react/review

a responsive journal for art & architecture

react/review:
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subversion zones:
bodies and spaces at the threshold

volume 4

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cover image
12th St. encampment, Oakland, CA
Dr. Ben Jameson-Ellsmore, 2023

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The conceptual grounding for this volume was derived from ideas presented at the UCSB Art History Graduate Student Association's 47th annual symposium, titled "Inside/Outside: The Threshold in Art and Architectural History" in 2023. The articles in this volume by Corey Ratch and Cole Graham were based on their 2023 symposium presentations, and their papers directly inspired the volume's theme. The symposium organizers, Graham Feyl and Sylvia Faichney, were generous with their time in the planning stages of this volume and have been invaluable collaborators in their role as editors for this volume.

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Introduction

Inhabiting the Uninhabitable at Oakland's Wood Street Encampment

Ben Jameson-Ellsmore and Taylor Van Doorne

From 2013 to 2023, the unhoused residents of West Oakland's Wood Street encampment constructed a sprawling informal neighborhood from the city's vast material and spatial excess. They built and furnished myriad shanties, tiny homes, and shacks from items cast off by Oakland's middle and upper classes and by the industries surrounding the city's massive port. It was common to see tarps and banners used as shading materials, fastened to utility poles and chain link fences. Forklift pallets became picket fences demarcating yards. Structures made from plywood and discarded furniture populated the shade beneath freeway overpasses (fig. 1).[1] At its height, this encampment grew to 300 people, as police and city officials repeatedly sent unhoused communities evicted elsewhere to Wood Street.[2] There, at least, the displaced benefited from improvised social infrastructures, including a flea market, clinic, kitchen, post box, "free store" stocking donated items, and space for

[1] See the labor photojournalist David Bacon's work on the Wood Street encampment and its residents: David Bacon, "The Second Demolition of Wood Street," *Contexts* 23, no. 1 (2024): 36-45.

[2] Evicted on Wood Street: California's Housing Crisis," *Wall Street Journal Podcasts* (May 26, 2023): https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/the-journal/evicted-on-wood-street-california-housing-crisis/5083e85f-7ba0-4a1e-bdc7-35baebeaa8c4.

Figure 1: Artists Building Communities constructed these tiny homes for the Wood Street encampment beneath the I-880. Oakland, California, 2022. Courtesy of Artists Building Communities.

newcomers between the existing homesteads.[3] The encampment welcomed those who had nowhere else to go in Oakland's prohibitively expensive residential landscape.

While the Wood Street encampment provided a crucial service by accommodating the Bay Area's evictees, it also subverted the dominant urban order. Without the legal right to the land (and without much choice), Wood Street's unhoused settled the empty industrial and commercial land around and beneath the snaking overpasses of Interstate 880 (fig. 2). In doing so, they threw the Bay Area housing crisis and Oakland's vast expanses of unused space into stark relief. Repurposing industrial and commercial land owned by Caltrans, the City of Oakland, private developers, and various railways, the encampment served as a loud critique of the private and public institutions that shape Oakland's formal housing landscape. As the encampment's size and visibility grew, it became increasingly damning that on Wood Street it was the unhoused themselves addressing the homelessness crisis.

The Wood Street encampment also drew attention to Oakland's racist planning history. As with many US cities, Oakland's mid-century freeways were designed to connect white suburban wealth to the city. Meanwhile, space was created for these freeways by demolishing ethnic, immigrant, and working class neighborhoods.[4] West Oakland, where Wood Street is located, is entirely circumscribed by the I-880, I-980, and I-580. When "white men's roads go through Black men's homes," as the saying

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[3] Gabrielle Canon, "Homeless Oaklanders were tired of the housing crisis. So they built a 'miracle' village," *The Guardian* (May 11, 2021): https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/11/oakland-homeless-cob-on-wood-village;
Clancy Wilmott, "Shelter – Proposal to the City of Oakland," in *Shelter: An Atlas,* ed. Alicia Cowart et al. (Emeryville: Bacchus Press, 2022), 58.

[4] Mitchell Schwarzer, "Oakland City Center: The Plan to Reposition Downtown within the Bay Region," *Journal of Planning History* 14, no. 2 (2014): 88-111, 89.

Figure 2: Before their incremental eviction in 2022-2023, the Wood Street encampment settled the vast vacant land beneath the I-880 overpasses in West Oakland, California. Photo by Ben Jameson-Ellsmore, 2023.

goes, Oakland's unhoused—who are disproportionately Black—demonstrate the persistence of these racialized expulsions.[5] Until their eviction in 2022 and 2023, the Wood Street encampment temporarily reversed this history, with residents settling the Interstate 880. Before their presence drew public attention as the largest encampment in Northern California, they transmuted what was planned as a void of the local into a community.

On July 11, 2022, a fire broke out underneath the Interstate 880 overpass. While no one was killed, the fire destroyed numerous dwellings. Fire afflicts informal settlements, setting residents back to square one by destroying their homes and crucial documents, like IDs, and also by drawing unwanted public scrutiny. Whether they result from arson or the candles and camping stoves of those who live without electricity,

[5] Deborah Archer, "'White Men's Roads Through Black Men's Homes': Advancing Racial Equity Through Highway Construction," *Vanderbilt Law Review* 73, no. 5 (2020): 1259-1330, 1259.

encampment fires are often catastrophic because they occur on land that is difficult for fire departments to reach, with few nearby fire hydrants. The billowing smoke led to the Interstate's closure, noticeably affected regional air quality, and drew public attention to the encampment.[6] According to Neferti XM Tadiar, fire is an agent of state change, bringing matter of all kinds across material, bodily, and social thresholds. Flammability marks a city's disparities and is often used as proof by municipal actors that certain dwellings and communities must be removed on humanitarian grounds.[7] It is difficult to say whether it was humanitarian concerns over fire that led to the encampment's eviction, or rather the way that fires illuminated some uncomfortable realities of the city.

All capitalist cityscapes burn. The cyclical accumulation, expenditure, and reaccumulation of capital both define the city and set it ablaze.[8] According to David Harvey, the city and its infrastructure are immobilized excess capital designed to accommodate intensified cycles of wealth accumulation. However, the durability of buildings and infrastructure can also impede capital accumulation and the demand for liquidity and constant circulation of value.[9] It is more expensive and time-intensive to alter built infrastructure than it is to reposition unfixed assets and capital like human labor and machinery. Enter obsolescence as an agent of constant state change. Modern buildings, especially postwar, are designed to cross thresholds of planned obsolescence quickly, through what Daniel Abramson calls "rapid supersession and discard."[10] Obsolescence may have nothing to do with a building's inhabitability, age, or its state of decay. Under capitalism, a building is obsolete when it no longer facilitates wealth accumulation.

While the functional capitalist city is conceptually ablaze in Harvey and Abramson's terms, encampments often literally burn quicker and more dangerously than other structures, imbuing their vulnerable neighborhoods with the confrontational power of a *memento mori*. But the plumes of smoke did not only draw public attention to the alarming combustibility of the Wood Street encampment. They also highlighted a space where the immutable order of property, which stabilizes the way the city

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[6] Darwin BondGraham and Natalie Orenstein, "West Oakland fire spews smoke over the East Bay," The Oaklandside (July 11, 2022): https://oaklandside.org/2022/07/11/west-oakland-fire-spews-smoke-over-the-east-bay-wood-street/.

[7] Neferti MX Tadiar, "Thresholds," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 39, no 6 (2021): 1111-1128, 1112.

[8] Daniel Abramson, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 5.

[9] David Harvey, The Urban Experience (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), 74.

[10] Daniel Abramson, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 6.

consumes itself, breaks down. To parse the paradoxical need under capitalism for perpetual change, Swati Chattopadhyay differentiates between durability and permanence in the built environment. Durability refers to the strength and endurance of materials over time, and permanence refers to the legal structures that sustain the modern capitalist city as fertile ground for capital accumulation. The regime of property rights is permanent because it provides a stable armature amidst constant material changes.[11] The legal systems that qualify a lot or parcel remain in place while structures materialize and decay over the decades. In illegally settling lots owned by private and public institutions under the I-880, the Wood Street encampment (like all such informal settlements) temporarily subverted the permanent underlying order that stabilizes urban immolations.

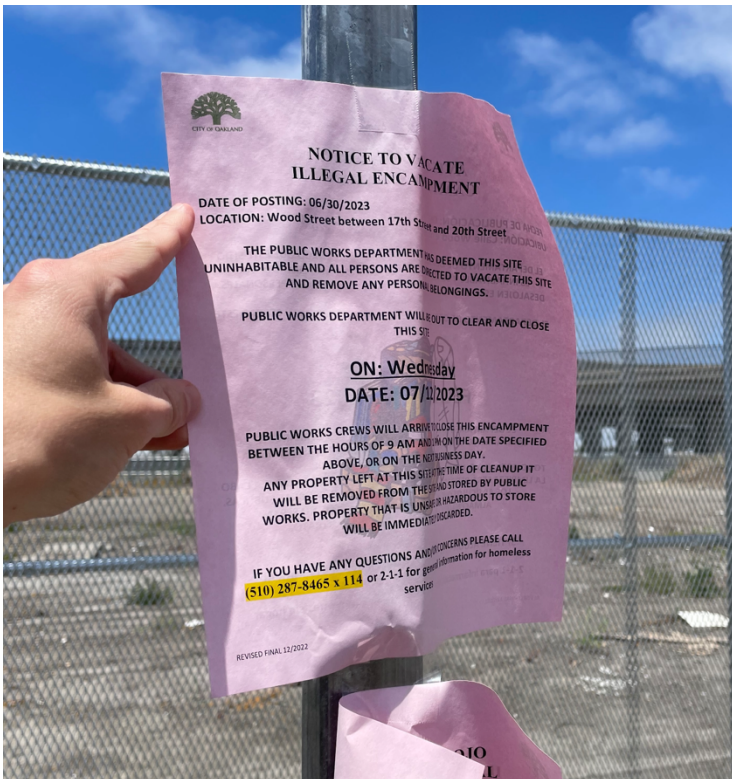

Figure 3: Pink notices declare inhabited sites "uninhabitable" before encampment clearance begins. Photo by Ben Jameson-Ellsmore, 2023.

State and municipal institutions are charged with ensuring controlled urban burns. This duty entails eliminating challenges to the immutable regime of property. Before, during, and after the Wood Street encampment's eviction, pink municipal notices appeared on nearby sign poles designating the surrounding site "uninhabitable" and demanding inhabitants vacate before a specified date (fig. 3). That the encampment grounds were "uninhabitable" was an assertion, not a material fact, as the area was indisputably inhabited. The term is often wielded against communities that emerge against all odds from the rubble of the modern city. AbdouMaliq Simone wonders if "the so-called uninhabitable does not necessarily point to a depleted form of urban life but simply to a different form - one that constantly lives

[11] Swati Chattopadhyay, "Hacking the Urban Code: Notes on the Durational Imagination in City-Making," in *Global Urbanism: Knowledge, Power, and the City*, eds. Colin McFarlane and Michele Lancione (London: Routledge, 2021), 236-237.

under specific threats and incompletion."[12] Evicting encampments, even with humanitarian motives, can also hinder our understanding of such divergent forms of urban life and how people create physical and social infrastructures in uninhabitable spaces. Wood Street's residents created an alternative neighborhood in a city where they were otherwise priced out of housing. Encampments like Wood Street demonstrate how marginalized people inhabit or "ride the uninhabitable," as Simone puts it.[13] These are *subversion zones*, where communities form on tenuous edges and thresholds become spaces of dwelling.

The Wood Street encampment is only one of many examples of spaces that are auxiliary to the city's delineated zones and legal regimes. According to Simone, cities are filled with passages that transport us to different times and spaces, and in and out of actual or perceived danger.[14] Walter Benjamin identifies such threshold spaces in his preparatory notes and archives for his *Arcades Project,* acknowledging that urban homogeneity and continuity is an illusion.[15] Within the city, myriad boundaries delineate public space from private, as well as articulating officially recognized districts, each of which has its own character and residents with their own habits. Yet, in between clearly defined zones are a constellation of urban thresholds, some with relatively more structural longevity than others: doors, gateways, streets, subterranean passages, public transit infrastructure, and demolition sites upon which the skeletons of the urban past stand.[16] Lingering too long in any one of these threshold sites—say, in tents under an Oakland overpass, on a subway platform after hours, or behind a wooden barricade erected on a street—is uncomfortable, unstable, or illegal.

According to Georges Bataille's *Critical Dictionary*, thresholds are also socially precarious. Thresholds are "where invisible but real battles are fought" as they negotiate social hierarchies and differences.[17] For example, he complicates the ostensible utilitarianism of the doormat, writing that the simple act of a host assuring a respected guest that they do not need to wipe their shoes on a doormat on a rainy day suggests the former's reverence for the latter. The host's labor to clean the house's

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[12] AbdouMaliq Simone, "The Uninhabitable? In between Collapsed Yet Still Rigid Distinctions," Cultural Politics 12, no. 2 (2016): 136-137.

[13] Simone, "The Uninhabitable?" 139, 142.

[14] AbdouMaliq Simone, *The Surrounds: Urban Life Within and Beyond Capture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2022), 22.

[15] Walter Benjamin, "Convolute C," in *The Arcades Project,* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1999), 88.

[16] For Walter Benjamin's threshold contemplations, see convolutes C2,1, C3,2, C3,3, C3,6, C3a,1, C5a,2. Ibid., 85-93.

[17] Georges Bataille and Robert Lebel and Isabelle Waldberg eds., *Encyclopædia Acephalica, Comprising the Critical Dictionary and Related Texts* (London: Atlas Press, 1995), 83-4.

floor carries less social capital than the guest's labor to clean off their own muddy shoes. Furthermore, "the threshold… is indeed a thing of dread… because there it is necessary to register, forcibly or with levity, the rank one occupies in society."[18] If a mere crossing elicits such discomfort, what are the social implications of communities that develop in such spaces? Occupied thresholds or subversion zones are where alternative ways of living similarly rub against the edge of the modern city and its legal/spatial order. For a decade, the Wood Street encampment was left in place at the whim of the series of landlords who tolerated the ambiguity of this occupied threshold. The eventual official assertion of the Wood Street encampment's uninhabitability, and its subsequent eviction, thus forcibly restored the unambiguous supremacy of property in the capitalist city.

But on the other side of the same coin, encampments serve as reminders that even those who function within permanent regimes of property are vulnerable to the ever-present threats of climate change and capitalist temporality. The precarity of encampment dwellings shatters the illusion of the city's stability as clearly defined by a governmental authority. Likewise, infrastructures of normative inhabitation produce casualties and truly uninhabitable spaces. The vast and extractive industries that support urban growth render much of the surrounding world unlivable. Meanwhile, endless demolition, growth, and speculation make a traditional home unaffordable and force life into threshold spaces.[19] The Bay Area housing market is a calamity in and of itself, its tides rendering all but the wealthiest participants vulnerable to displacement.[20]

In this volume of *react/review,* authors consider various types of subversion zones, from the architectural to the corporeal, that confront and challenge normative boundaries, epistemes, and authorities. In "Skating the Surrounds: Chemi Rosado Seijo and El Bowl in La Perla, Puerto Rico," Alida Jekabson examines a curious community landmark that serves as a swimming pool, skating bowl, and impromptu art gallery for both locals and outsiders of its impoverished neighborhood. Yet its image has been simultaneously appropriated in global popular media for the privileged gaze of the outsider. El Bowl as a subversion zone shows how an informal community resource can be implicated in a broader network of the colonial gaze, postcolonial statehood, and independence. In his response, Alexander Luckmann engages with the ways the Hajj Terminal by SOM and the Church of Victory by Gottfried Böhm emulate tent designs.

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[18] Ibid., 84.

[19] Michele Lancione, *For a Liberatory Politics of Home* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2023), 72; AbdouMaliq Simone, "The Uninhabitable? In between Collapsed Yet Still Rigid Distinctions," 139, 141.

[20] Connor Dougherty, *Golden Gate: The Housing Crisis and a Reckoning for the American Dream* (New York: Penguin Press, 2020), 214.

He explores how these structures render the temporary permanent and the local global. They embody the tensions held within religious pilgrimages like the *hajj* - the experience of which is fleeting, while the institutions that enable it are made to last.

If an informal site like El Bowl lies at the fraught intersection of local, national, and global politics, is it possible for authorities to embrace and plan for contingency? Can cities ethically make plans for all their inhabitants—local and outsider, human and nonhuman? Vanessa Lee, Karen Verpeet, and Jennifer Symonds, city planners working for the San Francisco Estuary Institute, grapple with this problem through an ecological lens. Their research spotlight article "Insights from Ecology for Health: Design Guide for Fostering Human Health and Biodiversity in Cities" reviews the institute's recent Ecology for Health salon and design guide. They recommend establishing interconnected networks of parks to simultaneously create urban wildlife corridors and increase human access to public greenspace. Conceptual drawings by Vanessa Lee articulate braided thresholds that separate and connect human and nonhuman life, with neither subverting the other.

Corey Ratch also considers the human/non-human binary in his article "Pineal/Perineal: The Anthropological Divide at Monkey Hill." Despite clear spatial divisions between monkey enclosure and human spectators, relational encounters between both groups of primates challenged 1920s visitors' anthropocentrism. Thus, in Ratch's study, relationality itself is also a subversion zone through which the constitution of human—and, in particular, white British imperialist—supremacy is contested. In his response, Ben Jameson-Ellsmore contemplates the ways that Lake Merritt in Oakland, California is defined by perpetual threshold crossings. Here, anthropomorphic divides are breached by the numerous waterfowl that overflow their sanctuary spaces into the paths of joggers and by the odorous cycles of aquatic algae and bacteria that offend bourgeois sensibilities. The Lake is also defined by human disagreement about proper use. The unhoused use its City Beautiful-style pergola as a bedroom; its shores are used as an automotive cruising ground, backing up traffic for miles; and the beats of lakeside Afro-diasporic drum circles permeate the walls of even the loftiest nearby penthouses.[21]

Just as relationality can be a subversion zone, so too can the non-normative body. In "Inefficient, Unsustainable, and Fragmentary: The Rauschenberg Combines as Disabled Bodies," Cole Graham argues that disability has been socially constructed as a deviant category, suspended in the threshold between public and private. Applying a method the author has termed *sitpoint theory* to Rauschenberg's Combines, Graham proposes that these objects reframe the viewing experience by repositioning canvases

[21] Alex Werth, "Before BBQ Becky: Racial Reverberations at Oakland's Lake Merritt," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 33, no. 4 (2021): 78-103, 85.

on the ground, within a different visual plane more accessible to those who cannot stand in a gallery, museum, or other public spaces. The Combines subvert thresholds of acceptable presence not unlike the involuntary collapsing of bodily thresholds that can define certain disabilities and remind onlookers of their own fragility and mortality. Sophia Gimenez employs Graham's sitpoint theory in her response to consider how artists with aphantasia challenge the paradigm of the "inner eye" and other internalized methods of artistic production that are privileged in Western art theory.

In considering how objects themselves may be subversion zones between autonomous and socially-engaged art, Elizabeth Anderson-Cleary argues that the Spanish Civil War-era oeuvre of the photographer and photomontagist Kati Horna has the characteristics of both avant-garde art and anarchist propaganda. Yet, neither function subsumes the other. Horna's empathetic depictions of everyday people constitute a connective threshold between autonomy and social engagement, despite their political deployment by anarchist organizations. Pivoting back to the issue of subversive city spaces, Megan Sheard responds to Anderson-Cleary with a reflection on the collective agency of *milicianas* and international political actors like Eileen O'Shaughnessy in the Spanish Civil War, their traces and absences in present-day Barcelona, and the female academic-tourist's embodied experiences at such sites in light of this history.

Finally, Leander Gussman's review of the temporary installation *Chará* in Vienna's luxurious Graben district by artist Kris Lemsalu considers how public art can create a disruptive threshold in city space. The massive candy pink sculpture invites comparison with exposed gums with teeth or a *vagina dentata*, while its form creates a metaphorical portal through which the historical street is framed. Thus, Gussman identifies in Lemsalu's work how the bold expression of female sexuality subverts and challenges the site context.

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feature articles

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Pineal/Perineal:
The Anthropological Divide at Monkey Hill

Corey Ratch

In 1927, the French decadent, writer, and philosopher Georges Bataille visited the London Zoo, and found himself stationed before an uncanny and unnerving spectacle known as Monkey Hill. Despite the seemingly ordinary nature of a visit to the city zoo, the experience would inspire some of his most impassioned and maniacal early writings. Bataille's visual encounter with the exposed posteriors of the male baboons would affect him deeply and color his future writings on the perceived differences between human and nonhuman animals, a recurring theme in his work. In an essay he wrote in 1930 entitled "The Jesuve," he attempts to pinpoint his obsession with what he calls the pineal eye, a symbol for him of humanity's differentiation from lesser primates. Reflecting on his visit to the zoo, he writes, "it would have been impossible for me to speak explicitly of it, to express totally what I felt so violently in early 1927 (and it still happens that I bitterly feel it) in any other way than by speaking of the nudity of an ape's anal projection, which on a day in July of the same year, in the Zoological Gardens of London, overwhelmed me to the point of throwing me into a kind of ecstatic brutishness."[1]

[1] Georges Bataille, "The Jesuve," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl, trans. Allan Stoekl, Carl R. Lovitt, and Donald M. Leslie. Jr. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 78.

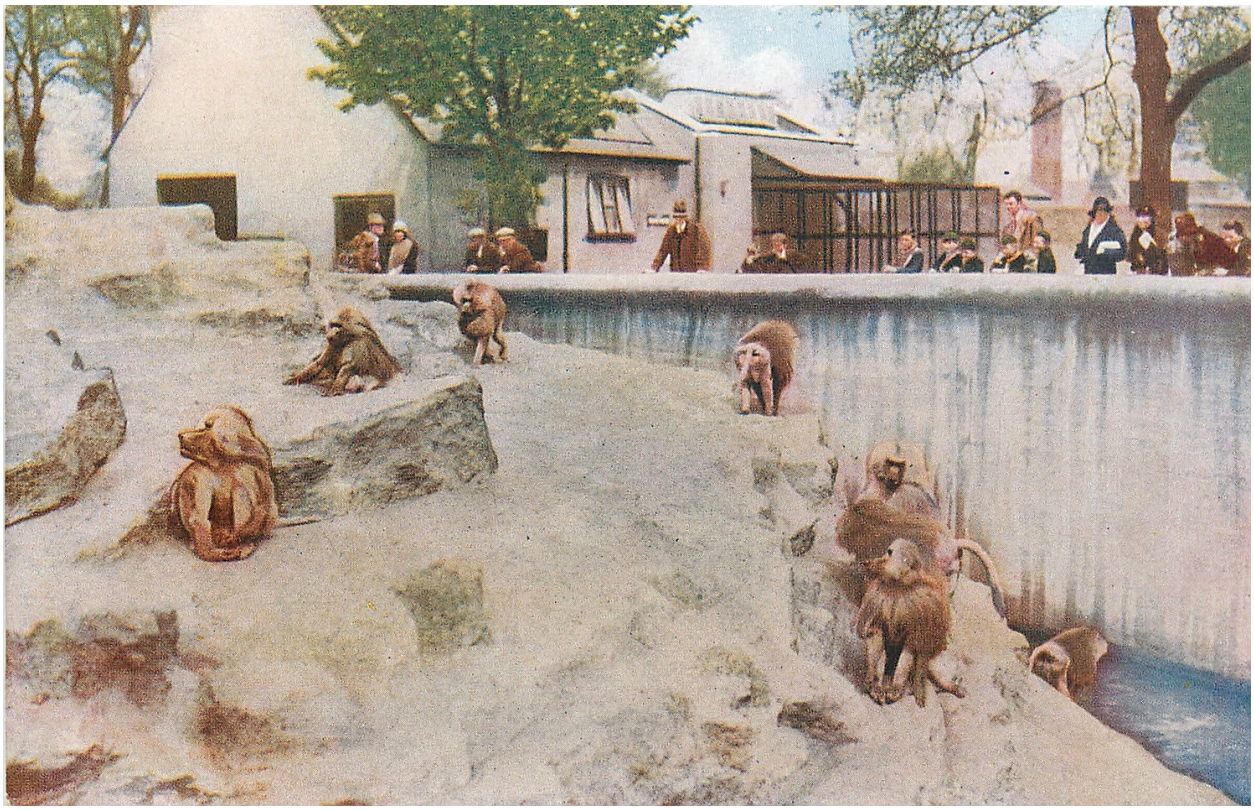

Figure 1: Monkey Hill, London Zoo. Raphael Tucks & Sons, At the Zoo, *Series II,* 1930. Artwork and photograph in the public domain. Information licensed under CC0. https://www.tuckdbpostcards.org/items/92804-monkey-hill-baboons-shown/

The scene for this momentous event could only have been Monkey Hill, a large display opened at the London Zoo in the 1920s and populated by hamadryas baboons captured in Africa. The zoological display of Monkey Hill was constructed so as to allow a clear and unobstructed view of the baboons, while strictly demarcating the space between the nonhuman animals and the human patrons of the zoo (fig. 1). This architectural division was representative of divisions that emerged in Western Europe and had been historically maintained in both philosophical thought and zoological practices. The dynamics of human-animal dichotomy are present in Bataille's own writings, including those writings inspired by his time at the London Zoo. This paper examines the architectural space of Monkey Hill and shows how Bataille's writings on the baboons reinscribed the human-nonhuman binary of Monkey Hill's architectural divisions, but in a bodily register in which the upper parts of the primate body—the mouth, the face, the pineal gland—came to represent humanity, and the lower parts—the ano-genital or perineal regions—became symbolic of a base and contemptible animality associated with the baboons. In the zoo, divisions between humans and other animals are often part of the display. Zoos manage the line between those seen as worthy of subjecthood and self-determination and those who are not, despite profound morphological and genealogical similarity. I argue that Monkey Hill, and the waterless

moat that divided the baboons from the zoo's human visitors, operated as an architectural management device, a concrete manifestation of a vast complex of discursive and ontological relations. This spatial division was emblematic of the ways that distances have been maintained between humans and other animals, as well as between humanity and its own animality, especially in Europe.

The monumental enclosure of Monkey Hill opened in May of 1925, as both a spectacle for visitors and for the benefit of scientific observation by the zoo's primatologists. With the Scientific Revolution and its promise of the universal betterment of humanity came a simultaneous program of imperial exploration, conquest, and terror. This history saw humans displace many nonhuman animals around the world from their homes and place them in the zoos of Western Europe. Monkey Hill's first baboons were taken from Ethiopia (often referred to as Abyssinia in England during the colonial period), and likely traveled from the ports of Djibouti, through the Suez Canal, and finally the Mediterranean Sea and Atlantic Ocean. They arrived in London through a company owned by George Bruce Chapman, a circus owner and dealer in rare animals.[2] The display was arguably a part of the market for "mediated realities," which, beginning in the late eighteenth century, endeavored to teleport their audiences to another place. The new home for the baboons was an enclosure sixty feet wide and one hundred feet long, consisting of two giant artificial mounds of ferrocement and a number of large rocks. Zoo officials used trapdoors for limited management of the baboons' movement, including at night, when the baboons were wrangled into sleeping quarters contained within the rockworks. During the day, high-powered lights simulated sunshine. The large, artificial habitat was encircled in the front by a waterless moat eighteen feet wide and twelve feet deep, allowing for clear viewing while preventing escape by the baboons and entry by human spectators.

Given the particularly close genealogical heritage shared by human and nonhuman primates, displays of unclothed apes in zoos, shocking or fascinating as they may be, can help affirm the assumed distance of civilized humanity from the animal kingdom. In zoos, the management of this difference is worked out in material, spatial terms. Monkey Hill was situated within the larger Mappin Terraces, whose ambulatory construction and broad views were highly influenced by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century panoramas.[3] These exhibits' massive width likely filled the viewer's entire visual field; perhaps a visitor could believe themselves carried away on safari or, as in a nearby enclosure, to visit polar bears stationed on a glacier. The enclosure's design

[2] Malcolm Peaker, "London Zoo's Monkey Hill (1925-1955) Revisited," *Zoology Jottings*, accessed January 26, 2024, https://zoologyweblog.blogspot.com/2016/05/london-zoos-monkey-hill-1925-1955.html.

[3] Peter Guillery, *The Buildings of London Zoo* (London: Royal Commission on the Historical Monuments of England, 1993), 58.

was influenced by similar displays in Germany, particularly the work of Carl Hagenbeck, another seller of animals to zoos across Europe. Hagenbeck was both an innovator in zoo design and largely responsible for the popularization of the so-called "human zoo," or ethnological exhibit, in Germany, marking a disturbing link between speciesism and the virulent scientific racism of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth centuries.[4] In Hamburg in 1897, to alleviate the problem of exotic animals dying in captivity, Hagenbeck opened a space designed "as the world's first cageless zoo, showing the animals in natural surroundings, separated from the spectators by unjumpable ditches instead of bars."[5] Starting in 1902, many of the buildings of the London Zoo were overhauled under the guidance of Scottish zoologist Sir Peter Chalmers Mitchell. In a nod to Hagenbeck, Mitchell advocated a move to more open-air structures.[6]

Despite these innovations in "open-air" design, which forgo the more obviously oppressive and dismal character of cages or fencing, the spaces of the London Zoo nonetheless necessitate forced containment, including Monkey Hill. These forms of material containments bring to mind what German media theorist Bernhard Siegert calls the "ontic operations" of "cultural techniques of hominization." One of these techniques, as Siegert details, is the making of various animal enclosures.[7] As Siegert puts it, these concrete operations work to "mark the distinction between inside and outside, civilization and barbarism, an inside domain in which the law prevails and one outside in which it does not."[8] Although many contemporary zoos do important work in animal research and rehabilitation, their history as institutions shows them to be places

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[4] "Human zoos" had been popular in London since the mid-nineteenth century. See Nadja Durbach, "London, Capital of Exotic Exhibitions from 1830 to 1860," in *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires*, eds. Pascal Blanchard, Nicolas Bancel, Gilles Boëtsch, Éric Deroo, Sandrine Lemaire and Charles Forsdick (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), 81. Human zoo exhibitions prior to the opening of the London Zoo most likely inspired a keener interest in apes during the period. Racist displays of this kind, such as the exhibition of Sarah Baartman, who was first brought to London in 1810 as the "Hottentot Venus," were similarly couched in the seemingly innocuous exercise of scientific inquiry and based in Enlightenment modes of knowledge production. See Gilles Boëtsch and Yann Ardagna, "Human Zoos: The 'Savage' and the Anthropologist," in *Human Zoos*, 114.

[5] R.A. Marchant, *Man and Beast* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1968), 87.

[6] The concern for the admittance of light and air into environments at the London Zoo led to new projects over the next decade, such as the Gorilla House, chronicled in a 1936 film by László Moholy-Nagy. See David Ashford, "Gorillas in the House of Light," *Cambridge Quarterly* 40, no. 3 (2011): 201-223.

[7] Bernhard Siegert, *Cultural Techniques: Grids, Filters, Doors, and Other Articulations of the Real* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015), 9. Siegert does not disregard the ontological aspect of power, but says that cultural techniques move "ontology into the domain of ontic operations," which I relate at times in this article to a process of reification.

[8] Siegert, *Cultural Techniques*, 12.

of management and coercive power through forms of containment that mark this divide. One legacy of the British Empire is the forced displacement of both human and nonhuman populations around the world, killing and separating families and forcibly kidnapping human and nonhuman people for enclosure and display in zoos and exhibitions. The London Zoological Society was an important part of this legacy, an outgrowth of the British colonial enterprise, conceived in 1825 by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, a colonial administrator involved in the founding of Singapore.[9]

Zoos are a site in which colonial and epistemological power intersect. Following the Enlightenment and the Scientific Revolution, epistemological legitimacy became bound up with the role of the scientific practitioner as an individual, a recognized subjectivity, a person, against a world filled with objects for that person's observation and mastery. This person is historically a white male, a "master subject" or "dominator identity" constructed against women, racialized people, and animals as the epitome of neutrality and objectivity.[10] According to historian Harriet Ritvo, Enlightenment modes of knowledge saw animals "significant primarily as the objects of human manipulation."[11] In practical terms, Ritvo writes, "advances in such fields as stockbreeding, veterinary science, and weapons technology made actual animals easier to manage. Nowhere were these developments more striking than in England."[12] One of Thomas Stamford Raffles's goals was to create a scientific institution in England that would put animals to use as objects of knowledge, a goal stated emphatically in a prospectus Raffles and Sir Humphry Davy published in 1825.[13] Construction on the zoo would begin the following year.

