coalition).

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André Lepecki

André Lepecki is a writer and curator. Associate Professor, Department of Performance Studies, New York University and Artistic Professor, Stockholm University of the Arts. Author of *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement*, currently translated in 10 languages. Editor of several anthologies on dance and performance theory including *Dance* for the Whitechapel series Documents of Contemporary Art. Chief curator of the festival *In Transit* at HKW in 2008 (http://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2008/intransit08/_intransit08/intransit08_detail.php) and 2009 (http://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2009/in_transit_09/in_transit_09.php). 2008 recipient of the 'Best Performance' award from AICA (USA section) as co-curator and director of the redoing of Allan Kaprow's *18 Happenings in 6 Parts*. Since 2014 he has been curating series of lectures on performance history and theory for MoMA-Warsaw. Selected talks include Museo Reina Sofia, HKW, MoMA, MACBA, MAM-RJ, U.C. Berkeley, École Des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Freie Universität, Princeton University, and UFRJ. His new book *Singularities: dance and visual arts in the age of performance* is forthcoming from Routledge (2016).



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