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No. 1 Rabbit Proof Fence, Western Australia, 1926
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The journal acknowledges Victoria Jennings and Iman Salty as co-organizers of the 2022 Art History Graduate Student Association Symposium, which served as the point of departure for our theme, and from which select papers were developed into feature articles in this edition. Within the editorial team, our special thanks goes to Leslie Huang for managing the website backend, to Samira Fathi as image permissions liaison, and to Betty Schlothan for additional proofreading support. We also thank founding co-manager Taylor Van Doorne for her ongoing support as the journal's publication liaison. Finally, we extend our enormous gratitude to the authors and editors whose efforts make this volume a wide-ranging and fascinating inquiry into the "fields of force" which shape historical and contemporary engagements with art and architecture.

In the context of this volume's theme and the postcolonial ideas treated by several of the papers, it is of particular importance that we acknowledge the unceded

lands of the Chumash communities on which the University of California, Santa Barbara stands. In addressing "fields of force," the fact that the resources of intellectual production which help give rise to postcolonial critique remain concentrated in colonizing institutions has not escaped our attention. Land acknowledgments not backed by action are empty: we offer the diverse papers contained herein as a small contribution to the project of challenging the ongoing colonial violence perpetrated by educational institutions, and recognize our collective responsibility to listen and respond to the lands we occupy. We call on UCSB to engage seriously with Chumash communities and to reckon with ongoing settler colonialism enacted on our campus.

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contents

Introduction

Fields of Force: Navigating Power in Space, Place, and Landscape

Megan J. Sheard & Iman Salty

What are the force fields we hold up?
What are the force fields we fight against?
- *FORCE/FIELDS*, Perennial Press, 2021

In a recent zine of short stories, poems, and artwork entitled *FORCE/FIELDS* published by feminist micropress Perennial Press, the editors asked readers to interrogate the "force fields" that exist around and within us, defining a force field as "a barrier that protects someone or something from attacks or intrusions."[1] While "force" can be interpreted as a physically tangible or more abstracted form of power at work, "fields" denotes a spatial, geographical, and temporal demarcation of such forces' claim to authority. These might manifest in visible, concealed, or transitory forms, such as the materiality of architecture that shapes and constrains action, less visible infrastructures of surveillance, or more ephemeral strategies of performance and practice that resist or transform existing spaces. Whether fixed or fleeting, we are

[1] *FORCE/FIELDS,* ed. Isalina Chow, Madi Giovina, and Tiffany Niles (San Francisco: Perennial Press, 2021).

attuned to the gaps and malleability of fields of force that offer opportunities to reconstitute how power is embedded in space, place, and landscape.

A poignant historical example of the multivalent, flexible quality of such fields of force is the so-called Rabbit Proof Fence, constructed in Western Australia between 1901 and 1907 and appearing on the cover of this volume. Stretching northward across the landscape from the state's south coast for an astonishing 1,139 miles, the fence was designed to exclude rabbits imported by the British, which had become a major pest in the eastern states of Australia. The fence was to become a laughing stock of Australian history: wooden posts stretched with wire netting are not especially effective against rabbits. By 1904, rabbits were inside the first segment of fence, necessitating the construction of a second and then a third fence, which finally stretched a total distance of 2,023 miles. In a reminder that resistance to spatial controls is not restricted to human beings, this enormous infrastructural effort ultimately failed to stem the tide of rabbits into the state.

In 2002, the Rabbit Proof Fence gathered new associations in the Australian popular imagination, when a film by the same name dramatized the story of three Martu girls who escaped from the Moore River Native Settlement and walked 1,500 miles along the fence to return to their home in the Western Desert.[2] The settlement at Moore River was one of a network of sites to which the Western Australian government sent stolen Aboriginal children of mixed descent. This was part of a genocidal policy of forced child removals known as the Stolen Generations, enacted across the country between 1905 and the 1970s.[3] The purpose of such separate "settlements" was to facilitate biological absorption of mixed-descent Aboriginal children into white society: the film was set in the 1930s during the appointment of A.O. Neville as Chief Protector [*sic*] of Aborigines in Western Australia, whose commitment to eugenics made him infamously aggressive in enacting abductions. The success of the film initiated new cultural attention to the role of the Missions and Native Settlements in the Stolen Generations, making the fence a cultural marker of child removals. Thus the fence, a field of force enacted by authorities to protect agricultural areas from ruin, underwent two key imaginative transformations: becoming first a marker of the colonial government's failure to stop the spread of a pest introduced via its own activities, and

[2] *Rabbit-Proof Fence*, directed by Philip Noyce (2002: Western Australia, Becker Entertainment), DVD. The film is loosely based on author Doris Pilkington Garimara's account in *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*, whose mother, Molly, was one of the escaping children.See Doris Pilkington Garimara, *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*, New ed. (St Lucia, Queensland, Australia: University of Queensland Press, 2002).

[3] Patrick Wolfe argues that child removals are genocidal in the sense that they are about reducing births within a group, a criterium explicitly addressed under Article II of the UN Convention on Genocide, and thus designed to diminish the Aboriginal population. See Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*, (London: Verso Books, 2016), 58.

second of abductions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families, and their confinement in government institutions.[4]

Such symbolic interpretations might obscure another reading of the fence suggested by the film itself: its significance in facilitating spatial practices directly contrary to the intentions of the colonial government that built it. Historian and archaeologist Denis Byrne has discussed how Aboriginal people refused the grid of colonial property in early colonial Australia, jumping fences and cutting through paddocks to access sites required for subsistence and continuing cultural obligations to the land.[5] Refusing the fence is one way to assert continuing sovereignty; in the case of the Rabbit Proof Fence, rather than being ignored, it becomes a navigation device for Aboriginal children returning to their country. Both jumping and following fences are engagements with colonial infrastructure that assert the continuity of a different spatial order: the priority of sacred places, country, home, over the recent interventions of colonial infrastructure and institutions.

Such spatial practices can be understood as "alternative" tactics that can puncture the apparent totalities of structures of domination.[6] These tactics arise from embodied, spatial forms of knowledge, a powerful category of examination increasingly being acknowledged in the field of art and architectural history. That is, without overdetermining the capacity for resistance, there is a certain privileging of counter-hegemonic engagements, as scholars investigate how people navigate institutional and discursive constraints in art and architectural structures. In the U.S. context, for example, Rebecca Ginsburg's scholarship on "slave landscapes" examines how enslaved people developed a "geographic intelligence" of plantation landscapes, allowing them to navigate gaps in surveillance and find sites of refuge. Such spatial intelligence, when shared within a trusted community, may create possibilities for refuge in environments of near-total constraint.

In the context of art objects and artifacts, the museum offers another instance of an institutional field of force through which objects acquired in collections establish institutional identity, reinforcing legacies of colonial collecting by claiming ownership over heritage from other places. The social, economic, and affective value of objects and artifacts in museums are reconfigured by their identities as objects subject to

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[4] For the report usually considered authoritative on this issue in Australia, see Meredith Wilkie, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from Their Families* (Sydney: Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 1997).

[5] Denis R. Byrne, "Nervous Landscapes: Race and Space in Australia," *Journal of Social Archaeology* 3, no. 2 (2003): 169–193.

[6] We might consider here Michel de Certeau's idea of tactics as "belong[ing] to the other." Michel de Certeau, "General Introduction," in *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Randall (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 19.

exhibition displays. Activists and organizations like the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act increasingly contest the geographic reach of museum networks and their authority over artifacts, drawing attention to the cultural significance of objects and their extraction from particular lifeworlds.

In this volume, "fields of force" becomes a concept for not only resisting boundaries, limitations, and positions of forced constraint, but also questioning and reconstituting the forces at play. The theoretical framework of this volume expanded upon ideas presented in contributing papers at the University of California, Santa Barbara's Art History Graduate Student Association's 46th annual symposium: "Objects of Affection: Itineraries, Sensations, and 'Thingness.'" The symposium was broadly inspired by the power of affect, mobility, and ephemera, asking presenters to consider the affective and sensorial aspects of material culture, spaces, and landscapes, and investigated how the circulation of objects inform human relations with them. In creating the third volume of *react/review*, we as managing editors inflected themes raised by symposium papers in an explicitly spatial direction into the theme "Fields of Force: Navigating Power in Space, Place, and Landscape." We asked contributing authors to consider the following questions: How is power embedded in the spaces, places, and landscapes people move across and inhabit? What are the modes or strategies through which it operates?

While each volume is organized around a central theme, *react/review* is a responsive journal which aims to cultivate a spirit of dialogue and exchange. Authors engage with both topics within their fields, and with issues and arguments posed by each other throughout the journal's content. The volume is divided into three sections: feature articles, spotlights, and reviews. Feature articles engage with the volume's central theme and emerge from select papers presented at the 46th symposium, and in response to the call for papers that followed. In keeping with the discursive model of the journal, each feature article is followed by a short-form response from graduate students and emerging scholars in art history, architectural history, visual studies, and related disciplines. Responses consider authors' arguments' corollaries and implications, using them as points of departure for new discussions, comparisons, and other creative engagements. In our spotlight section, scholars currently engaged in research highlight new findings, speculate on pressing questions, or address methodological issues encountered in their fieldwork. These articles are more open-ended by design, and perhaps offer more reflection and hypotheses than definitive conclusions. Reviews examine both recent books and exhibitions touching on the theme of the current volume.

Feature articles in the third volume are grouped into two broad categories which emerged as thematic throughlines in the papers. The first set of articles explores issues of surveillance, spatial production, and representation "from above": that is, as shaped

by dominant or at least privileged social institutions. In "Skyscraper Churches and Material Disestablishment at the Fifth Churches of Christ Scientist," Alexander Luckmann explores how religious buildings negotiate their relationship to the changing real estate market and urban fabrics of New York and San Francisco. Inverting Sally M. Promey's concept of "material establishment" into "material disestablishment" to capture the shedding of overtly religious architectural signifiers and the separation of business strategy from religious mission, Luckmann considers the way religious organizations negotiate identity to protect their presence in contemporary U.S. cities. Ben Jameson-Ellsmore responds by reading "skyscraper churches" against the history of gentrification in both cities, arguing that the real estate strategies Luckmann discusses implicate church organizations in exacerbating economic disparities in major urban centers.

In "All Along the Bell Tower: An Analysis of Surveillance and Affect on the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Campus," Sophia-Rose Diodati examines the presence of cupolas and the emergency Blue Light system at Johns Hopkins to demonstrate the everyday violence of Black and Brown students' experiences of surveillance. Drawing on affect theory, architectural analysis, and art-making practices, Diodati proposes the concept of "affect arrays"—imagined as emanating from bell tower cupolas and blue orbs—to spatialize the emotional impact of surveillance. Reading such structures in relation to Johns Hopkins' establishment of a private police force and its location in a hypersegregated area of Baltimore, Diodati argues for the need to recognize the disproportionate impact of surveillance architecture on Black and Brown bodies, rather than focusing on spectacularized episodes of racial violence. Samira Fathi's response draws out the implications of Diodati's "affect arrays" for an analysis of gendered surveillance in nineteenth-century Iran, describing how the king's palatial towers privileged the male ruler's gaze in the Eshratabad Palace of the Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah.

Emine Seda Kayim continues the theme of state surveillance in "Surveillant Movements: Policing and Spatial Production in East German Housing," which investigates the methods through which the German Democratic Republic's Ministry of State Security, or *Stasi*, conducted an orchestrated system of surveillance over its citizens. Focusing on East German housing complexes as predominant sites of state-powered surveillance, Kayim examines how the Stasi used housing surveys that reproduced the built environment through various media to perform their observations. Kayim positions the Stasi's surveillance methods alongside Michel Foucault's discussion of the Panopticon to demonstrate how his interrogation of architecture and surveillance is complicated and challenged by illuminating surveillance in the GDR context. Iman Salty responds by discussing the 1979 Doors Exhibition that took place in Dresden, where eight non-official artists exhibited works that incorporated the door as a symbol

for expressing feelings of spatial, cultural, and ideological constraint in their geopolitical positions of East Germany.

Thomas Busciglio-Ritter's "At Home in the Wild: Race, Power, and Domesticity in the Transatlantic Wallpapers of Zuber & Co." concludes our first grouping of articles with an examination of how dominant racial ideologies in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century France and North America influenced the visual production of wallpaper designs distributed throughout the Euro-American Atlantic. These contributed to the construction of an imagined white American landscape, and obscured the exploitation of natural resources and of Black and Indigenous populations. Busciglio-Ritter discusses the impact of Zuber & Co.'s business expansion into the U.S., arguing that wallpapers such as the 1834 *Views of North America* were increasingly displayed in domestic spaces of the antebellum Midwest and South to validate racialized regional identities, while maintaining a superficial depiction of "harmony" among diverse populations. Sylvia Faichney expands upon Busciglio-Ritter's discussion of the Zuber & Co. wallpaper by examining how it employs strategic fragmentation to establish a visual heritage for U.S. national identity, revealing its longevity through more recent installments in White House interiors.

The second group of articles explores spatial and artistic negotiations with fields of force "from below," investigating spatialities and practices of resistance, and venturing counternarratives for spaces traditionally read through the archives of power. Nathan Shui's analysis of queer spatial strategies in "In/Visibility: Beijing Queer Film Festival and Alternative Queer Space" challenges the dominance of liberationist accounts of queer countercultural space, which rely on the imperative of "coming out" and strategies of hypervisibility. Instead, Shui links the spatial strategies deployed by queer activists with their specific socio-political conditions. Through examining the requirement for flexible and adaptive strategies that may ultimately survive interventions by state censorship in China—such as opening the film festival on laptops in a train carriage at a specified time—Shui argues that activists develop an ambivalent mode of visibility "that oscillates between the states of concealment and disclosure," carving "guerilla" spaces for expression that avoid confrontational tactics. Bringing Shui's discussion of a queer "remapping" of Beijing into conversation with British colonial surveys of Egypt, Alex Schultz draws attention to the discursive nature of both official and activist cartographies, emphasizing the ambivalence between disclosure and concealment as fundamental to the project of geographic representation itself.

Ashleigh Deosaran's "Confection and the Aesthetic of Collapse: Luis Vasquez La Roche's Sugar Cane Field Performances" analyzes the sculptural and performance works of Trinidad-based artist Luis Vasquez La Roche through the lens of collapse and post-collapse. Collapse is engaged in Vasquez La Roche's work as a visual strategy for recalling, and reclaiming, the extractive colonial histories of Trinidad, and is positioned

by Deosaran as a counternarrative to the idealized depictions of Caribbean sugar cane plantations produced in nineteenth-century British colonial prints. Using historically charged, site-specific materials like sugar to reference legacies of violence, exploitation, and ecological devastation embedded in the remains of the island's plantations, Vasquez La Roche's work performs collapse on three levels as examined by Deosaran: a literal collapse of his sugar-based work, a spatio-temporal collapse in the convergence of colonial historical and contemporary continuities of labor, exploitation, and violence, and a collapse that envisions the dismantling of colonial and capitalist systems. In response, Letícia Cobra Lima explores how Latin American artist Feliza Bursztyn embraces an aesthetic of collapse in her junk metal sculptures sourced from junkyards and auto shops, materials that perform the decay of an unsustainable capitalist "autopia."

In "Black Magnolia: Counter-Narrating a Plantation Tourist Site," Connor Hamm draws on scholarship reconstructing subaltern histories of sites usually narrated through perspectives of the colonial archive. Tracing the transformation of the Magnolia Plantation in Charleston, South Carolina, from a rice plantation and site of Black enslavement into an elaborately planned garden catering to white tourists, Hamm sketches an outline for a Black history of its early days as a tourist destination by examining how formerly-enslaved Black "gardener-guides" mediated the plantation's physical transformation and relationship with visitors. Reading pictorial and textual representations of such laborers "against the grain," Hamm tries to reimagine their experiences within the spaces of the plantation site, and the forms of creative solidarity that helped them navigate this new form of subjugated labor. Megan J. Sheard responds by considering the different narrative strategies pursued by plantation sites in the U.S. and Australian convict sites transformed into tourist destinations, querying the place of white ethnonationalist identification with involuntary laborers in the spectacularization of violence.

The second part of the journal is designated to a research spotlight by Alex Schultz, who discusses how restrictions affecting her ability to travel to archives during the COVID-19 pandemic forced her to look outside the official state archive for information on the urban history of water in colonial Cairo, changing her interpretive approach. Working extensively with scanned materials, Schultz notes how people making the scans chose to exclude pages assumed to be unimportant, particularly plans and maps. These scans and missing pages become a point of departure for a reflection on the exclusions and "slippages" in British cartographic, numerical and textual representations of Cairo. Schultz considers how quantification allowed British records to represent machines as more efficient than people in managing Cairo's drainage: meanwhile, as Schultz shows, these archives also contain evidence of Cairene resistance to the implementation of sanitation practices that supplant social forms of labor.

Concluding our volume is a review by Rachel Winter of the exhibition "From Palestine with Art," featuring the work of nineteen contemporary Palestinian artists in the recent 59th Venice Biennale. Using an unsanctioned intervention in the co-located U.S. and Israel pavilions as a point of departure, Winter reflects upon the significance of the exhibition's inclusion as a "Collateral Event" on the periphery of the main Biennale, reading its position as a spatial iteration of the politics of the nation state which block Palestinian statehood. However, the peripheral status of the exhibition allows it to challenge colonial politics and boldly proclaim Palestinian sovereignty, with works contained in the exhibition asserting presence, resistance, radicality, and joy amidst the unjust occupation of Palestinian lands.

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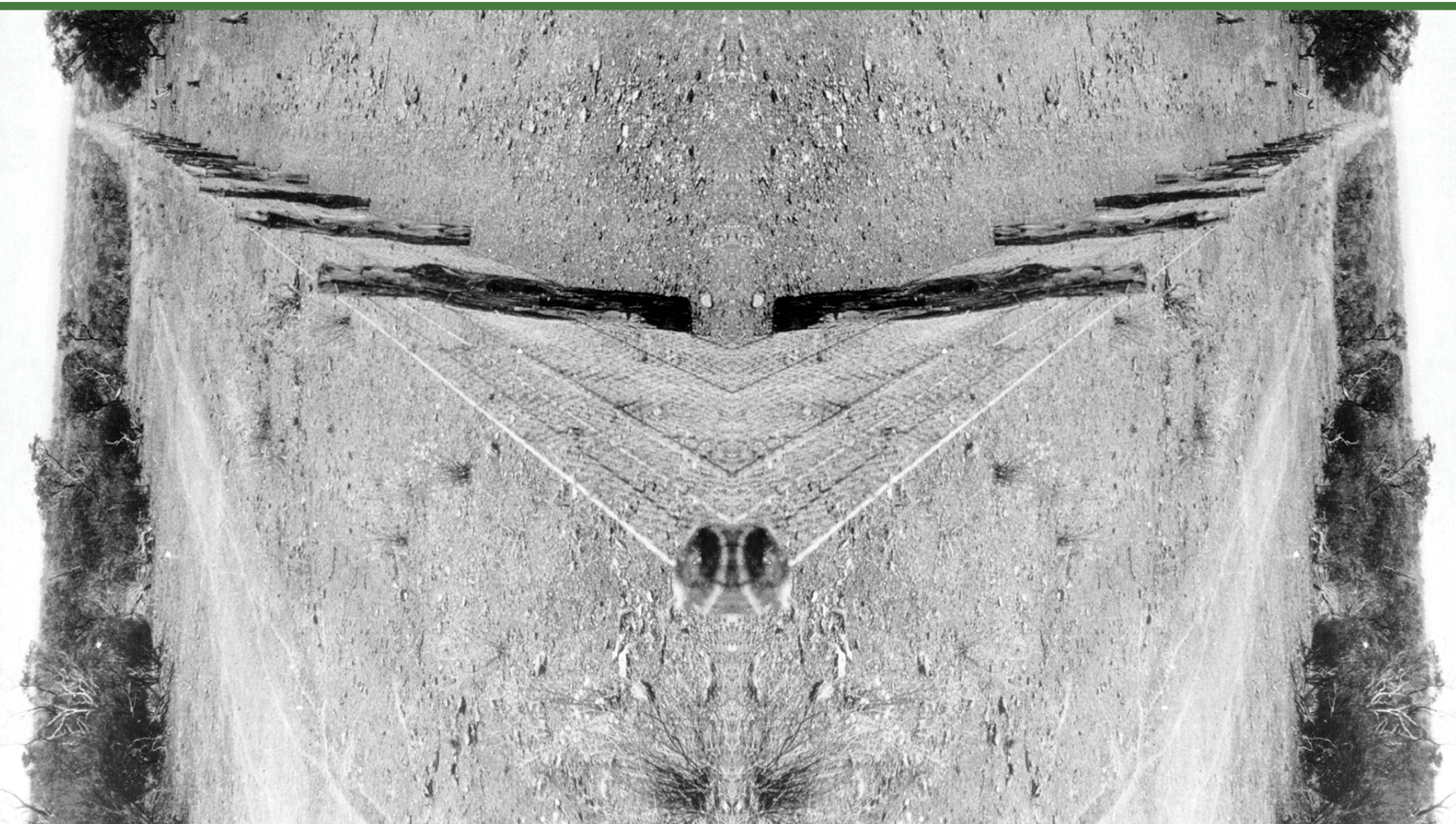
feature articles



Skyscraper Churches and Material Disestablishment at the Fifth Churches of Christ Scientist

Alexander Luckmann

In 1921, the English writer and political theorist W. L. George visited the United States. In *Hail Columbia! Random Impressions of a Conservative English Radical,* the book he published about his trip, George noted the phenomenon of "a big office building and a little church" that seemed to define the modern American city.[1] "What a change," he exclaimed, "since the Middle Ages!"[2]

The same year George visited the U.S.A., the Fifth Church of Christ Scientist in New York completed a structure on Madison Avenue between 43rd and 44th Streets that illustrated his observation: the Canadian Pacific Building, a twenty-one-story office building housing a 1700-member Christian Science church.[3] The *New York Times* described it as "the first church to be built within a skyscraper in the world."[4] Today, the entanglement of religious building projects and real estate development is becoming ever more common in American cities as rising property prices turn the land that

[1] W.L. George, *Hail Columbia!: Random Impressions of a Conservative English Radical* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1921), 157.