Roughly a hundred years later, in May 1925, ninety-seven hamadryas baboons were delivered to the London Zoo from Africa and put under observation at Monkey

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[9] Kevin YL Tan and Lim Chen Sian, *Raffles' Letters: Intrigues Behind the Founding of Singapore* (Singapore: National Library Singapore, 2013), vi.

[10] Kay Anderson, "Culture and Nature at the Adelaide Zoo: At the Frontiers of 'Human' Geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 20, no. 3 (1995): 277.

[11] Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in the Modern Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987), 2.

[12] Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 2.

[13] The prospectus reads: "It has long been a matter of deep regret to the cultivators of Natural History that we possess no great scientific establishments either for teaching or elucidating zoology, and no public menageries or collections of living animals where their nature, properties, and habits may be studied…. Should the Society flourish and succeed, it will not only be useful in common life, but would likewise promote the best and most extensive objects of the Scientific History of Animated Nature, and offer a collection of living animals such as never yet existed in ancient or modern times…animals to be brought from every part of the globe to be applied either to some useful purpose, or as objects of scientific research, not of vulgar admiration." Stamford Raffles and Humphry Davy, quoted in Peter Olney, "London," in *Great Zoos of the World: Their Origins and Significance*, ed. Solly Zuckerman (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1979), 38.

Hill. Zoo officials attempted to heed the advice of Carl Hagenbeck's heirs in Germany to exclude female baboons from such exhibits. Given that the males were larger, with big fangs and larger pink buttocks, it was also thought they would be a more appealing spectacle. The original order had called for male baboons only, but for reasons unknown, six of the ninety-seven were in fact females. The results of this mix proved catastrophic. The baboons had no prior relationship with one another, and were thrown into a space roughly one percent the size of their usual roaming grounds, leading to an eruption of violence. In two years, almost half of the baboons were dead, including most of the females. The first few years of Monkey Hill saw the deaths of sixty-two males and thirty-two females. Although only eight of the males died from direct violence, the males killed thirty of the females in fights of a "sexual" nature.[14] By the early 1930s, fifteen baby baboons had been born: fourteen were quickly killed, either having been caught up in fights, accidentally strangled by mothers, or kidnapped and strangled by rival males. Thirty more females were brought in, but these died as well, almost all by acts of violence. By the end of the 1920s, nearly two-thirds of the males and over ninety percent of the females were gone. Ironically, this orgy of violence was permitted within what was ostensibly a larger program of didactic enrichment in the "civilized" metropolis of London. The constructed environment of Monkey Hill became not just a place for innocuous public entertainment and scientific research, but a confined space for the viewing of a kind of artificial madness, of spectacular violence and sex, including masturbation, infanticide, necrophilia, and instances of cannibalism.

Nonhuman primates occupy a unique position in relation to humans. The English word 'ape' has long stood, as Boria Sax put it, to designate anything "almost 'human' but not quite."[15] Donna Haraway has cast simians as liminal characters that appear "precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed."[16] They are hybrids, she says, with the potential to destabilize normative narratives and binaries.[17] Anxiety that these hybrid characters may be closer to us than we would like has required the continual maintenance of a divide between us and them, as a means of distancing and exclusion. Kay Anderson has highlighted the production of alterity in the zoo, observing that "western metropolitan zoos are spaces where humans engage in cultural self-definition against a variably constructed and opposed nature, with

[14] Solly Zuckerman, *The Social Life of Monkeys and Apes* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), 219. Zuckerman notes, morbidly, that many of the dead females showed significant damage to their perineal regions.

[15] Boria Sax, *The Mythical Zoo: An Encyclopedia of Animals in World Myth, Legend, & Literature* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2001), 6.

[16] Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 152.

[17] Haraway, *Simians*, 2.

animals as the medium."[18] The apparatus of the zoo operates by preparing bodies for viewing within a frame: the cage, enclosure, or environment. These enclosures and the views they offer belie a complex of relations, a world of practices and material arrangements for the management of animal-objects who stand as the antithesis to civilized humanity. In his book *The Open: Man and Animal*, Giorgio Agamben refers to instances of this difference management as the work of an "ironic apparatus" he calls the "anthropological machine."[19] At Monkey Hill, the ditch separating human spectators from baboons manifested what Agamben has described as "the caesura […] between man and animal."[20] The apparatus of the zoo orients bodies inside and outside, enacting the anthropological difference of human and animal. Monkey Hill, with its moat between baboons and human spectators, became a veritable anthropological machine in action.

Despite efforts to maintain distance, humanity's proximity to other apes has manifested in forms of pithecophobia—*pithekos* being Greek for monkey or ape—tied to the realization of our shared history with other primates, what Jacques Derrida has called the Darwinian trauma.[21] Even though, like most apes, baboons share over ninety percent genetic similarity with humans, they have an especially bad reputation. While revered by the ancient Egyptians, they have often been targets of derision in other cultures. Technically classed as monkeys as opposed to apes, and possessed of a doglike appearance, they have been described in the United Kingdom as "hideous," "repulsive," "God-forsaken," and degenerate.[22] Anatomist, primatologist, and President of the London Zoo Solly Zuckerman referred in his early writings to the perception of baboons as "extremely disgusting with reputations as agents of destruction who have been reputed to tear open the stomachs of young lambs to obtain curdled milk."[23] This poor reputation helps to mark them as unworthy of just consideration, cast as criminal based on their perceived non-adherence to protocols of decorum. The French naturalist Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon's multi-volume *Natural History* (1775) illustrates baboons' disregard for the social and moral commandments of Western bourgeois society. Leclerc describes a baboon that was

> insolently lascivious and satisfied its strong desires in public. It seemed also to make a parade of its nakedness, presenting its posteriors oftener to the

[18] Anderson, "Culture and Nature," 276.
[19] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), 29.
[20] Agamben, *The Open*, 79. Here, as in the title of his book, Agamben uses the gendered term "man" to refer to humanity generally.
[21] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am,* trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 136.
[22] Ritvo, *Animal Estate*, 34.
[23] Zuckerman, *Social Life*, 193.

> spectators than its head; but it was particularly impudent in the presence of women, and plainly showed its immoderate desires before them by an inexpressible lascivity. The magot, and some others of the monkey kind, have likewise the same strong inclinations, but as they are less in size, and not so petulant, they were more easily corrected; whereas, the baboon is not only an incorrigible animal, but intractable to the utmost degree.[24]

The baboon as illustrated by Buffon is an intractable character, one who cannot be reasoned with, who cannot be disciplined, who cannot be reached. These so-called uncivilized elements are, however, present in humanity as well, often repressed, but nonetheless expressed throughout history. Zuckerman and Leclerc cast the capacity for base sexuality and horrific violence, like that seen on Monkey Hill, as beneath the dignity of cultured Western European sensibilities. Yet their expression by humans always waits just behind the curtain that divides the human from the animal.

Those passions, and the filth often associated with the lower body or even the body generally, are the animal natures that became largely denied. As Raymond Corbey argues, "in the modern era, European citizens looked upon themselves as 'civilized' and behaved as such. Decent people had to behave, dress, eat, defecate, make love, and so on, in a proper manner, and had to control their 'animal' impulses. [. . .] They associated peasants, the working classes, non-Western peoples, and various infamous professions and undesirable humans, with animals and animality, with 'untamed,' 'still uncivilized,' and 'low' nature."[25] Like the gargoyle, grotesque, or babewyn, baboons are seen, as art historian Michael Camille put it, as "all body and no soul, pure projectors of filth."[26] Like most animals in Eurocentric traditions of thought, they have been seen as pure flesh, pure carnality, empty shells, to be justifiably manipulated and exploited.[27] Baboons have been characterized as thoughtless animals

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[24] Comte de Buffon, *Natural History Vol. 3 and Vol. 4* (London: T. Bell, 1775). Zuckerman, following Darwin's own observations, tells us that *presenting* or "turning the hinder ends of their bodies towards their fellows," including humans and other animals, is very common among both male and female monkeys and apes. See Zuckerman, *Social Life*, 142. This activity is not altogether uncommon among humans as well, in various cultural and sexual contexts.

[25] Raymond Corbey, *The Metaphysics of Apes: Negotiating the Animal-Human Boundary* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 23-24.

[26] Michael Camille, *Image on the Edge: The Margins of Medieval Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press: 1992), 78.

[27] The characterization of nonhuman animals as empty and thoughtless was most famously espoused by the philosopher René Descartes, whose likening of all animals to clockwork automatons is well known and has had far-reaching historical effects. See René Descartes, "Discourse on Method," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume 1,* trans. John Cottingham, Robert Stoothoff, and Dugald Murdoch (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 140.

devoid of discipline and moral character, unaware of themselves and thus not subject to the internalized discipline and shame that the human, self-reflexive soul affords. Even Michel de Montaigne, one of the few staunch champions of nonhuman animals in the European philosophical tradition, sees nonhuman apes as especially unpleasant: "Those that resemble us most are the ugliest and most abject of the whole band: for in external appearance and shape of the face, it is the apes [who resemble us most]." He quotes Cicero, quoting Ennius: "How similar the simian, ugliest of beasts!"[28] Montaigne makes this point less to denigrate nonhuman animals than human ones, which he sees as especially ugly, justified in covering their own horrid, "defective" nakedness. For Montaigne, the offensive genitals must be hidden especially, lest the sight of them, ironically, cool lustful passions.[29] Given this apparent shame, it is remarkable to see in Zuckerman's writings the intense attention afforded to the ostentatious display of the ano-genital region of the baboon. This display is disconcerting not only because of the sheer, manifest nakedness of it, but also, given a proximity proffered by our shared primate heritage, a reminder of our own embodiment as animals, our own sexual and excretory functions and capacity for nakedness.

Reminders of our animal embodiment have often been placed at a distance from what is considered proper and civilized, a filth from within that must be disavowed. Julia Kristeva sees abjection, and specifically the excremental, as that which is tossed out of society—a filth that "relates to a *boundary* and, more particularly, represents the object jettisoned out of that boundary, its other side, a margin."[30] Seemingly, the cage or enclosure is the boundary that separates this filth from societies where humans dwell. As Agamben has explored in *Homo Sacer*, this play of inclusion and exclusion is not as clear as it might seem. At Monkey Hill, primates brought to the city are paradoxically both inside and outside of the laws that enable societies to function. They are situated in the cultural-technical-social space of the city, yet within this space, still another space excludes them from freedoms and protections that many (though not all) of the human citizens of that society enjoy.[31] This state of exception is not so much an inside and outside, but the *threshold* that divides them.[32] In other words, an enclosure or habitat like Monkey Hill, and especially its moat-like architectural gap

[28] Michel de Montaigne, "Apology for Raymond Sebond," in *The Complete Works of Montaigne*, trans. Donald M. Frame (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1957), 356.
[29] Montaigne, "Apology," 357.
[30] Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 69-71.
[31] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 18.
[32] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 19.

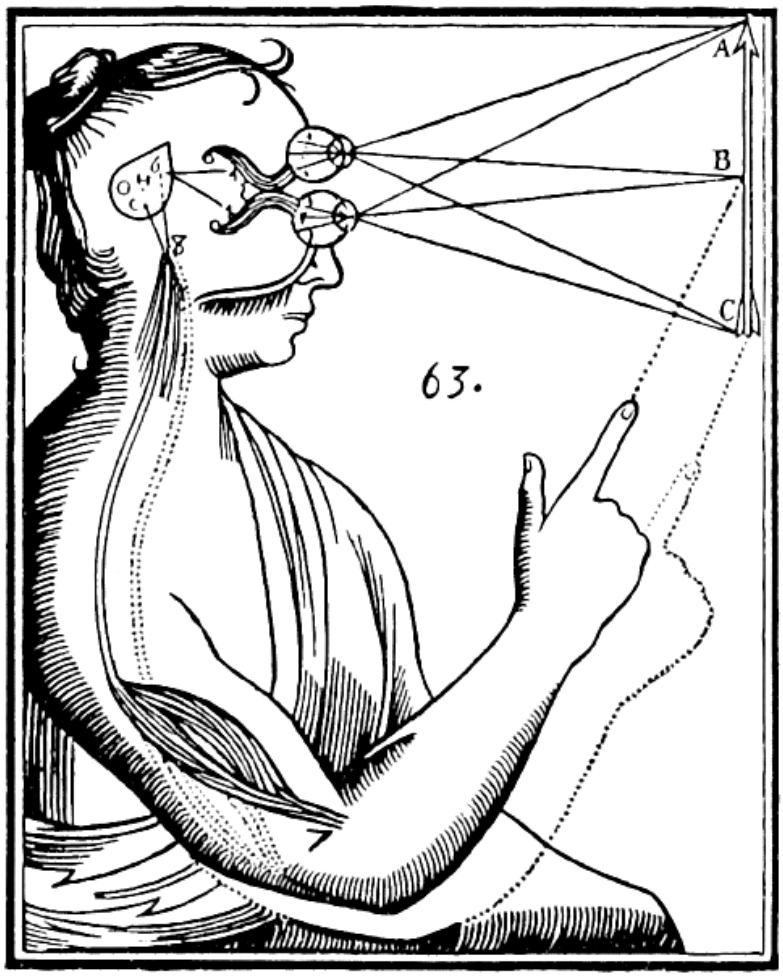

Figure 2: Reproduction of an original diagram of the pineal gland and its relation to the optical faculty. René Descartes, "Treatise On Man," 1664. Artwork in the public domain; reproduction provided by Wikimedia Commons.

dividing the baboons from the public, marks the threshold of civilized, human society, of an artifice of "culture" on one side and a carefully-prepared "nature" on the other.

In 1929, Secretary of the Zoological Society Peter Chalmers Mitchell worried about the impact of the Monkey Hill baboons' lack of shame and self-regulation, concerned "that the tendency of the baboons to copulate in public might have a 'demoralising' effect on visitors."[33] Anxiety, shock, or disgust surrounding the viewing of primates in zoos, and especially baboons, is a commonly observed phenomenon. An anonymous author from the early twentieth century says of baboons: "We approach the imprisoned baboon with the same feeling of repugnance that would be excited by a debased and brutal maniac."[34] Accompanied by a philosophical account of their second-rate morphology, Bataille would ultimately express his distaste for the baboons as well. In "The Jesuve," he writes of the pineal eye, a take-off of René Descartes's research into the pineal gland as the place in which the human soul and body are connected, the corporeal seat of humanity's non-corporeal, transcendental character (fig. 2).[35] Like Descartes, Bataille relates the pineal eye to the transcendental, to the ideal, to restricted identities. For Bataille, the pineal

[33] Jonathan Burt, "Solly Zuckerman: The Makings of a Primatological Career in Britain, 1925-1945," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences* 37 (2006): 299.

[34] Quoted in Boria Sax, *Animals in the Third Reich: Pets, Scapegoats, and the Holocaust* (New York and London: Continuum, 2000), 49.

[35] René Descartes, "The Passions of the Soul," in *The Philosophical Writings of Descartes: Volume 1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 340.

eye, situated at the top of the human skull, is the utmost symbol of human beauty and vertical erection, in contrast to the ugly, hunched, and irritating physiology of the lesser apes.[36] He calls the body "a tube with two orifices," the buccal—that is, of the mouth—and the anal, one above, one below. Setting up a boundary between the two, Bataille relates the former to humanity and latter to animality.[37] Each function as outlets for forceful expulsion. According to Bataille, because humans have become fully erect, the anus has now been tucked away in the buttocks and the anal energies redirected to eruptions of the face: laughter, screaming, sobbing, coughing, spitting, sneezing, and so on.[38] The juxtaposition for Bataille between man and baboon, between the face of man and the anus of the ape, establishes a strict line of separation between high and low.[39] The demarcation associates the filth of the lower body and the baboon's animalistic nakedness with a violation of propriety, a nakedness Bataille first tried, but found impossible, to observe with detachment.[40] Looking at the baboons' backsides—the perineal antipode to Descartes's pineal—Bataille was scandalized by what he perceived as the base horror of animality, personified by the baboons, where the animals' inner digestive faculties seem exposed, like a morphological error, the inside turned outside. Recalling his encounter, the tone of his writing is almost fanatical: "Today as I write, what I imagine of the pineal eye attains, through the course of a certain disorder, a brutality of erection so terrifying that I cannot imagine the enormous anal fruit of radial and shit-smeared raw pink meat (the one that struck me so in London) other than as an ignoble skull that I would smash with an axe blow, a rattled grunt deep in my throat."[41] For all of Bataille's fascinations with excess and scenes of vileness, filth, and dismemberment, his rearing and comportment are still those of a Western European bourgeois gentleman-intellectual. Some twenty-six years later, he maintained that the "monkey's ugliness disturbs us: it never ceases haunting us," as if to recall that traumatic event in 1927.[42]

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[36] Bataille, "The Jesuve," 74-75.

[37] Georges Bataille, "The Pineal Eye," in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 88.

[38] Bataille, "The Jesuve," 77.

[39] The privileging of the high over the low abounds in the Western cultural tradition, from the Acropolis and other high points in cities being seen as desirable or sacred; to the juxtaposition of Heaven and Hell or the celestial and the earthly; to the Great Chain of Being in which entities are hierarchically ordered from God down to the lowliest beasts. As explored here, the highest points of the vertically-oriented human body such as the richly expressive human face and the human brain are privileged, associated with the soul and humanity's rational faculties.

[40] Bataille, "The Jesuve," 75.

[41] Ibid., 78.

[42] Georges Bataille, *The Cradle of Humanity: Prehistoric Art and Culture,* ed. Stuart Kendall, trans. Stuart Kendall and Michelle Kendall (New York: Zone Books, 2009), 73.

Monkey Hill was finally closed in 1957, but negative views of baboons and other primates lived on through newspaper coverage, popular culture, and in the early decades of the field of primatology, where baboons and other primates were seen to operate purely on competition, dominance, and patriarchal violence.[43] An article in *The New Scientist* magazine on January 24, 1957 seemed to trumpet with some relief the end of "the sadistic sociality of the totalitarian monkeys of the Old World, … a state of affairs more shocking than might be thought possible outside Rome in the days of Caligula."[44] But was it the baboons who were the totalitarians? For all the condemnation of the moral depravity of baboons, for all their uncivilized barbarity, it is hard to say if the humans of England, with their history of colonial theft, confinement, and exploitation, fare much better.

Monkey Hill is one of many historical sites in which animals, including and perhaps especially primates, became the limit against which civility and a full humanness was measured. The tension between these two poles—human and nonhuman—was cast across the architectural divide at the Hill. It is ironic that scenes of such cruel debauchery and violence were permitted within the apparently civilized bounds not only of the city of London, but a zoological organization tied to the lofty humanist endeavors of Enlightenment science. Accounting for these tensions, I suggest, involves acknowledging the ways in which the modern European subject was constructed, at least in terms of mainstream public discourse and conduct, as necessarily apart from this animalistic violence and sexuality. However, the paradox of attempting to provide a "natural" environment for the baboons inside a decidedly urban techno-cultural space also set the stage for new encounters that would not only unsettle visitors, but disturb the clarity of the human-animal divide. Georges Bataille's obsessive reaction to the encounter at Monkey Hill played upon the same derogatory assumptions about baboons described throughout this paper, centered on the

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[43] Feminist and queer biologists and primatologists have since shown that even in nonhuman societies, kindness, patience, and cooperation are vital in group dynamics and social functioning. The research of Sarah Blaffer Hrdy has helped to debunk the sexist "myth of the coy female" that arose, she argues, out of the Victorian values of Darwin's time. See Sarah Blaffer Hrdy, "Empathy, Polyandry, and the Myth of the Coy Female," in *Conceptual Issues in Evolutionary Biology*, ed. Elliott Sober (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 132. Barbara B. Smuts has challenged prevailing ideas about male dominance and female subordination, arguing that the relationships between male and female baboons were more nuanced and cooperative than previously believed. Her observations suggest that females had more agency and control over social interactions than earlier theories proposed. See Barbara B. Smuts, *Sex and Friendship in Baboons* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 6-7. Joan Roughgarden has also looked to challenge a longstanding, totalizing emphasis in Darwinian evolutionary biology on "struggle" and competition over cooperation and kindness. See Joan Roughgarden, *Evolution's Rainbow: Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), 162.

[44] "Riot Days in Monkey Hill," *New Scientist*, January 24, 1957 (reproduced January 21, 1982), 180.

physiological, the soulless, and the sexual, the consequences of which were practices of denigration and exploitation such as those at the London Zoo. But while Bataille's case shows the typical revulsion at the baboons, it also shows something of an identification in his recognition of what he calls their "nudity." The spectacle of the naked anus of the baboon seemed to penetrate Bataille to his core, transgressing the carefully managed bounds of the human, affecting perhaps a cross-species sexual continuity, which caused in him an eruption of profound, vertiginous dissonance. This dissonance, borne of morphological similarity and familiarity, may be at the heart of much of the discomfort concerning the baboon body. Despite concerted efforts by zoos, this episode in the history of Monkey Hill points to a moment of failure in efforts to fully maintain the divide between human and nonhuman primates, whether those divides be philosophic, scientific, or architectural.

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Red Tide and the Anthropological Divide at Lake Merritt in Oakland, California

a response by Ben Jameson-Ellsmore

Lake Merritt is an ecosystem and public space where human and nonhuman forces perpetually subvert and overflow spatial divides. It is perhaps as close as it gets to an ideal public space; its users and landscape resist stifling regulation and subsumption to the logic of capital accumulation.[1] While access to much of modern public life and its amenities are determined by one's economic means, spaces like Lake Merritt where everyday users continually rewrite spatial codes of conduct have been regarded as increasingly rare and precious.[2] Often called Oakland's "crown jewel," Lake Merritt is a

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[1] Mariana Mogilevich, *The Invention of Public Space: Designing for Inclusion in Lindsay's New York* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2020), vii; Swati Chattopadhyay, "Visualizing the Body Politic," in *Making Place: Space and Embodiment in the City,* eds. Arijit Sen and Lisa Silverman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), 46; Saskia Sassen, "The Global Street: Making the Political," *Globalizations* 8, no. 5 (2011): 573-579, 575; Margaret Crawford, "Blurring the Boundaries: Public Space and Private Life," in *Everyday Urbanism,* eds. Margaret Crawford, John Chase and John Kaliski (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2008), 30; Dell Upton, *Another City: Urban Life and Urban Spaces in the New American Republic* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 309; Julie Peteet, "The Writing on the Walls: The Graffiti of the Intifada," *Cultural Anthropology* 11, no. 2 (1996): 139-159, 145; Richard Sennett, *The Conscience of the Eye: The Design and Social Life of Cities* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1990), 123.

[2] Simon Sadler and Charles Moore. "You (Still) Have to Pay for the Public Life," *Places Journal* (2016): https://placesjournal.org/article/you-still-have-to-pay-for-the-public-life/; Jeremy White, "Public Space and Public Action: A note on the Present," in *City Halls and Civic Materialism: Towards a Global History*

shallow, Y-shaped, 140-acre tidal lagoon east of Downtown Oakland. A pedestrian path surrounds the lake, followed by sloping lawns (fig.1). These green spaces are then encircled by a sidewalk, car parking, bike lanes, the street, midrise apartments, and the skyscrapers of Downtown. Lake Merritt's unsettled politics revolve around the use of these radiating spatial bands. Here, thresholds between people, animals, sounds, and smells are porous in ways that challenge white supremacist, bourgeois, and anthropocentric spatial assumptions.

Figure 1: The walking path around the east side of Lake Merritt barely separates pedestrians and runners from the shallow, trash-flecked water. Photo by the author, 2024.

The lake overflows with the sounds and smells of public life—features that are occasionally met with hostility. Its surface is a membrane that amplifies and transmits noise. Almost daily, a dance or festival takes place at Walter Reed's 1913 City Beautiful-style Pergola and Colonnade, while roller discos occupy parking lots, blasting retro tunes.[3] During rideouts and cruises, showy bikes and cars parade the lake's perimeter, slowing traffic to a halt.[4] Bikers off-road into lawn and park spaces, as if daring the indignant among the crowds to call the authorities. High-rise penthouse residents complain to the police

of Urban Public Space, eds. Swati Chattopadhyay and Jeremy White (London: Routledge, 2014), 299; Michael Sorkin, "Introduction: Variations on a Theme Park," in *Variations on a Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space,* ed. Michael Sorkin (New York; Hill and Wang, 1992), xiii.

[3] Charlie Lahud-Zahner, "A rollerskating revival spins up at Lake Merritt," *Oaklandside* (March 4, 2021): https://oaklandside.org/2021/03/04/oakland-lake-merritt-roller-skating-revival-pandemic/.

[4] Pendarvis Harshaw, "The Power of Taking Up Space: Marshawn Lynch's Oakland Rideout," *KQED* (June 29, 2018): https://www.kqed.org/arts/13836150/the-power-of-taking-up-space-at-marshawn-lynchs-oakland-rideout.

that the beats of drum circles penetrate their lofty walls.[5] In 2018, one now-infamous white woman, labeled "BBQ Becky" by Black Twitter users, called the police on two Black men for using a charcoal grill on the east lakeside.[6] Black counterpublics responded by reclaiming the gentrifying shores of Lake Merritt, through "BBQing While Black" solidarity events.[7] These events echoed historic Black Panther protests against a racialized 1970 ordinance prohibiting any conduct at the lake that "annoys or disturbs a reasonable person of normal sensitivities."[8] The lake's public culture and landscape chafe against such attempts to reify white and bourgeois cultural norms.

The lake's simultaneous roles as a public space, desirable real estate, wildlife preserve, and an environmental conundrum have historic roots. Before the arrival of white settlers, this land was a morphing tidal slough stewarded by the Ohlone Tribespeople and Mexican ranchers. White Gold Rushers purchased the land after it was stolen by the US government during the Mexican-American War. They then used the slough as a sewage dump. Among these actors was Dr. Samuel Merritt, who bought land west of the slough after making his fortune in San Francisco. Using his own capital, and rallying adjacent landowners, he dammed and dredged the swampy land in an attempt to freeze its contours in place.[9] As mayor in 1869, Merritt declared the area a "public lake" and the first waterfowl sanctuary in the US in 1870, while also increasing the value of his property. He devised a sewer system to flush raw human waste deposited in Lake Merritt into the San Francisco Bay by harnessing natural tidal rhythms. The system failed when the tides refused to cooperate, creating a structural flaw that reverberates into the present.[10] In short, the lake has offended human sensibilities and overflowed boundaries throughout its modern history.

The notion that Lake Merritt is Oakland's "crown jewel" or "pearl" paints an insufficient picture of this beautiful yet disgusting place, and instead invokes the

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[5] Alex Werth, "Before BBQ Becky: Racial Reverberations at Oakland's Lake Merritt," *Journal of Popular Music Studies* 33, no. 4 (2021): 78-103, 85.

[6] Dannie de Guzman, "Video shows woman calling police over barbeque at Lake Merritt," *SFGATE* (May 10, 2018): https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Oakland-barbecue-Lake-Merritt-Sunday-confrontation-12902520.php.

[7] Sam Lefebvre, "Grill Against Gentrification at BBQ'n While Black," *KQED* (May 22, 2019): https://www.kqed.org/arts/13861227/grill-against-gentrification-at-bbqn-while-black;

[8] Werth, 'Before BBQ Becky," 93.

[9] Zoë Beery, "The Long, Complex History of Oakland's Man-Made Bird Islands," *Atlas Obscura* (March 8, 2018): https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/lake-merritt-bird-islands-oakland; Beth Bagwell, *Oakland: The Story of a City* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982), 126; Richard Longstreth, "A Short History of Lake Merritt, 1850-1974," Thesis (University of California, Berkeley, 1974), 4.

[10] Bagwell, *Oakland,* 127; Longstreth, "A Short History of Lake Merritt," 11.

Bataillean quality of excess.[11] While beautiful and repulsive are usually regarded as antonyms, they share a positioning beyond mere utility in Georges Bataille's framework. He analogizes jewels and excrement, referring to their symbolic conflation in psychoanalytic dream analysis; both are useless objects resulting from the expenditure of wealth or of bodily material.[12] If Lake Merritt is a "crown jewel," it is as a dual ejection or excess – it is expensive land set aside for waterfowl and the public, and it is strewn with trash and shit.

Figure 2: One of dozens of storm drains empties into the avian sanctuary on the north side of the Lake. Photo by the author, 2024.

This sewage dump-cum-lagoon is jewel-like from the right vantage—a placid aqueous mirror reflecting a perimeter of string lights, lampposts, and the towers of downtown. Meanwhile, its fragrant algal and bacterial growth, excrement-littered pathways, and floating trash are repulsive. Fertilizer, antifreeze, oil, soap, and other excesses of the city enter the lake through sixty storm drains (fig. 2). Thousands of pounds of trash are also removed from the lake every month. The Lake Merritt Institute gleefully records their strange "catches of the day," including but not limited to dentures, dildos, parking meters, and a "no littering" sign.[13] These factors combined make a perimeter fence and the occasional

[11] Bagwell, *Oakland,* 127; Werth, "Before BBQ Becky," 78; Georges Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure," 116-129, in *Visions of Excess: Selected Writings, 1927-1939*, ed. Allan Stoekl (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press), 117.

[12] Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure," 119.

[13] Lake Merritt Institute, "A Year in the Life of Lake Merritt," (2002): https://lakemerrittinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/A_Year_In_The_Life.pdf.

Figure 3: Public binoculars on Lake Merritt's north side point toward the human-made bird islands. Photo by the author, 2024.

sign warning against swimming lake seem unnecessary—the smell of decaying aquatic widgeon grass and the sight of floating trash keep joggers and flâneurs alert not to inadvertently fall in.[14] The lake's repulsiveness is such a given that a local news article states, "It should go without saying that no one should swim in Lake Merritt." Although the article explains that humans would most likely not be harmed by the lagoon's waters, it urges humans to keep their distance to maintain the waterfowl sanctuary.[15]

While occasional public binocular towers for observing the human-made bird islands would seem to reinforce a zoo-like anthropological divide at the lake, the birds are free to traverse it and claim human space (fig. 3).[16] This is clearest when, in the

[14] Ibid.

[15] Eli Wolfe, "Swimming in Lake Merritt: Is it safe or even legal?" *Oaklandside* (August 30, 2023): https://oaklandside.org/2023/08/30/swimming-in-lake-merritt-is-it-safe-or-even-legal/#:~:text=It%20should%20go%20without%20saying,drains%20that%20empty%20into%20it.

[16] Zoë Beery, "The Long, Complex History of Oakland's Man-Made Bird Islands," *Atlas Obscura* (March 8, 2018): https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/lake-merritt-bird-islands-oakland.

summer, thousands of Canada geese occupy the lawns, beaches, and walking paths.[17] In this issue, Corey Ratch explores the less permeable divides at the London Zoo's early twentieth-century baboon exhibit called Monkey Hill. Surrounded by unjumpable ditches, it forcefully articulated human/non-human distinctions.[18] At Monkey Hill, humans were beholders of the conquered non-human world, with animality (both our own and that of the other) kept behind uncrossable divides.

But such divides are still permeable in the sense that they also put human beholders and their anxieties on display. Zoo officials worried that the uncouthness of the near-simian baboons would degrade the moral character of the post-Victorian public. Bataille himself recalled being overwhelmed by the sight of the baboons, associating their colorful posteriors with the irrational animal excess that human society represses.[19] Additionally, being forcibly transplanted from their vast habitats to a small exhibit space, the baboons were all but guaranteed to kill each other in territorial disputes.[20] Monkey Hill was thus a display of the human violence involved in constructing anthropological divides. Perhaps the distinctions between the birds, fish, and crustaceans of Lake Merritt and humans are more obvious and less subversive than those between humans and other simians, thus not requiring uncrossable barriers. But just as the mass death of the mistreated London Zoo baboons put human interventions in the natural world on display, so did a 2022 mass fish die-off in Lake Merritt.

The August 2022 red tide algal bloom siphoned enough oxygen from the water to litter Lake Merritt's edges with the asphyxiated bodies of fish, crustaceans, and mollusks. Decay could be smelled for miles. The stench penetrated masks and turned the stomachs of the seasoned sanitation workers tasked with removing the corpses.[21] One viewer remarked, "It's a hard contrast because you've got the beauty of the lake and then you got all the death around you."[22] This and other lake stenches draw a line straight back to Samuel Merritt and his semi-successful attempts to turn the uncooperative slough into a useful technology for real estate development and waste management. The conditions for the red tide were linked to global human interventions in the environment. The 2022 climate change-induced atmospheric rivers abruptly ended California's drought but also changed the salinity of the Bay's coastal waters. The resulting algae made its way into the lake from the San Francisco Bay

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[17] Lake Merritt Institute, "A Year in the Life of Lake Merritt."