[2] George, *Hail Columbia*, 157.

[3] Earlier on his trip, George had also visited the *Christian Science Monitor* office in Boston, which he described as "the most amazing newspaper office in the world." George, *Hail Columbia*, 33. George was not describing a skyscraper church in his "big office building and a little church" comment; rather, he was pointing out a reversal of size in "an enormous office building against the back of which outlines itself the spire of a church." George, *Hail Columbia,* 157.

[4] "Skyscraper Church Opens," *New York Times*, June 6, 1921.

congregations own into their most valuable asset. One hundred years after the Canadian Pacific Building was completed, the Fifth Church of Christ Scientist in San Francisco is attempting to build an apartment building-cum-church on the site of its current church at 450 O'Farrell Street.

These buildings suggest one answer to art historian and religious studies scholar Sally M. Promey's question about the public display of religion: "What is 'religion in plain view' when it doesn't 'look like' 'religion'?"[5] I propose that both the Canadian Pacific Building and 450 O'Farrell use a strategy I call "material disestablishment," in reference to Promey's concept of "material establishment," to downplay their religious aspects.[6] I understand material disestablishment as both a procedural and an aesthetic strategy. It can be expressed architecturally, as a lack of legible religious symbolism or iconography. It can also determine business strategy, as when a religious organization transfers the ownership and/or management of real estate to a developer or investor, thus avoiding direct business profits. At the Canadian Pacific Building, material disestablishment functioned on the level of real estate dealings but not the building's appearance; at 450 O'Farrell, it determines both. I argue that the self-effacement of material disestablishment allows contemporary religious buildings to work in the realm of capitalist real estate, and thus enables religion to maintain its presence in the built fabric of contemporary cities in the U.S.A. Although W. L. George may have correctly noted religion's diminished visual prominence, this need not mean that religion has disappeared from the American city. Urban religious power is sometimes exercised subtly; it is a force field that is often intentionally obscured. I propose that hybrid religious and rental buildings blur the boundaries between sacred and "secular" and lend support to the argument that, despite an immense increase in religious choice, our age is not necessarily irreligious.[7] In this article, I explore and trace the genealogy of this notion, specifically in Christian Science and then extending to an Episcopal church.

Founded by Mary Baker Eddy in 1879, Christian Science holds that all reality is spiritual and the material world is an illusion. A key implication of this belief is that illness

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[5] Sally M. Promey, "Material Establishment and Public Display," *Conversations: An Online Journal of the Center for the Study of Material & Visual Cultures of Religion*, 2016, accessed December 31, 2022, doi:10.22332/con.med.2016.2.

[6] On material establishment, see Promey, "Material Establishment and Public Display," and Promey, "Testimonial aesthetics and public display," *The Immanent Frame*, February 8, 2018, https://tif.ssrc.org/2018/02/08/testimonial-aesthetics-and-public-display/. I am grateful to Sally M. Promey for her comments on the presentation this paper is based on.

[7] This argument was notably advanced in Rodney Stark, "Secularization, R.I.P.," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 249-273. As Charles McCrary and Jeffrey Wheatley put it, "reports of religion's demise had been much exaggerated." Charles McCrary and Jeffrey Wheatley, "The Protestant Secular in the Study of American Religion: Reappraisal and Suggestions," *Religion* 47, no. 2 (2016): 258.

can be healed by a spiritual process based on Jesus's teachings.[8] The church grew quickly; by 1922, there were 946 Christian Science churches in the U.S.A.[9] Christian Science churches became prominent features of American cities, as Paul Ivey demonstrated in *Prayers in Stone*.[10] Ivey argues that "Christian Science has always been a religion most at home in an urban setting."[11] Though Baker Eddy preferred churches with prominent spires, she did not attempt to influence the architectural decisions of congregations, which chose a range of styles and designs for their churches.[12]

The majority of Christian Science churches built in the 1910s and 1920s, however, favored neoclassical designs. Advocates of neoclassicism within the church argued that it achieved three objectives. First, it set Christian Science churches apart from other churches, giving the religion its own visual identity. Second, it harkened back to the era of Jesus's lifetime and thus symbolized Christian Science's return to a time before the development of Catholicism and Protestantism. Finally, it aligned with the neoclassical architecture favored by the City Beautiful movement, exemplified by the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago where Christian Science had been included in the "World's Parliament of Religions."[13] The City Beautiful movement proposed neoclassical architecture as a way of improving American cities; Christian Science thus aligned itself with what Ivey calls an "architecture of urban reform."[14] Neoclassical Christian Science churches were seen as beacons that could help heal the ills of the city, just as Christian Science practice could heal the ills of the body.

By summer 1919, the Fifth Church of Christ Scientist in New York had outgrown its previous location, so it bought most of the block from Madison Avenue west between 43rd and 44th Streets. Fifth Church tore down the existing buildings on the site, including St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church.[15] The congregation selected A. D. Pickering and Starrett & van Vleck as architects.[16] When the church opened two years later, a number

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[8] The following analysis of the religion's history is largely based on Stephen Gottschalk, *The Emergence of Christian Science in American Religious Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1973), and Rodney Stark, "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science," *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 13, no. 2 (1998): 189-214.

[9] Stark, "The Rise and Fall of Christian Science," 194.

[10] Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science Architecture in the United States, 1894-1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

[11] Ivey, *Prayers in Stone*, 5.

[12] Ivey, *Prayers in Stone*, 55.

[13] Ivey, *Prayers in Stone*, 59-60 and 94-95.

[14] Ivey, *Prayers in Stone*, 89-94.

[15] "May Buy Noted Church," *The Sun* (New York), June 28, 1919.

[16] In July 1919, Arthur Donovan (A. D.) Pickering was announced as the architect for the whole building; "Scientists to Build 30 Story Building," *New York Times*, July 17, 1919. By January 1920, Starrett & van Vleck had joined the project; "$15,000,000 in Office Space Rents for $99," *The Evening Post* (New York), January 24, 1920.

of tenants leased space alongside it, including the Canadian Pacific Railroad, which gave its name to the structure.[17] The Indiana limestone and beige brick façade, with even rows of windows, rose fifteen stories, above which another six stories were set back (fig. 1). The church occupied five stories. Sunday School and coat rooms were located on the basement and first floor. The auditorium, which was the main worship space, stretched from the first to fourth floors. Finally, offices occupied the fifth floor (fig. 2).

Figure 1. Starrett & van Vleck with A. D. Pickering, *Canadian Pacific Building*, New York, 1919-21. Photo by Wurts Brothers, August 1924. (Byron Company Collection, Museum of the City of New York, Gift of Percy Byron, 1942. 93.1.3.1465.)

[17] "Canadian Pacific Building," *New York Times*, February 2, 1921; "Skyscraper Church Opens," *New York Times*, June 6, 1921.

Figure 2. Starrett & van Vleck with A. D. Pickering, *Fifth Church of Christ Scientist*, New York, 1919-21. Photo by author, 2022.

Shortly after the proposal was made public in 1919, the *New York Sun* published an article titled "Skyscraper Churches, Religion's New Anchorage in City's Vortex" (fig. 3).[18] Author John Walker Harrington described the problem: "How shall religion hold its own in the madding crowd of the cities where spires no longer pierce the skyline?"[19] He noted that many churches had been demolished recently, "partly because they stood on land so costly that it could no longer be left the site of non-productive buildings."[20] The Christian Scientists were well-placed to find a solution to this issue, the article

[18] John Walker Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches, Religion's New Anchorage in City's Vortex," *The Sun* (New York City), August 10, 1919.

[19] Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches." Architectural strategies contrasting with material disestablishment are explored by Thomas A. P. van Leeuwen, Rolf Lundén, and Courtney Bender; see Thomas A.P. van Leeuwen, *The Skyward Trend of Thought: The Metaphysics of the American Skyscraper* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988), 57-78; Rolf Lundén, *Business and Religion in the American 1920s* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1988), 80-83; and Courtney Bender, "Religious Horizons in New York's 1920s," *Grey Room* 88 (Summer 2022): 78-101.

[20] Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches."

Figure 3. W. Leslie Walker, "Study for One of New York's Proposed 'Skyscraper Churches.'" *The Sun* (New York City), August 19, 1922, page 10.

suggested, because they "are a practical folk, who believe that religion is not something detached from the life of every day…."[21] The article reproduced a speculative design by W. Leslie Walker for another Christian Science Church/office building incorporating offices and a clubhouse as well as a church.[22]

Harrington's article claimed that "to all external appearances this skyscraper church [the Canadian-Pacific Building] will be a well-ordered office structure, with an Indiana limestone façade. It will not have any pronounced suggestion of ecclesiastical architecture."[23] This quote positions the church's design as an example of material disestablishment. Despite this claim, the church displayed an unpedimented temple front with four Ionic columns flanked by two pilasters on each side, rising to a cornice that capped this section of the building (fig. 4). Across the otherwise bare frieze were the words "Fifth Church of Christ Scientist." This inscription led a 1922 author in *Architecture and Building* to note that "to mark the location of the church structure in the building façade that portion of the front has a certain ecclesiastical emphasis."[24] This modest marking of the church visibly staked religion's claim to the building.

[21] Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches."
[22] Walker created this design for "one of the trustees of a prominent church" which remained unnamed. Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches."
[23] Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches."
[24] "The Canadian Pacific Building, New York," *Architecture and Building* 54 (January 1922): 7.

Figure 4. Starrett & van Vleck with A. D. Pickering, *Fifth Church of Christ Scientist*, Canadian Pacific Building, New York, 1919-21. Photo not credited in *Architecture & Building*, January 1922.

The economics of the development, however, demonstrated a strategic self-effacement. The real estate deal was covered in depth by the *Evening Post*, which cited a member of the congregation:

> After we purchased the land, prepared the building plans and made other arrangements, a better idea unfolded itself eliminating one of the objections which the church had to the original plan, namely, that to carry it out the church would have to engage itself in a business enterprise. The new plan eliminated this objectionable feature on the proposition that we should sell the land and all the plans to a responsible owner who…would…give us a ninety-nine-year lease on the church structure for a yearly rental of $1. In other words, the church will get approximately 40,000 square feet of rentable area with an entrance opposite the Hotel Manhattan and one-half block from Fifth Avenue, an area which at present prices has a yearly rental value of $150,000, for $1 a year.[25]

This deal belied the member's claim that the church did not engage in a business enterprise. Indeed, the *Evening Post* called it "one of the cleverest and most ingenious

[25] "$15,000,000 in Office Space Rents for $99," *Evening Post* (New York City), January 24, 1920.

real estate deals ever put over in New York City."[26] But by not becoming a landlord, the congregation was able to separate its spiritual and business dealings. The decision to recognize and avoid the perceived contradiction between Fifth Church's sanctitude and financial transactions is an example of material disestablishment, expressed through real estate transactions as well as through form.

The building's renovation in the early 2000s, when glass replaced the masonry walls, augmented the façade's religious reference.[27] The Christian Science Church's entrance was untouched, and the contrast with the rest of the building now makes the Church façade's claim to religion's place in the city clearer than ever (fig. 5). This conspicuous display contrasts with the congregation's current status. In June 2022, I attended Sunday service at the Fifth Church. Entering the foyer from East 43rd Street, a pair of staircases led me up to the auditorium, a stunning, quadruple-height space that slopes down toward the pulpit at the front. Two aisles divided three banks of seating. Both side banks had a full gallery of seating above them, while the central bank had a gallery above the back. The space was magnificent, with green marble columns and a coffered ceiling offset with rich cream-colored walls. But neither side banks nor galleries were in use. I was one of only eight attendees, in addition to the First and Second Readers leading the service, a far cry from the 1700 for whom the church was built. Fifth Church maintained its physical presence despite what seems to be a significant decline in attendance, suggesting the efficacy of material disestablishment. But material disestablishment may not be able to negate the impact of a shrinking congregation.

Figure 5. Starrett & van Vleck with A. D. Pickering, *Fifth Church of Christ Scientist*, New York, 1919-21, renovated Moed de Armas & Shannon and Gensler, 2005. Photo by Jim Henderson, 2009. (Open access via Wikimedia Commons).

[26] "$15,000,000 in Office Space Rents for $99."

[27] Macklowe called this process "filling in the fingers." John Holusha, "A New Face on Madison Avenue," *New York Times*, October 26, 2005.

Fig. 6. Carl Werner, *Fifth Church of Christ Scientist*, San Francisco, 1923. Photo by author, 2022.

On the opposite coast, Fifth Church of Christ Scientist in San Francisco occupies a two-story, unpedimented neoclassical building built in 1923 and designed by local architect Carl Werner (fig. 6).[28] Around 2013, Fifth Church partnered with developer Thompson Dorfman and submitted a plan for a thirteen-story building housing ground-floor retail space, 176 apartments, and about 10,000 square feet for a worship space, church offices, classrooms, and a reading room.[29] Thompson Dorfman would own and manage the apartments, while Fifth Church would own the land—allowing this Fifth Church, like its New York counterpart, to relinquish the commercial role of developer.[30] The project was controversial from the start, as it involved demolishing the 1923 Werner building. Fifth Church eventually received permission to demolish its building in 2018 after invoking the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA),

[28] Werner built several Christian Science churches in the Bay Area. Ivey, *Prayers in Stone*, 167-168.
[29] Blanca Torres, "Exclusive: Fight between church and historic preservation group shows why it's so hard to build in San Francisco," *San Francisco Business Times*, November 2, 2018, https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2018/11/02/fifth-church-of-christ-scientist-housing.html.
[30] Torres, "Exclusive: Fight between church and historic preservation group."

arguing that "the Federal Religious Land Use Act states that cities cannot force churches to preserve historic buildings if the church is going to redevelop a property for other uses that fit the church's mission and comply with zoning."[31] The Planning Commission approved the proposed 13-story replacement, known as 450 O'Farrell, in June 2021. Subsequently, under community pressure, the Board of Supervisors rescinded approval.[32] By this point, Forge Development Partners had replaced Thompson Dorfman as developer, and Gensler had joined as architect. In response, Fifth Church's attorneys wrote to the Board of Supervisors that Fifth Church had "faced extreme and unreasonable delays in the land use approval process by the City, which have severely impeded the Church's religious exercise," imposing a "substantial burden."[33] In March 2022, Fifth Church and Forge sued the Board of Supervisors, claiming that the Board's vote violated a number of laws.[34] That lawsuit, and thus the project's approval, is pending as of December 2022.

Forge's website presents the development as an ideal scenario.[35] The congregation had shrunk and no longer needed its large building, which was expensive to maintain. Building apartments could help address San Francisco's housing crisis. It would thus serve Fifth Church's humanitarian mission—harkening back to Christian Science's healing of urban ills—and create a more manageable, appropriately sized worship space: what Forge delightfully calls a "turnkey church."[36] The initial project, which included 176 primarily affordable apartments in a range of sizes, enjoyed broad community support. However, concerns emerged as the project changed. Forge, who

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[31] Torres, "Exclusive: Fight between church and historic preservation group."

[32] Laura Waxmann, "O'Farrell developer, church threaten lawsuit after S.F. upholds appeal," *San Francisco Business Times*, December 1, 2021, https://www.bizjournals.com/sanfrancisco/news/2021/12/01/forge-threatens-to-sue-over-group-housing.html.

[33] Robin N. Pick, letter to San Francisco Board of Supervisors on behalf of Fifth Church of Christ Scientist, (August 25, 2021), 1-2. Fifth Church attempted to use what Sara Galvan has called "the unwanted phenomenon of extrajudicial enforcement" of RLUIPA, in which a religious institution threatens an RLUIPA lawsuit to get zoning permits approved, and regulators acquiesce rather than going to the expense and potential embarrassment of litigation. However, such a course may prove less effective when the plaintiff is relatively small (like Fifth Church) and the defendant relatively large and powerful (the City of San Francisco). Sara C. Galvan, "Beyond Worship: The Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act of 2000 and Religious Institutions' Auxiliary Uses," *Yale Law & Policy Review*, 24, no. 1 (Winter 2006): 231-232.

[34] Gabriel Poblete, "SF Church, developer sue city over rejected 316-unit Tenderloin project," *The Real Deal*, March 17, 2022, https://therealdeal.com/sanfrancisco/2022/03/17/sf-church-developer-sue-city-over-rejected-316-unit-tenderloin-project/.

[35] "450 O'Farrell, San Francisco, CA," *Forge Development Partners*, accessed October 17, 2022, https://www.forgedevelopmentpartners.com/tl-450.

[36] "450 O'Farrell, San Francisco, CA."

would own and operate the rental units, argued that the original scheme would not be financially viable, and changed their proposal to 316 rental micro-units of between 345 and 500 square feet targeting "the City's often overlooked middle income workforce."[37] Housing activists argue that most of the units are in fact market-rate, and label the scheme a "tech worker dorm."[38] The activists say that there is plenty of housing for single adults in the neighborhood, and that what is really needed is family housing—the kind Fifth Church originally planned.

Gensler's proposed design shows no clear religious symbols or other indications that the complex includes a church and Christian Science Reading Room.[39] A façade of projecting concrete frames generous windows. Three blocks of street-fronting apartments shield a taller, uniform backdrop, breaking up the massing of the street façade. Although Fifth Church has tried to leverage its status as a religious organization to pressure the City into approving the project, no traces of religious use are visible from the outside. Like Fifth Church in New York, the actual management of property is shifted to a developer, although Fifth Church San Francisco still owns the property. 450 O'Farrell, then, deploys material disestablishment in both its form and its financial structure.

Material disestablishment is opposite yet complementary to Sally M. Promey's "material establishment." Promey posits that Christian things in public space—ranging from a cross to an adopt-a-highway sign listing a church—privilege certain types of liberal Protestant religious belief and organization "and thus influence decision-making at all governmental and administrative levels."[40] Promey cites zoning laws that locate schools near churches, as well as the visual prominence of church spires, as evidence for the continued conception of the United States as a Christian nation. Material establishment occurs when symbols are legibly religious.

By contrast, material disestablishment conceals the presence of religion. In these instances, a passerby would likely be unaware that the building had anything to do with a religious organization. But material disestablishment does not reduce the importance of religion in the public sphere. Rather, as Winnifred Sullivan and Lori Beaman observed, "removing religion from the realm of the religious to the domain of the secular, in particular religion that is sometimes denominated culture or heritage, can reposition

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[37] "450 O'Farrell, San Francisco, CA." See image at Andrew Nelson, "Planning Department Approves 450 O'Farrell Street in Tenderloin, San Francisco," *SF Yimby*, June 30, 2021, https://sfyimby.com/2021/06/planning-department-approves-450-ofarrell-street-in-tenderloin-san-francisco.html.

[38] Tim Redmond, "A tech-worker dorm in the Tenderloin? Or the end of the Yimby narrative?," *48hills*, September 6, 2021, https://48hills.org/2021/09/a-tech-worker-dorm-in-the-tenderloin-or-the-end-of-the-yimby-narrative/.

[39] "450 O'Farrell, San Francisco, CA." See image at https://www.forgedevelopmentpartners.com/tl-450.

[40] Promey, "Material Establishment and Public Display."

Figure 7. Pelli Clarke & Partners, *Trinity Commons*, 2013-2020. Photo by author, 2022.

majority religion as part of the social fabric and thus not *really* as religion."[41] Material disestablishment allows church-led real estate development to satisfy the various interests and opinions of the church's congregations, the state (as represented by regulatory and zoning bodies), real estate agents, tenants, and the various publics who might interact with or have opinions about the building. Material disestablishment thus allows churches to better navigate competing forces while hiding the continued power of churches to shape the urban fabric of the U.S.A.

The term "disestablishment," as I use it, is not opposed to the legal term "establishment." That is, material disestablishment neither necessarily supports nor opposes the establishment clause in the First Amendment, which states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion…"[42] Rather, material disestablishment sublimates the visibility of Christianity to the general public, the tourists and residents who walk, ride, and drive past buildings owned and/or operated by religious organizations. Material establishment and material disestablishment both reinforce religion's presence in American cities, by making religion visible in some cases and invisible in others.

Trinity Commons, a real estate development project completed in 2020 in downtown Manhattan, further demonstrates the utility of the concept of material disestablishment (fig. 7). Developed by Trinity Church Wall Street, an Episcopal church that owns $6 billion of real estate in New York City, Trinity Commons houses gathering

[41] Winnifred Fallers Sullivan and Lori G. Beaman, "Neighbo(u)rly Misreadings and Misconstruals: A Cross-border Conversation," in *Varieties of Religious Establishment*, ed. Sullivan and Beaman (New York: Routledge, 2016), 7.