[18] Corey Ratch, "Pineal/Perineal: The Anthropological Divide at Monkey Hill," *react/review: a responsive journal for art and architecture* 4 (2024): 21-35, 24.

[19] Georges Bataille, "The Jesuve," 77.

[20] Ratch, "Pineal/Perineal, 26.

[21] Ricky Rodas, "'It's the worst I've seen': Lake Merritt dead fish clean-up continues ahead of heat wave," *Oaklandside* (Sept. 1, 2022): https://oaklandside.org/2022/09/01/its-the-worst-ive-seen-lake-merritt-dead-fish-clean-up-continues-ahead-of-heat-wave/.

[22] Rodas, "'It's the worst I've seen'"; Bataille, "The Notion of Expenditure," 119.

through the channel originally devised by Samuel Merritt, while the storm drains further diluted Lake Merritt's brackish water.[23]

During the Anthropocene and the era of human induced climate change, clear anthropological divides are unsustainable. We cannot simply display the conquered world: it implicates us as it bleeds through unsustainable anthropological divides. The red tide fish die off was an example of human-made climate change becoming less abstract and distant by virtue of afflicting a major Western city's "crown jewel." For a moment, cumulative global carbon dioxide emissions since the industrial revolution and the distant human and environmental sacrifices made in the name of endless capital accumulation washed up on the shores of Lake Merritt. These externalities/excesses of capital return and assert their claim to urban public space as well. Lake Merritt is thus a public space for the Anthropocene, where humanity encounters itself through contact with its human, animal, and environmental other, and where stark human/nonhuman divides periodically disintegrate.

[23] Ricky Rodas and Darwin BondGraham, "Can Lake Merritt be saved from another fish kill?" *Oaklandside* (March 21, 2023): https://oaklandside.org/2023/03/21/oakland-lake-merritt-red-tide-algae-atmospheric-river-rain-fish-kill/.

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Skating the Surrounds: Chemi Rosado-Seijo's *El Bowl* in La Perla, Puerto Rico

Alida R. Jekabson

Outside the colonial walls of San Juan, Puerto Rico lies the neighborhood of La Perla. Weaving through narrow streets and staircases on the steep, coastal terrain, one is surrounded by homes, businesses and other buildings, many inhabited and brightly painted, while others remain neglected. At the edge of the built environment, the coastline on the north of the island offers a view of the Atlantic Ocean. Among the roofless walls covered with murals and graffiti, an oblong concrete structure stands approximately 6 feet deep and 40 feet wide: Chemi Rosado-Seijo's *El Bowl* (figs. 1, 2).

El Bowl rises from the coastline, its curved yellow rim contrasting the Atlantic's blue waves. Handmade stairs lead up to the edge of the Bowl. Visible among graffiti markings across the concave, concrete surface is the form of a large shark, its fins shown cut away from its body. The painted image is weathered, with older coats of paint exposed at the bottom of the Bowl. These signs of wear are the first clues to the structure's use as one of the few public skateboarding ramps in the San Juan area. The rim of the structure bears the markings of skateboard wheels that have caught the lip of *El Bowl* as they prepare to glide downwards. At the bottom of the structure is a small hole, approximately two inches in diameter. This opening is essential to the hybrid character of *El Bowl*. On weekends, the hole is plugged up, and the bowl is filled with water and becomes a swimming pool for the residents (fig. 2).

During the week, the concrete structure is dry and empty of swimmers. Its use depends on an informal agreement between skateboarders and residents as to when *El*

Figure 1: *El Bowl*, 2018, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Photo by the author.

Bowl serves as a pool or ramp. Standing at the yellow edge, one can admire the structure and the painted forms of the work, while also taking in the views of the ocean and El Morro, a sixteenth-century citadel built during Spanish colonial rule. *El Bowl* marks a boundary between sea and earth, between the inner and outer colonial walls of the city. It can be filled or unfilled, and used by both residents and visiting skateboarders. Since its inception, the site has also marked a threshold between art and commerce in the gentrification of the urban space of San Juan.

El Bowl, a public space oscillating between artistic and commercial audiences, is also a testimony to Rosado-Seijo's contribution to many communities within Puerto Rico who have traditionally experienced limited access to recreational resources.[1] The

[1]The artist's community engagement work is epitomized by a sixteen-year project in the El Cerro community, located in the mountains an hour from San Juan. Over the years, most of the buildings have been repainted shades of green through the artist's effort to revive the town center and highlight the relationship between the natural and built environment. Á.R. Vázquez-Concepción, "El Cerro: A social practice work by artist Chemi Rosado-Seijo, ongoing since 2002," *Cranium Corporation*, April 21, 2016,

Figure 2: *El Bowl*, 2020, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Courtesy of iStock.com/StreetMuse.

ramp and pool engage with the architectural history of La Perla and the area's liminal relationship to the urban landscape of San Juan. Situated outside of the city walls, the neighborhood was cut off from municipal services until recent decades. By examining this complex site, my aim is to trace the inception, building, and reception of *El Bowl* as indicative of a type of border space that urbanist AbdouMaliq Simone calls "the surrounds," one that allows for a "rehearsal of experimental ways of living."[2] This rehearsal, for what Simone calls an "unprecedented" way of living, relates to *El Bowl* and its collaborative construction and use. Although the builders, skateboarders, and residents were already well versed in their respective histories of architecture and design, the participation of these communities at the same site, a first for both, can be viewed as a "rehearsal." For Simone, the correlating concept of the "surrounds" encapsulates this kind of "relationship among spaces, whose complexion exceeds their function while maintaining them and whose functions are never clearly stabilized because they seem to absorb the multiplicity of characteristics that makes up the place

https://craniumcorporation.org/2016/04/21/el-cerro-a-social-practice-work-by-artist-chemi-rosado-seijo-ongoing-since-2002/.

[2] AbdouMaliq Simone, *The Surrounds: Urban Life Within and Beyond Capture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2022), 6.

of the surrounds."[3] Simone stresses that "the surrounds is a product of *relational location* rather than geographic one."[4] The ongoing relations between communities, the local and federal government, and popular culture figures have contributed to the site's construction, and aids in the visibility of La Perla within the sphere of media tourism.

El Bowl, completed in 2006 by Rosado-Seijo, first emerged in response to the artist's skateboarding practice, but developed and transformed into an occasion for collaboration and social engagement with multiple communities. The interactive and multi-functional demands of *El Bowl* are integral to its continued use. Throughout his career, Rosado-Seijo has relied on the skateboarding bowl form, reflecting a larger trend in the contemporary art world toward nomadic, site-specific projects that are replicated and installed in museums, galleries, as well as public spaces. Art historian Miwon Kwon has traced the development of site-specific art, arguing that by the 1990s, installation practices with roots in the postwar era were often commissioned to be re-created or restaged in order to meet institutional demands, as well as to further artist's careers.[5] Artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija and art collectives such as Futurefarmers rely on community to complete their social practice-based works, which are often replicated in similar forms across many locations. Other more recent traveling installations, such as Yayoi Kusama's *Infinity Rooms,* circulate within the realm of blue-chip galleries and museums. Installations such as Kusama's rely on participants to generate attention via social media, inevitably contributing to funds for the host institutions. In this case, Rosado-Seijo's *El Bowl* and the artist's sustained engagement with the La Perla and skateboarding communities are rooted in the history of social practice art, which often takes the form of large-scale installations or events. The media images generated from *El Bowl* and the increasing tourist popularity of the La Perla neighborhood also inadvertently place this project on the boundary of more consumer-driven art installations.

Building In and With La Perla

In a 2018 interview, the artist commented that he wanted *El Bowl* to be about "building an object that has the aesthetics and parts of La Perla to talk about La

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[3] Ibid., 7.

[4] Ibid., 6.

[5] Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2002), 46. Kwon cites the example of Fred Wilson's 1992 project *Mining the Museum.* Wilson's project was originally staged at the Baltimore Historical Society in Maryland. Other museums subsequently commissioned Wilson to rehang their permanent collections, demonstrating that within the development of nomadic, site-specific installations, "the artist becomes a commodity with a special purchase on 'criticality.'"

Figure 3: Aerial view of Old San Juan and La Perla, 2016. *El Bowl* is visible in the lower left corner. Courtesy of iStock/Requejo Films.

Perla."[6] La Perla became a symbol of poverty and crime in San Juan in the early twentieth century. The area, outside the official walls of the city, takes its name from the La Perla *ravelin*, a triangular fortification built outside the city in the seventeenth century.[7] Differentiating La Perla from other "slums" in the Global South is the neighborhoods' picturesque coastal location (fig. 3). In many ways, La Perla is illustrative of major urban themes of the twentieth century, as outlined by architectural historian Florian Urban. According to Urban, "irrespective of the dominant interpretation, formal and informal elements were always vying for each other in La Perla."[8] Urban's definition resonates with Simone's concept of the surrounds in an urban environment. The surrounds are liminal, "left over(s)" from designated urban spaces, a phenomenon Simone describes as an "intricate suturing of bodily comportment, movement, exposure…into a collective choreography producing space

[6] Chemi Rosado Seijo interviewed by Daniel Rodriguez, April 21, 2018, video, 10:34, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qTpVXcR-oZA.
[7] Florian Urban, "La Perla – 100 years of informal architecture in San Juan, Puerto Rico," *Planning Perspectives* 30, no. 4 (2015): 498.
[8] Urban, "La Perla," 496.

Figure 4: A street in La Perla, 1938, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Photo by Edwin Rosskam. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives.

of unsettled invention..."[9] La Perla and the site of *El Bowl* both reflect the tension, or choreography, between the residents and artist interlocutors, and the qualities of impermanence, invention, and exposure named by Urban and Simone.

When the walls around San Juan were built, during the Spanish colonial era, Spanish law did not allow for a cemetery or slaughterhouse within the city bounds for hygienic reasons.[10] These sites were placed outside the walls, in what is now La Perla (fig. 3). By the close of the nineteenth century, La Perla was populated by former agrarian workers who relocated to the city from the rural mountain areas. The United States' invasion of the island during the 1898 Spanish-American War contributed to a changing economy. More people moved to urban centers like San Juan as farming practices that served the island population shifted to monoculture farming and the export of products such as sugar.[11] Domestic and industrial workers, some formerly enslaved, were forced into areas like La Perla that were less developed and less expensive.

By 1913, La Perla had formalized from a grouping of wooden houses near the slaughterhouses into a rental neighborhood. A small group of landowners rented land to the urban poor, who then built their own houses.[12] In the 1920s and '30s, official *ranchóns* for slaughterhouse workers were built in La Perla. These one-story structures were often built around planned streets and staircases that provided navigation

[9] Simone, *The Surrounds*, 6, 92.
[10] Jean M. Caldieron, "Land Tenure and the Self-Improvement of Two Latin American Informal Settlements in Puerto Rico and Venezuela," *Urban Forum* 24 (2013): 56.
[11] Alvarez-Curbelo Silvia and Aníbal Sepúlveda-Rivera, *De vuelta a la ciudad: San Juan de Puerto Rico, 1997-2001* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Fundación Sila M. Calderón, 2011), 140.
[12] Urban, "La Perla," 500.

through the steep coastal terrain. By the 1950s, the local slaughterhouse had closed, and many landowners tore down the *ranchóns*. More permanent single-family dwellings were built. Modeled after working-class homes in other parts of San Juan, they were often constructed out of existing foundations and standing walls, as well as recycled wood and non-permanent materials (figs. 4, 5).[13] Although residents constructed and maintained homes, they had no claim to the land.

Figure 5: View of a portion of the workers' quarter of La Perla from the old Spanish ramparts, 1938, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Photo by Edwin Rosskam. Courtesy of Library of Congress, Prints & Photographs Division, Farm Security Administration/Office of War Information Black-and-White Negatives.

During this period, San Juan underwent massive developments in the public and private housing sector. A visit to the city by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt in 1934, which included a tour of La Perla, resulted in the creation of the Puerto Rico Reconstruction Administration (PPRA) by her husband, President Franklin D. Roosevelt.[14] The press coverage of her 1934 visit includes a visceral description of the unhygienic conditions of La Perla. The PPRA aimed to improve conditions by providing "permanent" reconstruction for the island through the systematic clearing of "slums," which were then replaced with large scale housing projects. The PPRA's focus on modern progress was furthered in 1959 when the newly autonomous Puerto Rican government enacted Operation Bootstrap. An initiative dedicated to modern development and agrarian reform on the island, the program facilitated a shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy. An urban plan for San Juan was developed and most informal settlements in San Juan proper were cleared and

[13] Urban, "La Perla," 510; Caldieron, "Land Tenure," 58.

[14] Andrés Mignucci, "Modern urbanism in Puerto Rico: from abstract doctrines to concrete landscapes," in *Espacios ambivalentes: historias y olvidos en la arquitectura social moderna*," eds. Lizardi Pollock, Jorge L. and Martin Schwegmann (San Juan: Ediciones Callejón, 2012), 134.

replaced with housing projects.[15] This "externally oriented strategy" created social and economic conditions of high unemployment and large-scale migration that did little to raise the quality of life for individuals and families living on the island.[16] Throughout the twentieth century, government agents and private developers proposed several unrealized plans to bulldoze La Perla.[17] Urban attributes the failure of these developments to landowners' refusal to sell, or simply to bureaucratic inefficiency.

By 1982, a beachfront road was constructed in La Perla to increase access to the area. Streetlights and infrastructure were installed, connecting the area to the city's sewer system. However, most significant was the official transfer of land ownership from the heirs of factory owners to the inhabitants of the area, effectively legalizing La Perla as a community.[18] Legal access to the land led to an increase in construction of permanent residences, while unstable structures by the coast were abandoned and bulldozed by the Housing Authority. This area is now the site of *El Bowl*. In a 2011 study of the area, architectural historian Jean M. Caldieron describes homes in La Perla that had been occupied for many generations as embodying a "flexible" design.[19] The history of La Perla's architecture—informal and in response to the needs and environment of its inhabitants—is reflected in the construction of Rosado-Seijo's *El Bowl*.

The artist states that *El Bowl* was "…necessarily communal to build. It's impossible to do this by myself."[20] This construction process is key to understanding the work's hybrid functionality. *El Bowl* grew out of personal necessity: Rosado-Seijo, a student at the nearby arts school in San Juan, needed a place to skateboard. After a failed test at a site nearby, the artist submitted a proposal to a local arts foundation to build a skate ramp on the coast, from which he received funds to begin work on his project. Supporting his vision were other local skateboarders who were also looking for a place to skate. A video documentary about *El Bowl* features an interview with co-collaborator Roberto "Boly" Cortez, who has been surfing and skating in San Juan since the 1970s. When Cortez first began working with Rosado-Seijo, the project was about skating. It later became a bigger endeavor than Cortez had initially imagined.

The coastal site where *El Bowl* was constructed was full of debris left over from a previous structure, possibly a pool. The artist moved to La Perla, and his presence in

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[15] Urban, "La Perla," 506; Mignucci, "Modern urbanism," 144.

[16] James L. Dietz, *Puerto Rico: Negotiating Development and Change* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022), 66.

[17] Mignucci, "Modern urbanism," 135; Caldieron, "Land Tenure," 56.

[18] Urban, "La Perla," 517. Construction of the beachfront road began in the 1970s; since this period, construction has been prohibited in the maritime zone of the neighborhood.

[19] Caldieron, "Land Tenure," 59.

[20] Chemi Rosado-Seijo interviewed by Daniel Rodriguez, April 21, 2018, video, 10:10.

the community and relationship with locals enabled him to overcome initial skepticism that he encountered in the community. Soon, residents from La Perla began to pitch in; research has confirmed the involvement of residents in improvement activities in La Perla.[21] Construction began by amassing existing debris as a building material. Rosado-Seijo decided to use concrete in building the ramp, even though current methods for building improvised skate ramps commonly and primarily employ other materials, like wood. The work's location at the waterfront required the use of materials that could withstand the occasional flooding of seawater. The multi-functional shape of the pool also recalls the practice of skateboarders using abandoned swimming pools as ramps.

What Urban refers to as the historically "quasi-formal" character of La Perla is evident in Rosado-Seijo's project.[22] The bowl itself is the product of collaborative manual labor and experimentation. In the beginning, Rosado-Seijo was attracted to La Perla because of its architectural legacy. He asserts that "the Bowl is a visual reference to the place where it has been constructed."[23] Reflecting on the process of building *El Bowl* over a decade later, the artist recalled how important it was for everyone involved to have a good sense of humor, as building the structure was based on a trial and error process.[24] The project was intended to showcase an alternative to professionalized architecture, drawing instead on the local architectural history of La Perla. For the artist, *El Bowl* was an "example of design that is also enjoyable, [and] fun to build."[25] Videos of its construction show a concrete mixer on the coastline. Some people are applying concrete as a final action to smooth out the concave surface, while nearby, a skateboarder is testing a completed section on his board. A comb has found its way into the exterior wall, representative of the everyday objects that one finds embedded in the structure. A small, narrow staircase leading to the entrance draws on the forms of staircases constructed along La Perla's steep slopes (fig. 6). Using existing debris as a building material references the construction methods of many La Perla homes, which often use local materials and are completed in multiple sections over time. Heaps of

[21] Caldieron, "Land Tenure," 60. Caldieron's 2011 study asserts that 50% of residents participate in improvement activities in La Perla, a figure which may have decreased in recent decades given the rise of renters in the neighborhood, as descendants of original families have moved out (but have kept their family dwelling for rental income). In 2011, a large-scale drug raid of La Perla led to the incarceration of approximately one-fifth of the residents. A significant percentage of the current population are elderly and participate in activities offered by the community center, which is housed in the former slaughterhouse building.

[22] Urban, "La Perla," 497.

[23] Chemi Rosado Seijo, "La Perla Bowl," video, 2015, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 3:30, https://vimeo.com/138655930.

[24] Chemi Rosado Seijo interviewed by Daniel Rodriguez, April 21, 2018, video, 10:44.

[25] Ibid,, 10:20.

Figure 6: *El Bowl*, 2018, San Juan, Puerto Rico. Detail of staircase. Photo by the author.

debris are covered with rebar, and then carefully smoothed over with concrete by the many hands involved in the project. The materials and form of the bowl, as well as its picturesque location at the water's edge, are doing what Simone calls "disturbing an image of something that may have otherwise been taken as 'for sure.'"[26] In this case, the longstanding local association of the neighborhood with poverty, high crime rates, and poor infrastructure is disrupted by an artist's interest in the neighborhood as a site of art-making, and his intention to gather community from both outside and inside of

[26] Simone, *The Surrounds,* 7.

La Perla's walls. The nature of *El Bowl*'s "surrounds," its construction and use, points to the histories of the site and its participants.

After eight months of work, *El Bowl* opened in March 2006 and residents and skateboarders alike began enjoying their new recreation site for swimming or skating.[27] *El Bowl*, although envisioned and promoted by the artist, has expanded beyond his practice, and is used, maintained, and painted by members of the La Perla and skateboarding communities. The most widely documented instance of another artist working at the site was that of painter and public artist Federico Herrero in 2014. Herrero's practice often participates in public urban spaces, such as swimming pools, sidewalks, and playgrounds. Subsequent artistic interventions at *El Bowl* do not seem to be motivated by Rosado-Seijo, but arise more organically. Herrero's intervention in La Perla was to paint blocks of color on the interior of the structure, which emerged as a patchwork of rounded forms and colors. Once the bowl is filled with water, swimmers experience the patterns through reflections in the water as a shimmering collage of blues and greens.

Skateboarding as a Nomadic Practice

Rosado-Seijo's knowledge and interpretation of the history of skateboarding contributes to the forms and materials of *El Bowl*. Using an existing built space to skateboard is very much in the spirit of the sport. Gaining popularity in the 1960s and 70s, skateboards were used early on by surfers.[28] Skateboarders frequently make use of spaces like ramps and public squares, which means that the sport can be practiced in a wide variety of contexts. Abandoned and neglected spaces also often serve as potential skating surfaces.[29] *El Bowl* evolved from the artist's desire to translate his skateboarding practice into the creation of art objects and other socially engaged projects. Born in 1973 in Vega Alta, Puerto Rico, Rosado-Seijo began the sport as a teenager, and continued to pursue his passion while earning his B.A. at the Escuela de Artes Plásticas de Puerto Rico. Skateboarding has continually informed his work and relationship to art history. In the summer of 2016, Rosado-Seijo installed his largest skate ramp at the Museum of Contemporary Art and Design in Costa Rica, as part of the *History on Wheels* series. The wooden structure was later installed in a nearby

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[27]Chemi Rosado Seijo, "Art and the Urban Landscape," filmed December 2013 at Cranbrook Art Center, Bloomfield Hills, MI, video, 36:34.

[28] Tara Winner, "Sidewalk Surfing: The Gnarly History of Skateboarding Part 1 (1940s to 1972)," *Museum of Play*. https://www.museumofplay.org/blog/sidewalk-surfing-the-gnarly-history-of-skateboarding-part-i-1940s-to-1972/.

[29] Anastasiia Fedorova, "What Skateboarding Can Teach Us about Modern Life," *i-D Magazine*, October 8, 2016, https://i-d.vice.com/en_uk/article/gyg4z9/what-can-skateboarding-teach-us-about-modern-life; Seijo, "Art and the Urban Landscape," 31:42.

park.[30] More recently, in 2020 the artist installed *Ceremonial Pearl-Hole (The Ceremonial Bowl)* at Art Omi in Ghent, New York. The work, a concrete bowl for skateboarding, also incorporates the architectural form of a *batay*, a Taino ritual gathering space, reflecting the artist's interest in the ancient history of the island.[31]

Rosado-Seijo's continued use of the bowl form in his practice indicates a trend elucidated by Miwon Kwon. For Kwon, as more artists are commissioned to complete site-specific projects across the globe, their projects take on nomadic qualities of mobility and reproducibility. Kwon outlines that while some conceptual and minimalist artists defend their site-specific practices, "others are keen to undo the presumption of criticality associated with such principles as immobility, permanence, and unrepeatability."[32] In this case, to re-present a site-oriented project across multiple locations, the presence of the artist has become a necessary performative aspect of this restaging. For Kwon, "rather than resisting mobilization, these artists are attempting to reinvent site specificity as a *nomadic* practice."[33] Reprising the bowl format at La Perla is an illustration of this portability. In the case of *El Bowl*, the structure indicates a unique instance within Rosado-Seijo's practice. Here, design is intended for and engages both local and global users, while still relying on the nomadic form of the skate bowl, which has developed into a form associated with the artist's practice, regardless of site.

Rosado-Seijo uses video to extend his nomadic skateboarding practice in *La Habana,* a project filmed over a period of seven days in Cuba during his participation in the 2015 Havana Biennial.[34] The artist attaches a camera to his board, which records his travel through the streets. The work has a consistent soundtrack: the grating of wheels against pavement, an occasional click or bump as the board encounters new surfaces, and the whoosh of Rosado-Seijo's leg propelling him forward. The viewer sees the environment of street surfaces, pedestrians' shoes, small children, and pets zoom by at board level. In these projects, Rosado-Seijo relies on the skateboard as a medium that is translocal; the rides he takes and the structures he builds are tied to a specific site, but the mobility of the form allows for its application across localities. Each use of the

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[30] "Chemi Rosado-Seijo: One Thousand Four Hundred and Seventy One Rides," Press Release, Embajada Gallery, San Juan, Puerto Rico, May 28, 2017. This series also includes the treatment of skateboarding ramps as a canvas, the surfaces cross-hatched by the wheels, as well as a set of sculptures that takes the form of art history textbooks, re-fashioned to mimic the form of a skateboard.

[31] *Batay* were also used as ball courts by the Taino, who have inhabited the island since c. 600 CE. For more on archeology of *batay* courts see Mike Toner, *Ghosts of the Taíno*. Vol. 61 (New York, NY: Archaeological Institute of America, 2008).

[32] Kwon, *One Place after Another,* 43.

[33] Ibid.,, 43.

[34] "One Thousand Four Hundred and Seventy-One Rides," *Terremoto*, July 26, 2017, http://terremoto.mx/one-thousand-four-hundred-and-seventy-one-rides/.

skateboard creates something that is new, but that is simultaneously inflected by the past through hints of its previous location, much like the remnants of the dirt from former rides accumulated on the wheels of a skateboard.

El Bowl has led to recognition of La Perla in local and global skateboarding communities. Unlike Rosado-Seijo's other projects, the site at La Perla was not intended to be de-installed following an art exhibition. Since Rosado-Seijo's initial involvement with local skaters in 2006, other skaters have traveled to *El Bowl*. The site has received coverage from a variety of international sports publications and has become a destination for skaters.[35] Professional skateboarders often bring towels to dry off the surface if it has been raining, or if *El Bowl* is still damp from the previous day's swimming.

However, the popularity of *El Bowl* has perpetuated generalizations about La Perla as an unsafe neighborhood. For instance, reporter Ron Whaley recounts his experience in the neighborhood in his 2015 article for *Transworld Skateboarding*. At one point, his companion quickly advises him to leave, as he notices a man carrying a gun.[36] This individual is actually a policeman on duty. This mischaracterization of La Perla persists, despite Rosado-Seijo and his collaborators' efforts to engage communities of skateboarders, artists, and residents.

Rosado-Seijo's engagement with La Perla is deepened through the *Festival de Chiringas*, a yearly kite festival in the neighborhood instituted by the artist and residents in 2014. The day is a celebration of La Perla, when handmade kites soar above the walls of San Juan. The artist's and skateboarders' involvement in this area contrast with government neglect. In speaking about the neighborhood, Gerardo "Junior" Ramírez, a community leader in La Perla, asserted that "neither the local or state government has helped us here, they haven't given us anything! Asking here, asking there, looking, looking... up until today we're still waiting for the help of the local municipality and the state."[37] *El Bowl* signaled an interest in the area that revitalized the community in ways the government could not provide.

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[35] Ron Whaley, "Krux Puerto Rico Tour," *Transworld Skateboarding*, May 21, 2015, https://skateboarding.transworld.net/photos/krux-puerto-rico-tour/. A Spanish-language YouTube channel dedicated to sports and travel uploaded a video of their visit to La Perla and *El Bowl*. The footage includes views of skateboarders using *El Bowl*. Aerial TV, "Skate Bowl Piscina y Skatepark en Puerto Rico," YouTube video, 10:21, April 2018, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N1DzRM9OV04&t=245s.

[36] Whaley, "Krux Puerto Rico Tour."

[37] Chemi Rosado Seijo, "La Perla Bowl," video, 2015, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 3:16, https://vimeo.com/138655930.

La Perla and Media Tourism in Puerto Rico

The need for government aid in marginalized areas of Puerto Rico has increased since Hurricane Maria made landfall on the island in September 2017. The damage to structures in La Perla was significant, due to the neighborhood's location on a steep oceanfront slope. Many houses were flooded, and a few collapsed completely, leaving people homeless; some had no choice but to sleep in the ruins. Currently only sixty percent of the population in La Perla hold the legal titles to their land.[38] Residents who lack official deeds to their property are not eligible for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) aid from the United States government, leaving many at the mercy of whatever help they can get from their communities to reconstruct their lives. Signs posted near an entrance to the neighborhood following the hurricane read: "S.O.S., we need help. Water, provisions. Don't abandon us. Despacito." The latter is in reference to the hit reggaeton song, "Despacito" by Puerto Rican artists Luis Fonsi and Daddy Yankee. Ironically, that music video was filmed in La Perla earlier in 2016. The song's popularity inspired interest in the neighborhood, and some residents have started giving tours of areas depicted in the video, also providing visibility of the hurricane damage.

In the seven years since the release of "Despacito," La Perla has become subject to the overall displacement of Puerto Rican people. The movement of people out of the island has increased following the damage wrought by the hurricane in 2017, as well as due to the ongoing gentrification and commercialization of the island to cater to mainland U.S. Americans. This development has led to higher prices for housing and living necessities, which are out of reach for many Puerto Ricans.[39] (Minimum wage on the island was only raised past the federal rate of $7.25 per hour in 2022.) The establishment of a federally appointed board to oversee repayment of the island's $72 million debt, as well as tax incentives like Act 22, which provides mainlanders with a 100% tax exemption on capital gains, have exacerbated these growing inequities between mainland and island citizens. Enacted in 2012 by Governor Luis Fortuño to entice U.S. investors to relocate to Puerto Rico, Act 22 has since been expanded and further protected by later administrations like that of Governor Ricardo Roselló, who in 2019 solidified and expanded Act 22 to include broader incentives in a bill known as Act 60. Act 60 includes a consolidated tax code that provides huge deductions for mainland investors, and according to sociologist Jose Atiles, "establishes an efficient

[38] Caldieron, "Land Tenure," 61.

[39] Eighty-five percent of food in Puerto Rico is imported to the island at a high tax rate, contributing to exorbitant prices and food insecurity. See Shir Lerman Ginzburg, "Colonial Comida: The Colonization of Food Insecurity in Puerto Rico," *Food, Culture, & Society* 25, no. 1 (2022): 18–31.

process for granting tax exemptions to crypto-investors and corporations."[40] While intended to improve economic and employment conditions on the island, the government is unable or unwilling to oversee and enforce aspects of the law, leading to huge revenue losses for the island.[41] Act 60's popularity among U.S. mainland-based hedge fund and crypto-currency managers have increased the island's "visitor economy" as well. Act 60 beneficiaries are pricing out locals from real estate as short-term rentals proliferate (to qualify as a beneficiary of the law, one must reside for 183 days out of the year on the island). For Mariana Reyes Franco, curator at the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Puerto Rico, "it is evident that the only reason thousands of Act 22 beneficiaries have settled here is to enjoy the benefits of legal tax evasion facilitated by the continuation of the archipelago's colonial status and our own disenfranchisement."[42] Advertisements by the government-owned Puerto Rico Tourist Company and social media posts by celebrities such as YouTube boxers Logan and Jake Paul that attempt to lure mainland investors to a tax-free, tropical island also contribute to the commodification and sensationalizing of Puerto Rican cultural spaces, including La Perla. While differing from the narrative of abject poverty promoted during first lady Eleanor Roosevelt's visit to La Perla over eight decades ago, the prevailing narrative of U.S. hegemony over the Puerto Rican economy continues.

The visual vocabulary of the La Perla neighborhood has made appearances in other popular media referencing the island, including music videos by Bad Bunny. In 2023, the recognizable terrain of the neighborhood, including the graphic basketball courts of La Perla, were included in an advertisement for American Express featuring songwriter, actor, and playwright Lin-Manuel Miranda. These basketball courts were refurbished in 2010 by American former professional basketball player Carmelo Anthony. Completed a few years after the installation of *El Bowl*, the courts' location at one of the entrances to La Perla through the colonial walls, with a scenic view of the Atlantic Ocean, has contributed to the neighborhood's greater visibility and popularity. In the advertisement featuring Miranda, a celebrity who has come to stand for Puerto Rican culture within mainland U.S. popular culture, the representation of La Perla speaks to the neighborhood as a site at the intersection of class and politics. The product advertised, a credit card, is part of Miranda's daydream of being in Puerto Rico, where he is shown walking the streets of the La Perla, and therefore authentically

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[40] Jose Atiles, "The Paradise Performs: Blockchain, Cryptocurrencies, and the Puerto Rican Tax Haven," *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 121, no. 3 (2022): 616.

[41] Camacho, Cielo Naara Rios, "Lanzan campaña para derogar la Ley 22," *Nueve Millones*, May 25, 2023 https://9millones.com/es/organizations-unite-to-repeal-act-22/.

[42] Marina Reyes Franco, "Arts and Finances: Disinvesting in Puerto Rico," in *No Existe Un Mundo Poshuracán: Puerto Rican Art in the Wake of Hurricane Maria*, ed. Marcela Guerrero (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 2022), 51.

connected to the community. The neighborhood, teeming with texture, color, and sound, acts as the epitome of Puerto Rican culture in music videos and advertisements. Miranda's presence in the space bolsters his identity as an authentic Puerto Rican artist. The advertisement participates in the long-term economic dependence of the island on the tourist industry, as the enticing sights and sounds of Miranda's daydream are meant to create a fantasy Puerto Rico. Puerto Rico's colonial status is masked. Ironically, the marketing that relies so heavily on places like La Perla contributes to an economy that is participating in the demise of these neighborhoods and communities. Concurrent with the release of this advertisement, the popular staircase that provides access to La Perla through its basketball courts has been closed by the National Park Service (the agency oversees *El Morro*, the nearby colonial fortress) due to "severe damage,"[43] signaling the broader impulse of leadership on the island to control aspects of local culture after gaining commercial relevance.