[42] U. S. Const amend. 1. Sally M. Promey has suggested that "nonestablishment" may be a more apt term than "disestablishment," since I am not suggesting that the buildings I focus on were established to begin with. I am grateful to her for this insight, which I hope to pursue in future work.

and office spaces for the church in a ten-story "podium," which is topped by seventeen floors of rental office space.[43] Spatially, this arrangement expresses what the congregation considers an appropriate combination of religion and business: in the words of Trinity parishioner and former Manhattan Borough President Gale Brewer, "The mission and the real estate are being discussed together in a very positive way."[44]

It was not always thus. The first plans for Trinity Commons, revealed in 2013, split an already divided congregation. Reverend Dr. James Cooper, the church's rector and self-appointed Chief Executive Officer, incurred criticism for allowing the closure of Trinity's homeless drop-in shelter and overspending on its concert series.[45] In 2011, Cooper suggested devoting "more of the church's funds to turn the [offices] into a new state-of-the-art complex" and "told the vestry he might have to borrow money for the project or work with a private developer to build a condo tower above the new church building."[46] Ten of the church's twenty-two-member vestry board resigned in protest or were forced out, including Citigroup's Head of Global Real Estate Thomas Flexner, whose resignation letter noted Cooper's "almost obsessive desire to redevelop 68-74 Trinity Place [now Trinity Commons; the street number has been changed to 76] into a sort of mega-monument."[47]

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[43] Image of Pelli Clarke & Partners, *Trinity Commons*, programming diagram, c. 2018-2020 is viewable through the follow link: https://pcparch.com/work/trinity-commons. Jane Margolies, "The Church With the $6 Billion Portfolio," *New York Times*, February 8, 2019, https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/08/nyregion/trinity-church-manhattan-real-estate.html; "The Rector, Church-Wardens, and Vestrymen of Trinity Church, in the city of New-York and Subsidiaries: Consolidated Financial Report December 31, 2020 and 2019," https://trinitywallstreet.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/trinity_church_wall_street-2020_audited_financial_report.pdf.

[44] "The Future 76 Trinity Place Unveiled," Trinity Church Wall Street, October 26, 2016, video, 2:54, https://trinitywallstreet.org/videos/future-76-trinity-place-unveiled.

[45] Nick Pinto, "Lead Us Not Astray, Reverend James Cooper," *Village Voice*, December 12, 2012, https://www.villagevoice.com/2012/12/12/lead-us-not-astray-reverend-james-cooper/; Julie Shapiro, "Turmoil at Trinity Church Amid Board Member Exodus," *dnainfo*, March 8, 2012, https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20120308/downtown/turmoil-at-trinity-church-as-board-members-resign-en-masse.

[46] Shapiro, "Turmoil at Trinity Church."

[47] Nick Pinto, "As Trinity Church's Election Nears, Financial Disclosures and a Looming Lawsuit," *Village Voice*, March 28, 2013, https://www.villagevoice.com/2013/03/28/as-trinity-churchs-election-nears-financial-disclosures-and-a-looming-lawsuit/; Isabel Vincent, "Towering ambition: Trinity Church set to build after fight," *New York Post*, August 4, 2013, https://nypost.com/2013/08/04/towering-ambition-trinity-church-set-to-build-after-fight/; Isabel Vincent, "Trinity Church's board in open revolt against Rev. James Cooper's extravagant ways," *New York Post*, March 18, 2012, https://nypost.com/2012/03/18/trinity-churchs-board-in-open-revolt-against-rev-james-coopers-extravagant-ways/.

These complaints reveal an unease with Trinity's secular real estate activities. Flexner's comment in particular takes issue with Trinity Commons' monumental aspect. Since Flexner does not challenge Trinity's huge and iconic church, he presumably does not think a monumental building is inherently inappropriate for a church property. Rather, Flexner suggests Trinity Commons monumentalized the wrong ideas: perhaps the Reverend's own ego or the institution of Trinity Church rather than its mission.

Despite the controversy, Trinity commissioned proposals from architecture firms for what would become Trinity Commons, with a plan for six or seven stories devoted to church activities and twenty-five stories of residences.[48] Trinity chose the design by Pelli Clarke Pelli (PCP).[49] The Trinity Court Building was demolished in 2015, the same year Reverend Dr. William Lupfer succeeded Cooper. After the competition, the residences were shelved in favor of rental offices, which Lupfer said would allow the church to ensure that "all tenants will share the church's core values."[50] Likely in part to respond to the controversy, both Trinity Church and the architects emphasize the design process's communal aspect.[51]

Trinity Commons is located directly behind Richard Upjohn's Trinity Church, which is a major icon of American religious establishment.[52] Nevertheless, Trinity Commons gives little external expression of its religious function. The twenty-seven-story building, completed in 2020, is divided vertically into "a 10-floor podium open to the community with gathering spaces, basketball courts, classrooms, studios, administrative offices and meeting rooms," and seventeen narrower floors of rental office space above.[53] The podium is composed of glass walls with projecting aluminum piers and horizontal accents painted bronze, which the PCP website describes as a "tartan grid" that "references Trinity Church's Gothic expression."[54] Although the paint color is that of Trinity Church's brownstone, the material and architectural form are so

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[48] Irene Plagianos, "New Residential Tower May Soar Above Historic Trinity Church," *dnainfo*, July 2, 2013, https://www.dnainfo.com/new-york/20130702/financial-district/new-residential-tower-may-soar-above-historic-trinity-church/#slide-6.

[49] PCP is now Pelli Clarke & Partners.

[50] Nikolai Fedak, "Permits Filed: 68 Trinity Place Gets Height Increase, Will Stand 44 Stories Tall," *New York Yimby*, September 2, 2014, https://newyorkyimby.com/2014/09/permits-filed-68-trinity-place-gets-height-increase-will-stand-44-floors.html; E. B. Solomont, "Trinity quietly scraps plans for FiDi condo development," *The Real Deal*, February 24, 2016, https://therealdeal.com/2016/02/24/trinity-quietly-scraps-plans-for-fidi-condo-development/; Keiko Morris, "Historic Trinity Church Wall Street Unveils Plans for New Tower Space," *Wall Street Journal*, October 23, 2016.

[51] "The Future 76 Trinity Place Unveiled."

[52] So much so that it forms the cover image to the book *Varieties of Religious Establishment*, edited by Winnifred Fallers Sullivan and Lori G. Beaman (New York: Routledge, 2016).

[53] "Trinity Commons Wins AIA New York State Award," *Pelli Clarke & Partners*, November 5, 2021, https://pcparch.com/news/trinity-commons-wins-aia-new-york-state-award.

[54] "Trinity Commons: Home for inclusive congregation."

different that this reference does not quite carry over; slender aluminum supports in a glass façade reflect and hold light differently from a brownstone wall. Nevertheless, the grid is elegant, and the warm wood of the interiors invites passersby into the building.

According to the architects' website, "at the heart of the Commons is Parish Hall—a flexible space that accommodates 300 people for events and worship."[55] The communal religious space of the Parish Hall in the podium grounds the high-rise. The division between the religio-communal spaces in the podium and the purely commercial office spaces is explicitly visible from the exterior. Walking along Trinity Place, the Podium and Trinity Church can be understood as a pair, linked by a pedestrian bridge. The Trinity Commons Podium interior is furnished in natural wood and green fabric. An altar and a holy-water font near the entrance to the building underline its religious function.

Above the podium, the aluminum horizontals disappear, replaced inside the tower walls by a bronze-colored screen for the mechanicals between office floors. The dense bronze aluminum grid returns on the mechanical top floors. From most vantage points, the rental floors of Trinity Commons, stepped back behind the Podium, read separately from the Podium. Trinity Commons thus gives architectural form to Trinity's dual role as church and corporation, with the religious forming the base to the commercial. Material disestablishment allows Trinity Church to navigate the conflicting demands of rental real estate and a vocal congregation. Gale Brewer's duality of religious mission and real estate makes Trinity Commons' dual role explicit: the podium houses the mission, the upper floors the real estate.

PCP also emphasizes the reflection of Trinity Church in Trinity Commons' façade. But because Trinity Church is dark and often shaded by taller surrounding buildings, the early-twentieth-century office blocks along Broadway and Wall Street stand out in the reflection more than Trinity Church.[56] The reflection remains a fitting symbol, though. Above the podium, the transparency of Trinity Commons dematerializes Trinity Church, helping the financial and symbolic power of Trinity's normative Protestant Christianity disappear into the glassy space of rental real estate.

Religious organizations in twentieth- and twenty-first-century America have employed an array of strategies to capitalize on rising land values, while navigating religious principles, the real estate market, and many other factors. Trinity Commons and 450 O'Farrell employ material disestablishment as both a procedural and a formal strategy, using it to disappear behind a developer façade. Fifth Church of Christ Scientist New York, on the other hand, makes a clear, legible religious claim to public space. But all three projects use material disestablishment to engage in the business of

[55] "Trinity Commons: Home for inclusive congregation."

[56] This is the case both in evening-time professional photographs and in my own experience on a sunny morning.

real estate, legitimating them as players in the capitalist real estate market while hiding that very power.

Material disestablishment, as I propose the term, is a strategy that churches employ to align their business dealings with their religious values, aiming to satisfy business partners in the real estate market, congregation members, "the public" of non-congregation-affiliated individuals, and "the state" as represented by regulatory and approvals bodies.[57] My three case studies show different relationships to these groups: Fifth Church of Christ Scientist New York and Trinity Commons struggled to satisfy their congregations, for instance, while Fifth Church of Christ Scientist struggles to satisfy the state and the local public. Material disestablishment may also engage with megachurches that, as Jeanne Halgren Kilde has pointed out, "rarely sport steeples or Christian iconography," creating an "everyday, secular appearance…intended to attract worshippers who might be alienated by or uncomfortable with traditional church architecture…."[58] Such a connection would be a fruitful site for further inquiry.

I propose my analysis as a first step toward a genealogy for the ever-more-common skyscraper church, an important part of what Sally M. Promey has elsewhere called "the sense of multiformity and juxtaposition in the visual landscape of contemporary American religions."[59] Although this quote describes a visually exuberant and explicitly religious landscape—with legible symbols of Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Catholic, and Protestant houses of worship—my analysis suggests that the very *absence* of explicit religious symbolism may be just as important a component of this multiform landscape.

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[57] For a close discussion of the various audiences and agents in "public display," see Sally M. Promey, "The Public Display of Religion," in *The Visual Culture of American Religions*, eds. Promey and David Morgan (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2001), 27-48.

[58] Jeanne Halgren Kilde, "Space, Architecture, and American Religious Diversity," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Religion*, September 26, 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780199340378.013.467. See also Margaret Grubiak, *Monumental Jesus: Landscapes of Faith and Doubt in Modern America* (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2020), 118.

[59] Promey, "The Public Display of Religion," 47. An excellent overview of this visual landscape is provided in Kilde, "Space, Architecture, and American Religious Diversity."

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Churches in a Secular Skyline: Fields of Force and Urban Change

a response by Ben Jameson-Ellsmore

The editors of the zine-style volume *FORCE/FIELDS* that inspired the theme of this current issue define a force field as "a barrier that protects someone or something from attacks and intrusions." They ask "[w]hat are the force fields we hold up? What are the force fields we fight against?"[1] Alexander Luckmann's "Skyscraper Churches and Material Disestablishment at the Fifth Churches of Christ Scientist" demonstrates that certain New York and San Francisco churches do not fight against, but rather participate in dominant fields of force. They do so through "material disestablishment," the handing off of real-estate dealings to developers and accepting visual integration into the secular skyline. Far from oxymorons, pitting the incentives of private capital against religious missions, skyscraper churches indicate an alliance. I argue that through this alliance, skyscraper churches uphold fields of force that exacerbate socioeconomic disparity in U.S. cities.

Luckmann begins with W. L. George's 1921 remarks that tall office buildings in the U.S. had claimed the monumental primacy previously reserved for religious buildings. George followed a century of previous skyline lamenters. In 1831, Victor Hugo proclaimed that print culture had usurped the cathedral as the locus of power, the "life sap" of society flowing elsewhere and leaving Notre Dame cathedral but a vestige. In 1836, Augustus Pugin longed for the purity of the spire-pierced gothic skyline

[1] *FORCE/FIELDS,* ed. Isalina Chow, Madi Giovina, and Tiffany Niles (San Francisco: Perennial Press, 2021).

before it became tainted by unsightly smokestacks, workhouses, and tenements. And in 1904, William James lamented the unseating of the previously uncontested spire of New York's Trinity Church: "so cruelly overtopped and so barely distinguishable" amid the new skyscraper forest.[2] Each writer understood that a shifting skyline meant shifting centers of power. They witnessed the "sublimation," as Luckmann puts it, of the ecclesiastic skyline into the modern, secular real estate landscape.[3] What other urban changes took place between 1921 and now?

While early twentieth century skyscraper churches participated in the for profit real-estate landscape, they also attempted to distinguish themselves through proselytization, charity, and humanitarian aid meant to address mass poverty in industrial cities.[4] U.S. cities like New York and San Francisco were powerful "vortexes" absorbing flows of information, people, and resources from an expanding hinterland.[5] These so called "primate cities" were "supereminent" forces, far larger in population size and economic influence than any nearby city.[6] Populated by skyscrapers and ringed by industrial facilities, their urban cores were machines for capital production. While residential enclaves of wealth emerged in city centers, they were carefully insulated from the lower- and working class residents living in hazardous proximity to their industrial workplaces.[7] Alongside organizations like the Salvation Army and YMCA, Christian Science offered services to the working class in New York and San Francisco.[8] They also shared the reformist goals and neoclassical aesthetic of the City Beautiful movement, which envisioned an organized and racially homogeneous landscape of public

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[2] Victor Hugo, *Notre Dame de Paris* (Paris: Gosselin, 1831); Augustus Pugin, *Contrasts: Or a Parallel between the Noble Edifices of the Middle Ages, and Corresponding Buildings of the Present Day; Showing the Present Decay of Taste* (London: Charles Dolman, 1836); William James quoted in Spiro Kostof, *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings Through History* (Belfast: Bulfinch, 1993), 282.

[3] William Swatos and Kevin Christiano, "Secularization Theory: The Course of a Concept," *Sociology of Religion* 60, no. 3 (1999): 209-228, 225.

[4] Paul Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America, 1820-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[5] Gray Brechin, *Imperial San Francisco: Urban Power, Earthly Ruin* (Berkeley: The University of California Press, 2006); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991); John Walker Harrington, "Skyscraper Churches, Religion's New Anchorage in City's Vortex," *The Sun* (New York City), August 10, 1919.

[6] Mark Jefferson, "The Law of the Primate City," *Geographical Review* 29, no. 2 (1939): 226-232.

[7] Frederik Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1892); James Donald, *Imagining the Modern City* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[8] Paul Groth, *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 102; Boyer, *Urban Masses and Moral Order in America.*

infrastructure to counteract the immiseration of the industrial city.[9] Far from producing an idealized citizenry through urban planning, the movement's parks and boulevards displaced the urban poor within U.S. cities. Meanwhile, the wealthy continued their flight into the suburbs to escape the effects of industrial capitalism.[10]

It was postwar deindustrialization, not City Beautiful planning, that ultimately attracted suburbanites back into city centers. Suburban "white flight" was originally enabled by state-supported wealth accumulation and access to automotive transportation. Before being formally outlawed in 1968, the discriminatory practice of redlining classified racially heterogeneous neighborhoods as high risk or hazardous for home loan lending institutions, effectively denying services to ethnic urban communities and sabotaging their mobility and accumulation of generational wealth.[11] Restrictive covenants, or neighborhood contracts preventing homeowners from selling to people of color, created impermeable enclaves of white wealth, whose occupants could liquidate property and relocate.[12] These policies immobilized Black and immigrant communities by devaluing their property and thus contributed to the racialized concept of the "inner city."[13] This pattern inverted in the late-twentieth century, as U.S. companies outsourced industrial production and its health hazards to the Global South.[14] Aggressive gentrification ensued, with white collar suburbanites settling cheap inner-city tenements and industrial lofts, pricing out industrial-era residents.[15]

Luckmann's churches thus witnessed a second major urban shift following the initial rise of the skyscraper in the industrial city. Today, New York and San Francisco are "global cities," or late twentieth century postindustrial control nodes for multinational

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[9] Paul Eli Ivey, *Prayers in Stone: Christian Science and Architecture in the United States, 1894–1930* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

[10] Jon Peterson. *The Birth of City Planning in the United States, 1840-1917. Creating the North American Landscape* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003); Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961), 25, 374.

[11] Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[12] Eric Avila and Thaïsa Way, eds., *Segregation and Resistance in the Landscapes of the Americas* (Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 2023).

[13] Rebecca Kinney, *Beautiful Wasteland: The Rise of Detroit as America's Postindustrial Frontier* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

[14] Richard Williams, *Why Cities Look the Way they Do* (New York: Polity Press, 2019), 8; Alan Ehrenhalt, *The Great Inversion and the Future of the American City* (New York: Knopf, 2012).

[15] Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (London: Sage, 2019), 245; Neil Smith, *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (London: Routledge, 1996); Sharon Zukin, *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1982).

finance, insurance, real estate, and technology industries.[16] In the global city, global and local speculative interests compete, inflating land value in the urban center beyond all previous levels and exacerbating gentrification in the process.[17] The local working class was increasingly priced out, forming a new lower class suburban commuter workforce.[18]

The skyscraper church responds to these trends. From the 2010s to 2022, San Francisco had the most expensive housing market in the world, temporarily surpassing New York.[19] The drama surrounding the projected Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist building in San Francisco's Tenderloin district relates to the increasingly stark demographics of U.S. urban centers. While local activists slow the area's wholesale gentrification, the Tenderloin is also in need of newer and safer affordable housing options to replace its aging single room occupancy hotels (SROs).[20] The church's chosen developer planned to demolish their aging neoclassical building and reconstruct it for its now smaller congregation, while also creating a residential development to generate revenue and provide for their lower-income neighborhood. Harkening to the church's original humanitarian mission to heal urban ills, the upper floors were originally planned as affordable housing for San Francisco's "missing middle" or priced-out working- and middle-class families.[21] However, after passing major milestones in the approval

[16] Sharon Zukin, *The Innovation Complex: Cities, Tech, and the New Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020); Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*; Saskia Sassen, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[17] Saskia Sassen, *Territory, Authority, Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006).

[18] Kostof, *The City Shaped,* 279; P. Moscowitz, *How to Kill a City: Gentrification, Inequality, and the Fight for the Neighborhood* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2017); Roger Keil, *Suburban Planet: Making the World Urban from the Outside In* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016);
Sassen, *The Global City*.

[19] Roland Li and Nami Sumida. "S.F. metro area retains no. 1 spot as most expensive place to live in the U.S. Here's how costs compare to the rest of the nation," *San Francisco Chronicle,* December 14, 2021, https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/San-Francisco-metro-area-retains-No-1-spot-as-16701789.php; Alex Schultz, "San Francisco Ranks Among the 10 Most Expensive Cities in the World," *SF Gate,* December 2, 2022, https://www.sfgate.com/local/article/san-francisco-most-expensive-cities-17625251.php.

[20] SROs or single room occupancy hotels are an important mode of affordable housing for lower income adults in dense and expensive U.S. cities. For a history of SROs in San Francisco and its Tenderloin district see Paul Groth's *Living Downtown: The History of Residential Hotels in the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

[21] "San Francisco Approves 316-Unit Fifth Church of Christ, Scientist New Church and Essential Housing Project," *The Registry,* June 29, 2021, accessed February 10, 2023, https://news.theregistrysf.com/san-francisco-approves-316-unit-fifth-church-of-christ-scientist-new-church-and-essential-housing-project/.

process, the church-allied developer pivoted to lucrative but less affordable tech worker dorms.[22]

Relinquishing asset management to developers holds the church's real-estate dealings at arm's length, supposedly leaving their not-for-profit mission untarnished. But while offering spaces to "heal through prayer," the Church also allies with developers who exacerbate surrounding socioeconomic disparities that make such healing necessary. Despite their project now being stalled, the Church's strategy of material disestablishment succeeded. News articles on the subject hardly mention the church, focusing instead on the conflicts between the developers, City Hall, and the anti-gentrification Tenderloin Housing Clinic.[23] Material disestablishment obscures the reality that some religious organizations are at the center of contemporary fights over who can live in the city, upholding the force fields of real estate that price out the middle and working classes.

[22] Tim Redmond. "A tech-worker dorm in the Tenderloin? Or the end of the Yimby narrative?," *48hills*, September 6, 2021, https://48hills.org/2021/09/a-tech-worker-dorm-in-the-tenderloin-or-the-end-of-the-yimby-narrative/

[23] Aneela Mirchandani, "Amid San Francisco's Housing Crisis, a Church's Plan to Build is Shot Down," *The Click*, December 8, 2022, https://theclick.news/tenderloin-church-rebuild/ ; Randy Shaw, "Tenderloin Groups Mobilize to Save Family Housing," *Beyond Chron,* January 19, 2021, https://beyondchron.org/tenderloin-groups-mobilize-to-save-family-housing/.

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All Along the Bell Tower: An Analysis of Surveillance and Affect on the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Campus

Sophia-Rose Diodati

Introduction

"No justice, no peace, no racist police!"[1] The chants reverberated across Shriver Hall's auditorium at Johns Hopkins University's Homewood Campus in November 2022. At the first of three community forums, students marched onto the stage raising signs with clear messages for the university: "Who will protect us from JHPD???," "JHPD will be as bad as BPD," "Police Protect Property Not People," and "What makes you feel safe? We do not consent to JHU Private Police."[2] At centerstage, the largest banner, which previously hung in an administrative building stairwell during the 2019 Garland Sit-In, demanded, "No Private Police No ICE Contracts Justice for Tyrone West." The university's decision to implement a private police force had received pushback from students, faculty, and Baltimoreans living around the campus since its inception in 2018. Despite the community's apprehension voiced at university-organized meetings, town halls, petitions, and protests, Johns Hopkins University proceeded with their plan.

[1] Khiree Stewart, "Protesters Disrupt First Town Hall on Hopkins Police Force," WBAL, September 23, 2022, https://www.wbaltv.com/article/johns-hopkins-police-first-town-hall-meeting-protest/41342346.

[2] Stewart. JHPD, acronym for Johns Hopkins Police Department; BPD, acronym for Baltimore Police Department.