Conclusion

The hybrid format of *El Bowl* allows skateboarders and La Perla residents alike to enjoy it, establishing a center that is intended to be self-sustaining and resonating with Simone's ideas of "the surrounds" as a "rehearsal for experimental ways of living."[44] The artist's continued engagement with skateboarding culture across the globe marks the form as a nomadic practice, yet the materials and construction of the work tie *El Bowl* to its site. During weekends in La Perla, *El Bowl* is one of the few public swimming pools in the area, while during the week it provides a needed space for skateboarding. Skateboarders may be locals or tourists, but their skating has contributed to the tourist popularity and promotion of La Perla, relating to the unstable character of "the surrounds." Within increasingly commercialized spaces in media culture representing the island, art works and installations grounded in social practice also carry the risk to be overtaken by their market appeal. *El Bowl* recognizes and pays homage to the history and forms of community life in La Perla, while also inadvertently conversing with colonial infrastructures and policies on the island that might ultimately contribute to the tourist commodification of such sites in manner that places their ability to serve the communities they were intended for at risk.

[43] "Cierran escalera hacia La Perla por 'daños severos,'" *El Calce*, August 29, 2023, https://www.elcalce.com/contexto/2023/08/29/cierran-escalera-hacia-la-perla-por-danos-severos/.
[44] Simone, *The Surrounds*, 6.

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Against 'Nomadism' as Analytic: Pilgrimage Tents at the Hajj Terminal and Mary of Victory, Wigratzbad

a response by Alexander Luckmann

Alida Jekabson's "Skating the Surrounds: Chemi Rosado-Seijo and *El Bowl* in La Perla, Puerto Rico" deals with the tension between the local and the global. She engages with Miwon Kwon's book *One Place after Another,* which argues that starting in the 1990s, some artists "are attempting to reinvent site specificity as a *nomadic* practice."[1] Jekabson describes *El Bowl*, a skateboarding bowl-*cum*-pool by Chemi Rosado-Seijo in the San Juan neighborhood of La Perla, as an example of one such nomadic practice. Constructed by local residents, it is a site of local agency and pride. Simultaneously, the ascendance of El Bowl and its creator into international notoriety creates tension between the local and global. In 2023, the site featured in an advertisement for American Express. *El Bowl* demonstrates how a site-specific artwork can become valorized globally, perhaps in part for its very specificity. For American Express, La Perla and *El Bowl* are stand-ins for informal settlements of the Global South. The extremely local is thus deplaced.

I'd like to take up the particular manifestation of tension between local and global exemplified by pilgrimage. According to 2011 figures compiled by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, at least 150 million pilgrimages are likely undertaken

[1] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2002), 43.

annually.[2] Two structures related to pilgrimage that were designed and built in the 1970s employed tent forms, suggesting a relationship between this architectural form and pilgrimage. Skidmore, Owings & Merrill's (SOM) Hajj Terminal in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia (1975-81) and Gottfried Böhm's pilgrimage church Mary of Victory in Wigratzbad, Germany (1972-6) could thus be seen to engage some of the dynamics that Kwon calls "nomadic." I will suggest, though, that pilgrimage is a more appropriate lens through which to view such structures, because it engages with the actual uses to which these spaces were put, rather than employing a fraught metaphor.

The Hajj Terminal was one small part of King Abdulaziz International Airport, whose grounds were approximately the size of Manhattan.[3] It was designed to accommodate an increased influx of *hajjis* from an average of 50,000 in the 1960s to 500,000 by 1975. The increase was attributable to the advent of larger aircraft and "the decision by Islamic governments around the world to sponsor national pilgrimage flights."[4] The terminal moved vast crowds from planes to buses to Mecca during the few weeks of the annual *hajj*.[5] Since this transfer could take up to 36 hours, the terminal also needed to serve as a place for *hajjis* to sleep, perform ablutions, eat, and socialize.[6]

The terminal consists of fabric roofs suspended from steel pylons (fig. 1). These pylons are doubled into pairs along the sides of the building and squared into sets of four at the corners.[7] The pylons are arranged on a grid of forty-five meters, covering a total of 440,000 square meters. The covered space is open to the sides, allowing natural ventilation.

There are two clear precedents for this design: tents set up to accommodate *hajjis* and the lightweight tensile structures of German architect Frei Otto.[8] Architectural

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[2] "Pilgrimage Statistics – Annual Figures," Alliance of Religions and Conservation, December 2011. http://www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC%20pilgrimage%20statistics%20155m%2011-12-19.pdf.

[3] Matthew Allen, "The Genius of Bureaucracy: SOM's Hajj Terminal and Geiger Berger Associates' Form-Finding Software," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 80, no. 4 (December 2021): 420.

[4] Nicholas Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM: Building Corporate Modernism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 230; Aleksandr Bierig, "25 Year Award: Hajj Terminal," *Architectural Record* (June 2010): 122.

[5] Mecca is approximately forty-five miles from Jeddah. "Haj Terminal, King Abdul Aziz International Airport, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia," *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: Architecture and Urbanism, 1973-1983* (Stuttgart: Gerd Hatje, 1983), 382.

[6] Nicholas Adams, *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: SOM since 1936* (Milan: Electa, 2006), 262.

[7] Derek A. R. Moore, "A Terminal Worthy of a Pilgrimage," *SOM*, Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, July 28, 2020, https://www.som.com/story/a-terminal-worthy-of-a-pilgrimage-2/.

[8] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 231.

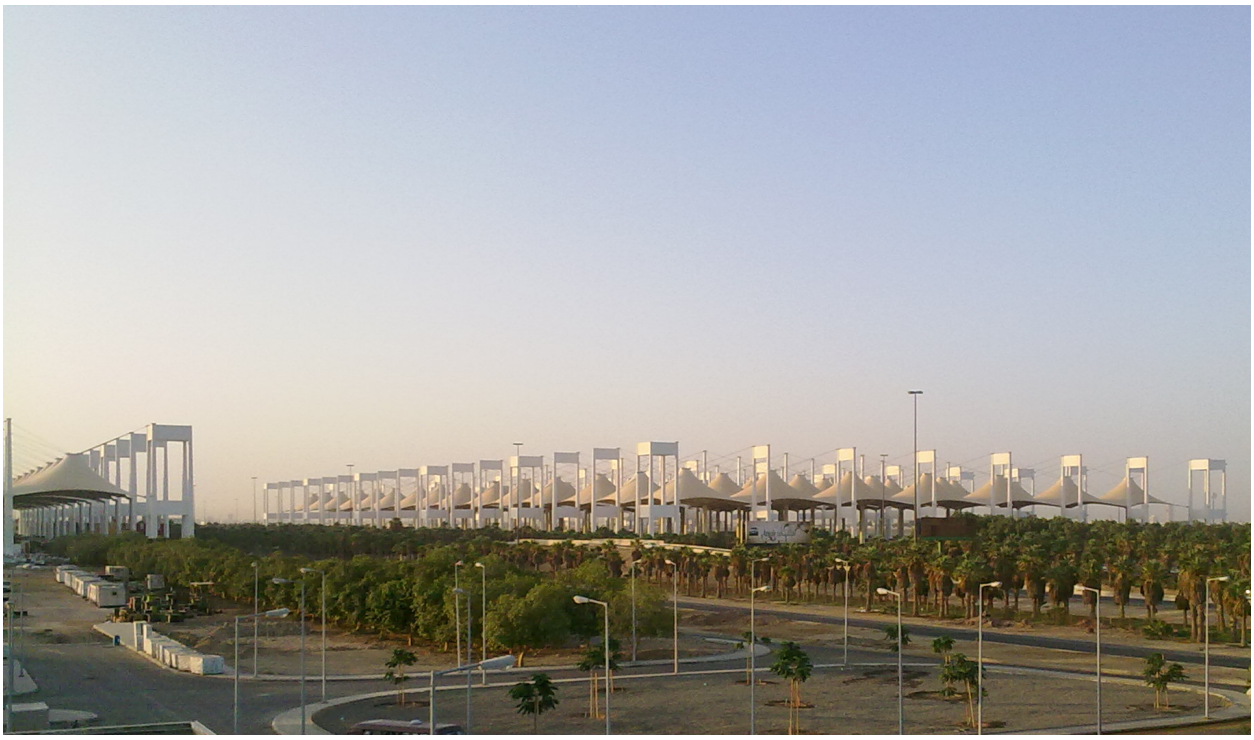

Figure 1: Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), Hajj Terminal, King Abdulaziz International Airport, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, 1975-81. Photo Credit: Yousefmadari, 2009, Wikimedia Commons.

historian Nicholas Adams notes that different members of the SOM design team had strikingly different understandings of the design. Engineer Fazlur Khan emphasized the similarity to temporary tents, whereas architect Gordon Bunshaft said that it "just happens to be a coincidence that [the terminal] has a shape like that, but it's not a tent."[9] Yet its visual similarity to temporary *hajj* tents is strong, casting the terminal as one stop on the pilgrimage. This similarity concerned the Saudi clients, who expected a concrete- or steel-and-glass, air-conditioned, "modern" building rather than an open-air structure.[10]

The tent is simultaneously a home-like shelter and a demountable, mobile structure; it is thus an appropriate symbol for pilgrimage. As Khan put it, "it gives you a feeling of tranquility and sense of continuity, of transition into the real place, which is Makkah."[11]

[9] Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 231.

[10] The main reason for the Hajj Terminal's natural ventilation, and a key factor in the clients' agreement, is that air conditioning could not be safely employed for only a few weeks out of the year, whereas the tent structure naturally cooled the space beneath it. Adams, *Skidmore, Owings & Merrill,* 263.

[11] "Invitation to the Haj: King Abdul Aziz International Airport, Haj Terminal, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia," *Progressive Architecture* 63 (February 1982): 122. Cited in Adams, *Gordon Bunshaft and SOM*, 231.

After *hajj* tents, the second source of inspiration for the Hajj Terminal was the German architect Frei Otto. In his 1954 dissertation, Otto examined the "fabric ceilings" (*Gewebedecken*) used by Cologne architect Gottfried Böhm in his early church restorations.[12] Two decades later, Böhm designed the pilgrimage church of Mary of Victory in Wigratzbad, a hamlet in the southwest German Allgäu. In 1936, Antonie Rädler, born into a butchers' family in Wigratzbad, erected a grotto dedicated to the Virgin of Lourdes on her parents' property. Simultaneously, Rädler practiced resistance to the National Socialist regime, refusing to replace a picture of the Virgin with a picture of Adolf Hitler in the butcher shop she managed. In December 1937, she reported hearing angels sing in her Marian shrine, and pilgrims began to come to Wigratzbad even though Rädler was arrested multiple times and was in hiding from 1940-45.[13] After the war, the stream of pilgrims increased and began to strain the Marian chapel Rädler had built in 1938-9. They came not to worship or touch a sacred object, but to be in the place where Rädler had received her apparitions. In 1972, Rädler commissioned Böhm to build the church of Mary of Victory.[14]

Böhm laid out the church at Wigratzbad as a composition of nineteen hexagons with sides of six meters and an area of ninety square meters each, crowned by a pyramidal roof with a skylight (fig. 2). One enters the wide worship space through a covered porch of six low hexagons. The worship space, itself made up of thirteen hexagons, faces the central altar, located at the back and flanked by two smaller, recessed altars. The roof of the hexagon above the altar is nearly twice as high as those of the other hexagons, emphasizing its importance.

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[12] Frei Otto, *Das hängende Dach* (Berlin: Bauwelt Verlag, 1954). See Manfred Speidel, "Gottfried Böhms Kirchen. Eine Typologische Studie," in *Gottfried Böhm*, ed. Wolfgang Voigt (Berlin: Jovis, 2006), 84. The most remarkable of Böhm's textile ceilings is in the Parish Church of the Three Magi in Neuss near Cologne (1947), whose black, grey, and gold decorations serve to underline its softness. Frei was critical of Böhm's non-structural fabric ceilings. However, he later wrote glowingly about Böhm's church of St. Paulus in Velbert. Otto, "Rheinische Kirchenbauten und hängendes Dach," *Bauwelt* 46, no. 51 (1955): 1047-50; cited in Speidel, "Gottfried Böhms Kirchen," 92 n17. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

[13] Much of this story follows the recounting in Wiebke Arnholz, *Form und Funktion der modernen Wallfahrtskirche* (Marburg: Tectum, 2016), 171-72. It is difficult to find trustworthy accounts of apparitions. For an analysis of German Catholic pilgrimage that ends when Wigratzbad's prominence begins, see Skye Donye, *The Persistence of the Sacred: German Catholic Pilgrimage, 1832-1937* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2022).

[14] This was not Böhm's first pilgrimage church. Probably his best-known work is the Church of Mary, Queen of Peace in the town of Neviges (1964-68).

Figure 2: Gottfried Böhm, Mary of Victory, Wigratzbad, Swabia, Germany, 1972-76. Photo Credit: Michel Decrevel, 2008, Wikimedia Commons.

The commission called for "prefabricated parts that can be easily assembled on the spot, so as to make possible adaption to later requirements," as "the growth of this place of pilgrimage cannot be foreseen."[15] In response, the structural system consists of green corrugated steel connected to red-painted steel Warren trusses and columns. Above the skylights are caps with small balls atop them – like the pompom on a sleeping cap – which can be propped open for ventilation, giving the ensemble a jaunty appearance. A basement housed a dormitory with twenty-four beds for pilgrims.[16]

The pyramidal hexagons, like the fabric roofs of the Hajj Terminal, resemble tents. An early review called the Wigratzbad church a "steel tent."[17] Böhm described it as "made up of many tent-like parts."[18] More recent commentators also described the

[15] Hans Klumpp, "Stahlzelt: Wallfahrtskirche in Wigratzbad = Tente an acier: église de pélerinage à Wigratzbad = Steel tent: pilgrimage church in Wigratzbad," *Bauen + Wohnen* 31, no. 11 (1977): 432.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Ibid.
[18] Ignaz E. Hollay, "Zelte Gottes," *DB: Deutsche Bauzeitung* 131, no. 8 (1997): 68.

building as resembling a "tent camp," a "tent city," or "pilgrims' tents."[19] One could question the tent metaphor at Wigratzbad. Writing about Böhm's earlier pilgrimage church of Mary, Queen of Peace in Neviges, Karl Kiem points out that "the wide-brimmed hat, the walking stick and the cape-like coat belong to the traditional equipment of a pilgrim, but not a tent."[20] The light materials at Wigratzbad, however, are fundamentally different from the massive faceted concrete of the Neviges church, making such an interpretation appropriate. The tent church has a longer history in Böhm's work, dating to St. Albert in Saarbrücken (1951-54) and even to his father Dominikus's St. Elizabeth in Birken (1929-30).[21] Moreover, the tent church draws on an established idea of faith as a whole as a pilgrimage or wandering.[22] Perhaps most intriguingly, a 1954 directive of the Archdiocesan Council of Cologne described church buildings as "the tent of God among the people," suggesting that this relationship is not necessarily unidirectional.[23]

Notwithstanding Bunshaft's protestations, the Hajj Terminal and Mary of Victory both formally reference tents, and Mary of Victory is also designed for easy de/reassembly (at least in theory). These buildings thus evoke mobility. But it is pilgrimage, not nomadism, that they reference; in Jeddah, it is *hajji* tents, not traditional Saudi Arabian black tents, that provide a formal precedent.

Pilgrimage calls into question the threshold that is the theme of this volume: if the *via sacra* extends from your house to the place of your pilgrimage, what is the essential threshold? As Gottfried Böhm noted, "movement – that is, the pilgrimage to a place where one experiences the religious experience differently, in a new form, and in various ways – this must be the meaning of pilgrimage. The worshipped picture can serve only as a point of reference, not as a goal."[24] Developments in pilgrimage studies over the last fifty years have decentered the material object or site of pilgrimage to

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[19] For "tent camp," Wolfgang Pehnt, "Self-confident Proximity: A Text from 1984 on the Work of Gottfried Böhm," trans. Jeremy Gaines, in *Gottfried Böhm*, ed. Voigt, 43. For "tent city," Speidel, "Gottfried Böhms Kirchen," 125. For "pilgrims' tents," Ingeborg Flagge, "Die Rolle des Lichtes im Werk Gottfried Böhms," in *Gottfried Böhm*, ed. Voigt, 208.

[20] Karl Kiem, "The Multi-layered Concrete Rock: The Pilgrimage Church in Neviges," in *Gottfried Böhm,* ed. Voigt, 76.

[21] Hugo Schnell, "Gottfried Böhms neue Kirche in Wigratzbad im Allgäu: Ein Zeichen im gegenwärtigen Kirchenbau," *Das Münster* 30, no. 1 (1977): 1-9, 6.

[22]Schnell, "Gottfried Böhms neue Kirche": 6-7.

[23] *Kölner Diözesan-Synode 1954* (Cologne: Bachem, 1954), 793. Cited in Walter Zahner, "Liturgietheologie und Architektur," in *Neue Kirchen im Erzbistum Köln 1955-1995*, ed. Karl Josef Bollenbeck (Cologne: Erzbistum Köln, 1995), 53.

[24] Cited in Arnholz, *Form und Funktion der modernen Wallfahrtskirche*, 163.

focus on the social and spiritual trajectory of the journey.[25] In a German context, as Rudolf Schenda wrote shortly before the Wigratzbad commission, "exaltation is no longer the result of a miraculous experience but of the experience of the whole journey."[26] Recent scholarship describes pilgrimage as "a continuous state of instability – between earth and heaven, between movement and place, between a process and its outcome."[27] The specific site is merely one part of the pilgrimage journey, which in turn is simultaneously a time of difference from everyday routine and part of the pilgrim's longer – often lifelong – spiritual journey.

Kwon's *One Place After Another* builds on James Meyer's 1997 argument that "two nomadisms have emerged" in contemporary art.[28] For Meyer, "lyrical" nomadism consists of "a random and poetic interaction with the objects and spaces of everyday life," while "critical" nomadism "locate[s] the structures of mobility within specific historical, geographical, and institutional frameworks."[29] Kwon concludes *One Place After Another* with a criticism of "nomadism" and its "seductive allure" that demands "physical and psychical experiences of mobilization and destabilization."[30] She rejects an opposition between sedentariness and nomadism. In its place, she calls for a "*relational specificity*" that understands different places not as discrete but rather as interconnected.[31] It is this thread of Kwon's thinking that Jekabson, like other recent scholars, picks up on: the idea that what is intensely local can also have global valences, and that the circulation and movement of artists and artworks is central to the production of that art's meaning.[32]

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[25] See Dionigi Albera and John Eade, "International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Putting the Anglophone Contribution in its Place," in *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles*, eds. Albera and Eade (New York: Routledge, 2015), 1-22. In a German context, Iso Baumer called for this refocusing as early as 1977. Baumer, *Wallfahrt als Handlungsspiel: Ein Beitrag zum verstehen religiösen Handelns* (Bern and Frankfurt am Main: H. Lang, 1977), cited in Helmut Eberhart, "From Religious Folklore Studies to Research of Popular Religiosity: Pilgrimage Studies in German-Speaking Europe," in *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies*, eds. Albera and Eade, 116.

[26] Rudolf Schenda, "Wallfahrten," in Martin Scharfe, Schenda, and Herbert Schwedt, *Volksfrömmigkeit* (Stuttgart: Spectrum, 1967), 95, cited in Ingrid Lukatis, "Church Meeting and Pilgrimage in Germany," *Social Compass* 36, no. 2 (1989): 204.

[27] "Introduction: Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage," in *Christian Pilgrimage, Landscape and Heritage*, eds. Avril Maddell et al., (New York: Routledge, 2015), 3.

[28] James Meyer, "Nomads," *Parkett* 49 (1997): 206.

[29] Ibid.

[30] Kwon, *One Place After Another,* 160.

[31] Ibid.; emphasis in original.

[32] See also Ahyoung Yoo, "The Nomad's Baggage: Imagining the Nation in a Global World," *InVisible Culture: An Electronic Journal for Visual Culture* 26, May 6, 2017, https://ivc.lib.rochester.edu/the-nomads-baggage-imagining-the-nation-in-a-global-world/#fnref-6346-11.

Yet Kwon and Meyer do not consider more deeply the terms they use. Anthropologist James Clifford dislikes "nomadism," a term that, as he wrote thirty years ago, is "often generalized without apparent resistance from non-Western experience."[33] I think Clifford's criticism applies to Meyer and Kwon, who employ the figure of the nomad without attending to the political realities of actual nomadic life. Meyer discusses Renée Green, an artist who, when provided with an apartment in a Le Corbusier-designed housing complex during a group exhibition, instead pitched a tent. Meyer writes that "this shelter within a shelter alluded to the nomad's plight of never having a home, for as Green suggests, to be a working producer today is to be constantly – often unpleasantly – on the move. The conditions of nomadic practice are hardly optimum."[34] But to be a nomad is not a plight; it is a way of life. It is merely a way of life that does not align with the static and bordered presumptions of the modern nation-state, leading to political marginalization of groups such as the Tuareg in North Africa. To be very clear: an internationally exhibiting artist, no matter how little time they may spend in one place, is not a nomad. The artists Meyer discusses are away from their (fixed) home, a profoundly different understanding of home from that of nomadic societies. Meyer's imposition of the concept of a fixed home upon nomadism shows the limits of his categorization. Nor, I think, does nomadism hold up as an analytical frame within which to view place. It focuses on the movement of an individual artist – who is conflated with the group life of many nomadic societies – rather than the characteristics of the place they are in. Kwon thus falls victim to the very "seductive allure" of nomadism that she explicitly rejects.

In pilgrimage, on the other hand, it's the journey that transforms the destination. In 1992, Clifford imagined "rewriting Paris of the twenties and thirties as travel encounters…a place of departures, arrivals, transits."[35] This description applies equally to the Hajj Terminal and to the tiny Allgäu hamlet of Wigratzbad. Clifford's preferred paradigm was travel. But, although not as capacious as travel, Clifford also noted that "'pilgrimage' seems… a more interesting comparative term to work with [than nomadism]."[36] As this response suggests, I am interested in architecture that engages with the embodied and directed but impermanent and mobile condition of pilgrimage. I propose that pilgrimage, with its dual focus on motion and location, pilgrim and site, is a more helpful analytic that nomadism in understanding the intersection of the local and the global.

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[33] James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, eds. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula A. Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 110.
[34] Meyer, "Nomads," 208.
[35] Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," 104.
[36] Ibid., 110.

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Inefficient, Unsustainable, and Fragmentary: The Rauschenberg Combines as Disabled Bodies

Cole J. Graham

I'm a trickster coyote in a gnarly-bone suit
I'm a fate worse than death in shit-kickin' boots

I'm the nightmare booga you fight with in dreams
'Cause I emphatically demonstrate: it ain't what it seems

I'm a whisper, I'm a heartbeat, I'm "that accident," and goodbye
One thing I'm not is a reason to die
—"Cripple Lullaby," Cheryl Marie Wade, 1997

In February of 1960, MoMA curator William Rubin (1927 – 2006) accused American painter Robert Rauschenberg's (1925 – 2008) Combines of rendering the "inherently biographical style of Abstract Expressionism… even more personal, more particular, and sometimes almost *embarrassingly private*" (emphasis mine).[1] Rubin's choice of the word "embarrassingly" was telling. For the curator, Rauschenberg's new assemblage works were not just private, but *embarrassingly so*. In other words, the

[1] Quoted from Tom Folland, "Robert Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration," *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 4 (December 2010): 359.

problem they presented was that they were not private when good sense and taste suggested they should be. Shameless in their resolutely personal nature, the Combines ushered in a public/private collapse that put Rauschenberg's innards on grisly-*cum*-ludicrous display. Thus, it makes sense that, in Rubin's account, the Combines' exhibition in the gallery space or museum—like pulling down one's pants next to a Jackson Pollock—became an act of (over)exposure.[2]

Rubin's criticism stuck, and in the decades since, Rauschenberg's de-pantsing of the modernist aesthetic—in other words, this slippage or spilling-over of the supposed-to-be-private into the embarrassingly deviant public—has been a wellspring of art historical discourse. Following the curator's assessment, the Combines have variously been read as an insistence on the work of art as both *in* its environment and *in communication* with it; as an attempt at the redress due feminine interiority; and relatedly, as a refusal of heteronormative subjectivity in the Cold War era.[3] Reading these works through a lens of deviancy, then, is nothing new, nor is remarking upon the bodily sense—the feeling of lobeing-with-a-body—that encounters with such assemblages invoke.

I, however, find interfacing with the Combines with an eye toward corporeal deviance rooted in disability theory to be importantly different (if similarly connected to slippages between the public and private/internal and external), and it is just such an intervention this article suggests. Cultural-critical disability theory establishes disability as an always embodied category of human difference (or deviance), similar to race, gender, or sexuality. This mode of disability theory is importantly separate from the medical model, which locates the "problem" of disability within the individual, and the social model, which locates this "problem" within inaccessible communities, spaces, and societal frameworks.[4] Similarly to the way queer theory imagines possibilities otherwise for sexuality, intimacy, bodily knowledge, and connection, cultural-critical

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[2] While there is contention within Rauschenberg scholarship regarding what qualifies a Combine, this article takes under consideration those assemblage works produced between 1954-1964 that extend themselves from the wall and enter into a three-dimensional relationship with the body and surrounding gallery space.

[3] Tom Folland proposes the first proposes the first reading in "Robert Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration," Helen Molesworth the second in "Before Bed," and Jonathan D. Katz in "Committing the Perfect Crime: Sexuality, Assemblage, and the Postmodern Turn in American Art." Tom Folland, "Robert Rauschenberg's Queer Modernism: The Early Combines and Decoration," *The Art Bulletin* 92, no. 4 (December 2010): 348–65. Helen Molesworth, "Before Bed," *October* 63 (Winter 1993): 68–82. Jonathan D. Katz, "Committing the Perfect Crime: Sexuality, Assemblage, and the Postmodern Turn in American Art," *Art Journal* 67, no. 1 (2008): 38–53.

[4] Difference becomes deviance when distance from the "norm" constitutes a defect rather than a benign variation.

disability theory opens onto a conception of human difference that radically rearranges ideas of and relations between "health, functioning, achievement, and beauty."[5]

Rather than simply acknowledging the existence of disabled mind-bodies as pre-subjective fact, cultural-critical disability theory interrogates the historical construction of disability as inextricably bound to the construction of ability as a naturalized category. In doing so, it introduces the potential for new lives and new ways of living that do not center ability at all. It is for this reason that a reading of Rauschenberg's Combines, made publicly-private through the application of cultural-critical disability, becomes so urgent. In fact, Rauschenberg was not unfamiliar with either the disabled experience or with the processes of care that disability requires. Just old enough to be caught up in the end of World War II, the artist received his draft notice in the spring of 1944.[6] Having enlisted in the Navy hospital corps, he worked as a nurse attendant in San Diego, caring for men whose nerve damage made feeding themselves impossible. Relatedly, Rauschenberg himself struggled with learning difficulties that would eventually lead to the diagnosis of a learning disability (dyslexia).

Later, during the last decade of his life, Rauschenberg told an interviewer from *Vanity Fair* that the purpose of his retrospective was to "encourage people to see old work in light of the new, rather than the new in the light of the old."[7] The artist's instructions are helpful here in the suggestion that we allow new meanings to inhabit and revitalize works through their relationships with the works (and the *work*) that come after. While the medical model was the sole model for disability discourse when Rauschenberg produced his Combines, disabled people were simultaneously living into and insisting on their own subjectivities nonetheless, often in ways that implicitly rejected medicalism, containment, and social acceptability. Indeed, if Rauschenberg's Combines knowingly engaged sexuality/gender difference as *differences that make a difference*, they just as poignantly anticipated discourses that would frame disability as another such mode of difference.

Purity And Puritanism

Modernist critic Michael Fried (b. 1939) engaged neither with Rauschenberg nor with questions of ability in his 1967 article "Art and Objecthood." Nonetheless, Fried's essay, like Rubin's accusation, evoked tensions that were already playing out in the Combines by the mid-1950s. What lay at the heart of Fried's argument was a deep-seated fear that assemblages like Rauschenberg's—in their lack of definition, their

[5] Anne Waldschmidt, "Disability Goes Cultural: The Cultural Model of Disability as an Analytical Tool," in *Culture—Theory—Disability*, ed. Anne Waldschmidt, Hanjo James Berressem, and Moritz Ingwersen (New York: Transcript Verlag, 2017), 26.
[6] John Richardson, "Rauschenberg's Epic Vision," *Vanity Fair*, September 1997, 219.
[7] Ibid., 219.

constant toggling between mediums—might lose whatever it was that made them "art" altogether. Concerned with the slippery "concepts of *quality* and *value*… to the extent that these are central to… the concept of art itself," Fried argued works could be "wholly meaningful only *within the individual arts*" (emphasis mine). Dubious as the critic was of the dangerous "illusion that the barriers between the arts [were] in the process of crumbling," Fried championed an understanding of art that effectively excluded Rauschenberg's Combines from consideration.[8]

That Rauschenberg's work had moved into three dimensions was not necessarily the problem; nor was the place of sculpture within the landscape of the emerging New York art scene at issue. Fried himself praised the works of sculptors such as David Smith and Anthony Caro, while Clement Greenberg (1909 – 1994), that champion of modernism, readily gave synthetic cubism its due credit in shaping the current artistic moment.[9] Rather, the danger Fried spoke of (and the specter that haunted Greenberg) was explicitly connected to the bodily engagement that assemblages in general—and the Combines in particular—provoked. Perhaps more important was Rauschenberg's insistence that the Combines *remained paintings*, *while they were, at the same time, becoming something else as well.*[10]

Rauschenberg himself coined the term Combine for his assemblage works because of their inherently hybrid configurations. The creation and exhibition of the Combines thus directly threatened modernism's ontological project as Clement Greenberg had constructed it: one seeking to establish the purity of each artistic medium, radically reducing what painting (and sculpture) could be. Indeed, though Fried couldn't have known it, with the Combines, Rauschenberg would open Greenberg's reduction of medium possibility into an equally radical expansion. When he did so, Rauschenberg would find that, in the words of art historian Branden W. Joseph:

> …at the endpoint of one medium, when it is hunted or traced back to its essence, it is neither nothingness or purity, but the conditions of another media. Painting whittled to its core opens onto sculpture, environment, and cinema, not all at once and indiscriminately, but… in hybrid or heterogeneous articulations.[11]

The concerns Fried laid out had been justified—the walls *were* crumbling, and today, in a post-atomic, post-9/11, pandemic-impacted future hardly imaginable in the 1960s, the boundaries delimiting the categories of the art world are less clear than

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[8] Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5 (June 1967): 164.

[9] Ibid., 167.

[10] Note the verb tense here: not "became," but "becoming."

[11] Branden W. Joseph, "Rauschenberg's Refusal," in *Robert Rauschenberg: Combines* (Los Angeles, CA: Museum of Contemporary Art, 2005), 266.

ever. Evidence for this growing lack of clarity exists in the catalog for a winter 2010 show presented by the Gagosian Gallery in partnership with the Rauschenberg Foundation. Here, gallery owner Larry Gagosian (b. 1945) dubbed the medium of collage a "microcosm of the larger, messy world"—and, if there is a hallmark of collage, it may very well be this messiness.[12] This seems especially true for assemblage art that, like Rauschenberg's, creeps out of two dimensions, refusing to forego its status as painting while simultaneously contaminating gallery space. (Fittingly, containment and its opposite, contamination, also rest on the success or failure of interior/exterior and personal/private divides, additionally suggesting the viral spread of debilitating life-long illnesses like HIV/AIDS, hepatitis and now, Long COVID.)

Modernism's problems with the temporary, inefficient, unnecessary, and excessive cemented negative critical opinion of Rauschenberg's work "in the minds of such critics as Clement Greenberg and Harold Rosenberg." But approached from a viewpoint looking back from and informed by cultural-critical disability theory, the Combines succeed in their "heterogeneous or hybrid articulations" in calling into question the possibility of unity-cum-purity at all.[13] Similarly, the many disabled lives that are lived in resourceful and innovative ways unrecognizable and invisible to the medical state reflect Gagosian's taste for a "larger, messy world."[14] In other words: if we tease out the thread asking what the modernist praise of and call for medium specificity implies for those living with disabled mind-bodies, we will find that these tendencies toward purity and efficiency reflect an ethic to which not only artistic practice is expected to aspire. Rather, the nexus of purity-efficiency-independence-productivity-profitability-social value undergirds modes of capitalist production and, in doing so, has played a substantial part in historically limiting possibilities for disabled mind-bodies—and indeed for *all* mind-bodies. Rauschenberg's Combines, however, challenge the privileging of such modernistic tendencies above others—instead emphasizing collectivity, contingency, heterogeneity, and partiality, which modernism not only denounces, but excludes.