Black and Brown students at JHU were, and continue to be, disproportionately impacted by surveillance architecture and security technology built into the campus environment. Protest messaging including "shut down the plantation, cancel the Hopkins private police!" and "surveillance won't give us safety" touch on the impact of these small forms of violence experienced by marginalized students, yet frequently disregarded by the perpetrating institution.[3] When surveillance strategies are critiqued by activists, such violence is typically overshadowed by recordings of police discrimination and injustice via cellphone video or body cam footage—shareable snippets of these traumatic encounters consumed through social media. While the proliferation of this media has bolstered public discourse and forced institutional recognition of extrajudicial violence, its spectacularization comes at the expense of Black and Brown communities.[4] As conversations about sensationalized violence carry importance and implicit harm, it is crucial to examine the conditions that precede traumatic encounters to discern the violent capacity of everyday surveillance. By exploring affect theory, architectural history, and art-making practices, this project analyzes objects that produce everyday forms of surveillance on JHU's Homewood campus and the representational objects that can emerge from them. Through the production of mixed media photographs centering the campus's architectural elements as subjects, I propose an alternative way of *seeing* without spectacle to work through these weighted affectual experiences.

Context

Johns Hopkins University Homewood campus is located in an area of Baltimore, Maryland known as the "White L," a strip of land that bisects the city and veers to the east at the harbor. It demarcates predominantly White neighborhoods with a greater concentration of community resources, such as transit, grocery stores, banks, green space, and recreation centers.[5] Homewood houses roughly 7,000 undergraduates in Charles Village, which is surrounded almost exclusively by other neighborhoods located in the "White L." What lies on its exterior is called the "Black Butterfly." Coined by Dr. Lawrence Brown, a research scientist at Morgan State University's Center for Urban Health Equity, the term "Black Butterfly" references East and West Baltimore, areas

[3] Annie R. Ramos, "Protesters Shut down Town Hall on Johns Hopkins Police Force for Second Time in a Row," CBS Baltimore, September 29, 2022, https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/protesters-shut-down-town-hall-on-johns-hopkins-police-force-for-second-time-in-a-row/.

[4] Safiya U. Noble adapts Guy Debord's work on spectacles to establish a framework for understanding the consumption and proliferation of Black death in media. Safiya U. Noble, "Critical Surveillance Literacy in Social Media: Interrogating Black Death and Dying Online," *Black Camera* 9, no. 2 (2018): 147-160, muse.jhu.edu/article/694972.

[5] Lawrence T. Brown, *The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022), 12.

experiencing hypersegregation stemming from a long history of discriminatory policies that bolstered exclusionary zoning practices, taxation, and redlining.[6] Hypersegregation, as employed by Brown, describes a type of spatial racial segregation of urban areas where African Americans were insulated based on several criteria: "unevenness," an ununiform distribution of neighborhood demographics in a city, "isolation," the number of African Americans residing in Black neighborhoods, "clustering," the proximity of predominantly Black neighborhoods to one another, "concentration," how much "physical space" African Americans individually inhabit at the urban scale, and lastly, "centralization," the proximity of African American residences to the city's center.[7] These neighborhoods, retaining many of the boundaries redlined into the fabrics of the city in the 1930s, stand as racially coded markers for the University community as what might be deemed safe or unsafe areas.

Following amendments made to the 2018 "Baltimore City - Independent Institutions of Higher Education - Police Force" proposed bill, Maryland lawmakers approved the legislation in 2019 with the revised name, "The Community Safety and Strengthening Act," which allowed the University to assemble a private police force in response to alleged rising crime rates in the area.[8] Under the former title, the bill exclusively authorized the implementation of police forces at an "independent institution of higher education in Baltimore City" to exercise the "powers granted to a peace and police officer."[9] Following the amendments, the initial bill was repackaged among proposals for other community-oriented public safety initiatives, such as bolstering youth programs in the city and creating an internship program to "provide career opportunities in law enforcement."[10] As it pertained to campus policing, the approved bill solely addressed Johns Hopkins University, with authorization "to establish a police department under certain circumstances; prohibiting the police department from acquiring certain aircraft, drones, vehicles, or weapons; requiring University police officers to wear and use body-worn cameras in a certain manner; etc."[11] When reframed to center the protection and support of the "community" as opposed

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[6] Brown, *The Black Butterfly*, 4.

[7] Brown, *The Black Butterfly*, 12. Brown adopts this definition from Douglas Massey and Nancy Denton, based on criteria established by Massee and Jonathan Tannen.

[8] For a synopsis of the proposed bill, see "Legislation - HB1803," Maryland General Assembly, accessed October 15, 2022, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/hb1803?ys=2018RS&search=True.

[9] "Legislation - HB 1803."

[10] The Community Safety and Strengthening Act, SB 793, 439th Legislative Session of General Assembly (MD 2019), https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/2019RS/chapters_noln/Ch_25_sb0793E.pdf.

[11] From synopsis. See: "Legislation - SB0793," Maryland General Assembly, accessed October 15, 2022, https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/mgawebsite/Legislation/Details/sb0793?ys=2019RS. For passed bill, see note 10 above.

to the safety mechanism being used, the bill's title obscures the unchanged proposal. The creation of a private police force at JHU remained at the core of this public safety initiative.

The bill's approval prompted a series of JHU student- and community-led town hall meetings and petitions. Fueled by the collective memory of the on-duty murders by police officers that ignited the Black Lives Matter movement in 2013, community criticism escalated to protests and a month-long sit-in on campus. At one rally in 2018, a student voiced their discontent to the Baltimore-based media outlet The Real News Network: "partnering with the Baltimore Police Department, arguably the most corrupt police department in the country, shows a complete disregard for students of color on this campus that would otherwise be brutalized if they lived just a few blocks down the street."[12] Another student elaborated on this sentiment: "this is another example of Hopkins looking out for its own power, its own image, without being accountable. This could really be dangerous for students and for people of color in the city."[13] Signs at the protest read "Who R U Here To 'Protect'?", "Not Tryna Get Shot," while chants echoed across Homewood: "More police hurts the peace" and "How do you spell racist? B-P-D."

Protests and demonstrations continued into April and May 2019, with the 35-day Garland Sit-In and Occupation marking an inflection point in the response to the bill. Students reclaimed Garland Hall, the university's main administration building at the time, forcing its services to relocate. Occupying students, university faculty, and community members demanded that the university cancel the proposed private police force and advocate against police brutality.[14] One student organizer quoted by The Baltimore Sun spoke on the importance of the movement: "I care because I am black. I care because I'm queer…I understand the implications that a private police force will have on black and brown and queer bodies. I care because historically police have been abusing black bodies."[15] Present at the sit-in was community organizer Tawanda Jones, the sister of Tyrone West who had been murdered by on-duty Baltimore Police and

[12] Brandon Soderberg, "What A Private Police Force Would Mean for Johns Hopkins University and Baltimore," *The Real News Network*, March 13, 2018, https://therealnews.com/what-a-private-police-force-would-mean-for-johns-hopkins-university-and-baltimore.

[13] Soderberg, "What A Private Police Force Would Mean."

[14] Colin Campbell and Talia Richman, "7 Johns Hopkins Protesters Arrested after Monthlong Sit-in at Garland Hall over Private Police, ICE Contracts," *Baltimore Sun*, May 8, 2019, https://www.baltimoresun.com/education/bs-md-jhu-sit-in-wednesday-20190508-story.html. Organizers also requested the end of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contracts with the university, which were not renewed after they had expired.

[15] Campbell and Richman, "7 Johns Hopkins Protesters Arrested."

Morgan State University police in 2013.[16] Her brother's story was mobilized by Sit-In organizers to condemn the BPD and their neighboring, peer institution's complicity. The Occupation ended when the BPD negotiated with protestors to vacate the premises, resulting in seven student arrests, but community dissent did not cease.[17]

Following the murder of George Floyd by on-duty officers in May 2020 that sparked nationwide protests, JHU's president Ron Daniels paused the police force's development. Daniels stated that the hiatus would offer the opportunity to "draw on the energies, expertise, and efforts of our community in advancing the agenda for consequential and enduring reform."[18] This decision was met with distrust and criticism by those opposing the JHPD. The Baltimore Beat quoted Jones on her frustrations of being repeatedly disregarded: "They didn't listen to us at all. We weren't respected. They mistreated us, and now we're supposed to buy this? No…Police had my brother in a George Floyd situation back in 2013, and here we are in 2020. Do we need more police? Hell no we don't."[19] A JHU faculty member echoed this concern, "The idea that Freddie Gray's murder at the hands of six police officers five years ago would not provide a tipping point, and would not keep an initiative like this from getting off the ground, is just astonishing…We're calling for the full abandonment of this initiative. We're making it clear that the pause that popped up as we were in this process is not a sufficient response to that call."[20] Despite JHU officially pledging to reform public safety procedures, the development of the force proceeded in 2022 with the signing of its Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), a document developed by JHU and the Baltimore Police Department detailing how the Johns Hopkins Police Department (JHPD) is to operate, on December 2nd of that year, with anticipated deployment of the force through Fall 2023 and Spring 2024.[21] Through years of consistent protests and demonstrations, the students, university faculty, and local community members and organizers emphasized the same belief: bolstering surveillance on campus would

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[16] Jacob Took, "Abolish, Not Delay: Opposition to Proposed 'Pause' On Johns Hopkins Private Police Force Grows," *Baltimore Beat*, July 13, 2020, https://baltimorebeat.com/abolish-not-delay-opposition-to-proposed-pause-on-johns-hopkins-private-police-force-grows/.

[17] Campbell and Richman, "7 Johns Hopkins Protesters Arrested."

[18] Hub Staff, "Johns Hopkins Will Pause Development of a Police Department for at Least Two Years | Hub," *Johns Hopkins University Hub*, June 12, 2020, https://hub.jhu.edu/2020/06/12/hopkins-pauses-jhpd-for-at-least-two-years/.

[19] Jacob Took, "Abolish, Not Delay: Opposition to Proposed 'Pause' On Johns Hopkins Private Police Force Grows," *Baltimore Beat*, July 13, 2020, https://baltimorebeat.com/abolish-not-delay-opposition-to-proposed-pause-on-johns-hopkins-private-police-force-grows/.

[20] Took, "Abolish, Not Delay".

[21] Public Safety, "Memorandum of Understanding," Public Safety, n.d., https://publicsafety.jhu.edu/community-safety/jhpd/memorandum-of-understanding/; Public Safety, "Status and Updates," Public Safety, n.d., https://publicsafety.jhu.edu/community-safety/jhpd/status-and-updates/.

increase the harmful, institutional gaze of both the state and university on its marginalized students and those living at its bounds.

Everyday Surveillance

Many forms of surveillance negatively impact how Black and Brown students experience educational spaces.[22] When considered in conjunction with the effects of historical constructions of race, many experience the sensation of perpetual surveillance as their bodies carry the histories from which these violent systems originated and functioned to other and oppress Black and Brown communities. Bound by the racial implications of transatlantic slavery and colonialism, contemporary surveillance employed in institutional spaces reasserts a historic gaze upon those from marginalized backgrounds who fall under it. In *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness,* author and educator Simone Browne discusses the intersection of race and surveillance to highlight "how racism and antiblackness undergird and sustain the intersecting surveillance of our present order."[23] She examines Foucault's understanding of the Panopticon alongside that of the slave ship in order to explore methods of control and intended outcomes prior to the construction of prisons. Referencing Foucault's idea of "hierarchical observation" as a way of casting watchful gazes through formalized institutions, Browne asserts that this observation method intends to change individuals' behavior: "With this play of gazes in the disciplinary institution, such as the penitentiary or the school campus, surveillance…sought to objectify, transform, and improve individuals through architectural arrangements, registration, examination, and documentation."[24]

When occupying a matrix of sightlines produced by university surveillance mechanisms, one may be inclined to change, transform, or otherwise negotiate a presupposed "otherness" as they perceive themself first through the lens of the surveyor. For Black and Brown students, the tension that arises when negotiating one's self-perception against how one is perceived through the lens of surveillance is an embodied experience. Such an ontological sensation may be regarded as affect. Brian Massumi adapts the work of Gilles Deleuze in his interpretation of affect theory,

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[22] Odis Johnson and Jason Jabbari's research shows that high surveillance schools (HSS) negatively impact students as determined by comparatively lower math test scores, higher suspension rates, lower likelihood of matriculation to higher education, with Black students being at higher risk as they were four times more likely to be enrolled in a HSS; greater detection led to greater punishment regardless of demographics of student body. Odis Johnson and Jason Jabbari, "Infrastructure of Social Control: A Multi-Level Counterfactual Analysis of Surveillance and Black Education," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 83 (November 1, 2022): 101983, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2022.101983.

[23] Simone Browne, *Dark Matters: On the Surveillance of Blackness* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 9.

[24] Browne, *Dark Matters*, 41.

describing this experience as being neither palpable nor imaginary, but manifesting between them with emotion being secondary to it. Both theorists term the plane in which this sensation emerges as "the virtual," the space caught between the actual, or the tangible, and the imagined, or the intangible.[25] Massumi suggests that when affect emerges, this experience is characterized by its nearly imperceptible dance between both the virtual and corporeal realms: "What is being termed affect…is precisely this two-sidedness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other."[26] When understood against the backdrop established by Browne, affect occurs as the tensioned response to the institutional gazes at "play" in the virtual; the sensation of feeling watched or monitored by surveillance mechanisms can be deemed as an experience beyond a manifestation of the mind, but rather something regarded as critically as somatic experiences. [27]

Surveillance measures seen at JHU include an assortment of contracted security guards, off-duty Baltimore Police Department officers, as well as security belonging to the institution, referred to as "Hop-Cops" by students. Uniformed individuals stationed on nearly every block throughout Charles Village and the campus itself are an overt and active form of surveillance. However, passive forms of surveillance built into the landscape offer a different understanding of what it means to be watched.

Like many universities across the nation, JHU has installed an emergency Blue Light system, a public safety mechanism of permanent towers equipped with security cameras and blue bulbs installed at strategic locations. This system offers immediate security to any person who feels unsafe on campus or any JHU property via a button and/or phone installed into its tower. At some institutions, the Blue Light system is a rectangular tower with "emergency" emblazoned on all sides with a blue light at the top, while at JHU's Homewood campus, it is merely a blue orb at the top of a pole. This security system is advertised on campus tours as being so prevalent, that at least one of the bulbs should be visible, or reasonably accessible, from any location on campus. Programming software synchronized to these cameras autonomically reports suspicious activity for security intervention—a feature touted to prospective students and parents during Blue Key Society campus tours.[28] While these blue orbs are intended to function for security, they perpetuate the presence of total surveillance: the towering mechanism is visible, but the surveying entity is not, similar to Foucault's Panopticon. These sorts of measures do not protect the perimeter nor deter external threats—they are blended

[25] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton (London: Continuum, 2004), 208.
[26] Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2002), 35.
[27] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 41.
[28] This comment stood out to me during my own Blue Key Society tour. Tour Guide Unknown. "Admission Session & Tour," Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD, August, 2016.

into the campus infrastructure such that they become mundane characteristics of everyday life that have disproportionate implications for the campus community.

While I was a student at Hopkins, I was consumed by an awareness of this system's affordances and its panoptic gaze. An architecture professor once off-handedly mentioned that from anywhere on the neoclassical campus, one may look up and see at least one cupola. The cupolas are a formidable presence on campus that dominate the skyline and architecturally simulate the watchful eye on the student body exacted by the blue orbs of the Blue Light system. Radiating from the blue orbs and each cupola are imperceptible, virtual threads that connect the built environment and the systems of surveillance that I navigated daily as a student, all while carrying the weight of memory, history, and time.

Art Objects

Both Homewood's cupolas and security system infrastructure share similarities in function and imagery when viewed through the lens of architectural history. Once a critical ventilation mechanism in various ancient Asian and European structures, cupolas were adopted into English domestic architecture to create an unobstructed path through the house for airflow.[29] Many design schemes allowed internal access to the cupola's interior, thus effectively making them observational decks with 360-degree visibility.

In the nineteenth-century United States, cupolas were often employed in governmental and academic buildings constructed in the Jeffersonian neoclassical style, developed by Thomas Jefferson to symbolize the country's free and democratic ethos. However, Jefferson's neoclassicism cannot be divorced from its subversive practical affordance to keep enslaved laborers and their dwellings hidden from sight. For example, his plantation Monticello (1809) was designed in this style as a symmetrical structure boasting a red, brick facade with marble pillars framing its entry. Jefferson designed two additional levels with lengthy terraces extending from the structure's backside, further masking the sleeping and working quarters for the enslaved laborers built into the opposing side of Monticello's hill. This terraced design can be seen replicated in his design for the University of Virginia's "Academical Village" (1825): interconnected buildings extend from the Rotunda, a central library that frames the east and west side of a quadrangle greenspace referred to as "the Lawn."[30] This arrangement was originally intended to accommodate lodgings for both students and

[29] John Milnes Baker, *American House Styles: A Concise Guide* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 74.

[30] Mariacristina Loi, "Origins and Development of the American Campus: The 'Academical Village' of Thomas Jefferson," in *Buildings for Education: A Multidisciplinary Overview of the Design of School Buildings*, ed. S. Della Torre, M. Bocciarelli, L. Daglio, R. Neri (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2019), 90.

professors to be "advantageous to morals, to order, & to uninterrupted study."[31] However, like Monticello, this design served the dual affordance of not only implementing the omnipotent gaze of the academic institution, but also burying the subterranean enslaved laborers' quarters beneath the Village's architectural footprint. In *Race and Modern Architecture*, architect and scholar Mabel O. Wilson argues Monticello's and the University of Virginia's (UVA) hilltop locations offered Jefferson optimal site conditions to bury the enslaved laborers' quarters below that of the primary living areas, an architectural metaphor for the paradox of freedom.[32]

Imbued with the ideals of the Enlightenment, neoclassical architecture synthesized elements of Greco-Roman architecture—e.g. orders, pediments, domes—and classical principles of design—e.g. proportion, harmony, symmetry—with the evolving understandings of nature through scientific discovery and the cultural shift toward challenging the ruling, traditional ideologies that governed architecture at the time.[33] In the American context, architects' use of neoclassicism was a nod to the formation of the Roman Republic, one of the earliest examples of representative democracy.[34] Pushing the importance of perception and symbolizing national values through form, Jefferson's inclinations extended beyond his civic buildings, such as the Virginia State Capitol, to his plantation home Monticello and UVA's campus. Yet, this classicizing landscape replete with symbols of "equality, justice, and freedom" physically obfuscated enslaved laborers, connoting a sense of choreographed invisibility, power, control, and surveillance.[35]

With the same arrangement utilized in the Academical Village, the Homewood campus shares this complex mix of motifs. Gilman Hall (1915), the university's most iconic structure, implements covered terraces or breezeways to connect the academic buildings framing its quadrangle, Keyser Quad. Atop Gilman Hall sits its cupola that secures the building's status as the tallest on campus. Towering over its neighboring structures, Gilman Hall exudes an unwavering sense of importance, as though seated at

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[31] Thomas Jefferson, "Rockfish Gap Report of the University of Virginia Commissioners, August 4, 1818," accessed November 3, 2022, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Jefferson/03-13-02-0197-0006.

[32] Mabel O. Wilson, "Notes on the Virginia Capitol: Nation, Race, and Slavery in Jefferson's America," in *Race and Modern Architecture: A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, ed. Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II, and Mabel O. Wilson (Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020), 23-42.

[33] Dell Upton, *Architecture in the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 72.

[34] Though in practice, the Roman system functionally maintained the power of its founders' class while furthering class disparity, perhaps creating an unwitting parallel with Jefferson's admiration for it, as it mirrors the abuses inherent in the American government being built upon the paradox of equality in a society reliant on enslaved labor. Michael R Allen, "Trumpism, Neoclassicism, and Architecture as Propaganda," *PLATFORM*, May 27, 2022, https://www.platformspace.net/home/trumpism-neoclassicism-and-architecture-as-propaganda.

[35] Wilson, "Notes on the Virginia Capitol," 25.

the head of a table. Like the Rotunda at UVA, Gilman Hall's entry boasts stark, white stairs, columns, and a sizeable pediment. Although the Rotunda does not feature a cupola, the imposing form of its domed roof references the 360-degree visibility of the watchtowers and cupolas of other JHU structures. With the first building on the Homewood campus incorporating Jeffersonian elements, the designs for the rest of the campus followed suit, placing cupolas atop several academic buildings. A total of nine buildings have cupolas. While some cupolas have stairway access, others do not and are ornamental.

Through the practice of art making, I explored the relationship between the university's cupolas, the blue light security system, and their built environment by creating a series of art objects entitled *Affect Arrays:* a series of photographs capturing different cupolas on JHU's campus with red thread sewn into the developed images depicting the web of surveillance they cast on the campus landscape. Each photograph serves as a moment in the process of moving through campus and taking inventory of the cupolas through the view of those falling under their gaze. Frames highlight different angles that display the relationship of structures to their immediate surrounding environment. I developed six photos into 8x10 inch prints to use as the final objects (figs. 1-6). With a needle and red thread, I sewed the perceived sightlines into the images beginning at the cupola (or other form of surveillance in the frame) and extending to the edges of the print to make the gaze of these structures visually legible and physically tangible.

Figure 1. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *City View*, Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, photograph and thread, December 2019, 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of author.

Figure 2. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *Gilman Hall (front)*, Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, photograph and thread, December 2019, 8 x 10 in., Courtesy of author.