For all these reasons, we should take seriously what Combines like *Monogram* and *Gold Standard* (the two case studies undertaken here) offer in response to modernism's demands. Here I am talking about standpoint theory's less-respectable

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[12] Robert Rauschenberg, James Lawrence, John Richardson, and Larry Gagosian, *Robert Rauschenberg, Published on the Occasion of the Exhibition Held at the Gagosian Gallery, New York, 29 October - 18 December 2010* (New York: Gagosian Gallery, 2010), 9.

[13] Walter Hopps, *Robert Rauschenberg: The Early 1950s: Museum of Contemporary Art, February 8 through April 19, 1992* (Chicago, IL: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1992), 167.

[14] Gagosian et al., *Robert Rauschenberg (Published on the Occasion of the Exhibition Held at the Gagosian Gallery, New York, 29 October),* 9.

cousin, which I call *sitpoint theory*.[15] While standpoint theory asks us to question what perspectives and possible solutions come from encountering the world from atypical vantage points, sitpoint theory—directed from the vantage point of rest and repose—instructs us not only to consider our own positionality, but also to *sit and take stock of* our bodies and minds. Sitpoint theory is not simply a methodology or epistemology; that is, it is not purely a mental exercise. It is instead an invitation to open oneself up to the manifold alternative corporeal ways of looking and seeing, especially those that reveal themselves when we allow our bodies to *stop*. In sitpoint theory, the instruction that one take up different points of view is as literal as it is figurative.

The Flatbed Picture Plane

When critic Leo Steinberg (1920 – 2001) invoked the phrase "the flatbed picture plane"—now synonymous with Rauschenberg's work—he was describing the then-radical reorientation of a painting's intended positionality: taking the painting down from where it hung (vertically) on the wall and laying it out horizontally. No longer was the picture plane a window; its new orientation made it a workspace.[16] Considering Rauschenberg's later silkscreens, Steinberg called on the ubiquity of the printing press as one familiar arena of interaction with the flatbed.[17] Although this made sense for the silkscreens, I would argue that the more immediate connotation of the flatbed as it pertains to the Combines is the flatbed *pallet,* the flatbed *truck*—surfaces onto which items are loaded for transport.

Figure 1: Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram* (front view), 1955-59, mixed media, 42 x 64 x 62 ½ inches. Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden. Courtesy of Rauschenberg Foundation.

[15] Here I am indebted to feminist scholar Sandra Harding, who coined the feminist theoretical framework and term standpoint theory.

[16] Steinberg, "Reflections on the State of Criticism," in *Robert Rauschenberg*, ed. Branden W. Joseph (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003), 27.

[17] Rauschenberg's interest in silkscreens began in 1962, his earliest works in the medium occurring concurrently with his final Combines (one of which is *Gold Standard*).

The Combine-as-flatbed would therefore imply something like *mobility* in addition to positionality.

This focus on mobility dictates that, if we are going to continue to mine Steinberg's overburdened reading, we do so in ways that come to bear on means of moving through and encountering the world; that is, ways that come to bear on the disabled mind-body. The first of these is to consider the flatbed picture plane as a compositional device directed toward the act of leveling. This function becomes clear when we consider the *kinds* of things Rauschenberg was attaching to his picture planes in the late 1950s and early 1960s: used sheets, broken-down boots, empty cardboard boxes, the list goes on. Recognizing this, curator William Seitz (1914 – 1974), once referred to Rauschenberg's found materials as "urban refuse" that had been subjected to an "inversion from ugliness to beauty."[18] Looking at the Combines, however, one must ask if any "inversion" of refuse has truly occurred; or, instead, this might be *the kind of refuse that refuses*—the kind that, in refusing Seitz's inversion and subsumption, refuses to be beautiful or legible, even to itself?

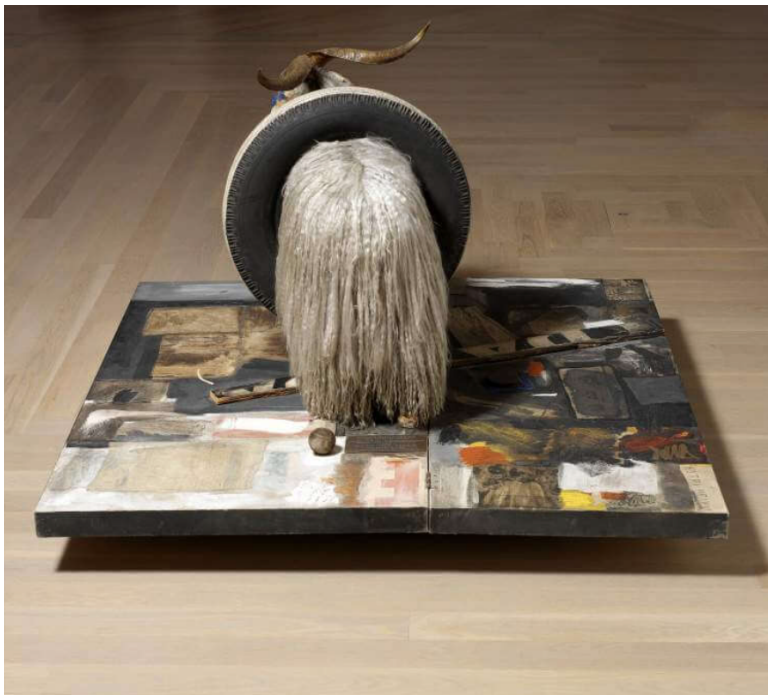

Figure 2: Robert Rauschenberg, *Monogram* (back view), 1955-59, mixed media, 42 x 64 x 62 ½ inches. Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden. Courtesy of Rauschenberg Foundation.

Take, for example, one of Rauschenberg's most oft-discussed Combines, *Monogram,* 1955-59, a taxidermied goat that stands on a rolling base made from one of Rauschenberg's earlier Black Paintings (figs. 1, 2). The stuffed Angora goat was purchased from a local furniture store, while a tire encircling its waist is *literal refuse*—trash taken straight out of the pile. Yet, in fixing the discarded tire around the similarly discarded goat's middle, Rauschenberg has treated his second-hand livestock with an excess of *care*. Though he may have initially haggled over the goat's fifteen dollar price tag, in dedicating four years to its consideration, Rauschenberg restored *dignity*—always a slippery concept, but especially so within the nexus of disability—to his thrift

[18] William Seitz, *The Art of Assemblage* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1962), 76.

store find.[19] In the artist's hands, the goat became *worthy of consideration.* This was a worth Rauschenberg demonstrated in carrying out intimate and physical acts of care: combing the goat's matted coat and repairing its damaged face (though with the application of brightly colored paints that simultaneously concealed and acknowledged the damage).

In reference to another Combine, *Kickback,* 1959 (fig. 3), painter Carroll Dunham (b. 1949) reads a spray of black paint across the work's surface as the shit stain that evidences "a total loss of sphincter control, a collapse of the most basic boundaries of the individual."[20] Dunham suggests that the intimate embarrassment of this moment in *Kickback* is "tragicomic," when the most private bodily function becomes the most public in a laying low of the body's corporeality.[21] At once flippant and achingly poignant**,** *Kickback* shares in this with *Monogram,* a work whose presence also feels decidedly playful. *Monogram*'s picture plane resembles Rauschenberg's Black Paintings in its palette of tar and crude oil, evoking

Figure 3: Robert Rauschenberg, *Kickback*, 1959, mixed media, 76 ½ x 33 ¼ x 5 inches. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, The Panza Collection. Courtesy of Rauschenberg Foundation.

[19] Rauschenberg worked intermittently on *Monogram* from the years 1955-59, conceiving multiple iterations of its composition (some of which are recorded in images of Rauschenberg's studio from those years) before settling on the one that is in now on view at the Moderna Museet in Sweden.
[20] Carroll Dunham, "All or Nothing," *Artforum* 44, no. 7 (March 2006): 251.
[21] Ibid, 249

similar scatological associations. Near the goat's back end, a dirtied tennis ball (widely recognized as a reference to a Jasper Johns work, and thus to Rauschenberg's sexuality) begs to be read as a turd.[22] Here is the mark of the artist in its "crudest, and literally lowest, form": the shit stain.[23] Indeed, for the person publicly experiencing "a total loss of sphincter control," there is no "inversion from ugliness to beauty"; there is only and instead the dark humor necessary if one is to live with and in the public/private collapse of disability.

If this loss of sphincter control is the comic element of *Monogram,* its tragic element is that the goat is dead, *rigor mortis* having long since set in. It will not (without Rauschenberg's help) be going anywhere, its strange, glass-eyed stare fixed somewhere beyond our gaze. We look, and the goat, in return, refuses to look back. It does not acknowledge the (sighted) person's primary mode of interfacing with our fellow beings in the world. But for this we cannot blame Rauschenberg's taxidermied goat: the animal is not only glassy-eyed, *but actually glass-eyed*. It sees nothing. We know this for two reasons. One is that the eye provides one of the earliest visible signs of decomposition. Between two and five hours after biological death, the cornea begins to cloud over as the breakdown of cells releases an excess of potassium.[24] The second is the process of taxidermy itself. Coming from the Greek **τάξις** (*taxis*), meaning arrangement, and **δερμίς** (*dermis*), meaning skin, taxidermy is quite literally the arrangement of skin. To break the process down to its essentials: the only part of *Monogram*'s goat original to its body is its skin, which, having been removed, cleaned, and tanned for preservation, has been stretched over a goat-shaped frame. As it turns out, *Monogram*'s goat is hardly a goat at all; it is, at best, the *evidence* of one.

While Rauschenberg's taxidermied goat asks that we squirm in uncomfortable but ultimately humorous acknowledgement of our bodily functions, it simultaneously activates grim anxieties surrounding literal biological death. The goat's glass eyes ask, "What is the edge of personhood?" Thinking not only of glass eyes, but of prosthetics and artificial larynx speech aids, the question becomes: what happens when part of the organic body is replaced with something foreign? How much of the body can be removed before who and what one is changes fundamentally? What must we retain if we are to retain *ourselves*? (The 3D-printed limb is one thing, but what of the proverbial science-fiction head in a jar?)

With its horizontal arrangement, *Monogram*'s "flatbed" nature demands that we consider what constitutes such "undesired differences" (glass eyes, cybernetic

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[22] Johns and Rauschenberg maintained an intellectual and sexual relationship until 1961. Neither artist was above including references to same-sex anal pleasure in their work.

[23] Graham Bader, "Rauschenberg's Skin," *Grey Room* 27 (2007): 113.

[24] Fatima Abbas, et al., "Revival of Light Signaling in the Postmortem Mouse and Human Retina." *Nature* 606, no. 7913 (2022): 351–57.

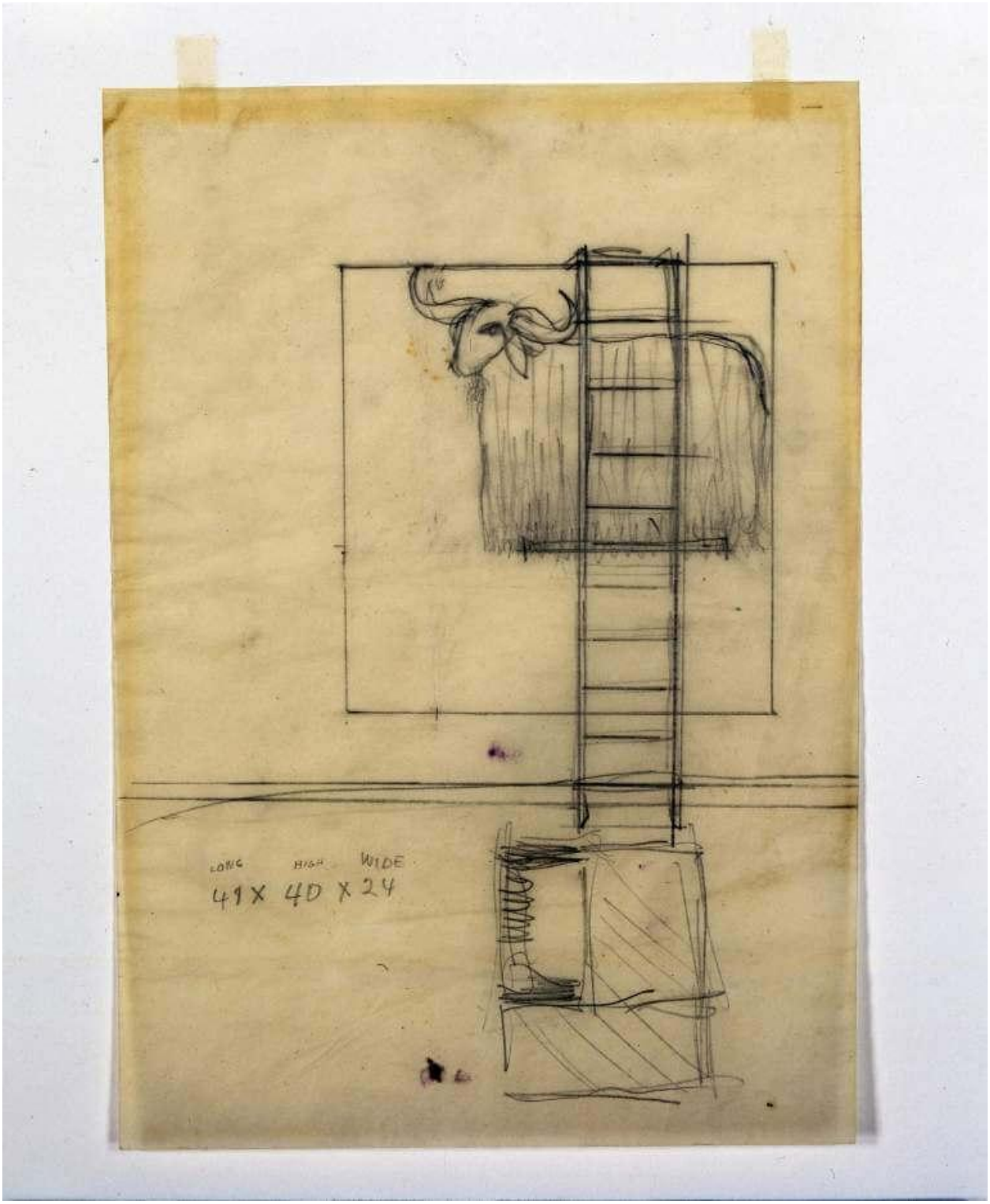

Figure 4: Robert Rauschenberg, preliminary sketch for Monogram, ca. 1955. Collection of Jasper Johns. Courtesy of Rauschenberg Foundation.

limbs, artificial voice boxes. Furthermore, it jostles the assumed viewing positionalities of the bodies that interact with it. Steinberg speaks to the "normal erect posture" of most paintings from at least as early as the Renaissance. Hung on the wall, both the traditional easel painting and Pollock's "all-over" drip paintings are best viewed in a fully upright standing position that allows us to come "face to face" with the image—or so Steinberg asserts.[25] This is not so for the stuffed goat of *Monogram*, who, situated well below our standing line of sight, "placidly bears witness to the transformation of the visual surface into—as Rauschenberg called it—'pasture.'"[26]

Yet a preliminary sketch given to Jasper Johns (fig. 4) reveals that Rauschenberg once considered arranging the Combine vertically. In Rauschenberg's drawing, the goat projects sidelong from a rectangular vertical surface. The placement of the ladder suggests the goat might have hovered well above our standing line of sight, rather than below it. If Rauschenberg ever actually arranged *Monogram* this way, however, there is no further documentation of the experiment. Although the careful viewer can spot the goat taking up an array of positions in photographs of Rauschenberg's studio, this drawing (now held in the Johns collection) is the only remnant of this compositional possibility. What this tells us is that *Monogram*'s horizontality is no accident. Rauschenberg's goat did not stumble onto its pasture by chance. *Monogram*'s arrangement—one knowingly chosen by the artist in full awareness of the alternatives—could easily have assumed the usual able-bodied, standing viewer. Indeed, it could have gone further still, denying the satisfaction of the goat's gaze to any viewer incapable of physically climbing. Pointedly, though, it does not. Instead, there is nothing to say that the work might not best be viewed in a sitting position. Indeed, just as *Monogram* can roll around on its wheeled base, so too might a wheelchair user roll around to view the sculpture, the viewer's gaze comfortably meeting the goat's. Perhaps the viewer could even lie prostrate, stretched out on the floor, had Rauschenberg retained an interest in looking up at the goat from below.

In bringing all of this to a point, we find ourselves again in the territory of sitpoint theory. When we consider that it was Jasper Johns who suggested Rauschenberg roll *Monogram*'s goat "out to pasture" (and that Rauschenberg used this language), we may be tempted by the phrase's all-too-ready connotations with the treatment of the very old and the no longer useful. Sitpoint theory, however, would ask that we pause and consider whether the goat on its placid pasture might not only retain dignity and value, but instead (and more radically) interrogate understandings of production, value, and usefulness from the point of view of previously unseen/unheard, cast-off, or ignored subjects. The Combines, Steinberg wrote, "kept referring back to

[25] Steinberg, "Reflections on the State of Criticism," 27.
[26] Rosalind E. Krauss, *Perpetual Inventory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2013), 94.

the horizontals on which we walk and sit, work and sleep."[27] In doing so, they rejected assumptions about the body's ability and the kinds of positions required for viewing subjectivity. Further, sitpoint theory reminds us of the preliminary sketch of *Monogram*, which evidences Rauschenberg's decision not to ask the viewer to stand at all. *Monogram* itself is an invitation *to sit alongside of and with it*.

The Gold Standard (Of American Individualism)

A decade before Rauschenberg's work on *Monogram*, the United States—faced with a stream of returning WWII veterans, pant legs knotted up at the knee and shirt sleeves dangling uselessly—needed something like sitpoint theory perhaps more than ever. The country was filled with thousands of the newly disabled, their scars mental-emotional as much as physical (something that would not change but only intensify with the Korean and Vietnam Wars). Yet, when WPA photographer Walker Evans (1903 – 1975) was tasked with assembling a series of portraits of the American labor force for the November 1946 issue of *Fortune Magazine*, there was no mention of this new reality.[28] Rather, the caption running alongside the photographs reflects a growing dedication to the (abled-enough-to-work) individual as necessary to capitalist production:

> The American worker, as he passes here, generally unaware of Walker Evans' camera, is a decidedly various fellow. His blood flows from many sources. His features tend now toward the peasant and now toward the patrician… It is this variety, perhaps, that makes him, in the mass, the most resourceful and versatile *body of labor* in the world… Most of the men on these pages would seem to have a solid degree of self-possession. By the grace of providence and the efforts of millions, including themselves, they are citizens of a victorious and powerful nation, and they appear to have preserved a sense of themselves *as individuals* (emphasis mine).[29]

According to this spread in *Fortune Magazine*, to be American was to be physically virile, capable of caring for oneself (that is, individualistic) without the help of community, family, or charity. In other words: *to be American was to be able-minded and able-bodied*, while to be anything else was by implication suspicious, unpatriotic,

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[27] Steinberg, "Reflections on the State of Criticism," 29.

[28] See various portraits, now at held by the Walker Evans Archives at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, here: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/281889

[29] Quoted from David Serlin, "The Other Arms Race," in *The Disability Studies Reader (second edition),* ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 49.

Figure 5: Robert Rauschenberg, *Gold Standard* (created during the 1964 performance 20 Questions to Bob Rauschenberg), 1964, mixed media, 84 ¼ x 142 x 51 ¼ inches. The Glenstone Foundation. Courtesy of Rauschenberg Foundation.

and anti-American (even Communist).[30] Indeed, scholar of disability and deafness Lennard J. Davis firmly links the establishment of the norm with the rise of modern capitalism under industrialization and the solidification of the working body as laborer and producer.[31] Put simply: the norm as a psychophysical ideal grew out of this connection between expected bodily production and industry that enabled reliable supply and demand in an economy now dedicated to the profitability of war.

It should come as no surprise that some of the first statisticians—men practicing what would essentially become the *science of the norm*—were prominent industrialists.[32] What this mathematical-scientific project introduced was *the ideal's equation with the average* through which arrangements of power make the unremarkable the desirable. (Plastic surgeons straighten noses; they don't bend them.

[30] Even Evans' "body of labor" relegated these working men to self-contained rectangles that emphasized their self-determination and reliance, rather than depicting them on the job, where they would have looked more like a collective labor force.

[31] Lennard J. Davis, "Constructing Normalcy: The Bell Curve, the Novel, and the Invention of the Disabled Body in the Nineteenth Century," in *The Disability Studies Reader (second edition)*, ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 3.

[32] Ibid., 4.

Speech therapists teach patients how to speak without a lisp; they don't introduce one.) Using this equation—especially with the victory (and losses) of the Second World War still fresh and now on the eve of a new "Cold" War—wary Americans heard in any call for collectivity a dog-whistle for Communist sympathizers.[33] It was in this climate of suspicion that Americanness itself came to be marked through and on the (individual) masculine body. This was especially true of the fragmented veteran body, which haunted newspaper racks and television broadcasts. During the continuous for-profit reproduction of war that characterized the 1960s and 1970s, that body was taken up as a visual and rhetorical symbol for resilience and perseverance.

One of Rauschenberg's last Combines troubles this marking, though the viewer who finds this reading counterintuitive upon their first encounter with *Gold Standard* can easily be forgiven. Completed as a part of the 1964 performance *Twenty Questions to Bob Rauschenberg,* the Combine *Gold Standard* (fig. 5) dates to nearly two decades after Evans' photographic project. The year 1964, however, sits comfortably in the middle of the twenty years during which the Vietnam War dragged on. *Gold Standard* is a Combine that explicitly evokes physical labor—particularly physically hardy construction work, with its "men-at-work" color (the result of Rauschenberg's use of real industrial paint) and inclusion of a road barrier. It is, perhaps most damningly, the product of Rauschenberg's own physical labor, which was and is, in its performance, itself part of the work.[34]

Yet to see in *Gold Standard* an uncritical celebration of American workingman virility is to ignore the true nature of the garish yellow industrial paint, whose purpose is to suggest a need for caution, reflecting the caution tape found at crime scenes and construction sites, as well as the materiality of the paint itself. After all, what is the purpose of *Gold Standard*'s road barrier if there is no calamity lurking beyond the bend? The work's title is relevant here, asking whether it is the gold standard itself that represents the danger, and correspondingly, if our bodies and minds might be what we should approach with caution (and care)?[35] In other words: might *Gold Standard* function as an admonition of the standardization of expectation for performance across the spectrum of bodies and minds? Similarly, if not as an instruction to stop, then at least to *slow* and take stock of the wear and tear our mind-bodies experience in adhering to such standards?

Considered against the backdrop of such questions, *Gold Standard becomes a proponent of/argument for sitpoint theory.* After all, *Gold Standard*

[33] The equation I am speaking of here is one that seeks to reproduce the unmarked through eugenics and anti-Black racism as the ultimate seat of privilege.

[34] Here, work is *part of* the work.

[35] What I mean here when I speak of "gold" is the capitalistic need to always acquire more—more wealth, more things, simply *more*.

urges us to take seriously the danger suggested by its proceed-with-caution yellow. This danger, the potential for physical and mental violence, is real in the corporeal sense; throughout the composition of *Gold Standard*, "saws…replaced scissors as the artist's tool of choice," and the folding-screen format suggests an area cordoned off, perhaps for purposes of safety.[36] Putting it up is indeed an architectural move. Doing so changes the room it inhabits and engages with concepts of boundary-making, of property and ownership if we return to the title (remembering it is a *gold* standard rather than a *yellow* one), the financial means property ownership requires and the ways in which the body's labor *becomes* that means. The necktie spray painted in gold and then knotted around the traffic blockade indicates that perhaps even the newly synthesized figure of the middle management office worker is not outside this mind-body exchange.

Because what can be known can be put to ideological and fiscal use, cataloging and serializing mind-bodies—especially those considered marked in some way, whether that be by race, (dis)ability, or gender—carries great weight. The lived, real-world implications of what disability scholar Sharon Snyder has dubbed an "insatiable cultural fascination" with the disabled body are not elusive.[37] One need only turn to arrangements like Britain's Disability Living Allowance and the United States' Supplemental Security Income to recognize that the disabled are not allowed anonymity. Rather than trusting the disabled mind-body's account of its own experience, abilities, and ailments, the machine that operates via such technologies places the disabled at the mercy of healthcare providers with whom they share in a deeply unbalanced power dynamic. In the interest of smoking out the malingerer, those applying for such programs are required to disclose the "most minute experiences of pain, disruptions of menstrual cycle, lapses of fatigue, and difficulty in operating household appliances" in what Shelley Tremain calls a "performance of textual confession."[38] Here, the public/private divide breaks—or is torn down entirely—with the disabled being given two choices: aid (or at least the chance of it) or privacy (or at least the chance of it). One cannot have both and often receives neither.

For those who are capable of it, as in the case of those with invisible disabilities or those outfitted with real-looking prosthetic limbs/glass eyes/etc., the opportunity of "passing" as able-bodied and able-minded, of assimilating (at least temporarily) into an

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[36] Frances Colpitt, "Compound Pleasures [Robert Rauschenberg]," *Art in America* (December 2006): 105.
[37] Sharon Snyder and David Mitchell, "Narrative Prosthesis and the Materiality of Metaphor," in *The Disability Studies Reader (second edition),* ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 213.
[38] Shelley Tremain, "On the Government of Disability: Foucault, Power, and the Subject of Impairment," in *The Disability Studies Reader (second edition),* ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 193.

abled homogeneity, relies on the constant interplay of (hyper) visibility and (total) invisibility. It is, says museology expert Marquad Smith, like a particularly high-stakes game of hide-and-seek—one there is no hope of winning.[39] The ruse cannot be upheld forever. Like the Japanese folding screen of Rauschenberg's *Gold Standard*—which comes in a form meant for convenient transport, being easily folded and packed away, or for being set up across the width of a room, concealing half of the space—"passing" temporarily obscures what lies behind the prosthetic or pretended and temporary ability. But as soon as the screen is accordioned back in on itself, the jig is up. (Prosthetic limbs are removed at night for comfort; medications wear off and pain returns, etc.)

"Screen" is a generous and variable word. It invites instances of meaning-twisting and wordplay. When subject to processes of numbering, categorization, medical testing, and surveillance, one is "screened," yet one might also erect a "screen" to shield themselves from such prying eyes and ears. In its ambiguity, then, the screen becomes a tool of ambivalence. This is apparent in the folding screen Rauschenberg has appropriated for his uses in *Gold Standard;* a bare-faced electric bulb affixed to the top of the assemblage throws its light on whatever lies beyond the screen, promising there is always more to see, while the box on the leftmost panel reads "Soni-Tape Type-7." A product of Sony (then Sony Tape), today the most cash-rich company in Japan, Soni-Tape reel-to-reel recording devices began to be used in archival work three years after Evans' project, in 1949. The inclusion of this box, when taken in with the clocks (both literal-physical and diagrammatic) that share the panel it occupies, suggests the temporal and temporary nature of surveillance evasion.

It is in this refusal of easy categorization—in refusing to be known or understood—that the Combines as a body of work upset the role of surveillance as cataloguer and sense-maker. The screen in *Gold Standard* has a former life: its purpose was once to offer privacy, respite from the public gaze. Yet it has failed, and violently so, reborn out of dismemberment into the Frankenstein-like construction of elements that become, when drawn into the network of the composition, ridiculous in their lack of use. The ceramic dog tilting forward on a bicycle seat, the lead an umbilical cord connecting it to the center panel, is, for example, a reproduction of a campaign originally created for RCA (Radio Corporation of America) advertising Victor Records.[40] The recognizably curious tilt of the dog's head once indicated his interest in the voice

[39] Marquad Smith, "The Vulnerable Articulate: James Gillingham, Aimee Mullins, and Matthew Barney," in *The Disability Studies Reader (second edition),* ed. Lennard J. Davis (New York: Routledge Publishing, 2006), 312.

[40] The Victor Talking Machine Company was purchased by the Radio Corporation of America in 1929; this same dog later would later inspire the official mascot of the Target corporation, the English bull terrier "Bullseye."

of his master as it emanated from a gramophone. He was an attentive and obedient dog, a *good dog.* But, with the gramophone embodying his master's voice conspicuously absent, the tilt of the dog's head fails to read as inquisitive. Eyes cast to the ground, he has been tied up outside and left to wait. If he no longer pulls at the leash, it is because he recognizes that this mode of resistance fails to produce results. His usefulness has been stymied by his refusal not only to hear, but to follow, orders. The dog may not be deaf, but neither is he *listening*—and to his master, the two are equally frustrating.

Conclusion, Or: What Works

The disabled mind-body's use value is similarly stymied. Not resilient or efficient—and, most notably, not independent or independently productive—it retains the marks of its hurts. Having been scarred and warped, disabled mind-bodies need assistance more than they are ready and waiting to follow orders. Indeed, there *are* orders in *Gold Standard* (for construction, no less) found on the instruction manual that has been affixed to the same panel where we encounter the clocks and Soni-Tape box. In this way, like the stubborn ceramic dog who refuses to listen, or the goat put out to pasture, these disabled mind-bodies refute not only productivity but notions of traditional American masculinity. They whisper: what if purposeful activity did *not* equal work? What would a world look like in which rest was an equally valuable in(activity)? How would it change how we do—or *don't do*—things? Would efficiency still rule the day? If not through directly asking these questions, then by at least implying them, *Gold Standard* exposes the hierarchy that holds ideas like work, activity, and efficiency above those like rest, moderation, and care. To turn this hierarchy on its head is precisely the promise sitpoint theory presents.

From all of this, the Combines reveal themselves as fragmentary, piecemeal constructions of abject materials. If disability is, as bioethicist Rosemarie Garland-Thomson asserts, "the unorthodox made flesh, refusing to be normalized, neutralized, or homogenized," then this description might be as easily read alongside Rauschenberg's early assemblage work.[41] When efficiency is a pipe dream and resilience refuses to pay off in a lessening of pain, what it means to function in the world is radically transformed. Nothing "works"—yet anything might "work." A yardstick becomes a tool for the wheelchair-user who needs to retrieve something from a high shelf. The bed-bound person keeps floss on their nightstand because they cannot brush when their caretaker is not there to assist them to the bathroom. An

[41] Rosemarie Garland-Thomson, *Re-shaping, Re-thinking, Re-Defining: Feminist Disability Studies* (Washington, DC: Center for Woman Policy Studies, 2001), 263.

ostomy bag that collects the body's waste can be clipped to a belt loop. It is not pretty. It is often inefficient, unsustainable, and fragmentary—all words applicable to both *Monogram* and *Gold Standard*—but perhaps this is the kind of functioning most fit for our surveilled, transitory world. If we must throw open the doors to—and sit among—the *embarrassingly private,* then so be it.[42]

[42] This seems fitting, considering that Rauschenberg liked doors quite a lot, including them in some of his most well-known Combines, such as *Pink Door* (1954).

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Dreaming Out Loud:
Aphantasia and the Contingencies of Artistic Imagination

a response by Sophia Gimenez

Cole Graham's article "Inefficient, Unsustainable, and Fragmentary: The Rauschenberg Combines as Disabled Bodies" prompts us to consider disability as one of the precarious, suspended, and contradictive subversion zones that this volume explores. Framed through the lens of a cultural-critical disability model he calls sitpoint theory, Graham demonstrates how Robert Rauschenberg's Combines disrupt spatial, bodily, and sociocultural hegemonies, thus challenging existing ableist power structures and introducing the potential for new ways of living that do not center around conventional notions of ability. What if we were to apply Graham's sitpoint theory to other modalities of disability or neurodivergence? Take, for example, the imaginative process of visual artists with aphantasia, "a condition of reduced or absent voluntary imagery," known colloquially as "mind blindness."[1] How might mobilizing sitpoint theory in analyzing the artistic production of aphantasic artists challenge entrenched notions of "artistic genius" and expand the horizons of creative expression?