These art objects are comprised of two main elements: a symbol of surveillance, the cupola or a blue orb, and its resulting gaze represented as red thread. When first approaching the cupolas in my design process, I sketched the towers by hand, gaining an intimate understanding of their design and intricate details. Laying trace paper on top of these sketches, I drew the sightlines of a potential observer situated on top of the watchtower, then extended these lines like rays of light fracturing outwards (figs. 7-9). The resulting images provided an alternative way of viewing these structures. While these towering white structures offer aesthetic cohesion, they also cast a similar gaze onto bodies as the campus's security mechanisms. They act as constant reminders of the University's prestige and overwhelming power, seemingly as bold and pristine as its marble pillars. Imagining these structures as alternative forms of surveillance did more than just create the hypothetical image itself. It materialized my affectual experience amidst the University's perpetual surveillance.

Figure 3. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *Wyman Quad,* Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, photograph and thread, December 2019, 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of author.

The affectual experience brought on by surveillance is represented in the objects' second element, the red thread. Representing the line of vision from the manifested watchtower through this imagery provides similar affordances of (in)visibility as Foucault's Panopticon. In this style of representation, each view offered a different way of perceiving the directionality of the sightlines. For example, *Gilman Hall (front)* (fig. 2) presents an array that extends onto the landscape beneath it, much like *Wyman Quad* (fig. 3) and *Gilman Hall Cupola & Blue Light System* (fig. 6) that show several cupolas' arrays overlapping and extending to the foreground in a similar manner, respectively. However, in the case of *City View* (fig. 1), the arrays of the cupolas pictured in the distance are presented connecting with one another as opposed to fracturing into the city to emphasize the network of surveillance between them. *Garland Hall & Latrobe Hall Cupola* (fig. 5) displays the only array not originating from a cupola or surveillance mechanism with fractured rays. To distinguish its rays within the series, each thread extending from Garland Hall bends, redirecting each path more vertically as opposed

to radially to emphasize its positioning as a site of protest and its connections beyond the campus, as organizers connected with local communities and other universities.[36] Maintaining the medium and color of this array lent consistency to its reading within the series: these connections exist virtually, sharing the burden of surveillance with those who stand in solidarity, protesting in their respective communities and campuses. Materially speaking, thread has the dual affordance to reliably bind fabric together, showing strength and durability, while also being delicate to the touch, as if barely there. Thread as a metaphor for affect makes virtual space visible, bridging the real and imagined realms.

Figure 4. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *Chemistry Building*, Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, photograph and thread, December 2019, 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of author.

When moving through these spaces, the arrays represent the instant activation and fleeting awareness of one's proximity to the structures at play on the university's grounds which include, but are not limited to, the histories and broader understandings of boundaries, community, and identity. Speaking on the many connections that catalyze affect, Massumi suggests that the virtual consists of many potentials, "where futurity combines, unmediated with pastness."[37] These temporalities appear too transitory to be perceived in the moment as they give way to the resulting "affect or intensity in the present." [38] Drawing on similar concepts of space and time, Doreen Massey suggests in *For Space* that in the virtual plane, space and time collide creating multiple resonances that allow the space in which

[36] Students from other universities shared public support for the JHU students at the time of Garland Sit-in in 2019. Some of the universities represented included Brandeis University, Yale University, Portland State University, Tufts University, and University of North Carolina. Chad Williams (@Dr_ChadWilliams), Twitter post, May 1, 2019, https://twitter.com/Dr_ChadWilliams/status/1123735764284649473.; Lindsay Ayling (@AylingLindsay), Twitter post, May 1, 2019, https://twitter.com/AylingLindsay/status/1123699517839302656.; PSU Student Union (@PortlandStateSU), Twitter post, May 1, 2019, https://twitter.com/portlandstatesu/status/1123673020248264704.; Tufts SJP (@SJPtufts), Twitter post, May 1, 2019, https://twitter.com/SJPtufts/status/1123724585092960256.

[37] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 30.

[38] Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, 32.

Figure 5. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *Garland Hall & Latrobe Hall Cupola,* Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, photograph and thread, December 2019, 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of author.

one inhabits to be considered dynamically rather than statically, offering consideration for how affect might be inscribed onto place in one's memory.[39] Similarly to Massumi, Massey suggests that at any point in time physical space has the affordance of facilitating this temporal convergence, with the transient present constantly making and remaking its current, virtual existence: "The specifically spatial within time-space is produced by that—sometimes happenstance, sometimes not—arrangement-in-relation-to-each-other that is the result of there being a multiplicity of trajectories…There is always an element of 'chaos'. This is the chance of space…"[40] What Massey considers the "chance of space" can be understood as what might manifest in a location as affectual experiences that erupt from the complex convergence of the past, present, and future. In this case, the "chance" of the space where students encounter methods of surveillance—whether by people, machine, or built environment—carries the weight not only of the present encounter, but also the virtual collision of the histories that detailed and foreshadow the outcomes of such systems.

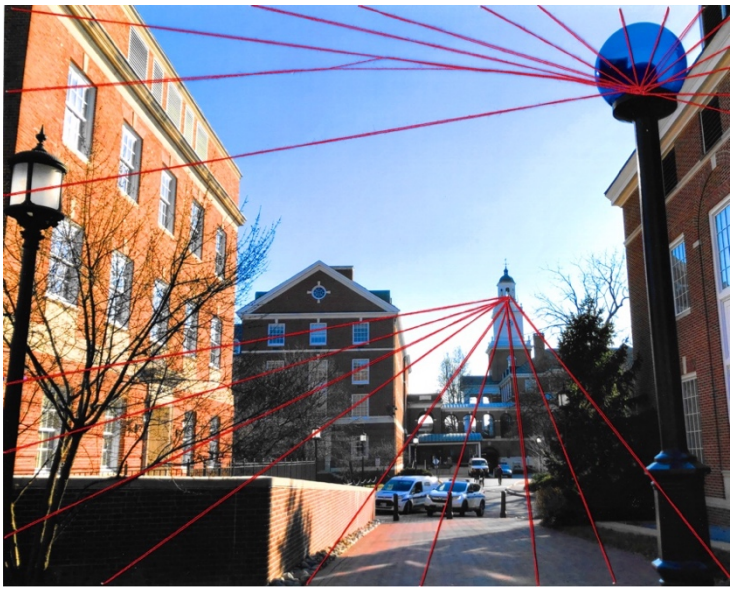
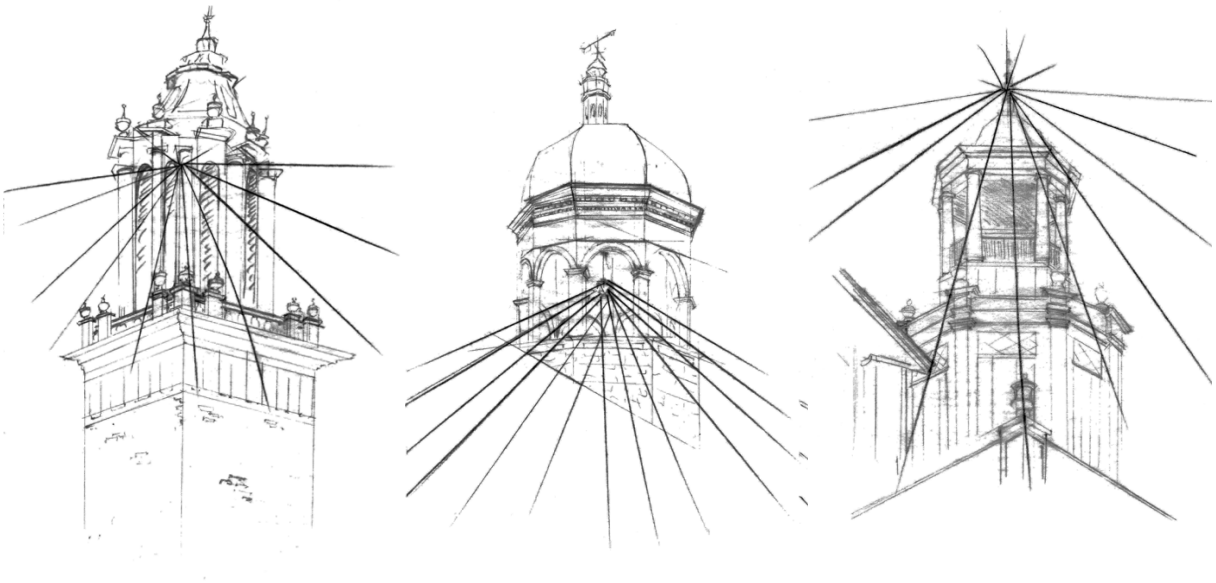


Figure 6. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *Gilman Hall Cupola & Blue Light System,* Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, photograph and thread, December 2019, 8 x 10 in. Courtesy of author.

When considered against the backdrop of institutions as Browne suggests, affect must be understood beyond a one-dimensional view of what it

[39] Doreen B. Massey, *For Space* (London: SAGE, 2005), 10.
[40] Massey, *For* Space, 111.

means to be watched; affect's gravity for Black and Brown students on university grounds results from how surveillance sightlines intersect with the temporalities that Massumi and Massey describe. The perception of oneself as understood through institutional gazes is inherently informed by these temporalities: the past, comprised of the histories of control placed on Black and Brown communities that extend beyond physical violence to the quotidian forms built into institutions and their environments; the present, referencing those histories echoing through time and reenacted by modern day practices of policing; and the future, envisioned as extrajudicial violence, recorded and reproduced in media giving visual reference for future possibilities. The virtual collision of time, space, history, and memory creates affectual experiences for Black and Brown students navigating Homewood that are embodied and carried throughout campus and across these arrays.



Figures 7-9. Sophia-Rose Diodati, *Cupola Sketch(es),* Baltimore, Affect Arrays series, Pencil on vellum over pencil on paper, December 2019, 7 in. x 11 in. Courtesy of author.

Critical Conclusions

Casting a critical lens on how affectual experiences of surveillance can be rendered more legitimately made this type of visual inquiry and analysis possible. This process began with an interest in the over-policing of communities, coupled with knowledge from my own experiences, seminar-style discussions, theoretical readings, and engaging with art across different media.[41] With growing concern on the JHU

[41] Suzan-Lori Parks, *The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World: AKA The Negro Book of the Dead* (New York: Samuel French, 2019); Claudia Rankine, *Citizen: An American Lyric* (London: Penguin

Homewood campus regarding the institution of a private police force at the time of this research, my interests shifted towards the university's current surveillance systems and the structural, historical, and architectural systems embedded within it. Understandings of affect theory and the virtual became a central part of this investigation, providing other means of discussing the embodied responses to campus surveillance. In pursuit of an art-making methodology, the photographs and alterations made from my exploration of campus required attention not only to the built environment and my surroundings, but also to a consideration for affect as it emerged internally.

Through cataloguing personal affects across the campus landscape, the methodologies that rendered these art objects stemmed from a material exploration of the virtual itself. Collecting images of the same mechanisms that surveilled me stirred up a deep discomfort; raising my lens to record another lens that had been recording me seemed wrong as I became hyperaware. The effects of the omnipresent surveillance on the Homewood campus became increasingly apparent as I consciously moved through it, my body feeling heavier and more entrenched in a web of suspicious gazes. Even as I reversed the direction of surveillance, the overwhelming affect from its Panoptic presence continued to bear down on me. As these mechanisms of surveillance disproportionately impact othered bodies, the resulting affect is far more damaging than that of those in more privileged skin, and the more that their virtual reality is disregarded and replaced by actual images of traumatic violence, the heavier it is to carry—the more harmful it becomes.

The virtual plane, where affect emerges, for Black and Brown people is only considered legitimate in the public eye after real and unmediated representations of their vulnerability manifest. Popular consumption of media containing shocking or otherwise attention-grabbing material renders violence as spectacle.[42] When the affectual experiences of communities are disregarded for the privileging of graphic representations of violence against them, what comes next? In the crucial conversations about necessitating ostensible proof of tangible violence to validate a community's trauma, questions of how to represent the small forms of violence that precede such traumatic ends are often lost. Providing another way of "getting on" in the world, or a way of surviving, should never be underestimated. My inquiry through the practice of physical representation and (un)making suggests a new way of seeing that does not implicate sensationalized images of bodies that resembled my own. Rather, we should consider other ways of representing the entanglements we carry with us. If a possibility emerges such that the virtual is regarded as concretely and tangibly as the actual, then perhaps the way that Black and Brown people move through surveilled space could

Books, 2015); Jay Buim, "Creative Time Presents Kara Walker's 'A Subtlety,'" (2014; Brooklyn, NY: Creative Time), https://creativetime.org/projects/karawalker.

[42] Noble, "Critical Surveillance Literacy."

change as these security mechanisms would, allowing them to shed the affects of those that came long before.

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A Gendered Response to a Watchful Gaze

a response by Samira Fathi

We are constantly under the rays of the spectator's eyes, an inevitable consequence of modern urban life with high demand for the rhetoric of safety and security under the disguise of omnipresent surveillance systems. Expanding from contributing author Sophia-Rose Diodati's spatial analysis of "affect arrays" and surveillance of racialized bodies, this response aims to situate Diodati's analysis alongside nineteenth-century Iranian palatial towers in order to highlight the intersection of gender politics and power relations in the surveilled body. In "All Along the Bell Tower: An Analysis of Surveillance and Affect on the Johns Hopkins University Homewood Campus," Diodati explores the material manifestation of the surveillance system on the JHU campus. Inspired by Diodati's concept of "affect arrays" which emanate from the bell towers across the JHU campus, I bring to light the connections between the gendered gaze and its impact on architectural configuration of space through the examination of Qajar palatial towers in Tehran, Iran.

Like the bell towers investigated in Diodati's paper, my response explores the panoptic perspective created for the Qajar king Naser al-Din Shah (r. 1848–96) in the palatial tower of Eshratabad Palace (literally, abode of indulgence). I propose that the prevalence of multistoried palatial towers of this sort during the Naseri era can be read as the architectural manifestation of Naser al-Din Shah's absolute and patrimonial monarchy and the gender hierarchy in late nineteenth-century Iran. As stated by Gülru Necipoğlu, gender "played an important role in the zoning and social organization of the gaze in Islamic palaces where royal women were generally kept away from public

view."[1] The politics of gaze, she maintains, was crucial for exerting power in different strategies of rule in early modern Muslim empires (Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal). For instance, during the Safavid period (1501–1722) in Isfahan, *talar* (a pillared porch)—and particularly the one at the Ali Qapu Palace—functioned as a theater box at the edge of the grand public square (Maidan-e Naqsh-e Jahan) where the king would appear in specific occasions, and his gaze was framed in a particular way. The function of the Tower of Justice at the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul was administrative where the Ottoman Sultan observed and oversaw his subjects through grilled windows. The *Jharokha* (window of appearance) in the Red Fort at Delhi was an octagonal tower, topped with a dome, and a window for the public appearance of the Mughal emperor at specific times. This tower also functioned as the emperor's sleeping chamber.[2] While the Mughal palatial towers with their placement in the private sections of the palace show more affinity with the Qajar examples, their function in the larger representation of power and visibility of the ruler is different. In this regard, Necipoğlu asserts:

> The ways in which the three palaces framed the gaze in staging the public appearances of the monarch articulated the nature of his relationships to the extended royal household, his subjects, and the world at large, a relationship that was rooted in a different concept of absolute monarchy in each case.[3]

The shift from a corporate system of rule in the Safavid period to a familial state in the Qajar period led to the retreat of the king from the public view to the confines of the walled royal citadel (Arg) in Tehran.[4] The reciprocal gaze between the ruler and his subjects was gradually replaced by a one-way act of watching by the mid-nineteenth century.

Rather than appearing in the public view, Naser al-Din Shah preferred gazing at his subjects for his pleasure through the balconies and windows of the multistoried palatial pavilions. His newly erected Shams al-Emareh (Sun of Palaces) in the royal citadel, built in 1865, was the first multistoried palace in Tehran providing such gazing opportunity for the king (fig.1). Naser al-Din Shah's interest in overseeing the surrounding landscape through the windows and *iwans* (porches) of this structure is

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[1] Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze in Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal Palaces." *Ars Orientalis* 23 (1993), 303.

[2] See Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze."

[3] Gülru Necipoğlu, "Framing the Gaze," 303. She has focused on the Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, the Safavid Palace in Isfahan, and the Red Fort in Delhi.

[4] Sussan Babaie, "In the Eye of the Storm: Visualizing the Qajar Axis of Kingship." *Artibus Asiae* 66, no. 2 (2006): 35-54.

evident in the photographs that he captured from this elevated viewing stance.[5] Moreover, the king's habit and hobby of watching people in the city led to the addition of a new gateway with an iwan to the eastern wall of the Shams al-Emareh Palace. The balcony of this portal faced Naseriyeh Street and residential neighborhoods (fig.2). This new street had recently turned into one of the modern avenues of Tehran, after the city's expansion in 1868, featuring new shops and buildings that attracted people from different social strata to promenade there.[6] Providing the views of this crowded street and adjacent shops, the portal of the Shams al-Emareh became a place of leisure for Naser al-Din Shah as a curious spectator.[7]

Figure 1. Shams al-Emareh, located in the Golestan Palace, Tehran. Indeed, this palace consists of two multistoried towers attached together. This image shows the considerable elevation of the palace and its imposing structure that provided vistas of the city for Naser al-Din Shah. Photograph courtesy of the author, 2021.

At Eshratabad, or commonly referred to as *jardin d'amour*, the design and spatial arrangement of the king's palatial tower clearly demonstrated the gendered structure of power between the king and his subjects. In this summer palace, the tower was a multistoried building that functioned as the sleeping quarters of Naser al-Din Shah. It featured spacious and lavishly decorated spaces with wider windows and balconies at

[5] Photography was introduced to the Qajar court in this period. The king was an amateur photographer who took photographs of his haram and women, hunting campaigns, and views of the capital city, Tehran. A group of photos taken from the Shams al-Emareh by the king indicates his passion for recording vistas of the city from this elevated location.

[6] For the expansion of Tehran during this period see Samira Fathi, "From Vision to Reality: Tehran's Urban Expansion Under Naser al-Din Shah (1848–96)," *International Journal of Islamic Architecture* 12, no. 1 (January 2023): 71–99.

[7] Mohammad Hasan Khan E'temad al-Saltaneh, "Rouznameh-ye Sharaf," [Sharaf Gazette], no. 68, 1888.

higher levels. The top floor indeed was reserved for the king and provided a panoramic view of the surroundings.[8]

Figure 2. The eastern portal and façade of the Shams al-Emareh palace at the edge of Naseriyeh Street. Note the abundance of openings toward the street, especially the pillared porch. (Open access via Wikimedia Commons).

The king's male body and his role as the preserver of the royal progeny and head of Qajar state was accentuated in the innermost spaces of his *haram* (women's quarter) in terms of gender hierarchy. Not only was the king the absolute ruler of the state and Qajar court, he was also the shadow of the God on earth and the sole patriarch of the Qajar household. Naser al-Din Shah possessed 84 wives and concubines and all of them lived inside the haram. The placement of the king's tower in relation to the mansions designated for the haram women indicates the male-centered conception of space in this complex. The tower stood independently among a series of individually designed mansions designated for the king's wives and concubines (fig.3). These two-storied pavilions were arranged around a circular pool at the foot of the king's tower (fig.4). The imposing tower with pillared porches on four sides, overlooking the women's

[8] Kaveh Bakhtiar, "Palatial Towers of Nasir Al-Din Shah," *Muqarnas* 21, no. 1 (2004): 33–43.

apartments, provided the king with a panoptic gaze. Emanating from this tower to the haram buildings and extending outwards to the city, the royal gaze found an architectural manifestation in these multistoried towers favored during Naser al-Din Shah's reign. Whether a haram woman or a commoner, all subjects were under the gaze of the omnipotent king.

(left) Figure 3. The palatial tower at Eshratabad Palace. Note the placement and scale of the palatial tower in relation to the adjacent women's apartments by the pool. (Open access via Wikimedia Commons). (right) Figure 4. Women's apartments are individually placed along the pool with a repetitive design. (Open access via Wikimedia Commons).

Through the windows and balconies, as in the JHU bell towers, these towers produced a space for observing and remaining unseen. Although the king was physically absent from the view, the tower replaced his presence and provided the king with an opportunity to indulge himself in being a voyeur, as Michel de Certeau puts it:

> His elevation transforms him into a voyeur. It puts him at a distance. It transforms the bewitching world by which one was 'possessed' into a text that lies before one's eyes. It allows one to read it, to be a solar eye, looking down like a god. The exaltation of a scopic and gnostic drive: the fiction of knowledge is related to this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more.[9]

Although in a different context than Manhattan high-rises discussed by de Certeau, the palatial tower at Eshratabad did provide such a pleasure for the king, standing at a distance and representing superiority and domination. In either case, the voyeur possesses the power of ordering and conceiving the space where his subjects move and live. However, the tower at Eshratabad, surrounded by women's apartments, establishes the physical and visual dominance of the king gazing at his female subjects for the sake of sexual and erotic pleasures. In contrast to tower structures associated with religious authority such as bell towers of Christian churches and *minars* of Muslim

[9] Michel de Certeau, "Walking in the city," *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 92.

mosques, which present a sonic community-gathering quality, these palatial towers bespeak the individuality of the king's presence and his ever-watching eye as the landmark of the city. Like the bell towers of JHU that present the power dynamic in a racialized landscape, the Naseri towers visually and spatially manifest the gender and power politics of the Qajar court in Iran. The Eshratabad tower with its function and unique arrangement of architectural spaces around it casts light on the gendered gaze of the king evident in this complex.

Reading this example along with Diodati's piece complicates our understanding of the mechanisms of surveillance and affect experienced by the watched body. While Diodati's bell towers facilitate the surveilling of the racialized body, the Eshratabad tower demonstrates another layer of watchful gaze associated with gender and body politics of the Qajar king. Unfortunately, we do not hear from histories how the women living in these apartments experienced this spatial hierarchy, and the affect arrays of this tower are lost to us today. However, the very function, scale, and placement of the spaces in this palatial complex present the hierarchy of power and gaze which ought to be clear and legible to the subjects in order to be effective.