Graham's sitpoint theory draws from Anne Waldschmidt's cultural model of disability, which challenges a received dichotomy of ability/disability that juxtaposes prototypical correctness with derivative perversion. Waldschmidt suggests, rather, they are both neutral alternatives, *possibilities*, of being alive. These embodied possibilities

[1] Adam Zeman, Michaela Dewar, and Sergio Della Sala, "Lives Without Imagery: Congenital Aphantasia," *Cortex*, 73 (2015): 378.

of being alive across "health, functioning, achievement, and beauty" are transversal and intersectional contingencies that collide and contend with each other, offering "essential knowledge about the legacies, trajectories, turning points, and transformations of contemporary society and culture."[2] Graham augments Waldschmidt's disability model with the epistemic relativism of Sandra Harding's feminist theoretical model, standpoint theory, thus arriving at sitpoint theory: a differently-embodied vantage point that instructs us to "not only to consider our own positionality, but also to sit and take stock of our bodies and minds."[3] Using Rauschenberg's freestanding assemblage *Gold Standard* (1964) as a case study, Graham asserts that the work's portrayal of a disabled mind-body challenges established norms of productivity, independence, and traditional masculinity by "expos[ing] the hierarchy that holds ideas like work, activity, and efficiency above those like rest, moderation, and care."[4] Graham continues, "To turn this hierarchy on its head is precisely the promise sitpoint theory presents."[5] What other hierarchies can be flipped on their heads with sitpoint theory? What other insights can we gain from the disabled or neurodivergent experience within the visual arts that challenge established norms? For me, the neurodivergent condition known as aphantasia is a compelling place to start.

Artists with aphantasia seemingly pose no higher challenge to the notion of artistic creativity: visual artists who cannot visualize. Coming from the Aristotelian term for the faculty to mentally generate images, *phantasia* (imagination), and *a-* denoting absence, aphantasia is a neurocognitive variation in which there is entirely absent or markedly impaired generation of voluntary sensory imagery.[6] While aphantasics still experience a rich inner world of emotions and thoughts, the estimated 3.9% of the population with the condition cannot visualize images of the objects, people, or places

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[2] Anne Waldschmidt, "Disability Goes Cultural: The Cultural Mode of Disability as an Analytical Tool," in *Culture—Theory—Disability,* ed. Anne Waldschmidt, Hanjo James Berressem, and Moritz Ingwersen (New York, NY: Transcript Verlag, 2017), 26.

[3] Graham, this volume, 79.

[4] Ibid., 90.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Within the broader scope of disability studies, the classification of aphantasia as a disability is still a matter of debate in neurology and psychology literature. Recent scholarship views aphantasia as a neutral neurodivergence rather than a disorder, critiquing medical and social models of disability to promote a more inclusive understanding of cognitive diversity and addressing the societal implications that individuals with aphantasia may face. For more, see Merlin Monzel, Carla Dance, Elena Azañón, and Julia Simner, "Aphantasia Within the Framework of Neurodivergence: Some Preliminary Data and the Curse of the Confidence Gap," *Consciousness and Cognition*, 115 (2023): 103567. and Merlin Monzel, David Mitchell, Fiona Macpherson, Joel Pearson, Adam Zeman, "Proposal for a Consistent Definition of Aphantasia and Hyperphantasia: A Response to Lambert and Sibley (2022) and Simner and Dance (2022)," *Cortex*, 152 (2022): 74-76.

that accompany them.[7] In simple terms, when prompted to imagine an apple, individuals with aphantasia cannot conjure a vivid mental image of color, depth, and form. The aphantasic sees nothing. Their mind's eye is "blind."

The notion of a visualization-impaired artist may seem counterintuitive as it contradicts Western paradigms of artistic creation. Contemporary Western culture is permeated with implicit assumptions about artists that are inherited from Renaissance ideals. In the sixteenth century, Italian artist, architect, and art historian Giorgio Vasari recorded an account of Leonardo da Vinci explaining the art of painting, with the latter defining artistic geniuses as those who are "thinking out inventions and forming in their minds the perfect ideas which they subsequently express and reproduce with their hands."[8] The stereotype of a virtuosic artist—specifically one who generates fully-formed visions from an internal cognitive process before realizing it in the world—persists well into the twentieth century. When tracing the history of aesthetic theory across classical, medieval, and Renaissance philosophy, iconographer Erwin Panofsky predicates his analysis of the dialectics of artistic value and production on the notion that an artist conceives from their "inner eye" or an "inner image."[9]

Yet, Panofsky's neurotypical model does not explain the genesis of creativity or artistic production for all artists. For example, the Oscar-winning Disney animator Glen Keane has aphantasia.[10] When Keane first sat down to draw character designs for films including *The Little Mermaid* (1989), *Beauty and the Beast* (1991), *Aladdin* (1992), *Pocahontas* (1995), *Tarzan* (1999), and *Tangled* (2010), his mind was blank, devoid of any preconceived perfect images forming in his inner eye. Keane describes his initial markings when designing a character study as "an explosion of scribbles," then incorporates external references from photographs or objects into an on-paper feedback loop, adding and detracting elements until he reaches a rendering to his liking.[11] When drafting the Beast character from *Beauty and the Beast*, he combined features he observed from a wall-mounted buffalo head in his workspace, the mane from a reference of a lion, the ears from a reference of a cow, and finally, human eyes

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[7] Aphantasia is a spectrum condition, with some experiencing a range of visual imagery deficits while .8% experience the severest form in which visual imagery is entirely absent. For more population statistics, see Carla Dance, A. Ipser, and Julia Simner, "The Prevalence of Aphantasia (Imagery Weakness) in the General Population," *Consciousness and Cognition*, 97 (2022): 97.

[8] Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the Artists: Volume One*, rev. ed., trans. George Bull, ed. Peter Murray (New York: Penguin Classics, 1988), 354.

[9] Erwin Panofsky, *Idea: A Concept in Art Theory* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1968), 13-18.

[10] James Gallagher, "Aphantasia: Ex-Pixar chief Ed Catmull says 'my mind's eye is blind,'" *BBC News*, April 9, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/health-47830256.

[11] Glen Keane, "How I Created Disney Princesses," *Google Zeitgeist*, September 19, 2016, video, 27:19. https://youtu.be/1ftHVPJJ26I?si=LOXd-d9iYzI1KqUd.

resulting in a breakthrough moment that was like "recognizing someone you know."[12] Keane's solely externalized visualization process reveals that generating a prototype dwelling from within is not a prerequisite for artistic creation, thus undermining the established paradigm of the imagination as an internal function into a more expansive network that bypasses presumed cognitive borderlands.

Matthew MacKisack, cultural historian and co-curator of the 2019 aphantasic and hyperphantasic artist exhibition *Extreme Imagination – Inside the Mind's Eye*, effectively articulates how aphantasia offers new spatial understandings of the creative process.[13] Alongside co-curator Susan Aldworth, MacKisack analyses the exhibiting aphantasic artists' strategies as alternative pathways in lieu of internal imagery. British figurative painter Michael Chance, for example, must "physically work" via improvisation and discovery, using his aphantasia as motivational stimulus for artistic production that "bypass[es] conscious decision making."[14] Australian collagist Susan Baquie says she works "blind," concentrating on the "energy of the process" of "cutting and tearing papers and applying the mixed media in abstract forms."[15] Baquie's process refers to a collage she made in response to her learning of the suicide of an acquaintance, stating, "As I have aphantasia, there were no images in my mind of the distressing events, but it seems that a figurative representation of them emerged unintentionally, growing from the action of making and the subliminal or subconscious knowledge of the death of the young man."[16]

Both Chance and Baquie's accounts reveal that the aphantasic externally improvises and plays with pre-existing material in the physical word through involuntary action. Notable as well are the artists' remarks of decisions and actions that draw from subliminal or unconscious spaces. Comparable to André Breton's advocations, the aphantasic's creative process is perhaps akin to a waking dream, a surreality of "certain forms of previously neglected associations, in the omnipotence of dream, in the disinterested play of thought."[17] In light of the knowledge that many aphantasics do, in fact, dream, MacKisack believes that it confirms a "significant dissociation between voluntary and involuntary imagery," contending that aphantasic visual imagining is a

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[12] Ibid.

[13] Hyperphantasia is aphantasia's antithesis, the condition of experiencing extreme mental imagery vividness. For more, see Rebecca Keogh, Joel Pearson, and Adam Zeman, "Aphantasia: The Science of Visual Imagery Extremes," *Neurology of Vision and Visual Disorders, Handbook of Clinical Neurology*, vol. 178 (Elsevier, 2021): 277-296.

[14] Matthew MacKisack and Susan Aldworth, *Extreme Imagination: Inside the Mind's Eye* (Exeter: The Eye's Mind Press, 2018), 35.

[15] Ibid., 44.

[16] Ibid.

[17] André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism (1924)," in *The Routledge Companion to Surrealism*, ed. Kirsten Strom (Taylor & Francis, 2022), 98-99.

process that can exist both in the realm of dreams and via an "extended cognitive process" while awake.[18]

Identifying this externalized cognitive process as a "surrogate for the 'mind's eye,'" MacKisack employs the concept of *extended cognition* proposed by philosopher Andy Clark and cognitive scientist David Chalmers.[19] Clark and Chalmers describe extended cognition as a cognitive function in which the brain delegates some operations that it finds difficult or impossible out into the surrounding environment as an "active externalism" for problem solving.[20] MacKisack argues that aphantasic artists, demonstrated by the processes of Chance and Baquie, "have extended image-making as a cognitive process to include paper, paint, and canvas, using those materials for a task that their brains in particular find impossible."[21] With this considered, the aphantasic imagination is not at all absent. Rather than being an internal experience, aphantasic creativity is outsourced beyond the borders of the brain where paper, paint, and canvas act as neuroreceptors and neuropathways for the artist's mind. The aphantasic artwork and the means of its production are the artist's brain incarnate, an ectopic phenomenon in which an organ transgresses, grows, and lives outside the borders of the human body within exterior environmental materials.

This is where Graham's sitpoint theory offers us fresh perspectives of the aphantasic experience beyond conventional understandings of the creative process. His framework encourages us to reposition normative notions of how the human imagination can function: rather than visualizing what we wish to create in Platonic perfection before it safely enters the world, why not externalize the nascence of creation and witness our thoughts, feelings, and ideas clash, grapple, and synthesize with each other? Why not conceptualize artistic creation not as cognitive proxy, but as cognition made manifest? Rather than emphasize those collected, complete, and premeditated virtues entrenched in patriarchal and capitalist values of effectiveness and control, what can the vulnerability of being unformed, inefficient, and disjointed reveal to us? Similar to what the automatists reached for, what if we dreamed out loud?

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[18] Matthew MacKisack, "Artists with Aphantasia: Extended Imagining?" *The Junkyard: A Scholarly Blog Devoted to the Study of Imagination* (blog). April 17, 2019. https://junkyardofthemind.com/blog/2019/4/14/artists-with-aphantasia-extended-imagining.

[19] Ibid.

[20] Andy Clark and David Chalmers, "The Extended Mind," *Analysis*, vol. 58, no. 1 (1998): 7–19.

[21] MacKisack, "Artists with Aphantasia: Extended Imagining?"

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A Hybrid Avant-Garde: Kati Horna's Balance between Artist Autonomy and Political Engagement

Lizi Anderson-Cleary

A photograph taken by Mexican-Hungarian photographer Kati Horna (née Katalin Deutsch Blau, Kathe Polgare, 1912–2000) in the fall of 1937 features a girl with bright eyes and a kind smile who gazes into the distance (fig. 1). The girl has a ribbon tied in a bow at the top of her head to hold back her short, straight hair and wears a simple dark frock. Without context, the photograph is a moment of childlike delight and wonder. However, the image takes on additional meaning when we learn that Horna captured the photograph in Madrid during the Spanish Civil War (1936–1939), a conflict between the fascist Nationalists and the democratic Second Spanish Republic. The Republic had recently suffered defeat in the northern Basque territory surrounding Bilbao, while its citizens in Madrid and Barcelona endured heavy air raids. Those who survived the raids were left without access to water, food, warm clothing, or shelter. Women, children, and the elderly flocked to refugee centers surrounding the city to seek help.

Against this backdrop of violence, disruption, and hunger, we can see that Horna adds a humanitarian rhetoric to the photograph by using an upward camera angle. Numerous photojournalists during the Civil War used a similar technique to depict standing soldiers in heroic terms. Expansive skies behind these figures create a sense of boundless possibility and optimism, while upward camera angles provide the subjects with towering authority and strength. When Horna applies this same rhetoric

Figure 1: Kati Horna, *untitled* (Girls of Madrid), 1937, photograph on cellulose nitrate, 6 x 6 cm. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain, #220 in the Kati Horna Archive. http://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/118215.

to a young girl, she becomes a heroine of endurance and hopefulness, as demonstrated by her faraway gaze and shining eyes. This photograph illustrates the humanitarian-feminist intentions that guided Horna's work during the last two years of the Spanish Civil War and provides evidence of her own artistic autonomy, even as she produced visual materials for the anarcho-syndicalist union, the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo/ Federación Anarquista Iberíca (CNT-FAI).

Before Francisco Franco's Nationalist forces attempted to overthrow the Second Spanish Republic on July 17, 1936, political organizations in the country suffered from factionalism. After the coup d'état, a myriad of political organizations rallied around right and left factions. On the left, the Popular Front consisted of Marxist communists, socialists, Republicans, and anarchists. While the anarchists viewed the Civil War as an opportunity for revolution, the other members of the Popular Front considered these endeavors detrimental to the war effort. During the war, the CNT-FAI collectivized agriculture and industry, established secular schools, and reorganized finance. These activities were driven by anarchist tenets of autonomy and belief in the ability of the community to organize itself. Upon her arrival in Spain from Paris in January 1937, Horna photographed the military and civilian efforts in the Aragón region and created propagandist materials for the CNT-FAI. In the first few months of her engagement with the conflict, her visual products matched the aims of the organization. Her pamphlet, *¿España? Un libro de imágenes sobre cuentos de miedo y calumnias fascistas* (Spain? A picture book of horror tales and fascist calumnies) can certainly be considered propaganda.[1] Over the course of the war,

[1] Michel Otayek, "Loss and Renewal: The Politics and Poetics of Kati Horna's Photo Stories," in *Told and Untold: The Photo Stories of Kati Horna in the Illustrated Press*, ed. Gabriela Rangel and trans. Christopher Leland Winks (New York: America's Society, 2016), 27–29. Otayek uses this brochure as evidence of Horna's agency in creating propagandistic materials. While his essay aptly recenters the

Horna's focus shifted. She became the graphic editor of the CNT journal *Umbral* in July 1937, where she displayed greater concern for broader social issues, such as humanitarianism and feminism.[2]

Despite the revolutionary aims of the anarchists, most groups considered women's rights a low priority. However, Mujeres Libres, founded by writer Lucía Sánchez Saornil, lawyer Mercedes Comaposada Guillén, and doctor Amparo Poch y Gascón advocated for the liberation of women from their "triple slavery." They believed that women were enslaved by their ignorance and by their dual status as both women and workers.[3] In addition to publishing a journal, *Mujeres Libres*, the group held meetings for women to gain education, job training, and build solidaristic community. Horna attended meetings, photographed members, and contributed to the associated journal. Her photographs and photomontages from the fall of 1937 to the end of the war in 1939 demonstrate her artistic experiments in feminist and humanitarian issues, but retain elements of the political matters that the CNT-FAI prioritized.[4] In this way, Horna was able to balance two concepts that at first appear mutually exclusive: artistic autonomy and political engagement. This was an accomplishment given the artistic debates occurring in avant-garde movements, which sought either the combination or separation of art and politics during the interwar years in Europe.

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discourse on Horna's political intentions, it overlooks the relevant discussions on art and politics that were occurring in the artistic avant-garde movements during the interwar years in Europe. Otayek observes that Kati's waning revolutionary fervor is expressed in her collages and photomontages created with José Horna, which attest to the pending defeat of the revolution. However, I argue that Horna shifted her focus from the aims of the CNT-FAI to her own personal humanitarian and feminist interests in these same photomontages and collages.

[2] Miriam Basilio, "The Art of Kati Horna," *Latin American Literature and Arts* 51 (1995): 71. Basilio was the first to notice Horna's burgeoning interest in feminism during the Spanish Civil War.

[3] María Aránzazu Díaz-R. Labajo, "Miradas para la guerra de España: los usos de las fotografías de Kati Horna en la propaganda del Gobierno republicano, de la CNT-FAI y en las revistas ilustradas Weekly Illustrated, Umbral, y Mujeres Libres (1937-1939)," in *Liberales, cultivadas y activas: redes culturales, lazos de la amistad* (2017): 503.

[4] Kati's Civil War oeuvre contains 972 negatives and 20 known photomontages, several of them created in collaboration with José. There are 270 negatives stored at the Kati Horna Photo Archive at the Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica (CDMH) in Salamanca, Spain. A recent discovery by Almudena Rubio Pérez uncovered an additional 522 photographs within "Las Cajas de Ámsterdam," a shipment containing important CNT documents and image archives that were smuggled out of Spain shortly before the fall of the Republic. It is likely that there are more photomontages by Horna that scholars have not yet found or identified. I recently conducted research on the newspaper *Tierra y Libertad* at the CMDH and found two previously unidentified photomontages signed by José using Kati's photographs. Kati Horna, *Archivo fotográfico de Kati Horna*, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain; Almudena Rubio Pérez, "'Las Cajas de Ámsterdam': Kati Horna y los Anarquistas de la CNT-FAI," *Historia Social* 96 (2020): 22.

In his book *Theory of the Avant-Garde* (1974), Peter Bürger explains that the historical or revolutionary avant-gardes of the early twentieth century rejected the "separation of art from the praxis of life," which had dominated the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.[5] Instead, he observes that the avant-gardes sought to "organize a new life praxis from a basis in art."[6] This shift required the participating artists to establish novel guidelines for using art to change their realities. On the one hand, Russian Constructivists adhered to an "art for the proletarian," which utilized abstraction to reflect modern industry. They contended that individual artistic autonomy should be subservient to the needs of the proletarian class. On the other hand, Surrealism championed freedom, chance encounters, the subconscious mind, irrationality, and the marvelous. The leader of the movement, André Breton, sought to combine dream and reality, which he termed "surreality."[7] He considered aligning Surrealism with the French Communist Party (PCF) but avoided a formal commitment because he believed in the primacy of artistic freedom over service to an official political party.

Although Horna experimented with both Constructivist and Surrealist formal artistic methods, she did not ascribe to their "all or nothing" mentalities regarding the combination of art and politics.[8] Instead, I posit that she committed to the belief that artistic autonomy and politically engaged art can coexist without the one consuming the other. This was the position argued by Lajos Kassák, the founder of Hungarian Activism, whose teachings had an early influence on Horna. Hungarian Activism combined leftist ideologies with artistic avant-garde disciplines, primarily Constructivism and Expressionism.[9] Horna, who encountered the group during her adolescence in Budapest, described Kassák as a "man who opened her mind to new ideas."[10] In response to these influences, Horna created a hybrid philosophy that

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[5] Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. Michael Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 49.

[6] Ibid.

[7] André Breton, "Manifesto of Surrealism" (1924), in *Manifestoes of Surrealism*, trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969), 14.

[8] Even in exile in Mexico after the Spanish Civil War, Horna was associated with the Surrealists, but she did not accept the title herself.

[9] Hungarian Activism was a movement within the larger Hungarian avant-garde.

[10] Lisa Pelizzon, *Kati Horna: Constelaciones de sentido* (Barcelona: San Soleil, 2015), 20. Kassák believed that art reflected its artist. If the artist was socialist, then the art itself would inevitably also be socialist. The artist could produce revolutionary work, but her autonomy should not be subordinated to directly serve a social class or political ideology. Kassák's ambivalent view on artistic independence is reflected in his own brief experiences as an official poster censor for the Hungarian Soviet Republic. He quickly left his position for the same reason that he did not fully commit to Constructivism: he believed that artistic autonomy should not be consumed by one's dedication to social and political organizations. Esther Levinger, "The Theory of Hungarian Constructivism," *The Art Bulletin* 69, no. 3 (1987): 457; Éva Forgács

balanced artist autonomy and political engagement by integrating Constructivist and Surrealist formal elements with Kassák's theory.[11] Although her photographs, photomontages, and collages contain anarchist intonations—certainly enough to be published in CNT-FAI's newspapers and journals—Horna's own humanitarian-feminist voice can still be heard and recognized.

The remainder of this essay addresses the intersection of art and politics in Horna's artwork from the Civil War, which included avant-garde vestiges of Constructivism and Surrealism. This work was created in collaboration with her husband, Spanish graphic artist José Horna (1912–1963), who she met while working at

Figure 2: László Moholy-Nagy, *Die Eigenbrötler II* (The Mavericks II), 1927, photomontage (gelatin silver prints and ink), 22.4 x 15.7 cm. Gift of Herbert R. and Paula Molner in honor of Douglas Druick, 2011.333.1. The Art Institute of Chicago, Illinois / Art Resource, NY © 2024 Estate of László Moholy-Nagy / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York.

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and Tyrus Miller, "The Avant-Garde in Budapest and in Exile in Vienna," *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines*, eds. Peter Brooker, Sascha Bru, Andrew Thacker and Christian Weikop, vol. 3 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 1137; Oliver Botar, "Lajos Kassák, Hungarian 'Activism', and Political Power," *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 36, no. 1–2 (2002): 400.

[11] Alicia Sánchez- Mejorada, Emma Cecilia Garicía Krinsky, Sergio Flores, and Lisa Pelizzon have emphasized Horna's avant-garde productions, notably works that reflect Surrealist influences, as well as her documentary photography as a photojournalist. By referencing Horna's "libertarian beliefs" and role within the CNT-FAI only in passing, they relegate these connections to a minor role. The 2016 edited volume *Told and Untold* recentered Horna's commitments to radical left-wing politics but allows them to overshadow her artistic contributions: *Told and Untold: The Photo Stories of Kati Horna in the Illustrated Press*, ed. Gabriela Rangel and trans. Christopher Leland Winks (New York: America's Society, 2016). While Almudena Rubio Pérez's recent findings in "Las Cajas de Àmsterdam" are invaluable, they too focus solely on Horna's political engagements.

Umbral.[12] Kati Horna left Budapest in 1930 to study politics at the Hochschule für Politik in Berlin.[13] She then lived in Paris from the fall of 1933 to March 1937, when she left for Spain. The text of the essay mirrors Horna's travels, by moving from an example of her integration of Constructivist formal elements to an example of her application of Surrealist elements, both created during the Spanish Civil War. Subsequently, it details Horna's use of humanitarian and feminist iconography and her effort to balance her artistic autonomy with art created in service to the CNT-FAI.

Horna adopted formal elements from Constructivism but avoided committing to their goal of "art for the proletariat." While in Berlin, she encountered László Moholy-Nagy's photographic theory of "New Vision" and his belief in the narrative potential of photomontage, as described in his influential publication, *Malerei, Photographie, Film*.[14] Photomontage is a method of cutting, pasting, and manipulating photographic fragments into a whole, accomplished either in the darkroom or by physically altering the hard copies of the photographs themselves.[15] A comparison between *Die Eigenbrötler II* (fig. 2) by Moholy-Nagy and *L'enfance* by Kati and José illustrates similar spatial relationships between the two photomontages.[16] These formal similarities demonstrate Moholy-Nagy's influence on Horna, particularly in the use of blank space and triangular relationships between elements. These triangular relationships are used to bring attention to victimized and exploited figures, who are isolated from their

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[12] While it is important to note Kati and José's collaborations on *L'enfance*, *sin titulo*, and *¡Campesinos! La FAI está con vosotros*, the primary aim of this essay is to demonstrate Kati's avant-garde experimentations in materials created for the CNT-FAI.

[13] Maria Antonella Pelizzari, "The 'Social Fantastic' in Kati Horna's Paris (1933-1937)" in *Told and Untold*, 44.

[14] Translated, the title reads *Painting, Photography, Film.* Moholy-Nagy and Horna's shared connection to Kassák most likely facilitated her introduction to his work and artistic praxis. Moholy-Nagy frequently collaborated with Kassák on the Hungarian Activist journal *MA*. I emphasize Horna's connections to Kassák and Moholy-Nagy over her relationship with Marxist philosopher Karl Korsh (1886–1961). The latter relationship was facilitated by her first husband, Marxist intellectual Paul Partos (1911–1964). Korsh and Partos's influence on Horna's political development were certainly important in her young life. However, I believe that this was a moment of radicalism in Horna's otherwise nuanced approach. While Partos remained committed to the radical aims of the CNT-FAI, as the Republican army began to fall, Horna's zeal diminished.

[15] The term refers to both the German words, "montieren" meaning "to assemble" and "Monteur" signifying "engineer." The term was linked to the Constructivist designation of the "artist engineer," who employed industrial technology to make herself and her art useful to anti-capitalist and anti-bourgeois society. Horna's preference for the designation "art worker" or "photography worker" probably stemmed from similar proletarian connotations. Eleanor Hight, *Moholy-Nagy: Photography and Film in Weimar Germany* (Wellesley, MA: Wellesley College Museum, 1985), 106; Lisa Pelizzon, "El conflicto en el cruce de fronteras: Kati Horna y la Guerra Civil Española," *DeSignis* (2018): 76.

[16] An image of *L'enfance* (Childhood) can be found at: https://latarteyfoto.wordpress.com/2017/04/21/kati-y-jose-horna-lenfance-1939/.

surrounding environments in both photomontages. However, while *Die Eigenbrötler* condemns class hierarchies and the exploitation of the proletariat, *L'enfance* denounces fascist attacks on civilians.[17]

Moholy-Nagy's *Die Eigenbrötler* features a white background that flattens the plane, to which he gives dimension through three groupings of figures. On the right side of the photomontage, a building rises dramatically above its surroundings. Groups of people gaze out from behind barred windows. Animals surround the fortified building. A fish with a gaping mouth invades the bottom left corner of the photomontage, while a cat and a dog approach the structure. Three intertwined, running figures are simultaneously separate from and part of the scene. Each of these groups form one point of a triangle. One corner begins at the gaping mouth of the fish. From there, following the upward diagonal trajectory of the fish across the image, the second point is the top window of the building. The third point consists of the small figures running through the neutral space. Eleanor Hight concludes that the figures safe behind the barred windows represent the bourgeoisie, the running children exposed to the elements represent the proletariat, and the roaming animals represent danger.[18] Moholy-Nagy advocated for art in service to the proletariat and commonly used photomontage to critique class distinctions. It follows that his use of blank space and triangular relationships demonstrates the exposure of the proletariat to the ills of capitalism. The central figures, who are frozen in mid-stride without a clear direction, are utterly vulnerable. Their constant state of motion mirrors the rapid demands of industrialization on the worker. There is no defense for them from the dangers of worker exploitation, which is symbolized by the roaming animals.

Kati and José's *L'enfance*, created in Paris shortly after the fall of the Republic, can be interpreted as an anti-fascist experiment in Constructivist formal methods.[19] It features a neutral, white background punctuated by elements that also form a triangle: a photograph of a young boy against an abstract representation of a decaying tree; a

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[17] Although *Die Eigenbrötler II* was never published, it uses strategies that Moholy-Nagy implemented throughout his work: the exploitation of blank space and creation of structure through diagonal axes. While Horna most likely never saw it, *Die Eigenbrötler* is an example of Moholy-Nagy's formal constructions and integrates his social concerns for the proletarian. Horna most likely saw a similar photomontage in one of the many advertising posters and book jackets that Moholy-Nagy produced after leaving the Bauhaus in 1928. While there is no evidence that Horna formally studied with Moholy-Nagy, most scholars agree that the two crossed paths while in Berlin, and found an affinity due to their shared language, background, and interest in Hungarian Activism.

[18] Hight, *Moholy-Nagy*, 110.

[19] José, like Kati, was likely well-versed in the stylistic and ideological principles of Russian Constructivism which he encountered through Soviet photomontages by El Lissitzky and Alexander Rodchenko featured in the journal *USSR in Construction* (1931–1941). The journal circulated in Spain after it was translated into Spanish in the 1930s.

pile of rubble; and the ruins of a building, barely left standing after the devastating air raids on Barcelona in March 1938. The building looms over the figure of the young boy, threatening him with its presence. The rubble around its base forms one point and the chimney at the top of the building forms another point on the triangle. The young boy, who constitutes the third and most striking point, is almost completely exposed, his only shelter a weak tree with bare branches. He is not grounded by other structures in the photomontage, but rather floats amidst the wreckage. As in *Die Eigenbrötler*, the triangular relationships of the photomontage highlight the victimized figure as detached from his surroundings.

Lisa Pelizzon observes that, although this element is at first difficult to see, the boy is sitting on a cloud.[20] The grey lines that curve around the child and balloon outward are faint, but undeniable. Pelizzon argues that this subtle yet important element implies that he has perished during the air raid and now holds a Christ-like status as a martyr.[21] However, I interpret the child not as a martyr, but as a singular representation of all the victims of the Civil War. *L'enfance* is a denunciation of the attacks on the Spanish civilian population during the Civil War, a conflict that dissolved the borders of war and civilian zones. Interestingly, the victims in both *L'enfance* and *Die Eigenbrötler* float within the blank space of the photomontages, completely unprotected, to demonstrate the vulnerability of the groups. Horna's experiments in photomontage demonstrate her application of Constructivist formal elements that bring attention to victimized groups through isolation. However, she replaces Moholy-Nagy's proletarian concerns with her own pacifist interests. To create her hybrid avant-garde, Horna meticulously curated her use of formal elements and ideological tenets to create a heterogeneous artistic practice that extended beyond the traditional borders of a singular avant-garde movement.

Horna also experimented with Surrealist collage, which replaces the harsh edges and brutal chopping of Constructivist photomontage with a blend of reality and dream into a cohesive yet chimeric scene. The German Surrealist Max Ernst, who is credited with the invention of collage, described it as "the exploitation of the fortuitous encounter of two distant realities on an unfamiliar plane (to paraphrase and generalize Lautréamont's celebrated phrase: 'Beautiful, like the chance meeting of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table).'"[22] Although unified, his method of

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[20] Pelizzon, *Kati Horna*, 237.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Max Ernst, "Beyond Painting," in *Surrealists on Art*, ed. Lucy Lippard (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1970), 126. Ernst found the combination of a sewing machine and an umbrella on a dissecting table illustrative of the recontextualization of collage. The dissecting table robs the umbrella and sewing machine of their purpose and identity. Then, Ernst explains, the umbrella and sewing machine "make love," or become something entirely new, heterogenous but unified. Louis Aragon credited Ernst with

Figure 3: Max Ernst, *Tranquility*, in *La femme 100 têtes* (The Hundred-Headless Woman): Chapter VI, plate 100, 1929, collage. Photo by Jacques Faujour, Musée National d'Art Moderne/Centre Georges Pompidou/Paris/France, © 2024 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / ADAGP, Paris. Digital Image © CNAC/MNAM, Dist. RMN-Grand Palais / Art Resource, NY.

collage retains an element of dissonance. Ernst found that this combination was the ideal vehicle to project the uncanny, a word used by Sigmund Freud to describe the unsettling feeling of familiar objects within unfamiliar contexts. Horna exchanges Ernst's concentration on Freudian traumas and absolute artistic autonomy for socially and politically engaged wartime traumas.

Ernst's first collage-novel, *La femme 100 têtes*, demonstrates his application of the uncanny. One collage from the book features a man comfortably reclining in an armchair that is adrift on a churning sea (fig. 3). His calm demeanor is strikingly out of place in the dangerous scene. A torrent of water engulfs a lighthouse and an enormous wave crashes against it in the background. In the foreground, a woman's arm reaches out from the waves as if she is swimming against the current. While her presence might have come as a welcome source of help, she appears inhuman and alien. She does not reach out toward the man but reaches past him to continue out to sea. Ernst's collage is an uncanny combination of familiar (the armchair and the man reclining in it) and strange (the mysterious arm and dangerous crashing waves). Kati and José collaborated in applying

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the invention of collage in "The Challenge to Painting," in *The Surrealists Look at Art: Eluard, Aragon, Soupault, Breton, Tzara*, ed. Pontus Hulten, trans. Michael Palmer and Norma Cole (Venice, CA: Lapis Press, 1990), 64.

Ernst's approach to collage in *sin titulo* (1938).[23] It features a father embracing his young child in a field. However, glimpses of the dangers of the Civil War punctuate the image. The father's right leg has been amputated, so he leans on two crutches for support. The landscape is filled with flowers, but the sky above is dotted with airplanes, a reminder of the imminent raids. The contrasting elements within the environment create an uncanny scene that juxtaposes the beauty of life with the dangers of war. It is a humanitarian call to the preservation of life.

Sin titulo was published in *Tierra y Libertad* on July 23, 1938, as the Nationalist army neared victory. A few months earlier, the Republican government had attempted to sue Franco for peace, but he rejected their offer. The image appears under the title, "Nosotros no reiremos"—"we will not laugh." The accompanying text asserts that it would be better to die fighting the advancing fascist army than to live under their control and calls for continued defense of anarchist liberties. In this context, the collage takes on a dark intonation. In *Tierra y Libertad*, the collage is not a scene of happiness disrupted by war, but rather a goodbye between a father and his child before he leaves to defend this family from the approaching airplanes in the distance. Although Horna created graphic materials for the CNT, it is unlikely that she took the same sacrificial stance as that expressed by the article accompanying the collage. After defeat and exile, many of her anarchist peers remained committed to the cause in secret. However, Horna did not maintain her politic after she left Spain.[24] Her anarchist fervor declined throughout the war and left her disenchanted. *Sin titulo*'s call for the preservation of life, when published in *Tierra y Libertad*, became an insidious signal to die fighting for anarchist freedoms. This provides an example of the politicization that Horna consistently navigated during the Spanish Civil War. Although she intended to create art that could change the social and political landscape of Spain (and by extension, Europe), she did not want to create art that solely served the goals of the CNT. In line with Kassák's philosophy, Horna believed that her autonomy could exist simultaneously with art in service to revolution.

Horna's oeuvre is consistently described as empathetic and rooted in human connection.[25] Among scenes of battle and the ruins of air raids, Horna's Civil War body

[23] An image of *sin titulo* (untitled) can be viewed at: https://www.museoreinasofia.es/en/collection/artwork/sin-titulo-untitled-468.

[24] Although Kati and José strayed from their radical organizational affiliations after the Civil War, Kati remained committed to promoting gender equality for the remainder of her life.

[25] Carmen Agustín-Lacruz and Luis Blanco-Domingo, "La memoria en encuadres. Fotógrafas extranjeras en Aragón durante la Guerra Civil Española (1936–1939)," *Documentación de las Ciencias de la información* 44, no. 1 (2021): 66; Pelizzon, *Kati Horna*, 62–63, 66; Alicia Sánchez-Mejorada, "Kati Horna y su manera cotidiana de captar la realidad," *Addenda* 10 (2004): 5.

Figure 4: Kati Horna, journal layout for "La maternidad bajo el signo de la revolución," ("Motherhood Under the Sign of Revolution"), *Umbral* no. 12, October 1937. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain, https://hemerotecadigital.bne.es/hd/es/viewer?id=4e766593-eff2-4c30-9697-702582d32ceb.

of work contains photographs of quiet and everyday moments.[26] A barefoot soldier writes a letter in a field at the Aragón front. A woman gazes down at her breastfeeding infant. Women gather to do laundry at a fountain in Barcelona. An elderly *campesina*, or peasant, gazes out across the countryside. Within these seemingly ordinary moments, scholars remark on Horna's intentional portrayal of humanity found in each of the subjects included in the photograph: she approached those in front of her lens with benevolence and compassion.

The photo series *La maternidad bajo el signo de la revolución* (fig. 4) published in the journal *Umbral* in October 1937, demonstrates Horna's humanitarian and feminist focus on women and children in a two-page spread surrounding an article by

[26] While there have been exhibitions of the photographs from "Las Cajas de Ámsterdam" and two articles published between 2020 and 2022 by Rubio Pérez, the full archive has yet to been made public. Therefore, this essay draws from the Kati Horna Archive at the CDMH and integrates Rubio Pérez's findings on the "Las Cajas de Ámsterdam" archive for support.

Lucía Sánchez Saornil. In August, Horna and Saornil toured the Casa de Maternidad in Vélez-Rubio, a refuge for pregnant women, mothers, and their children. While they walked around the facilities, they interviewed the director of the center, Doctor Carreras, and photographed scenes of young children and their mothers.[27] The spread also features photographs from the refugee center at Alcázar de Cervantes, which they toured the following month. Horna's photographs display mothers breastfeeding their newborn infants, children eating in a dining room, and women socializing in small groups. Horna arranges them in a method reminiscent of photomontage, in which the placement of each image contributes to an overarching narrative.[28] The images curve across the page, beginning with a photograph of a group of babies lying in bed. Then, the photographs illustrate mothers feeding themselves and their children. They are safe, cared for, and in the case of an infant with an exclamatory expression, enjoying a moment of happiness. The two photographs on the opposite side of the layout conclude the narrative with images of the older children at the refugee centers. One features a young boy; Saornil ends her article with his story, which recounts his separation from his father on the road to the center.

These images demonstrate Horna's commitment to feminist efforts that extended her humanitarian concerns beyond the official platforms of the political organizations she allied with. Republican propaganda and symbolism during the Civil War emphasized the role of young boys, who could grow up to be soldiers and fight for their cause, over girls. Therefore, photographs of girls were rarely published as they did not support these war aims. This dearth of representation was intricately tied to images of women published during the war, first taking the form of the proud *miliciana*, or militiawoman, at the front lines, then quickly replaced with the image of the "combative mother."[29] Following the moderate Republicans, women were barred from enlisting and called to serve in the rear guard.[30] The combative mother supplied the government with male children who would grow up to join the ranks of the soldiers. The mother and her children became symbols of hope for the future against fascism.

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[27] Doctor Carreras' full name and biographical details remain unidentified. The article only refers to him as "doctor Carreras" and there is a great deal of research yet to be done on this refugee center. Even María Aránzazu Díaz-R. Labajo refers to him simply as "doctor Carreras" in "Miradas para la guerra de España," 497.

[28] This is a method which she used throughout her career. Moholy-Nagy described the narrative potential of photomontage (and by extension, photo series) in *Malerei, Photographie, Film*.

[29] Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver, CO: Arden Press, 1995), 57.

[30] Basilio observes that the image of the militia became synonymous with anarchist opposition to unification. See Miriam Margarita Basilio, "'First, Win the War!' Kati Horna, Gendered Images and Political Discord During the Spanish Civil War", in *Told and Untold*, 60.

However, in the journal, Horna includes photographs of both young girls and boys.[31] In doing so, Horna removes women from their status as producers, deindustrializes them, and rehumanizes them. Her feminist interpretation was an unpopular choice, seen as secondary to the war effort by other groups within the Popular Front.[32]

Horna's images of motherhood and children, although subversive, were nuanced enough to be considered appropriate, as evidenced by their existence in an anarchist publication. The symbolism of the mother adheres to the Republican appropriation of women as producers of soldiers and is therefore directly antifascist. However, Horna's removal of mothers from the status of producer situates them as individuals, revealing her affinity with the anarcho-feminist group Mujeres Libres, which emphasized the individuality of women. Horna's photographs also accompany a similar article, titled "Maternidad," meaning "motherhood," which appeared in the associated journal *Mujeres Libres* in January 1938. In the article, Horna's photograph of the breastfeeding mother was used in accordance with the organization's effort to encourage new mothers to breastfeed their children. Mujeres Libres sought to educate women and encourage their *capacitación*, best translated in English as "consciousness-raising and empowerment."[33] However, they understood that motherhood was a reality for most women, so engaged a campaign to create *madres conscientes*, or self-conscious mothers.[34] Mujeres Libres' concern with the mothers themselves rather than the soldiers that they produce presents a stark contrast to the image of the combative mother, nurturing her son for his eventual service as a soldier. Horna's attendance at group meetings, her photographs of educational and refugee centers for women and children, and her collaboration with its founding members suggest that Horna found a kinship with the anarcho-feminist group. Her humanitarian photographs contain a perspective that did not seamlessly align with the male-dominated version of anarcho-syndicalist aims. However, this diversion is subtle and nuanced enough that it had the potential to escape direct criticism, allowing her to seemingly remain faithful to CNT initiatives, while challenging established gender roles within Spanish society.

Even before the war, revolutionary leftist magazines associated women's bodies with fertility, freedom, and production. Mendelson identifies that anarchist artists repurposed the female form along these ideological lines to connect their role as

[31] Pelizzon, *Kati Horna*, 143–145.
[32] Basilio, "First, Win the War!," *Told and Untold*, 60.
[33] Martha A. Ackelsberg, *Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women* (Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2005), 147.
[34] Ibid., 162.

Figure 5: Josep Renau, *la primavera* (the spring), c. 1933–5, photomontage. Valencia, Spain. Published in *Estudios*, January 1935.

producers with agricultural cultivation.[35] Spanish graphic artist Josep Renau, who held significant artistic and political influence in Spain during the Civil War, openly embraced the title of propagandist. His work covered the interior and exterior of the Spanish Pavilion with large-scale photomurals at the Paris International World's Fair in 1937. In an earlier collage, he utilizes the image of a female body to represent agricultural productivity in his collage, *la primavera*, published in the January 1935 issue of *Estudios* (fig. 5).[36] In the background, a youthful, nude female body emerges from the fields. Her figure, suggestive of fertility, looms over a campesino who pushes a plow through the land behind a white horse. The fertility of women, at first connected to agricultural production, informed the conception of the combative mother during the war, who supplied the Republican army with soldiers.

Horna replaced the youthful nude with images of elderly women, which her contemporaries avoided. This choice challenged the model of the combative mother by employing the image of an elderly *campesina* to represent production, freedom, and endurance. For example, in a photomontage created in collaboration with José and published in *Tierra y Libertad* on June 18, 1938, Kati's photograph of a *campesina* stands proudly in the foreground (fig. 6). Her hands rest on her hips, and she gazes outwards triumphantly. Her upright and steady posture is symbolic of women's ability to continue producing even after her ability to bear children has passed. She appears no less capable of agricultural labor than a younger woman. In the background, two horses pull a plow while a man guides them. The words, "¡campesinos! La FAI está con

[35] Jordana Mendelson, *Documenting Spain: Artists, Exhibition Culture, and the Modern Nation, 1929–1939* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), 151–152.

[36] Although Renau was a communist, until the later stages of the Civil War, the communists allied with the anarchists. His work appeared in the anarchist magazines *Orto* in 1932 and several times in *Estudios* between 1933 and 1935. Ibid., 148.

Figure 6: Kati Horna, *untitled* (Peasant in a vineyard on the road from Madrid to Alcalá de Henares), 1937, photograph on cellulose nitrate, 6 x 6 cm. Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte, Centro Documental de la Memoria Histórica, Salamanca, Spain, #93 in the Kati Horna Archive. https://pares.mcu.es/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/118345.

vosotros" (farmers! The FAI is with you) frame the photomontage. This photomontage, like Renau's *la primavera*, consists of a *campesino* in a field but replaces the faceless, young, nude female torso with a robust, hopeful, elderly *campesina*. Her age and vitality represent past and future fortitude of the *campesinos* and resilience towards authoritarian control. While Horna uses the same method and symbolism as Renau, she furthers feminist discourse by incorporating an individual elderly woman who resists commodification and objectification into the photomontage. This was a novel intervention, as concerns regarding ageism or the removal of women's societal value past their childbearing years fell beyond the scope of Mujeres Libres. For example, in Catalonia, anarchist programs to introduce women into the skilled workforce admitted women between the ages of sixteen and thirty-five. Women older than thirty-five who applied were instead encouraged to volunteer with various women's organizations.[37]

Horna occupied an elite position as one of the few foreign female photographers of the Spanish Civil War. Carmen Agustín-Lacruz and Luis Blanco-Domingo count four other women photographers of the conflict.[38] Like her contemporaries, Horna's profession as a photojournalist and her presence at the front lines challenged spaces traditionally reserved for men. Moreover, Horna's practice was exceptional in her efforts to balance artist autonomy and art in service to revolution. Horna's humanitarian and feminist efforts retained her autonomous voice within the

[37] Nash, *Defying Male Civilization*, 132. José can be considered an exceptional supporter of feminist aims; it was uncommon for a man to support the efforts of Mujeres Libres, let alone initiatives that fell outside of their scope.

[38] Agustín-Lacruz and Blanco-Domingo, "La memoria en encuadres," 62. Agustín-Lacruz and Blanco-Domingo list Gerda Taro (1910–1937), Agnes Hodgson (1906–1984), Vera Elkan (1908–2008), and Margaret Michaelis (1902–1985) as the other four female foreign photographers of the Spanish Civil War.

materials she created for the CNT-FAI. In so doing, she created a hybrid avant-garde that presented a solution to the dominant interwar debate on how to combine art and politics without the one consuming the other.[39] This discourse, like photojournalism and war photography, was predominantly controlled by men. Horna's creative voice nevertheless resonated in these spaces, through her consistent application of compassion for her subjects and her balance between artistic autonomy and political engagement.

[39] Gail Day, "Art, Love and Social Emancipation: on the Concept 'Avant-Garde' and the Interwar Avant-Gardes," in *Art of the Avant-Gardes*, eds. Steve Edwards and Paul Wood (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 333.

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The Body and the City: Walking Barcelona with *las Milicianas* and Eileen O'Shaughnessy

a response by Megan J. Sheard

In her recent book on Eileen O'Shaughnessy, Anna Funder examines a passage from George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia* in which Eileen, a British logistics worker with the non-Stalinist *Partit Obrer d'Unificació Marxista* (POUM) during the Spanish Civil War, sits alone in the Hotel Continental's lobby at night.[1] Located on the major promenade of Las Ramblas in Barcelona, the hotel occupies a central location in a zone scarred by conflict. The avenue follows the line of the former medieval wall between the Plaça de Catalunya and the Mediterranean Sea, separating the Barri Gótic and El Raval neighborhoods, and was a site of skirmishes during the war (1936-1939).[2] As a broad, linear expanse within a denser urban mosaic, Las Ramblas acted at various moments as an avenue for collective movement, a no-man's-land in street battles, and a space to be defended; its cobblestones were even torn up to build barricades. It also hosted volunteers who, like Eileen, had traveled to Spain to work for one of a plethora of organizations defending the Republican government. At the time of this scene in 1937, the POUM has just been suppressed by Stalinist communist factions. Eileen's

[1] Anna Funder, *Wifedom: Mrs Orwell's Invisible Life* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 2023), 95-183. Eileen's married name was Blair; I follow Funder's use of her maiden name here.

[2] The street is variously *La Rambla* or *Las Ramblas* in Castilian Spanish, and *Les Ramblas* in Catalan. I use the plural form here to preserve the history of the street as a series of independently named sections, and the Castilian due to its common usage. I use Catalan for other site names and the Castilian *miliciana* for its application beyond Catalonia.

office at the hotel had been ratted out by spies and her colleagues arrested. Though she is now a target, she sits exposed in the lit-up lobby waiting for her husband George to return from fighting with the POUM on the Aragon front to warn him of the danger. When he arrives, she feigns unconcerned affection, only to hiss in his ear: "*Get out!*"[3]

Funder's reimagining of the scene from Eileen's perspective draws on the scholar's research about the period and on Orwell's description in *Homage* to contemplate the significance of Eileen's actions. In the face of the arrest of her colleagues, and knowing her own capture was almost certain, she sat waiting in a space of total visibility and exposure. It was an act of courage in an extremely dangerous situation, and neither her first, nor her last: she had already saved Orwell's book manuscript, which she typed, in an earlier search of their room by the Soviet-affiliated police.[4] Soon after, she would arrange for their escape to France.

The image of Eileen acting in isolated resolve might be compared to more literal images of women from the Spanish Civil War in which we see them standing alone: the iconic image of the seventeen-year-old journalist Marina Ginestá atop the roof of the Hotel Colón with a rifle on her back and a triumphant gaze, or a photograph of a smiling Rosita Sánchez from 1936, dressed in the uniform of the Republican militia with her baby on her hip. Like the images discussed by Anderson-Cleary in this volume, such image production amid the turmoil of the Spanish Civil War challenged both prevailing ideas about women's place in society as well as some images produced by allies of the Spanish Republic.[5] Anderson-Cleary's analysis shows how depictions on the Spanish left and their corollaries in the avant-garde movements sometimes repurposed the trope of the female body as a signifier of biological reproduction toward radical ends. These tropes emphasized terrestrial fecundity—farming being a firmly working-class occupation—or depicted women as the progenitors of (male)

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[3] George Orwell, *Homage to Catalonia and Looking Back on the Spanish* War (London: Penguin Books, 1966),195; Funder, *Wifedom*, "In Plain Sight," 168-179.

[4] For Orwell, Eileen's ability to save the manuscript owes to Spanish manners, since the police seemed unwilling to turn a lady out of her bed: the manuscript was hidden beneath the mattress. However, it seems that a fair degree of nerve might be needed for a woman sleeping alone whose room has been entered by six armed men to stay *in* the bed. See Orwell, *Homage*, 200-1; Funder, *Wifedom*, 169-173.

[5] Associations between different worker's confederations during the war are marked by a degree of complexity. The Confederación Nacional del Trabajo (CNT) was a major worker's organization under the banner of the Asociación Internacional de Trabajadores (AIT) whose connection is represented CNT-FAI; the emergence of the Federación Anarquista Ibérica (FAI) produced the CNT-FAI. For a useful explainer, see "CNT, FAI, AIT: la barrera inexpungnable (CNT, FAI, AIT: The unbreachable barrier)," Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego, accessed 19 March 2024, https://library.ucsd.edu/dc/object/bb1366015z.

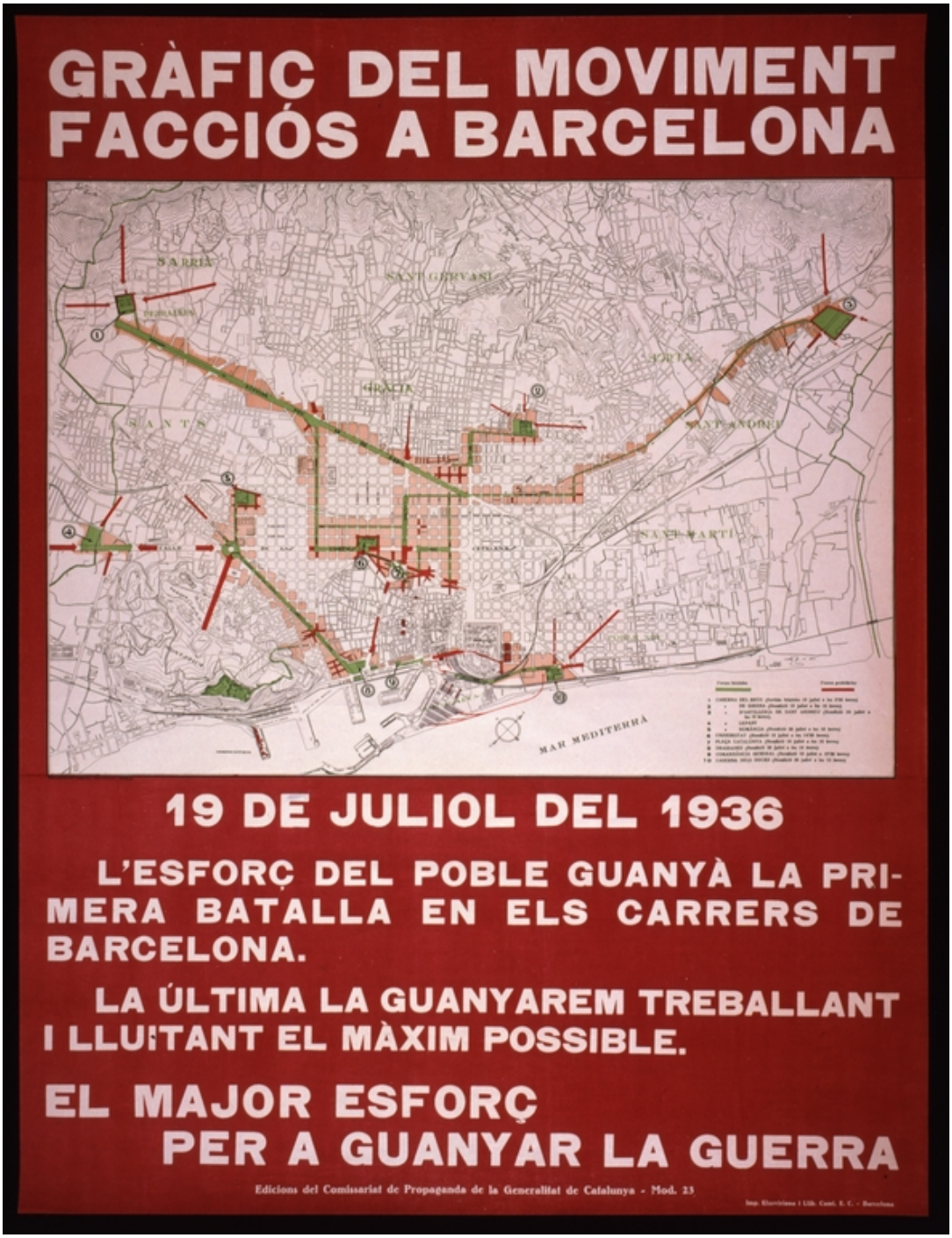

Figure 1: *Gràfic del moviment facciós. 19 de juliol del 1936* (Diagram of the insurgent movement. July 19, 1936). This propagandistic map of Barcelona shows the military uprising and its repulsion by Republican-allied forces, predominantly the CNT-FAI. Red areas show forces *feixistes* (fascist forces, i.e. Nationalists) and green areas show forces *proletòries* (forces of the proletariat), with arrows indicating movement. Las Ramblas can be seen between (7) Plaça de Catalunya and the port. Note the upper and lower occupation of Las Ramblas by Nationalist forces and the density of the old city, particularly the Barri Gótic to the east. Comissaria de Propaganda de la Generalitat de Catalunya, 1936. Courtesy of Special Collections & Archives, UC San Diego.

soldiers. Women did briefly appear as fighters, or *milicianas*, in Republican-affiliated posters, though often as single figures flanked by men.[6] One call to arms features a woman in dungarees pointing at the viewer in a clear reference to World War I Uncle Sam posters, her other arm outstretched and brandishing a rifle as a male militia marches behind her, with the slogan *Les milicies, us necessiten!* ("The militias need you!") above.[7] Another poster shows a woman bearing the bold red and black flag of the CNT-AIT leading a brigade of armed men, one of whom appears to kneel deferentially. Another shows a woman engaged in trench fighting with two male soldiers, who take aim over the body of their fallen comrade with the words *¡No pasarán!*, or "They shall not pass!" inscribed above them in blood (fig. 1). In the background, an all-male contingent advances in monochrome.

These depictions of women were a minority theme among propaganda posters during the war. They were also short-lived, quickly replaced by posters encouraging women to labor on the "second front" of farm, factory, and domestic work like sewing as women began to be pushed back into the "rearguard" of the war.[8] But like the iconic photograph of Marina Ginestá—who maintained she was never a combatant—such images project a set of possibilities beyond their direct realization.[9] These are the possibilities that artists like Kati Horna simultaneously create and take up as they seize the means of image production to present women with greater fullness: the powerful elderly *campesina* with a wrinkled face, the young girl whose smile and bright eyes

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[6] Strictly speaking, the terms *miliciana* and *miliciano* refer to combatants in the worker militias before their incorporation into the Republican army. I use the term here to draw out the figure of the female fighter, but also acknowledge Esther Gutiérrez Escoda's point that the continued use of the term after both women and men were more correctly soldiers has contributed to a misunderstanding that women only fought in the earlier period. See her interview by Sebastiaan Faber, "Yes, Women Did Serve in the People's Army of the Spanish Republic: Esther Gutiérrez Escoda Sets the Record Straight," The Volunteer, August 18 2022, accessed 18 March 2024, https://albavolunteer.org/2022/08/yes-women-did-serve-in-the-republican-army-esther-gutierrez-escoda-sets-the-record-straight.

[7] Mary Nash interprets this poster as an example of the image of the *miliciana* being used to convince men to sign up. It could therefore be read as an appropriation of the *miliciana* into the visual vocabulary of women shaming men into signing up already extant in posters of the period. See Mary Nash, *Defying Male Civilization: Women in the Spanish Civil War* (Denver: Alden Press, 1995), center plates.

[8] Esther Gutiérrez Escoda notes a that critical misunderstanding in Spanish Civil War scholarship is that women were banned from being part of the Republican Army from the fall of 1936, when in fact their presence continued in both the army, and the *maquis* (guerilla resistance) after the war's official end in 1939.

[9] This is not to overlook the importance of such images as propaganda for the Republican cause, but merely to assert that they carry an excess of meaning beyond their strategic use (i.e., whether or not Ginestá was really a combatant is peripheral to the possibilities her photograph evokes for women who see it).

Figure 2: *¡No pasaran!* Spanish Civil War poster showing a *miliciana* engaged in combat with male CNT-FAI soldiers. Digital image © 2022 New York University. Image reproduced under fair use. Courtesy of Abraham Lincoln Brigade Archives (ALBA).

suggest a future unavailable to any of the women who precede her.[10] A certain imagination breaks loose.

Thinking about images of *milicianas* and other women active in the war, in which they are so often depicted alone or with men, I wondered how we might adjust our historical imagining to see women not just on the frontlines and the city streets *at all* but also *together*. After all, Eileen did not only sit alone in Barcelona waiting for Orwell: she had also worked side by side with Lois Orr, an American volunteer in the POUM office who at this moment had just been imprisoned.[11] Likewise, *milicianas* were not isolated figures, but worked together, including against the sexism they experienced from their male comrades. As Anderson-Cleary notes, Horna was a central photographer for *Mujeres Libres*, a women's organization and magazine committed to both anti-fascism and social revolution that at its height had 20,000 affiliates.[12] Such

[10] See Lizi Anderson-Cleary's article in this volume. For a discussion of Ginestá and an interview with her son on the issue of whether she was a combatant, see Yvonne Schoulten, "From Toulouse to Trotsky's Assassin: The Story Behind an Iconic Photograph," *The Volunteer*, May 17 2020, accessed 19 March 2024, https://albavolunteer.org/2020/05/the-girl-who-dated-trotskys-assassin-the-story-behind-an-iconic-photograph.

[11] For details of the arrests see Lois and Charles Orr's accounts in Lois Orr and Charles Orr, *Letters from Barcelona: An American Woman in Revolution and Civil War*, edited by Gerd-Rainer Horn (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), Chapter 8: "In Stalin's Secret Barcelona Jail," 183-201.

[12] Martha A. Ackelsberg, *Free Women of Spain: Anarchism and the Struggle for the Emancipation of Women* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 21.

women were not isolated heroes, but collaborators pushing aggressively at the boundaries of the politically and socially possible.

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I recently visited Barcelona and was struck by the intensity with which historical time is spliced and bricolaged together in the fabric of the city. Balloon twisters in clown suits create colorful heart and sword shapes on the steps of the Catedral de Barcelona, where the historical alliance of Spanish Catholicism and monarchy feel as weighty as the church's piers. Passing through the cloister, I was jarred by the contrast between geese splashing placidly in their pond and the somber quiet of the chapter house museum with its glittering jewels, where all cameras were on me and I was not permitted to use my own. As I stepped from the cloister into the narrow street, Catalan *senyera* and *estelada* flags reminded me of a long independence struggle traceable in buildings like La Sagrada Familia so celebrated by tourists. At the eastern edge of the neighborhood, municipal workers clean the streets by the old Roman wall with green-bristled brooms and stop to smoke beneath the trees.

Less obvious are the sites and traces of the war. Cobblestones torn up from Las Ramblas have long been replaced to be trod daily by throngs of tourists. The octagonal tower recorded by Orwell as a position from which the Assault Guards shot at anarchists is simply identifiable as the tower of the Basilica de Santa Maria del Pi, whose gutting by fire during the anarchist-led uprising of 1936 leaves no obvious trace. Even the Roman sepulchers that emerge startlingly from below the Plaça de la Vila Madrid seem to tell only of the ancient city of Barcino, though their position in a cavity below the square might make you wonder why the Carmelite convent that stood there was so badly damaged in 1936 as to lead to their discovery.[13] Having visited the city at the wrong time to take a Spanish Civil War tour, I instead scoured the guides' website for clues in interpreting the traces of war in Barcelona's built environs, and let myself wonder about gaps in official signage, which reported urban change like a string of empirical facts.[14]

* * *

[13] Olivia Munnoz-Rojas Oscarsson notes that restoring Roman sites after the Nationalist victory in 1939 aligned with Franco's ideological emphasis on the supremacy of Roman and Hapsburg empires in Spain's history. Olivia Munnoz-Rojas Oscarsson, "Wartime Destruction and Post-War Urban Reconstruction: Case Studies of Barcelona, Bilbao and Madrid in the Spanish Civil War and Its Aftermath" (PhD dissertation, London School of Economics and Political Science, 2009), 108.

[14] "Spanish Civil War tours in Barcelona and History of the War," accessed 19 March 2024, https://thespanishcivilwar.com. See also Catherine Howley's interview on Alan McGuire and Eoghan Gilmartin (hosts), "How Antoni Gaudí turned me into an Anarchist: Architecture and Class in Barcelona," *The Sobremesa Podcast*, 31 March 2023, accessed 19 March 2024, https://open.spotify.com/episode/1UOqmIwH6D7YXA5gjGkGW0.

Figure 3: A group of *milicianas*, likely Barcelona 1936. Note the caps of the CNT-FAI on the women at right and their male comrades behind them. Image used under Creative Commons license. Courtesy of Generalitat de Catalunya, Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya 2023.

Though I searched for the Civil War in Barcelona, I didn't consider the impact of gender on wartime experience of the city's spaces until much later, despite its impact on my own experience. I had visited La Sagrada Familia in a hallucinatory wave of cramping that intensified both the oppression of heat and the euphoria of color, and found few places for respite in planned spaces built to keep tourists moving. On my last night in the city, a quick jaunt to see the Plaça de George Orwell in the heels I'd worn to dinner left me wobbling on the stones and looking a little nervously over my shoulder. But I was a summer visitor in a highly touristified space, attempting to connect with the city's history through a paradoxical genre of Anglo travel writing that Jane Hanely characterizes as combining war with a romanticized view of another country.[15] I hadn't thought of Eileen then: if I had, I might have stopped before the Hotel Continental, might even have imagined her in the cafeteria with Lois Orr, but I would still have been reading the war through an Anglo story. I wonder now about the Spanish *milicianas* like the members of CNT-FAI (fig. 3), members of *Mujeres Libres*,

[15] Jane Hanley, "The Tourist Gaze in the Spanish Civil War: Agnes Hodgson Between Surgery and Spectacle," *College Literature* 43, no. 1 (2016): 196–219.

and women engaged in other roles involving active negotiation of the city's spaces. Which streets did they travel, alone or together, and where did they sleep? Not at the Hotel Continental. The exuberant faces of the CNT-FAI women in 1936 after the Nationalist coup was defeated in Barcelona are pictured in a moment of celebration, not under fire during fighting nor setting fires in churches. We don't see where they took shelter, how they navigated the narrow alleys of the Barri Gótic, whether their male colleagues fought alongside them, harassed them, protected them. How hot was the summer sun in July 1936 as it rebounded from walls and streets? Did a sea breeze blow in along Las Ramblas to cool their faces while the stones of narrow Barri Gótic alleys radiated warmth long into the evening? How many were also bleeding, and how did it feel to wear those dungarees, so newly and briefly permissible? I wonder where they cooked, what they ate, where they met to discuss their concerns away from men, where they relieved themselves when engaged in combat in the city, and—though not for too long—where they went or were taken when the war was lost.[16] Imagining the city as a space where these women were moving, fighting, and speaking together, I wonder what I missed when I walked through Barcelona looking for the war. Against the horizon of heightened bodily danger and the high stakes of the war for women's (re)suppression, the dungarees, rifles, art-making and journalistic activities of *Mujeres Libres* become perceptible as fragments of a heady rush for freedom, radical hopes not extinguished—perhaps even invigorated—by heightened danger.

Imagining *milicianas* moving through the city makes me think of Eileen and other international women who volunteered in Spain differently: not as isolated heroines among men, long deserving of recognition, and certainly not as a secondary rearguard, but as people embedded in friendships, familial ties, and comradeship with other women even as they navigated unfamiliar spaces. Like *milicianas* on the front, international women formed relationships with one another and wrote letters home to other women: Eileen's letters to her friend are a critical source for Funder's book. While Eileen's and Lois' Barcelona may have been a city of the hotel rather than the street and their privileges ultimately saved them from the effects of the Republican defeat, they left safer places and were forced to improvise in environments offering new possibilities and new, gendered dangers.