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Surveillant Movements: Policing and Spatial Production in East German Housing

Emine Seda Kayim

For the German Democratic Republic's (GDR) Ministry of State Security—commonly and heretofore referred to as the *Stasi*—mass housing was a primary site of mass surveillance. Housing was where people spent a considerable amount of their lives and, in contrast to spaces of work, expressed themselves relatively freely. As one of the "niches" in which East Germans found refuge from the Soviet-socialist surveillance regime of the GDR, the home became a site of the surveillance state's heightened attention.[1] The Stasi set up observation posts in key housing sites to inspect potential deviant behavior, recruited informants amongst residents, and installed listening devices in neighboring walls. Preemptive surveillance strategies targeted housing, as well. With "housing district inquiries" (*Wohngebietsermittlung*), the Stasi collected preliminary information on citizens following the Chekist objective to uncover "who is

Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine.

[1] The term "niche society" was coined for the GDR by Günter Gaus and has since been mobilized to argue for the existence of privacy and private spheres exempt from socialist ideology and rule. See: Günter Gaus, *Wo Deutschland liegt: Eine Ortsbestimmung* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1983). For a discussion on Christian subculture and domestic life in the GDR as spaces of this "niche society," see: Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

who."[2] These systematic background checks were aided by an architectural counterpart, called "housing district surveys" (*Wohngebietsaufklärung*), which mapped spatial relationships between persons and buildings, uncovering "who" and "what" was "where" for surveillance operations ahead.[3]

This paper examines the Stasi's housing district surveys as a particular genre of East German state surveillance and explores the spatial modes and strategies through which East German state power operated in housing settlements. Analyzing the ways the East German secret police reproduced and used the built environment, I demonstrate that East German architecture both facilitated and complicated methods of state surveillance, ultimately resisting the panoptic aspirations of state power. I thus argue that Michel Foucault's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, which continues to be one of the leading models for interrogating the relationship between architecture and surveillance, does not fully elucidate the spatial practice and efficacy of surveillance in the GDR.[4]

The architecture of housing is no outlier to Foucault's theory of panoptic surveillance. To Foucault, Bentham's prison is an "abstraction," "a diagram of a mechanism of [disciplinary] power reduced to its ideal form."[5] While the Panopticon provides "a figure of a political technology," housing belongs to one such "political technology of the body" through which power exerts itself by spatially distributing people.[6] In Bentham's design, a central observation tower overlooks solitary cells circumscribing the circular structure. Yet, the "physics" of panoptic surveillance, asserting itself by way of architecture and geometry, can be achieved through myriad spatial-organizational regimes and established by the distribution of buildings. Key to this architectural and optical system is the observation of many by the few and the

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[2] The term "Chekist" refers to *Cheka*, the post-revolution Russian intelligence service, which provided the *Leitbild* for state security agencies across the Soviets, including the Stasi.

[3] "Aufklärung" is a complicated concept to translate both due to its weighty historical connotations and various meanings within the Stasi jargon. Agents of the East German state security apparatus' espionage and reconnaissance unit HVA, for example, were referred to as "Aufklärer," literally "enlighteners, sent out into the world" to find out and expose unknown connections between the "Western enemy forces." Jens Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi: East Germany's Secret Police, 1945-1990* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 154. "Aufklärung" means—along with "reconnaissance" and "enlightenment"—clarification, exposition, and revelation. The term is hence imbued with the meaning of visually explicating unknown connections between things. My translation relies on the definition of "Aufklärung" as "a preliminary survey to gain information." Thus, to analyze "Aufklärung" as a specific line of spatial investigative work and an activity of architectural knowledge production, I refer to it as "survey."

[4] This paper primarily relies on a reading of Foucault's chapter on panopticism, in: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1995), 195–228.

[5] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 205.

[6] Translated from French and quoted in: Michael C. Behrent, "Foucault and Technology," *History and Technology* 29, no. 1 (2013): 55.

dissociation of the "see / being seen dyad."[7] Panoptic technologies render the surveilled fully visible while removing the watchers from sight, ultimately making the actual exercise of observation unnecessary to exert power.

Do surveillance agents become insignificant once the illusion of permanent visibility has been established, as Foucault intimates? While questions of agency, tactical co-optation, and resistance were notably left out of Foucault's analysis of panoptic power, Foucauldian panopticism also neglects the role of "watchers," as sociologist Kevin D. Haggerty notes.[8] Even though "in an ideal panoptic setting humans need not be present for the system to function," Haggerty writes, empirical findings have shown that "it matters enormously who is actually conducting surveillance," specifically because "surveillance of both people and things is typically a component of larger projects associated with a host of potential responses and interventions."[9] Exploring the role and methods of "watchers" is equally important to analyze the ways surveillance takes place in the built environment and to complicate the narrative that a "permanent, exhaustive, omnipresent surveillance" is rooted in its organization.[10] As Foucault acknowledges, "watchers" need to observe, register, and report, and to do so they need to devise certain schemes of observation: methods for selecting, classifying, and processing information, and systems of reporting.[11] Industrialized, typified, and mass produced architectural projects of "high modernism," as James C. Scott shows, constitute one such scheme of inspection and control.[12] These projects of "state simplification" rationalize and standardize social space "into a legible and administratively more convenient format," enabling the state to "see" and hence surveil.[13] Yet, investigating how power mechanisms see is not enough to account for the role of the "watchers." Surveillance is intrinsically a spatial practice and therefore we need to consider how surveillance agents move through and navigate space. With this consideration, another question arises regarding Foucault's reading of the Panopticon: does architecture act as a passive by-product of the objectives of surveillance and policing? Buildings are not merely the site but also objects of surveillance, and their spatial composition, material characteristics, and urban morphologies both shape and are shaped by surveillance. By comparatively analyzing how East German surveillance

[7] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202.

[8] Kevin D. Haggerty, "Tear Down the Walls: On Demolishing the Panopticon," in *Theorizing Surveillance: The Panopticon and Beyond*, ed. David Lyon (London; New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2011), 33–34.

[9] Haggerty, "Tear Down the Walls," 33.

[10] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 214.

[11] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 220.

[12] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 87–125.

[13] Scott, *Seeing Like a State,* 3.

agents encountered, mapped, and navigated housing from Wilhelmine-era *Mietskasernen* to Soviet-socialist *Plattenbauten*, this paper will interrogate architecture not merely as a backdrop to surveillance but as an active constituent of its operations.

Surveying and Navigating Prewar Housing Settlements

The East German state security apparatus put almost 50% of the population under some form of targeted surveillance.[14] Many of these surveillance activities concentrated within East German prefabricated mass housing structures known as Plattenbauten, where one in every three East German came to live by 1990.[15] To become a resident of any Plattenbau-settlement, including the "new cities" in Berlin-Marzahn or Leipzig-Grünau, citizens had to undergo a diligent vetting process. Their party memberships, contacts with the West and even job performances were subject to the ministry's background checks. The high-density Plattenbau-settlements were—so the Cold War paranoia went—a prime target for "Western enemy forces" threatening with infiltration.[16] Thus, despite its residents' political conformity, being in the know about what goes on in and around these social housing sites remained important to the Stasi. Old residential neighborhoods, this time seen as a hotbed of "unsocialist" behavior, were also under the Stasi's heightened attention.[17] Intellectuals, artists,

[14] The Stasi pursued approximately eight million people, and recorded, classified, and indexed their activities in six million dossiers comprising 180 kilometers of files. Paul Betts, *Within Walls*, 21. The level of intervention into people's lives varied greatly, ranging anywhere from a short folder "full of boring, bureaucratic trivia" that encompassed reports from the neighborhood police, the workplace, and various informants to more intrusive—but comparatively rare—forms such as wiretapping and limited-term video surveillance. See: Robert Darnton, "The Stasi Files," in *CTRL [SPACE]: Rhetorics of Surveillance from Bentham to Big Brother*, ed. Thomas Y. Levin, Ursula Frohne, and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 170-74.

[15] As a distinctly East German building technology, the Plattenbau-system was first introduced in 1961. Over the next three decades, many Plattenbau-types were developed, all of which promised complete standardization of design, prefabrication of all components, and fully integrated industrial assembly. By 1965, the Plattenbau-system came to constitute 30% of all East German construction activities. By 1985, 85% of all housing production in the GDR was conducted with industrial construction methods, and Plattenbauten comprised 75% of it. See: Christine Hannemann, *Die Platte: Industrialisierter Wohnungsbau in der DDR*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Verlag Hans Schiler, 2005), 23–24.

[16] So were many "academic" studies conducted at the ministry's "spy academy" in Potsdam devoted to developing blanket observation systems for specific Plattenbau-settlements, such as: "Nutzung operativer Beobachtungsstützpunkte im Neubaugebiet Leipzig-Grünau," BArch MfS BVfS Leipzig Abt. VIII 782, 1-11; "Dokumentation und graphische Darstellung zur Nutzung operative Sicht- und Aufenthaltsstützpunkte in Leipzig-Grünau," BArch MfS BVfS Leipzig Abt VIII 367, 19-45.

[17] As Claus Bernet writes, "right up to the last years of the GDR, Wilhelmine districts were viewed as representing capitalism par excellence." Claus Bernet, "The 'Hobrecht Plan' (1862) and Berlin's Urban Structure," *Urban History* 31, no. 3 (2004): 416.

activists indeed chose to live in *Altbauten*—Wilhelmine-era tenements within the vicinity of old city centers—as a sign of their refusal of state social engineering.[18]

Surveilling and policing prewar and postwar housing required different methods due to their distinct morphologies. Wilhelmine housing conditions for the proletariat were characterized by rental barracks (*Mietskasernen*) which emerged as a product of capitalist housing production in an era of rapid industrialization. Even though they adhered to the general guidelines of their respective city plans, in the absence of building regulation and fueled by rampant land speculation, the Mietskasernen were developed as densely as possible by private landlords seeking to maximize profits. Growing from a front house into side wings and a rear house, the Mietskaserne became a tenement type: five to six stories high and circumscribing a residential lot by leaving only a small inner courtyard. Working-class residents had only communal hygiene facilities and little to no sunlight in their one-room accommodations, accessible by narrow hallways and staircases opening into the courtyard. These agglomerations of residential space tightly lined along streets, forming entire blocks with interconnecting courtyards, and hiding what came to be known as wretched quarters (*Elendsviertel*) behind their attractive neo-historicist façades.

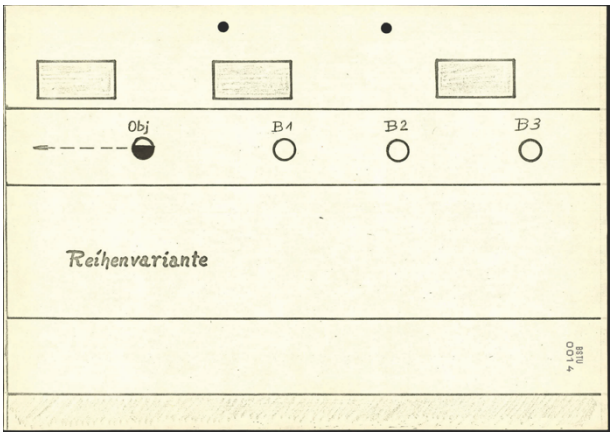
Postwar housing production in the GDR aimed to ameliorate endemic housing shortage and the "miseries" of the Wilhelmine housing stock. From the 1960s onward, new structures in prefabricated concrete sprawled across war-torn urban centers, on the peripheries of major East German cities, and at industrial sites. Following a long lineage of social housing solutions within the European modernist tradition, they were rationalized, standardized, and typified. All units had access to fresh air and sunlight, with their windows opening to expansive green fields as opposed to narrower streets or courtyards. Plattenbauten were not only social but socialist housing. With their planning, the East German state set forth the programmatic reconstruction of the society, reorganizing both domestic and urban relations anew.

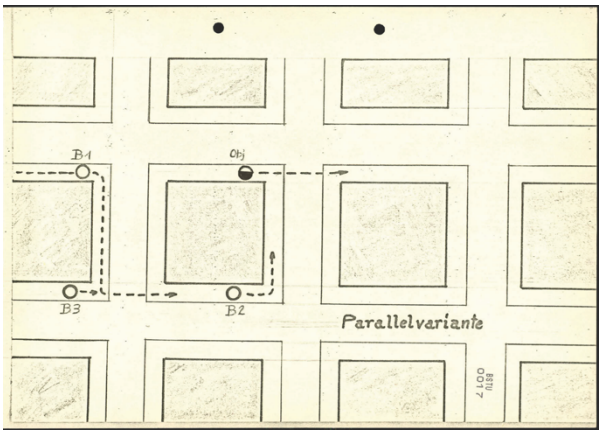
One way the Stasi responded to these different urban-residential environments was by devising so-called "observation systems" (*Beobachtungssysteme*), which choreographed the movements of surveillance agents' foot-tracking and observing subjects of interest. The objective was to orchestrate an interplay of moving and stationed "observers" so that "objects"—namely, pursued subjects—could be kept visually "under control" and their destinations could be determined.[19] Observation

[18] It is worth noting that bourgeois liberals of the Kaisserreich saw neighborhoods housing the proletariat as "breeding grounds for both radical left-wing politics and moral degeneration," only a century earlier. Rubin, "Amnesiopolis: From Mietskaserne to Wohnungsbauserie 70 in East Berlin's Northeast," *Central European History* 47 (2014): 337.

[19] "Beobachtungssysteme," BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, 13. The Stasi referred to both human subjects and buildings (*Objekthaus*, *Überwachungsobjekt*) as "objects" of surveillance.

systems considered many factors, including population and building density, the width of streets, size of building blocks, and the form of urban planning. For "quiet neighborhoods and uncrowded streets," the East German secret police recommended the use of the "sequenced" (*Reihenvariante*) and "parallel" (*Parallelvariante*) variations. In the sequenced variation, three observers (*Beobachter*) would follow their "object" by forming a straight line while constantly changing their positions (fig. 1). In the parallel variation, they would pursue their object parallel to each other across adjacent streets (fig. 2).[20] The parallel variation was, however, only fitting for garden colonies or neighborhoods of single-family houses on city peripheries, where parallel streets or pathways were not too far apart from one another. For Plattenbau-settlements, where streets were lined by rows of housing blocks and offset in greater distances with green belts in between, the sequencing method was preferred. In these social housing sites, heavy foot traffic occurred only during the morning and evening when people went to and came back from work.[21] The sequencing method promised to make the street "look livelier," diverting the attention of potential "counter-observers"—not just accomplices but passers-by or curious neighbors.





(left) Figure 1. *Reihenvariante*, date unknown. "Sequenced" variation of the Stasi's observation systems. Source: BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, p. 14. (right) Figure 2. *Parallelvariante*, date unknown. "Parallel" variation of the Stasi's observation systems. Source: BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, p. 17.

By contrast, in densely built, crowded, and organically planned residential neighborhoods, such as the old tenement quarters, the Stasi urged its operatives to follow the "pre-stationing" model (*Vorpostierungsvariante*) (fig. 3). In this method, one

[20] "Beobachtungssysteme," BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, 14-15, 17-18.

[21] Writing on the Plattenbau-settlement in Berlin-Marzahn, historian Eli Rubin explains that the settlement "was constructed so that every resident could walk to either work or school or could walk easily to a public transit stop. There were very few who left their building and hopped into a car to drive away, in contrast to the older neighborhoods." Eli Rubin, *Amnesiopolis: Modernity, Space, and Memory in East Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 141.

agent was stationed in a building with a clear view (*Sichtpunkt*) of the "moving object." Three agents were positioned on block corners and street intersections towards which the surveilled might approach, and a surveillance vehicle drove towards the target.[22] The Stasi's observation systems thus suggested that, at least at a rudimentary level, surveillance conducted in old housing districts might require more elaborate planning and more human power than in new social housing sites.

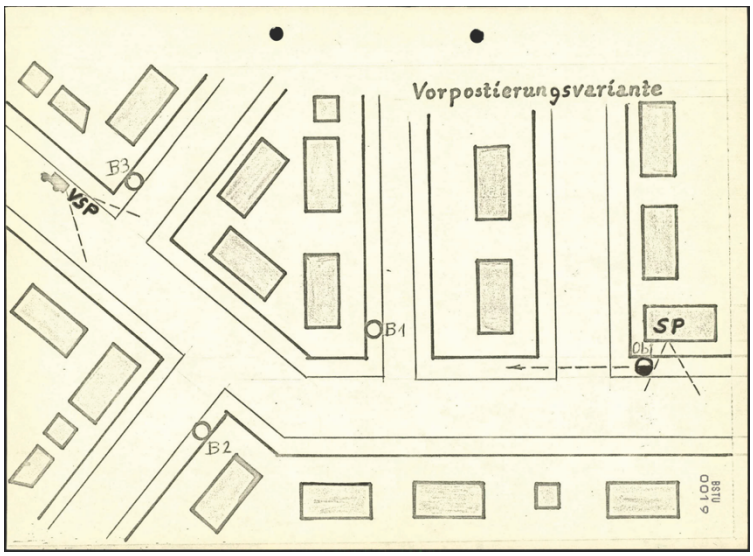


Figure 3. *Vorpostierungsvariante*, date unknown. "Pre-stationing" model of the Stasi's observation systems. Source: BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, p. 19.

While observation systems considered urban morphologies, their successful execution depended on "good collective interplay and prior and extensive knowledge of localities."[23] To produce the local spatial knowledge needed for tailoring these "systems" to a given site, the East German secret police had to visit and document them. This was achieved with operational surveying (*operative Aufklärungsarbeit*), which helped discover spatial relationships between structures, spaces, and persons.[24] The Stasi attended to many spatial characteristics: entrances and exits, sightlines, hidden pathways and throughways, vertical and horizontal circulation, to name a few. These connections were networked to ensure fast, efficient, and secret movements during current and future operations. The secret police inspected, on-site, the frequency of red lights, noted the schedules of nearby public transportation options, commented on the level of street light illumination and when to expect pedestrian or vehicle traffic in an area (fig.4). Examining spatialities and temporalities of the built environment, surveys collected information unavailable on city maps or building blueprints but consequential

[22] "Beobachtungssysteme," BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, 19.

[23] "Beobachtungssysteme," BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, 18.

[24] This largely fell under the responsibility of the state security apparatus' so-called "observation and inquiry line"—the Main Department 8 (*Hauptabteilung VIII*)—which, in assignment of other departments, planned and realized pursuit and observation schemes, as well as house searches and arrests in and outside of the GDR. For an overview of the department's history and range of activities, see: Angela Schmole, *Hauptabteilung VIII: Beobachtung, Ermittlung, Durchsuchung, Festnahme* (Berlin: Bundesbeauftragte für Stasi-Unterlagen (BStU), 2011).

for surveillance operations, nonetheless. The embodied knowledge gained was articulated via various media. Maps, sketches, scaled and unscaled plans, sections, and photographs were supplemented by written reports, legends, annotations, and charts (fig. 5). Diverse survey media helped the Stasi plan foot-tracking operations, mobile and anchored observation, surreptitious entry, and house searches.

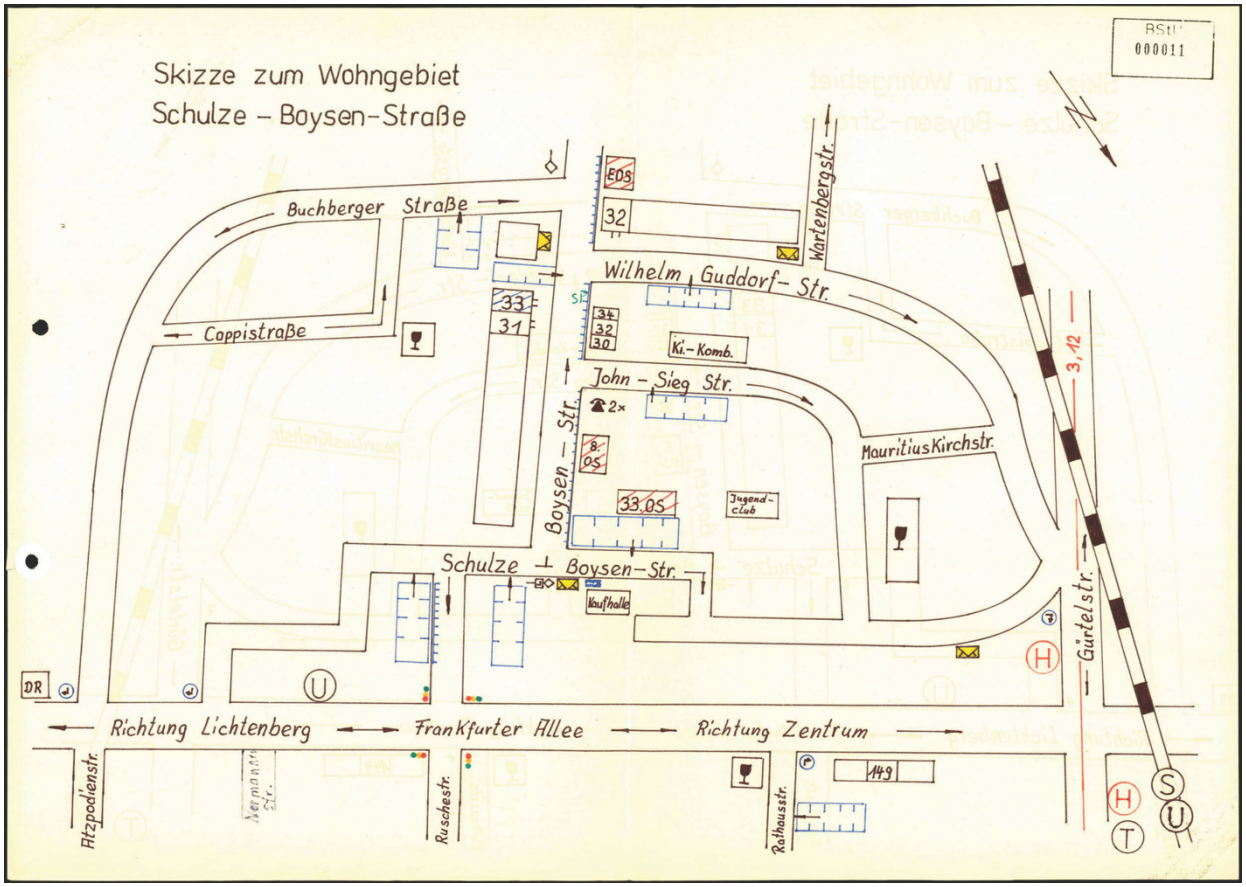


Figure 4. *Skizze zum Wohngebiet Schulze-Boysen-Straße,* 1988. Site plan for a housing survey from Berlin's Lichtenberg neighborhood. The hand-drawn plan shows traffic lights, mailboxes, parking spaces, public facilities, and public transportation options (marked as H, T, S and U) within the vicinity of the targeted housing structure. The target housing is hatched in blue (no. 33) and red hatches indicate buildings offering sightlines or stopover posts. Source: BArch MfS HA VIII 6348, p. 11.