[16] The consequences for Republican women combatants and allies in the aftermath of the war were particularly horrendous. See Esther Gutierrez Escoda, "Las mujeres militares en la Guerra Civil Española Política, Sociedad y Administración Militar de la II República (1936-1939)" (PhD dissertation, Universitat Rovira Y Virgili, 2009).

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research spotlight

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Insights from Ecology for Health: Design Guide for Fostering Human Health and Biodiversity in Cities

Vanessa Lee, Karen Verpeet, & Jennifer Symonds

As city leaders and communities around the world plan for a healthy environment and address threats to biodiversity, many turn toward integrating nature in urban environments for a variety of ecosystem services and ecological functions. Common examples of such integration include the creation of tree-lined boulevards for urban heat mitigation and urban waterfront restoration for recreation and native habitat. Urban green spaces, which include common features such as trees, herbaceous and shrub cover, bare ground, water features, and green roofs and walls, play a crucial role in supporting biodiversity and human health.[1] However, not all greenspaces support humans and native wildlife equally. For instance, small neighborhood parks are less likely to provide undisturbed native habitat due to their size constraints. One of the key challenges in designing green spaces is navigating tradeoffs, such as the need for active recreational spaces that can coexist with minimally disturbed wildlife habitats, or the desire for simplified landscaping, such as lawns for easy pedestrian access while restoring complex habitats preferred by native wildlife species. There is a tangible need for cities to design green spaces that serve the health of urban residents and native biodiversity.

[1] Abdullah Akpinar, "How Is Quality of Urban Green Spaces Associated with Physical Activity and Health?," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 16 (2016): 76–83.

To address this need, the San Francisco Estuary Institute (SFEI) has created Ecology for Health, a science-based urban design guide to support designers and planners in approaching greenspaces with biodiversity and human health in mind. SFEI is a science research institute with more than seventy staff dedicated to advancing visionary science and interdisciplinary tools for the health and resilience of the San Francisco Bay Area and beyond. A team of scientists and designers within SFEI's Urban Nature team developed the guide to meet the growing demands of planners, designers, policymakers, and the public in gaining the diverse benefits that nature can provide to urban communities. The guide connects the team's biodiversity research with an extensive review of the health benefits of access to biodiverse greenspaces to explore how designing cities for biodiversity improves people's the physical and mental health. This design guidance is also published on SFEI's Making Nature's City Toolkit website, which provides user-friendly navigation through the Ecology for Health principles.

This research spotlight encompasses a selection of planning and site design strategies from the guide, coupled with insights from the Ecology for Health salon—an open-house style engagement event held after the guide's publication to brainstorm its implementation in Bay Area projects. Feedback from the salon, including discussions about the application and future phases of the guide, is incorporated below.

The Guide

The Ecology for Health guide addresses three distinct scales in developing health- and biodiversity- promoting greenspaces: urban planning; site design; and detailed design and management. Within each scale are strategies for designing urban greenspaces that reconcile tradeoffs and maximize the benefits of urban biodiversity and human health support. The guide's proposals are based on scientific literature published over the past thirty years on urban greening, human health, and biodiversity, focusing on understanding the health benefits and tradeoffs associated with access to biodiverse greenspace. When addressing urban biodiversity, the guide focuses on supporting native wildlife. These species have coevolved in specific geographies, resulting in specialized relationships that contribute to the diverse and dynamic ecosystem of a given location.

While the guide synthesizes research on urban biodiversity and human health in cities across the globe, which allows many of the strategies to be applied in cities worldwide, SFEI's work is strongly informed by their experience as scientists and designers in California's San Francisco Bay Area. We acknowledge that this may result in some strategies and case studies being more relevant to the challenges of our

region and those that share its economic, cultural, political, and ecological characteristics.

The selected strategies from the guide highlighted below relate to greenspace connectivity, park design, and waterfront design, addressing both planning and site design scales commonly engaged by planners and landscape architects.

Planning for a connected greenspace network. Filling in gaps between poorly connected greenspaces by creating distributed neighborhood parks, greenways, and other habitat patches helps establish a connected greenspace network. Residents' access to greenspace is associated with improved mental and physical health, and aids wildlife in moving safely between patches (fig. 1).[2] Large habitat patches are associated with higher rates of recreation and health benefits and also offer the most significant wildlife benefits, especially for species sensitive to urban impacts. However, a few large

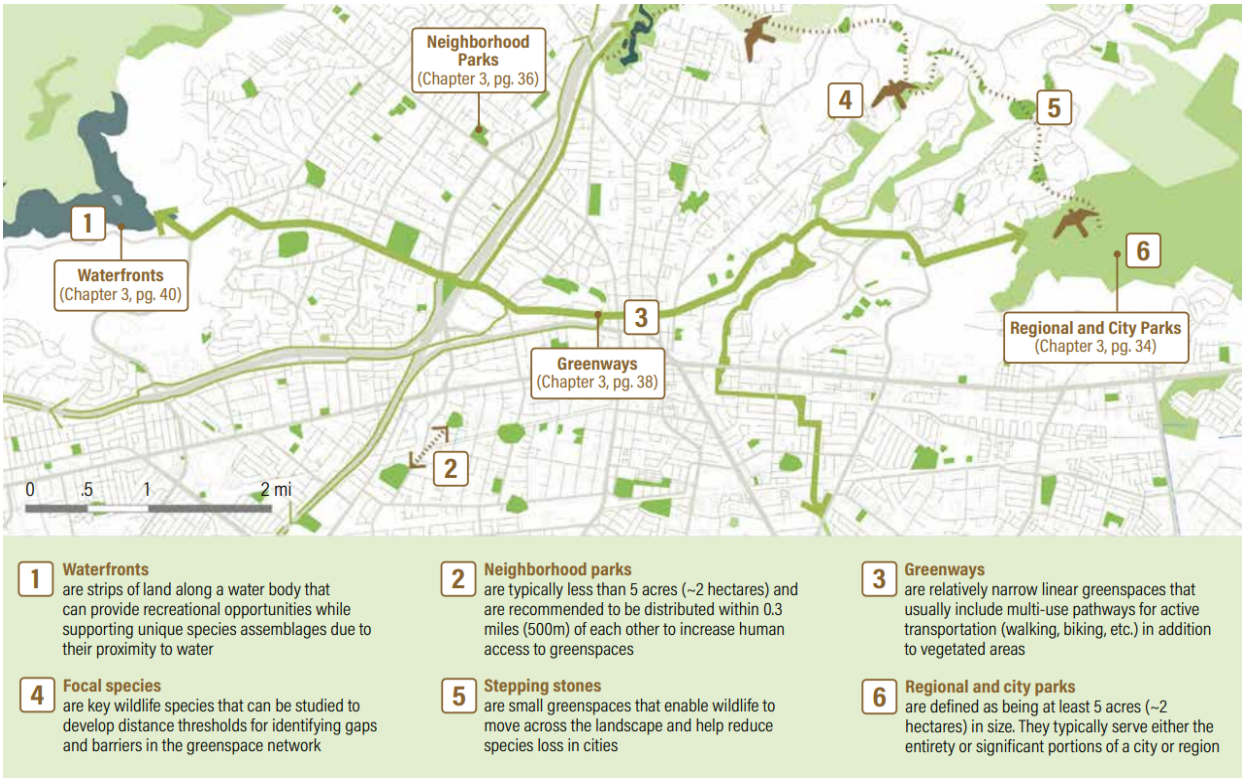

Figure 1: Key elements of a greenspace network may consist of continuous green corridors and distributed neighborhood parks that provide greenspace access to local communities and act as stepping stones for wildlife. Drawing Credit: Vanessa Lee (SFEI).

[2] Akpinar; Deborah A. Cohen et al., "Contribution of Public Parks to Physical Activity," *American Journal of Public Health* 97, no. 3 (2007): 509–14; Amy J. Lynch, "Creating Effective Urban Greenways and Stepping-Stones: Four Critical Gaps in Habitat Connectivity Planning Research," *Journal of Planning Literature* 34, no. 2 (2019): 131–55.

patches, as opposed to small, dispersed patches, limit access to those who can afford to live near them and *may* be more likely to contribute to green gentrification.[3] When resources are limited, planning for greenspaces to be distributed throughout the city can create habitat stepping stones for wildlife and provide recreation access to more residents.

Figure 2: An example of regional and city parks that demonstrate a gradient of use intensity in park areas based on adjacent access, land uses, and existing landscape features. Drawing Credit: Vanessa Lee (SFEI).

[3] Green gentrification is the phenomenon of displacing existing, often lower-income, residents due to an influx of wealthier residents following neighborhood greening, such as the creation of new greenspaces. Catherine Paquet et al., "Are Accessibility and Characteristics of Public Open Spaces Associated with a Better Cardiometabolic Health?," *Landscape and Urban Planning* 118 (October 2013): 70–78; Ross WF Cameron et al., "Where the Wild Things Are! Do Urban Green Spaces with Greater Avian Biodiversity Promote More Positive Emotions in Humans?," *Urban Ecosystems* 23, no. 2 (2020): 301–17; Seung Kyum Kim and Longfeng Wu, "Do the Characteristics of New Green Space Contribute to Gentrification?," *Urban Studies* 59, no. 2 (2022): 360–80; Yu Chen et al., "Can Smaller Parks Limit Green Gentrification? Insights from Hangzhou, China," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 59 (2021): 127009.

Designing parks. Regional and city parks are defined here as larger than five acres (~2 hectares or city blocks) and can include large habitat areas buffered from urban impacts (fig. 2). Buffer zones, which separate high-use park elements from sensitive habitats, limit human disturbance and may incorporate physical barriers such as dense forest plantings or a water body. These zones are essential for maintaining the quality of sensitive habitats by reducing urban disturbances. High-use park elements, such as sports fields and event areas, should be placed near park edges for public access, while sensitive habitats should be placed toward the park's center to reduce urban disturbance. In cases where one of the park edges is connected to an adjacent habitat patch, consider locating sensitive habitats closer to that edge while ensuring an adequate buffer from the road. Additionally, a minimum of approximately 130 acres (~50 hectares or city blocks) dedicated to interior habitat is recommended to support urban-intolerant wildlife.[4]

Neighborhood parks are defined here as being smaller than five acres (~2 hectares or city blocks) and often pose challenges for creating undisturbed habitat due to space limitations. However, small spaces can still contribute to wildlife connectivity and provide habitat for urban tolerant species while providing greenspace access to people (fig. 3). Also, the separation of uses can distinguish human-use areas from habitat zones to minimize disturbance. While this separation may reduce recreational space for residents, certain passive activities like picnicking and seating areas can be incorporated adjacent to habitat areas, and the added biodiversity can support well-being and visitation.[5] To establish high-quality habitat patches in limited space, the guide recommends planting native pollinator gardens and include essential host plants for target wildlife species, such as milkweed for monarch butterflies. Additionally, introducing structural complexity in planting, where feasible, is associated with supporting biodiversity in small greenspaces.[6]

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[4] Joscha Beninde, Michael Veith, and Axel Hochkirch, "Biodiversity in the City: Fundamental Questions for Understanding the Ecology of Urban Green Spaces for Biodiversity Conservation," ed. Nick Haddad, *Ecology Letters* 18, no. 6 (June 2015): 581–92.

[5] Susan L. Prescott et al., "Biodiversity, the Human Microbiome and Mental Health: Moving toward a New Clinical Ecology for the 21st Century?," *International Journal of Biodiversity* 2016 (August 3, 2016): 1–18.

[6] Structural complexity refers to the variety of vegetation types and structural heights at a site. Grant C. Palmer et al., "Determinants of Native Avian Richness in Suburban Remnant Vegetation: Implications for Conservation Planning," *Biological Conservation* 141, no. 9 (September 1, 2008): 2329–41; J. Amy Belaire, Christopher J. Whelan, and Emily S. Minor, "Having Our Yards and Sharing Them Too: The Collective Effects of Yards on Native Bird Species in an Urban Landscape," *Ecological Applications* 24, no. 8 (2014): 2132–43; Esteban Fernández-juricic, "Avian Spatial Segregation at Edges and Interiors of Urban Parks in Madrid, Spain," *Biodiversity and Conservation* 10, no. 8 (August 1, 2001): 1303–16.

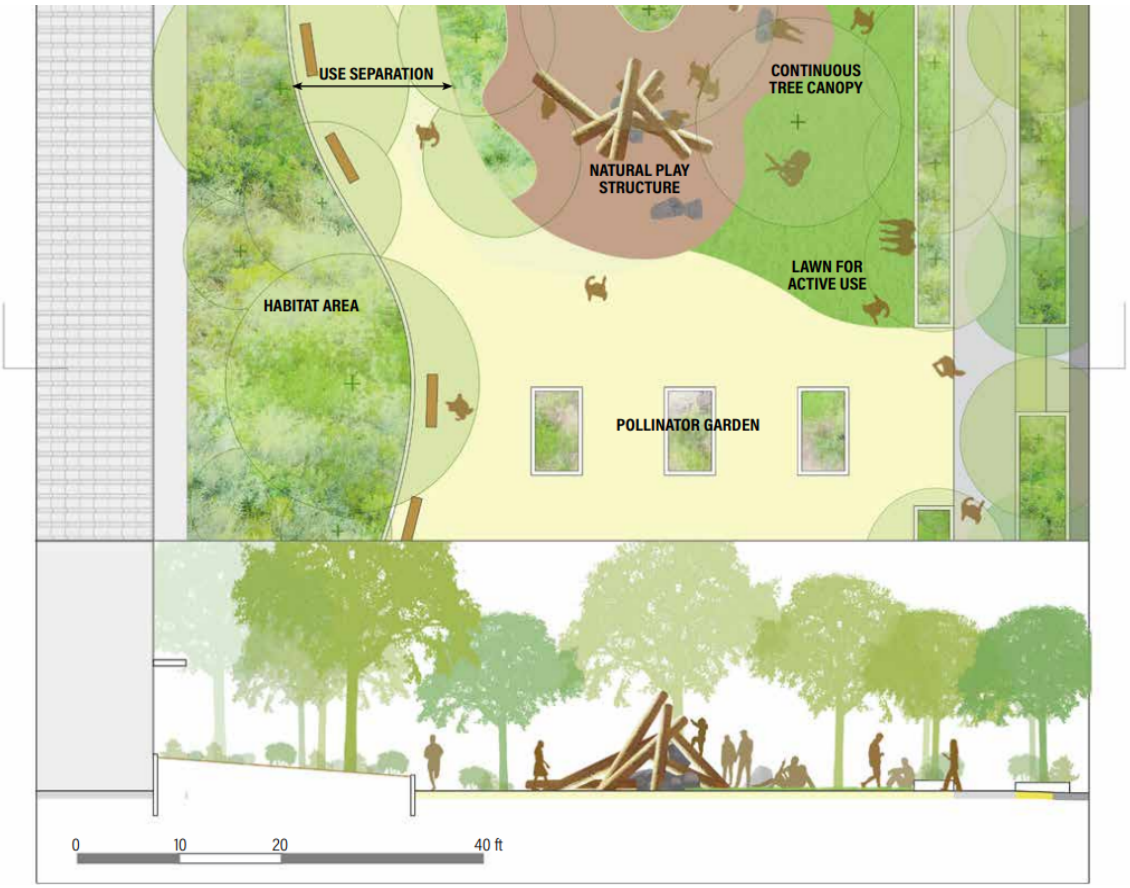

Figure 3: A typical site design of small parks, showing separate active human use areas from habitat patches to minimize habitat disturbance. Drawing Credit: Vanessa Lee (SFEI).

Designing waterfronts. Waterfronts are strips of land along a coast, river, or other water body, and can support diverse riparian species due to their proximity to water. Preserving high-quality riparian habitat, which is characterized by dense vegetation, can potentially obstruct scenic views of the water, which are linked to improved well-being.[7] In such cases, raised boardwalks and overlooks are recommended as design interventions at waterfronts to maintain views while limiting disturbance (fig. 4). Furthermore, multi-use trails along existing levees can offer scenic views while minimizing the need for new land disturbance. To mitigate impacts on wildlife and enhance resilience to sea-level rise, the guide recommends positioning trails, pathways, and recreational areas at least 200 feet (~60 meters) from the marine high tide line and 100 feet (~30 meters) from other critical or sensitive habitats.[8]

[7] Daniel Nutsford et al., "Residential Exposure to Visible Blue Space (but Not Green Space) Associated with Lower Psychological Distress in a Capital City," *Health & Place* 39 (2016): 70–78; Joanne K. Garrett et al., "Urban Blue Space and Health and Wellbeing in Hong Kong: Results from a Survey of Older Adults," *Health & Place* 55 (January 2019): 100–110.

[8] G. Bentrup, "Conservation Buffers—Design Guidelines for Buffers, Corridors, and Greenways" (Asheville, NC: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Southern Research Station, 2008).

Figure 4: A typical site design of urban waterfronts, showing multi-use trails at habitat edges to preserve sensitive habitat zones with limited human trail access. Drawing Credit: Vanessa Lee (SFEI).

The Salon

To brainstorm how to implement these strategies in the Bay Area and beyond, SFEI convened a salon on September 20th, 2023 at their Richmond, California office. This event brought together planning, design, and engineering firms, federal, state, and local agencies, non-profit and community-based organizations, and academic institutions across the Bay Area, all sharing an interest in urban greenspace planning and design. The purpose was to collectively brainstorm the local and broader application of these strategies. More than fifty attended the salon (figs. 5-7). [9]

The salon featured an overview of the guide, encompassing urban planning, site design, and detailed design strategies, along with support resources previously developed by SFEI. To facilitate the collection of input and feedback from attendees, feedback boards with sticky notes and discussion tables with notepads were provided.

[9] In total, ninety-two RSVPs were received, representing approximately twenty planning, design, and engineering firms, fourteen federal/state/local agencies and regional collaboration, nine non-profit and community-based organizations, and academic institutions.

Figure 5: Salon attendees discussing the regional and city parks strategies presented by the Ecology for Health guide. Photo Credit: Shira Bezalel.

Figure 6: A salon attendee providing thoughts on a feedback board related to how the Ecology for Health team can help support projects in achieving biodiversity and human health goals. Photo Credit: Shira Bezalel.

Figure 7: Salon attendees reading other SFEI publications related to urban ecological and resilience planning and design. Photo Credit: Shira Bezalel.

Salon attendees identified two primary ways in which they intend to use the design guide. First, they plan to incorporate the planning and design strategies into their ongoing and future urban greening projects. This includes addressing design trade-offs between health and biodiversity support, as well as exploring the human health benefits associated with open space and green infrastructure design. Second, they aim to reference the human health and biodiversity benefits identified in the guide when communicating the benefits of urban greening efforts, particularly tree planting and open space design, to their stakeholders and/or clients.

Several key potential next steps for the guide emerged during discussions and in written feedback. Salon attendees expressed a high degree of interest in developing clear, science-based, quantifiable planning and design metrics based on the strategies from the guide. For example, what percentage of tree cover is needed to provide *x* amount of cooling in a park? These metrics would help policymakers, resource managers, and communities set up measurable goals, standards, and targets related to human health, biodiversity support, and other community benefits. These quantified benefits associated with urban greening would also drive policy, funding, planning, and design decisions by providing data to support the implementation of these strategies and tools.

Additionally, there were suggestions to better understand the impacts on and of the unhoused population residing in urban green spaces. In particular, suggestions addressed key challenges associated with managing and maintaining open space and

landscape restoration projects in ways that consider the needs of the unhoused population while improving regional biodiversity support and human health.

Other feedback focused on increasing community collaboration on projects and considering impacts on green equity and climate change mitigation. For instance, discussions centered around prioritizing urban greening efforts in historically underserved communities lacking quality greenspaces. Participants discussed developing strategies to mitigate the impacts of green gentrification through collaboration with affected communities and stakeholders.

Conclusion

The Ecology for Health guide represents an initial step in providing a conceptual framework and technical guidance to balance the needs for biodiversity conservation and human health support within urban greening projects in communities. SFEI is currently evaluating and charting the next steps of the guide to further support biodiversity and human health targets in urban greening initiatives. These suggestions push SFEI to explore future opportunities to work more closely with design partners and communities on projects and to collectively develop design solutions.

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reviews

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For Play and Pleasure

exhibition review by Leander Gussmann

Chará by Kris Lemsalu
Date: 16. AUGUST – 8. NOVEMBER 2023
Location: Kunstplatz Graben, Höhe Graben 21, 1010 Vienna, Austria

Situated in Vienna's Graben—a central point in the city's first district known for its historical gravitas, and a prime location for contemporary luxury shopping—Kris Lemsalu's public sculpture *Chará* emerges as a compelling intervention to address feminine pleasure and joy (fig. 1). Commissioned by KÖR, the sculpture is a steel structure coated in pigmented synthetic resin and mounted on a concrete plinth. Doubling as an accessible seating area, it serves tourists and the local populace, in line with KÖR's mission to support artists and enhance public spaces.[1]

KÖR, short for *Kunst im öffentlichen Raum* (Art in Public Space), was established in 2004 as a public/private institution dedicated to enhancing Vienna's public spaces through art. Each year, the organization commissions a new work for the Graben. These temporary projects allow selected artists to conceptualize and realize site-specific works. The selections, overseen by the KÖR jury and financed by their annual budget, are based on the artists' ability to engage with the location's existing conditions. Such projects, widely accessible in Vienna, support emerging artists and

[1] Thomas Brandstätter, "Chará / Public Art Vienna," *KÖR: Kunst im öffentlichen Raum Wien,* accessed December 29, 2023, https://www.koer.or.at/en/projects/kunstplatz-graben-2023/.

Figure 1: Kris Lemsalu, *Chará*, Kunstplatz Graben, near Graben 21, 1010, 2023, steel, pigmented synthetic resin, concrete, 5 m, Vienna, Austria. Iris Ranzinger © 2023. Courtesy of KÖR.

improve Vienna's cultural standing internationally, with artworks often becoming focal points for community interaction.

Chará, standing five meters tall, consists of two abstracted, oversized reindeer jawbones. Its form asserts a free sculptural approach, contrasting the city's organization and rigidity. The sculpture's surface is coated using a technique reminiscent of the glazing found in Lemsalu's ceramic pieces. Unlike Lemsalu's ceramic work, which evokes a sense of fragility, *Chará* gives the impression of sturdiness through the use of an inner steel framework and flame-retardant cladding. In contrast to the solidity of the steel form, the coating takes on a soft and organic quality due to its flesh-toned pink hue and a series of white and reflective silver teeth. The form itself is a twisted and curved line that morphs depending on one's perspective, resembling an emoticon heart, mouth, portal, or vulva. Its portal form is more than a mere architectural element in the cityscape, becoming symbolic—of the functional, sexual, social, and political.

Chará blurs the line between the familiar and the uncanny. As a gate or portal, it invites comparisons with Anish Kapoor's *Cloud Gate*, Dani Karavan's *Passages,* and Christo and Jeanne-Claude's *Gates* in Central Park. Like these works, *Chará* is a

transitional threshold that destabilizes and redefines spatial, political, and sociocultural identities. Kapoor's *Cloud Gate* reflects and distorts its surroundings, while Karavan's *Passages* is a monument to the thresholds between life and death, freedom, and oppression (fig. 2). Similarly, the portal of *Chará* is a metaphorical entry to other realms, be they spiritual, psychological, or social. In its ambiguity, *Chará* has a multilayered signification, echoing historical and contemporary analogies between openings in the human body, dichotomies, and the built and natural environment.

Lemsalu's work also relates to ancient myths and rituals, such as the *vagina dentata* and Baubo, which are both explicitly mentioned in the on-site textual information that accompanies the sculpture. Baubo, the female jester in Greek mythology who exposed her vulva to cheer up the grieving goddess Demeter, is often depicted in clay as an obscene or absurd figure (fig. 3).

The use of the *vagina dentata* motif in *Chará* marks a shift from fear to desire, evoking a reimagined engagement with feminine powers. The motif typically represents a male fear of feminine sexuality, but in *Chará*, it takes on multiple tones with the white and sparkling teeth. The sculpture invokes ancient fears, yet subverts them through playful engagement, as reflected by other feminist and queer

Figure 2: Dani Karavan, *Passagen*, 1994, steel and iron, Portbou, Spain. This monument is a tribute to Walter Benjamin, encapsulating the tragic history of his failed escape. A passage constructed of steel presents a gate-like formation with a corridor of 87 steps descending from the cemetery to the sea, flanked by rusted iron.

interpretations of the motif. Minnie Bruce Pratt writes in her poem "TEETH":

> […] I thought men foolish,
> Then I saw Cris smile
> her teeth set sharp
> in her hungry mouth,
> and I wanted to turn
> into quince or apricot,
> I wanted her to eat me up
> bite me, entice me,
> let me nibble
> her tender hand…[2]

In Lemsalu's work, the motif, which Pratt calls the dentata of greed, destabilizes conventional understandings of sexuality and gender dynamics and directs towards smiles and other forms of love and laughter, which feature prominently in her work. Jo Anna Isaak wrote extensively on the revolutionary power of women's laughter, describing it as pleasure, a dense "transfer point of power relations" with particular significance for those on the margins and without power. In Pratt's poem, the smile and the laughter bring about this transition.[3]

Thus, in *Chará*, thresholds are not merely structural. The sculpture is a metaphorical gateway to happiness and unashamed pleasure, embodying joy and passage—akin to Baubo's transformative laughter, which alleviated Demeter's sorrow in the wake of her daughter Persephone's rape and abduction. This thematic resonance underscores the power of women's laughter, as discussed by Isaak, as a site of social revolt and relief. Lemsalu has described herself as an ambassador of joy; she invites communal laughter, a shared pleasure that contests the status quo and fosters liberating engagement. In turn, her work becomes part of a larger narrative about behavior in public spaces, where laughter and joy may disrupt the status quo and hold the potential to catalyze social and individual transformation.

Although temporary, Lemsalu's *Chará* was a provocative addition to Vienna's public space in its engagement with the complexities of form, function, and symbolism. Lemsalu's employment of subversive and provocative motifs disrupts conventional perceptions, sparking discussion for some and evoking joy for others. Public comments

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[2] Minnie Bruce Pratt, "Teeth," *Sinister Wisdom* 7 (Fall 1978): 60.

[3] Jo Anna Isaak, *Feminism and Contemporary Art: The Revolutionary Power of Women's Laughter* (London: Routledge, 1996): 3.

Figure 3: Baubo, 3rd-2nd century BCE, Egypt, clay, 9.5 x 10.3 x 5 cm, terracotta, Antike Collection, MKG Hamburg, inventory no. 1989.584. Courtesy of MKG Hamburg.

about the work have been polarized, with accolades from the local press counterbalanced by critiques in the boulevard media. One article quotes Vienna's city councilor for culture, Veronica Kaup-Hasler stating, "A beautiful sculptural gesture by a female artist who critically looks at being a woman in a world that men still dominate," thus suggesting the sculpture has not been without its (patriarchal) detractors.[4] As one far-right politician, Vienna's FPÖ Chief Dominik Nepp stated, "this kind of art is completely tasteless."[5] Similarly, one pensioner, Ingeborg, was quoted as calling the

4 "Kultur-Stadträtin erklärt jetzt Riesen-Vagina am Graben," August 19, 2023, https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/chronik/kultur-stadtraetin-erklaert-jetzt-riesen-vagina-am-graben/566335032. Translated by the author.

5 "Riesen-Vagina sorgt für Erregung am Graben" (Giant Vagina Causes a Stir on the Graben), oe24.at, August 17, 2023, updated August 17, 2023, https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/chronik/riesen-vagina-sorgt-fuer-erregung-am-graben/566167945. Translated by the author.

work, "terrible, an imposition [...] I have goosebumps."[6] Finally, on the online forum for a national newspaper article about the sculpture, there are approximately 700 comments and reactions.[7] Upon analyzing the postings, it is evident that the sentiment expressed is divided and lacks a consensus. In quantity, a minority of people have expressed explicit positive opinions, a significant portion has conveyed negativity, and many individuals have remained neutral or expressed mixed feelings. The comments reflect a broad spectrum of general perspectives on the nature and purpose of art, which are often polarized and diverse, and only seldom do they pick up on the themes of female pleasure and joy.

Nothing disappears completely. When certainties give way to new possibilities, we should embrace liminality and reshape our public life not only by political action and deliberation but also by acknowledging our desires. *Chará* was demounted on November 8th, 2023, and moved to the Belvedere21, a contemporary art museum in Vienna. It remains a testament to the transformative power of public art, challenging our understanding of pleasure in urban space.

6"'Zumutung': Wirbel Um Riesen-Vagina in Wien." 2023. www.oe24.at. August 18, 2023. https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/chronik/wien/zumutung-wirbel-um-riesen-vagina-in-wien/566296287. Translated by the author.

7 Katharina Rustler, "Herz, Portal Oder Bezahnte Vagina? Neue Skulptur Am Wiener Graben," DER STANDARD, August 24, 2023, https://www.derstandard.at/story/3000000184049/herz-portal-oder-bezahnte-vagina-neue-skulptur-am-wiener-graben.

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"'Zumutung': Wirbel um Riesen-Vagina in Wien," August 18, 2023. https://www.oe24.at/oesterreich/chronik/wien/zumutung-wirbel-um-riesen-vagina-in-wien/566296287.

author biographies

Lizi Anderson-Cleary recently earned her master's degree in art history from the University of Oregon, with a focus on the intersection of art and politics in modern Latin America and Europe. She holds a bachelor's degree in history with complementary minors in Spanish and Geography. For her master's thesis, she examined the avant-garde, humanitarian, and feminist aspects of Kati Horna's photomontages and photography. During graduate school, Anderson-Cleary assisted in the preparation of an anthology of essays written by the professors in the College of Design for publication, interned at Blue Sky, a photography gallery in Portland, and worked as a Teaching Assistant with the Classics Department. She is currently the Grant Project Manager at the Museum of the Oregon Territory.

Sophia Gimenez is a Ph.D. candidate at UC Santa Barbara with a focus on 20th-century American art. She currently works as the social media coordinator for the historical preservation nonprofit Living New Deal. Previously, she taught as a lecturer at Minnesota State University, Moorhead and North Dakota State University, Fargo. She also served as a graduate intern at the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles and as the Murray Roman Curatorial Fellow at the Art, Design & Architecture Museum at UC Santa Barbara.

Cole J. Graham is a dog enthusiast, an autistic trans man, and a Ph.D. student in History of Art at the Ohio State University, where he also completed his M.A. His research takes place at the intersection of (trans)gender and dis/ability in 20th century painting. Cole previously served as curatorial intern at the Wexner Center for the

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Leander Gussmann is a researcher in arts and cultural studies and currently holds a teaching position at the University of Applied Arts in Vienna, Austria. His two research interests are focused on exploring the intersections between fine arts and literature, as well as museums, ethics, and quality management.

Ben Jameson-Ellsmore graduated with his Ph.D. in art and architectural history from the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2023. He researches the history of American architecture and urbanism and is currently a co-managing editor of react/review: a responsive journal for art and architecture. His dissertation titled Hackerspaces: The Architecture and Visual Culture of Public Life in Contemporary US Cities explores the spatial politics of countercultural collectives in the Detroit and San Francisco metropolitan areas. Following a 2023 summer historian position with the Historic American Buildings Survey studying the spaces of the unhoused in West Oakland, California, he is continuing an oral history project on the Wood Street encampment. While at UCSB, he received an NEH Humanities Collections and Reference Resources Program grant, as well as a Steve and Barbara Mendell Fellowship in Cultural Literacy through the Walter H. Capps Center. Ben also has a B.A. in philosophy and an M.A. in interdisciplinary studies from California State University, Stanislaus.

Alida Jekabson is a doctoral student in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Her research focuses on transnational modern art related to forms of making involving craft, dress and folk traditions, with an emphasis on the circulation of Latin American and Eastern European art and material culture in U.S. museums and world's fairs. Jekabson holds an M.A. in art history and an Advanced Certificate in Curatorial Studies from Hunter College at the City University of New York. Her publications include contributions to exhibition catalogues and peer-reviewed research in academic journals such as *Kunstlicht* and *Miradas: Journal for the Arts and Culture of the Américas and the Iberian Peninsula*. Before beginning her doctoral studies, she held curatorial positions at the Museum of Arts and Design and Wave Hill in New York. Jekabson is the current recipient of the Murray Roman Curatorial Fellowship at the Art, Design and Architecture Museum at UCSB.

Vanessa Lee is an Associate Environmental Scientist at the San Francisco Estuary Institute. With an interdisciplinary background in environmental planning, landscape

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