What were the means with which the Stasi registered and reported on the built environment, and how was this spatial knowledge used? A close architectural reading of the Stasi's passageway surveys (*Aufklärung Durchgangshäuser*) helps answer these questions. Passageways between interconnecting courtyards across old building clusters were eminent objects of the Stasi's urban-spatial analysis. As undisciplined spaces occupied by undisciplined bodies, they posed both an advantage and a threat to secret policing. They were also pivotal for adjusting abstract observation systems to specific architectural settings. The East German secret police thus diligently surveyed passageways connecting courtyards and streets by hand-drawing site plans, marking

links, and reporting on access points and routes (fig. 6).[25] To help orient observers, the plans were traced from maps for an accurate representation of scale and proportion. These tracings were done by ruler, suggesting that the plans were prepared at the office instead of on site. The drawings were kept simple: they only showed signposts within the area, such as subway and train stations, parks, squares, and noteworthy buildings. The alternate route offered by the passageway was drawn in color as the focal point of the study. With this spatial analysis, the East German secret police prepared for foot-tracking subjects, who—under possible suspicion of their tail—could take these hidden routes. It also created maps (both mental and material) benefitting surveillance agents' covert approach and getaway. Accompanying written reports described the surroundings step by step: how unkempt the greenery of a courtyard is, or the difference in ground elevation from one courtyard to the next. Such environmental and architectural details were not recorded for a subsequent correction of disorder, as a Foucauldian reading might suggest. Rather, they were distinct identifiers of a place with which agents could verify their locations. The amount of detail covered in these reports also indicates that the Stasi visited the premises in-person but only took notes as sketching on site would have provoked suspicion and elicited unwelcome questions from civilians in the area.

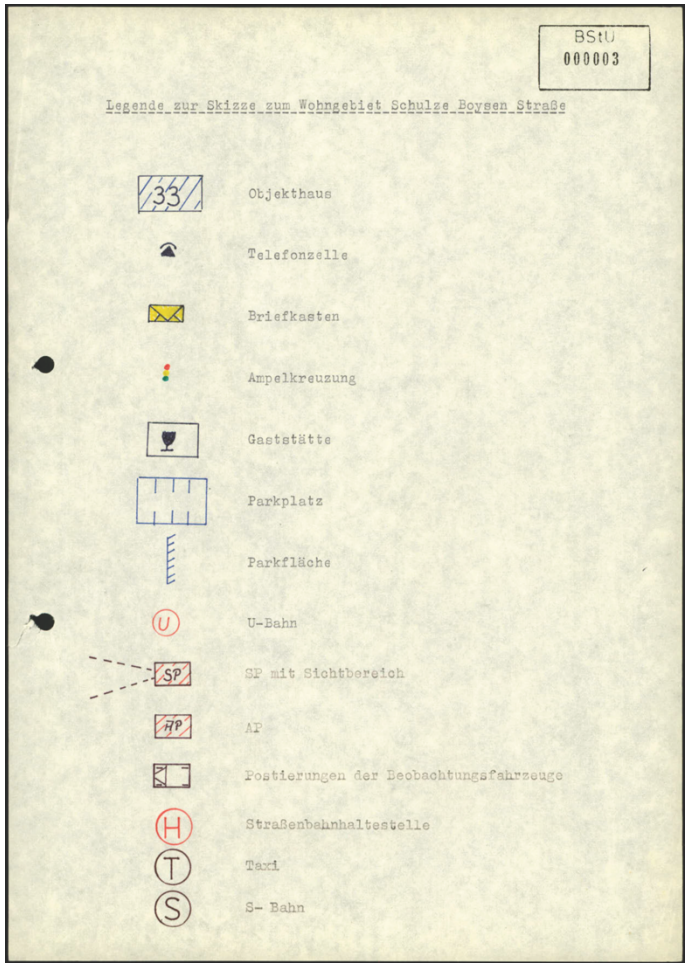


Figure 5. *Legende zur Skizze zum Wohngebiet Schulze-Boysen-Straße*, 1988. Drawn legend accompanying the housing survey above (fig. 4). From top to bottom, listed symbols stand for "object housing," which is the focus of the survey, telephone booth, mailbox, traffic light, restaurant, parking lot, parking space, subway station, sightpost with sightline, stopover post, positioning of observation vehicles, tram stop, taxi, and streetcar terminal. BArch MfS HA VIII 6348, p. 3.

[25] See: "Durchgangshaus im Stadtbezirk Friedrichshain, Mitte, Prenzlauerberg," BArch MfS HA VIII 8032, 1-17.

Once completed, survey materials were catalogued according to spatial themes, with hidden passageways belonging to a folder on shortcuts and safe locations used for path diversions. Cataloguing allowed the secret police to revisit these documents to devise new observation schemes targeting previously surveyed premises. It also made regular verification possible. Surveys were updated according to changing spatial conditions and refined for "objectivity," meaning with the input of multiple agents.[26] Thus, through surveying, the Stasi not only understood better the spatialities within which it had to operate but also mediated them, transmitting its mental map to other agents.

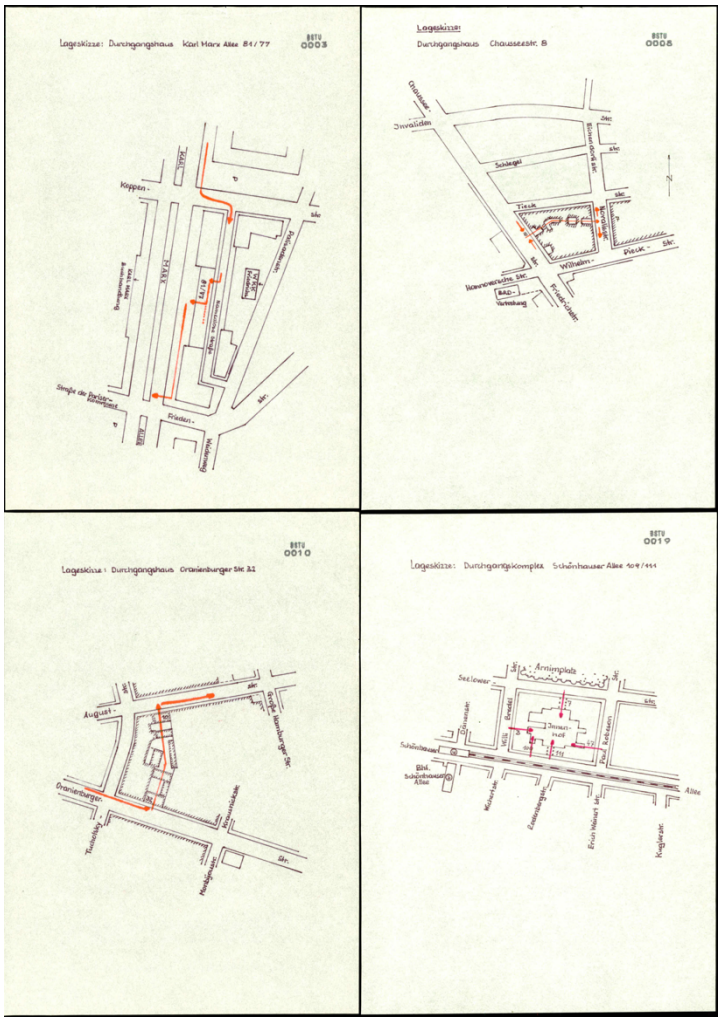


Figure 6. *Lageskizze: Durchganghäuser*, ca. 1981. Berlin "passageway" surveys conducted by the Stasi. Source: BArch MfS HA 8032, p. 3, 8, 10, 19.

[26] Siegfried Suckut, *Das Wörterbuch der Staatssicherheit. Definitionen zur "Politisch-Operativen Arbeit,"* 3rd Edition (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2016), 260.

Losing Tail and Losing Sight in Plattenbauten

Was it more complicated to surveil and police old housing settlements, as the Stasi's observation systems and passageway surveys suggest? Plattenbau-settlements presented the East German secret police with some advantages. In contrast to old housing structures, designed and constructed through decentralized processes, blueprints of East German prefabricated housing types were easily available to the Stasi's disposal. These blueprints provided the secret police with elementary knowledge of their spatial configurations prior to surveying efforts. The replicability of building types to various sites brought with it a degree of replicability in surveillance measures targeting them, as well.[27] While the Stasi needed to explore the spatial characteristics of old housing structures individually, at Plattenbau-settlements "personal inspection of the area" could be supported by learning "which new building types are prevalent…and what special features they have," features concerning accessibility and visibility within the building type.[28]

In planning surreptitious entry and pursuit of subjects into prewar and early postwar residential structures, the Stasi had to watch and determine time patterns—garbage collection schedules, visits of postal workers, and general habits of residents—to find out when a building would be generally accessible.[29] The equipment of industrialized housing types with intercom systems changed the rules of accessibility for the Stasi, giving them another advantage. As the entrance doors automatically closed and locked upon entry, there was no point in systematic observation and determination of patterns as the operatives could randomly ask to be buzzed in. In comparison to old housing structures within city centers where neighbors formed a closely-knit community, in the Plattenbauten hundreds of residents lived together and, while people most probably knew who lived on the same floor as them, they certainly did not know everyone in the building.[30]

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[27] Studying the most commonly applied Plattenbau types, the Stasi attempted to develop listening technologies to implement centrally and en masse. See: "Vorschlag über eine neue Realisierungsvariante von oben oder unten in der Wohnungstypen IW 73 bis IW80," BArch MfS BV Karl-Marx-Stadt Abt. 26 168. Other studies included: "Konzeption für den Einsatz der Linie B in Wohnbauten P2 & Q3," BArch MfS BV Karl-Marx-Stadt Abt. Wismut 23; and "Telefonversorgung im Neubautyp QP71," BArch MfS Abt. 26 868, 8-22. There is currently no evidence, however, showing that these plans were realized.

[28] "Dokumentation über den Stadtbezirk Berlin-Marzahn. Erarbeitet von den Jugendkollektiven des Referates 4 der Abt. 3," BArch MfS HA VIII 5192, 11.

[29] See, for instance: "Wohngebietsaufklärung. Dresden Stadtteil Striesen - Bereich Johannes R. Becher Platz," BArch MfS HA VIII 8032, 36-42.

[30] This point has previously been made by: Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 144. As Rubin writes, "it was not uncommon for residents to ring a random bell and ask to be buzzed in because they had forgotten their key or because they needed to use a telephone, which many of Marzahn's buildings had in their lobbies." For further information, see: "Dokumentation über den Stadtbezirk Berlin-Marzahn," BArch MfS HA VIII 5192, 10.

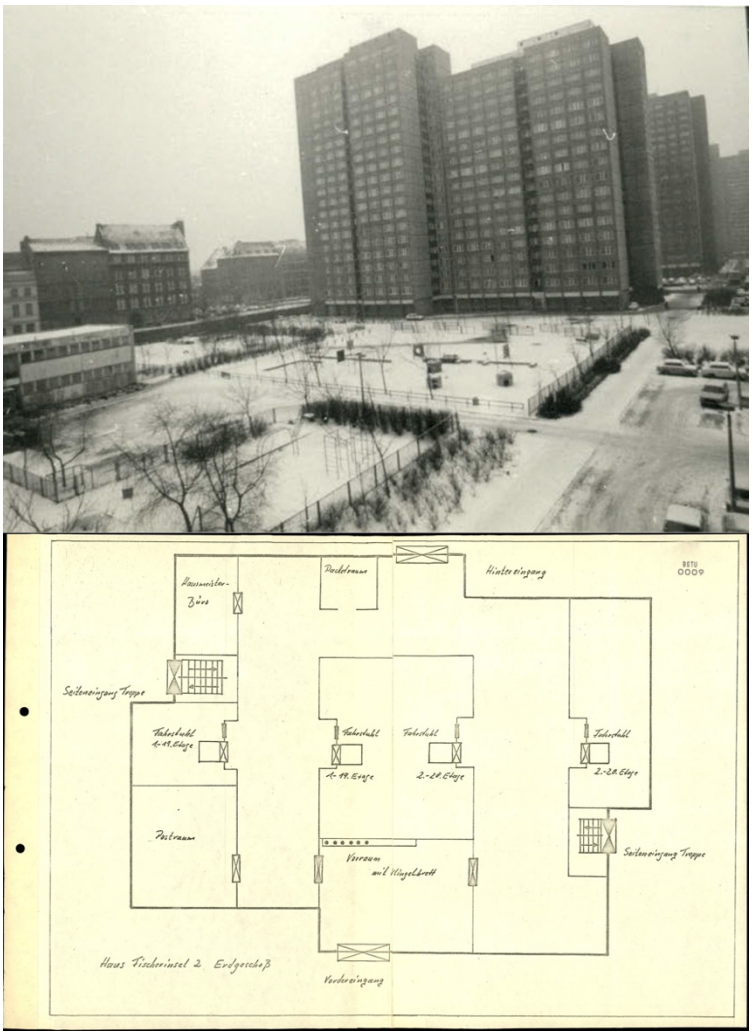

Figure 7. *Aufklärung Fischerinsel 2*, date unknown. Exterior photograph (above) and ground floor plan (below) of the WHH GT 18 type housing on Berlin's Fischerinsel, prepared by the Stasi. Source: BArch MfS HA 8929, p. 7, 9.

Elevators were also considered significant in Stasi surveys, but not necessarily beneficial for surveillance operations. Foot-tracking subjects of interest by the staircase versus the elevator required different approaches. In buildings without an elevator—including Mietskasernen as well as fully industrialized types up to five stories high—the secret police either had to climb ahead, which was difficult to orchestrate as the surveilled entered the premises first, or had to listen to and count their steps to determine their whereabouts within the building. The aural dimension of the staircase communicating information through echo, however, was lost to the elevator. In many housing types, elevators either skipped or stopped between floors, making it impossible to aurally track whether the surveilled was walking upstairs or downstairs thereafter. The

staircase shaft of a Plattenbau with elevators—usually ten or more stories high—simply rendered the steps not distinctly audible. For example, in the twenty-stories high WHH GT 18 (*Wohnhochhaus Grosstafelbauweise*) type residential towers erected on Berlin's Fischerinsel in the early 1970s, there were four elevators, all accessible from the ground floor. Two of these stopped on floors with odd numbers and the other two on those with even numbers (fig. 7).[31] With twelve units on each floor, all connected via a central staircase, the target could be headed anywhere, regardless of which elevator they took. In the most commonly applied housing type, the WBS 70 introduced in 1971, the elevators stopped at every floor but the uppermost, yet the secret police still had to keep physical proximity to and a visual tap on its subjects to determine their destination as there could be up to eight units per floor.[32] In other types, such as the eleven-story high P2, developed in 1965, elevators stopped only on the fourth, seventh, and tenth floor, making it even more difficult to follow a subject without provoking suspicion.[33]

In former Mietskasernen, too, the Stasi had no way of knowing where its targets might be going. They could take the stairs of the block facing the street (*Vorderhaus*) or advance towards the side wings or the back house (*Hinterhaus*), both of which were accessible only through the courtyard. The solution was to determine observation points within the housing complex as a preemptive surveillance measure. Surveying a prewar housing structure in Berlin, the Stasi operatives photographically documented vantage points allowing for the observation of possible movements across the courtyard.[34] At first, these photographs of a seemingly dilapidated building capture its dark corners: opportune hiding places with exclusive views onto the interior windows of the complex. Yet, paying attention to how the Stasi was able to take these images, it becomes clear that they were taken from these very corners: from the windows of the side wing's staircase looking onto the courtyard (fig. 8), or from the semibasement leading from the front lobby to the courtyard (fig. 9). Old housing settlements were crowded and difficult to decipher spatially, but helped both agents and subjects to be out of sight.

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[31] "Aufklärung Fischerinsel 2," BArch MfS HA VIII 8929, 1-9.

[32] Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 144; "Dokumentation über den Stadtbezirk Berlin-Marzahn," BStU MfS HA VIII 5192, 12.

[33] Other architectural and technological differences between the centrally devised and manufactured Plattenbau-types included the weight of standardized prefabricated elements, dimension of housing units, and principle of load-bearing walls. From the early 1960s until the late 1980s, every subsequent type demonstrated a higher degree of rationalization in design and industrial production.

[34] "Haus Voigtstr. 36/37 Bln.-Friedrichshain," BArch MfS HA II 29913, 9-12.

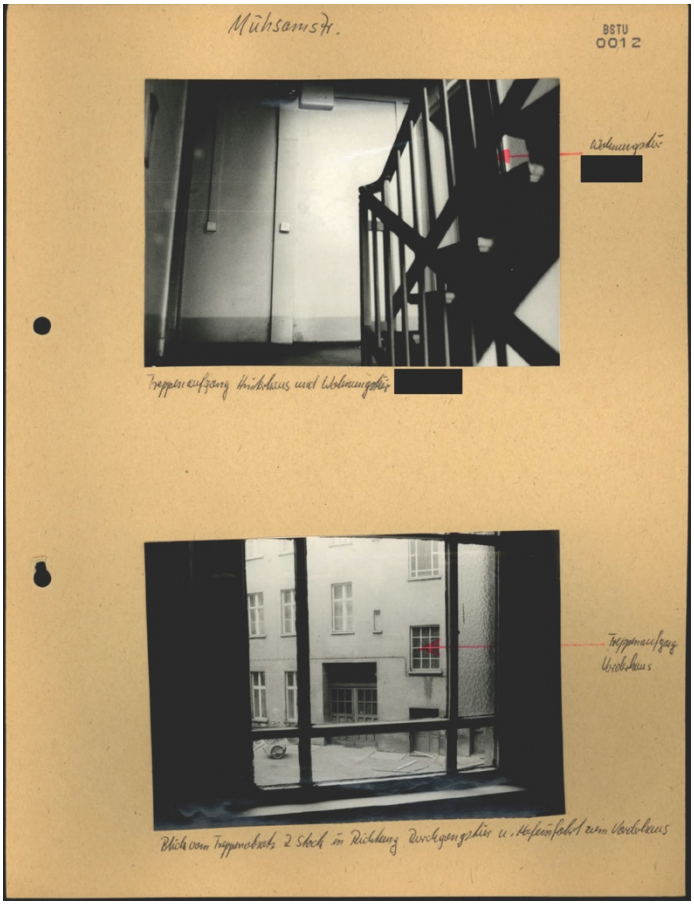

Figure 8. *Haus Voigtstr. 36/37 Bln-Friedrichshain*, date unknown. Photographic documentation of a former *Mietskaserne* in Berlin-Friedrichshain, surveyed by the Stasi. Image above is taken from the staircase of the back house; image below taken from the side wing's staircase, looking onto the exit from the front house into the courtyard. Source: BArch MfS HA II 29913, p. 12.

In prefabricated housing settlements and complexes, by contrast, it was difficult to hide and there were simply more routes of escape for everyone: for surveillance agents and East Germans under their watch. East German prefabricated housing—by virtue of its planning and design—provided its own hard-to-track spatial connections akin to the back alleys, connecting courtyards, and hidden passages between old building clusters. In addition to multiple entrances, exits, staircases, and elevators, corridors of adjacent housing blocks were linked on two or more floors. In the eleven stories high variation of the WBS 70 housing type, for example, the basements and 9th floors of housing assemblages were horizontally connected via throughways between their corridors; leading up to hallways and vertical circulation, and hence linking floors, entrances, and exits of chains of buildings. This meant that a target could enter an eleven-storied WBS 70 type from one block, take the elevator or stairs to reach one of the throughways, and ultimately exit the structure from several blocks down.[35] In the eleven-stories high P2 type housing, these connections existed between the twin housing sections and on floors where the elevators stopped, making it even more difficult to foot-track a suspect alert to being followed. One could potentially enter the building from one section, take the elevator up, move on to the other section, climb up or down the stairs to take the elevator again, and exit the section from its rear door.[36] These were spatial characteristics unique to the new housing stock, and the

[35] Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 144.

[36] "Wohngebietsaufklärung. Dresden Stadtteil Mitte - Bereich Fučíkplatz. Objekthaus Comeniusstr. 12," BArch MfS HA VIII 8032, 29.

Plattenbauten created vertical and horizontal mazes through which the Stasi had to keep physical proximity to and a visual tap on its subjects of surveillance.

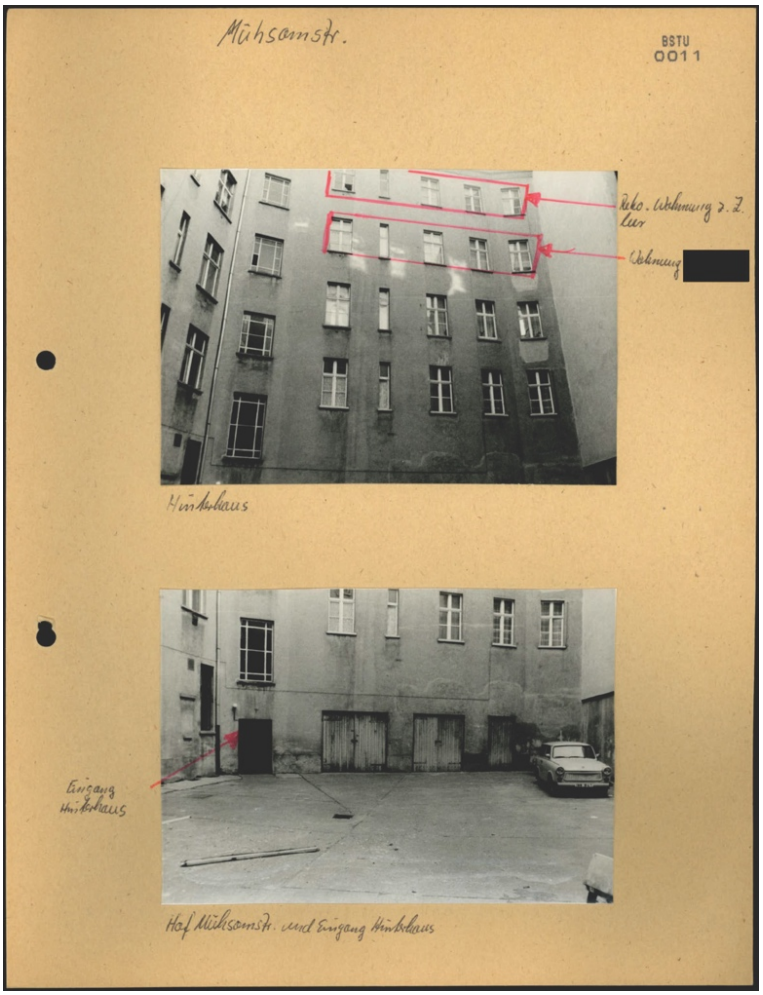

Figure 9. *Haus Voigtstr. 36/37 Bln-Friedrichshain*, date unknown. Photographic documentation of a former *Mietskaserne* in Berlin-Friedrichshain, surveyed by the Stasi. Image above taken from the courtyard; image below taken from the semibasement of the front house, looking onto the entrance of the back house. Source: BArch MfS HA II 29913, p. 11.

For the Stasi's clandestine work, orientation and navigation within the Plattenbauten was similarly intricate as in the GDR's prewar building stock. This complicates the narrative that modernist solutions for the social ordering of space—or, in Scott's terms, state simplification—creates seamless and uniform results for the exercise of state power. Writing on the Plattenbau-settlement in Berlin-Marzahn, historian Eli Rubin states that the Stasi "knew every access point, every piece of technology, every sight line, every angle…knew the spaces of Marzahn better than the

residents themselves."[37] Yet, as I argue, while the Stasi labored to learn new cities like Marzahn, it did so to learn countless other building sites across the GDR.

This surveillance labor did not directly translate into the "economy of power" central to Foucault's panoptic model. The panoptic scheme assures economy in material, personnel, and time by centralizing surveillance, reducing the number of observers, and standardizing processes of information collection, making the power apparatus more "efficient."[38] Considering the Stasi's architectural surveys, however, especially the lengths surveillance agents went to explore, visually mark, and describe the minutiae of the built environment in a process of regular verification, Foucault's concept becomes brittle.[39] The architectural and spatial specificities of old housing sites were not available to the Stasi, but inspecting Plattenbau types did not eliminate "the need for local knowledge," either. Contrary to Rubin's contention, this elementary knowledge did not render the secret police "ready to conduct surveillance and espionage anywhere throughout the country."[40] First, East German housing types were no monoliths, and most standards had at least few regional variations, such as the P2-Halle, WHH 18 "Typ Jena," or WBS70 "Typ Cottbus," which differed in their plan layouts, number of floors, and units per floor, to name a few.[41] These modifications were created due to differences in production capacities, territorial reach, and local needs.[42] Second, typified building methods—regardless of their level of adherence to any centrally-devised standard—still required adjustment to topographic conditions, infrastructure, and roadworks during assembly. This led to alterations in the arrangement of block sequences, interconnecting corridors, and location of back doors,

[37] Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 133.

[38] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 206, 218–19.

[39] In fact, the Stasi grew in both budget and employment numbers during periods of relative relaxation, such as the détente years, and domestic surveillance became more intense over the 1970s and early 1980s, which coincided with the expansion of the GDR's mass housing landscape. Gieseke, *The History of the Stasi*, 49–51.

[40] Rubin, *Amnesiopolis*, 138.

[41] Philipp Meuser, *Vom seriellen Plattenbau zur komplexen Großsiedlung: Industrieller Wohnungsbau in der DDR 1953 -1990*, vol. 1 (Berlin: DOM Publishers, 2022), 136–37.

[42] Some features of the centrally devised WBS 70 type, for example, "could not be implemented due to restrictions in production capacities" and territorial "building combines developed regional solutions in consideration of general guidelines and their own material-technical conditions." Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, "Leitfaden für die Instandsetzung und Modernisierung von Wohngebäuden in der Plattenbauweise: WBS 70 Wohnungsbauserie 70 6,3 t" (BBSR Bonn, 1997), 4. For an overview of the modifications to mentioned types, also see: Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, "Leitfaden für die Instandsetzung und Modernisierung von Wohngebäuden in der Plattenbauweise: P2 5,0 t" (BBSR Bonn, 1992), 4–11; Bundesministerium für Raumordnung, Bauwesen und Städtebau, "Leitfaden für die Instandsetzung und Modernisierung von Wohngebäuden in der Plattenbauweise: Wohnhochhäuser" (BBSR Bonn, 1993), 3–41.

to name a few, and had significant effects on the principles of circulation and vantage points allowing observation.[43] Ultimately, learning prefabricated types did not endow the Stasi with the panoptic power Rubin ascribes.

One of the implications of Foucault's analysis of the Panopticon is that architecture is epiphenomenal to surveillance as the "physics" of disciplinary power can be architecturally perfected to create homogenous power effects.[44] In the GDR, the state certainly desired to establish a panoptic system, attempting to turn "the whole social body into a field of perception: thousands of eyes posted everywhere, mobile attentions ever on the alert."[45] Yet, the situated practice of building is much more complex than Foucault acknowledges and, as such, its complicity in assuring a system of full (in)visibility must be questioned.

As this paper has shown, even in projects built on a tabula rasa, designed through centralized processes, and produced with standardized architectural technologies, the East German built environment did not completely lend itself to the panoptic aspirations of state power despite the state's continuous efforts. Plattenbauten, within this context, acted as mass produced and standardized technologies of dwelling *and* of surveillance but fundamentally different from a Foucauldian panoptic architectural technology that is entrenched with the logic of state power, exposing everything but its observers. Plattenbauten facilitated surveillance as their centralization and standardization gave the East German state a leg up, as it were, in devising tactics for observation. They also complicated this system, however, by creating the illusion of uniform replicability and contesting the dissociation of the dialectics of seeing and being seen. This did not occur only in Plattenbauten. Whenever housing structures in the GDR exposed, they exposed both agents and subjects of surveillance, and where they provided a potential for invisibility, it was again available to both. How these frictions potentially facilitated resistant spatial acts in the GDR poses an important and urgent question and, while it is outside of the premises of this paper, it can hopefully be traced by following the discordant footsteps of the watchers.

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[43] Outlining tactics for monitoring the Plattenbau-settlement in Leipzig-Grünau, for example, the Stasi determined that some building clusters created "complicated conditions" for the sort of centralized, anchored observation the Stasi was seeking to establish. While some housing structures faced no other building from which their main entrances could be observed, others lined the street in such a way that their entrances visually blocked each other, making a single and clear sightline of observation for the entire row impossible. BArch MfS BVfS Leipzig Abt VIII 367, 21. In a prefabricated housing complex built within an existing neighborhood, the entrance floor of one typified housing block lead via its exit to another street level due to the topography of the site, which was inaccessible and unobservable from the vantage point of the other exit. See: "Erläuterungsbericht zum Wohngebiet 1055 Berlin, am Friedrichshain 21a," BArch MfS HA VIII 3334, 1-3.

[44] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 202.

[45] Foucault, *Discipline and Punish,* 214.

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Doorway to Dissidence: The 1979 Doors Exhibition in the GDR

a response by Iman Salty

In October of 1979, a group of eight German Democratic Republic (GDR) artists in their twenties organized an exhibition designed to reflect the sentiments of their generation. It took place on a year that would mark the 30th anniversary since the formation of the GDR.[1] Held at the Leonhardi-Museum in Dresden from October 27-November 11, the Doors Exhibition [Türen-Ausstellung] overwhelmingly represented experiences of being caught at a threshold—enclosed, separated, and alienated, yet on the edge of possibility, openness, and connection—as metaphorized through the everyday structure of the door. How was it that the symbol of the door came to hold such significance and potential at the time?

In this exhibition, each artist created their own "door" constructions by salvaging and repurposing objects from demolished houses and junk yards, a strategy that in itself challenged the "official" government sanctioned art of Socialist Realism by reflecting the intention of these artists to create work in a so-called "non-official" or "non-

[1] The GDR was established in 1949, politically dividing Germany into East and West, which would later be marked geopolitically through the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961. The Doors Exhibition is retrospectively documented in amazing detail supported by personal artist interviews conducted by art historian Angelika Weißbach. The artists who participated in the exhibition include Michael Freudenberg, Volker Henze, Ralf Kerbach, Helge Leiberg, Reinhard Sandner, Cornelia Schleime, Thomas Wetzel, and Karla Woisnitza. See: Angelika Weißbach, "'Das ist der Anfang der Überwindung des falschen Bewußtseins!' Die Türen-Ausstellung im Leonhardi-Museum in Dresden 1979," *OwnReality* 5, (2014): 1-46, http://www.perspectivia.net/content/publikationen/ownreality/5/weissbach-de.

conformist" manner.[2] For then 26-year-old Cornelia Schleime, her work *Room of the Poet* [*Raum des Dichters*] critiqued the banning of many poetic texts and, more broadly, encapsulated feelings of creative constraint in the GDR.[3] She positioned two upright doors facing opposite each other, maintaining significant space in between them. Their exteriors were painted with black and white geometric shapes. They stood upon a large sheet of blue paper representing a body of water in between them, and yet they were propped up together and connected by thin wires. On this "ocean" floor lay scattered broken glass that had come from a smashed windowpane from one of the doors. A drawing of a face was also on the "ocean" floor, whose "reflection" was caught in a papier mâché head hanging from one of the doors above it. Paper eyes, paper ships, and strands of poetic texts were dispersed between the doors and caught in the wires that bound them. Strung up on the wires between the doors was also a saw, because for dissidents in the GDR "one was not immediately decapitated as with a guillotine, but rather their head was sawed off slowly and agonizingly."[4] Though not literal, it conveyed in other words that in this installation attempting to move *through* one door to the other would make occupying this threshold untenable without inflicting damage to the body, the senses, and the psyche. As documented by art historian Angelika Weißbach, upon visiting the exhibition A. R. Penck—the pseudonym of Ralf Winkler, an influential non-conformist artist from Dresden at the time who was frequently surveilled by the Stasi and often prohibited from exhibiting work—reportedly described the group exhibition as "the beginning of overcoming false consciousness!"[5] By 1980, Penck would move to West Germany, and by 1981 Schleime herself would be barred from exhibiting work, a common fate of non-conformist artists.

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[2] It is important to note that while it can be helpful in our understanding of artistic practices in Cold War-era Central and Eastern Europe to create the distinction between "official" and "non-official" art, this binary should be challenged as artistic practices were more nuanced than this. In the context of the GDR, there were still many non-official artists who were painters, and therefore engaged with more traditional forms of art making but in a non-official way that rejected Socialist Realism. According to Weißbach, the artists in the Doors Exhibition intentionally created works that would be different than academic conventions of art in the GDR, such as painting and other non-experimental forms of art. Weißbach, 4.

[3] Unfortunately, many of the door objects exhibited were likely destroyed after the exhibition. Weißbach's phone interview with Cornelia Schleime discusses the exhibition, her contributing door construction, and her interpretation of the installation and what it meant at the time: Weißbach, 32-35. To view a rarely found image of this sculpture, see Weißbach, 7. Also visit: https://perspectivia.net/receive/pnet_mods_00000087.

[4] Cornelia Schleime as quoted in Weißbach's interview documenting the exhibition: "*man in der DDR nicht gleich wie mit einer Guillotine geköpft wurde, sondern langsam und quälend den Kopf abgesägt.*" Cornelia Schleime, "'Das ist der Anfang der Überwindung des falschen Bewußtseins!' Die Türen-Ausstellung im Leonhardi-Museum in Dresden 1979," *OwnReality* 5 (2014), interview by Angelika Weißbach, March 18, 2013, phone conversation, 33.

[5] Weißbach, 14.

Among an abundance of interpretations, one could make sense of the (im)permeability of a door as a reference to the border enforced by the Berlin Wall. The experience of confinement and its extension beyond the Wall into the public and private spheres of everyday life in the GDR is investigated by contributing author to this volume Emine Seda Kayim in "Surveillant Movements: Policing and Spatial Production in East German Housing." As Kayim conveys, movement through *any* space in the GDR—especially presumed niches of refuge—was often not simple. The home was subject to great scrutiny by the Ministry of State Security (MfS), or *Stasi*, precisely because of its assumed place of privacy.[6] Focusing on mass housing and mediating spaces like corridors in residential complexes, Kayim investigates how architecture at times functioned as a co-conspirator of the Stasi, who studied, mapped, drew, photographed, and frequented these sites to orchestrate an elaborate system of surveillance over its citizens. Throughout its operating years from 1950–1990, the Stasi would produce a vast archive of knowledge amassing a total of 111,000 meters worth of observation files, which can be accessed today.[7]

As the MfS constructed these systems of surveillance, the East German government developed their own lexicon for state productions, curating mass and cultural media to align with the beliefs of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), which many non-official artists at the time became attuned to and resisted, even if only in private.[8] Extending from Kayim's article, this response discusses the methods through which non-official artists in the GDR responded to government control of art and literature by citing and metaphorizing the visual, spatial, and performative lexicon of surveillance as a means of dissent. The 1979 Doors Exhibition offers a distinct instance in which non-official artists made tangible—on a concerted and public scale—the widely felt yet evasive surveillance of everyday life in East Germany, through the symbol of the door. In particular, Cornelia Schleime's *Room of the Poet* represents the GDR's spatial, cultural, and ideological boundaries by reimagining the materiality of the Wall based on lived experiences of creative restriction, constructing an architecture of isolation rather than one of imagined geopolitical stability.

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[6] Kayim situates her essay alongside Michel Foucault's discussion of Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon to complicate and expand on the role of "watchers" in the GDR context.

[7] "About the Stasi Records Archive," Stasi Unterlagen Arhiv, accessed April 7, 2023, https://www.stasi-unterlagen-archiv.de/en/archives/about-the-archives/.

[8] What non-official or non-conformist art looked like was by no means standardized and varied greatly throughout Central and Eastern Europe at this time. For example, in the context of the GDR, Dominic C. Boyer discusses the significance for non-official artists of East Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg scene to create their work in private and/or shared spaces amongst themselves. They were influenced by post-structuralist literature like Foucault and their similarly post-structuralist approach to art can be seen as an interpretation, Boyer argues, of their artistic practices. Dominic C. Boyer, "Foucault in the Bush: The Social Life of Post-Structuralist Theory in East Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg," *Ethnos* 66, no. 2 (2001): 207-236.

The power of language, visual and textual, is central to Schleime's *Room of the Poet* as it represents the threat of individual expression in literature and art and its regulation by the GDR's Ministry of Culture for the purpose of controlling critical dialogue through these media. The repurposed doors in this work operate as borders restricting the movement and accessibility of poetic texts that challenged SED party ideology, thereby effecting the demise of a potential "niche" of refuge found in poetry. Schleime's two doors—bound together and yet opposite each other, as they stand afloat within a blue "ocean" floor—realizes the experience of living in the GDR as an island, isolated geopolitically, ideologically, and culturally.[9] Yet, similar to how we know the Iron Curtain was in fact not as impermeable as it seemed, Schleime's construction features subtle opportunities to see through the door, with broken window panes offering a sightline of possibility.

In addition to critiquing the regulation of poetry, the two doors facing each other in *Room of the Poet* may offer a reflection of East Germany against the "Other," West Germany. The notion of the Other is an effective framing of the geopolitical divisions marked by the Iron Curtain. Historians of German culture and geography Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till, and Janet Ward in *Walls, Borders, Boundaries*, describe how the Berlin Wall was "not just a real physical object but a metaphor for the Cold War's division of the world's two major geopolitical systems, generating symbolic confrontations and grand narratives of systemic struggles on both sides." These systems "demanded ideological mirroring…. In the abstract sense, the Other…became a necessary condition for the common line of separation."[10] The notion of the Other provides an oppositional comparison against which a collective group identity is grounded and fortified. This appears in *Room of the Poet* not only through the doors operating as mirror images of each other, but also in the drawn image of a head on the "ocean" floor reflected from a larger papier mâché head hanging above it. These heads behave as mirrored images of the self, contributing to an Other imaginary.[11] While this could project an alternative future for oneself beyond the border, in the context of surveillance this could be read temporally to convey the restricted future of artists and poets. The sculpted head hanging above denotes public visibility and prominence,

[9] Schleime talks of the idea of doors floating on an "island" in her phone interview with Weißbach. Weißbach, 34.

[10] Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till, and Janet Ward, "Introduction: Walls, Borders, Boundaries," in *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe*, ed. Marc Silberman, Karen E. Till, and Janet Ward (New York: Berghahn Books, 2012), 6.

[11] In describing the piece, Weißbach states how the heads in Schleime's installation reflect one another but does not elaborate on what this could mean. Though, the notion of the mirror and the metaphor of reflection is mentioned retrospectively by several of the exhibiting artists in the interviews with Weißbach.

while the 2D "drowned" head in the ocean floor predicts a death of the artist or poet into obscurity, indicative of the banning of poetic texts and artwork.[12]

The overwhelming presence of doors throughout the exhibition, each door another reflection of the other, expresses a feeling of liminality. Moving through the exhibition space, one finds themselves repeatedly confronting an ambiguous threshold. In this way, the door is a powerful symbol because it performs the lived experience of non-official artists in the GDR. Beyond being a commonly found object, doors are prevalent in public and private spheres as architectural demarcations of space, signaling a separation from a surrounding environment precisely because they operate as thresholds. And while they can be understood as a border, barrier, or limitation, thresholds also function as mediating spaces offering opportunities for connection, protection, and transportation. The ubiquity of doors and their display on such a concerted, united scale make the Doors Exhibition critical as it attempts to articulate to the public the precarity and ambiguity of what lies within, and beyond, the confines of a given interior or exterior. The doors enact both spatial and performative qualities that viewers would encounter with state-sanctioned surveillance, for anyone, neighbor, friend, or co-worker, could be an informant. As Kayim discusses, even sounds of movement, such as the shuffling of steps between corridors and stairs, and the opening and closing of doors, might be recorded for Stasi observation.

The Doors Exhibition and Schleime's *Room of the Poet* confronts spatial politics in the GDR by referencing walls, barriers, and thresholds as a strategy of institutional and geopolitical critique. The mass presence of doors without surrounding frames and infrastructure, as is the case for many of the objects in the Doors Exhibition, highlights spatial displacement and dysfunction: the doors are bound to be ineffectual. The defunct door operates as another symbol of criticism in the GDR, a system of governance founded on geopolitical divisions performing a spectacle of high efficiency. It thus embodies instability and unsustainable habitation, perhaps foreseeing the collapse of the GDR. Schleime's installation performs its untenableness by recreating reality as it is being felt and experienced concurrently in 1979.

It is not insignificant that the Doors Exhibition was organized at a state-owned art institution, Dresden's Leonhardi-Museum. The Leonhardi-Museum was one of the few venues where contemporary non-conformist art was continuously exhibited throughout nearly 30 years of the GDR. It became a well-known space for non-official artists to exhibit their "officially unwanted fine arts," in part because it was known to

[12] In this way, the mirroring positions the reality of non-official artists or poets against the narrative of the "dissident" artist constructed by the Stasi in observation files. Schleime confronts the image the Stasi constructed of her by engaging with her own surveillance files in her later "Stasi Series" from 1993. An excellent article that focuses on Schleime's "Stasi Series" is Sara Blaylock, "Being the Woman They Wanted Her to Be: Cornelia Schleime Performs Her Stasi File," *Third Text* 35, no. 2 (2021): 227-247.

have Stasi informants.[13] The artists exhibiting in the Doors Exhibition likely knew they were being watched, but in turn, they were watching and publicizing the false spectacle of the GDR, shining a mirror on the state and showing it to itself as a means of contradiction. Perhaps this is what Penck meant by describing the exhibition as the "beginning of overcoming false consciousness!"

[13] My translation is of Weißbach's description of the museum as a space for "*offizell unwerwünschter bildender Kunst.*" Angelika Weißbach, "Frühstück im Freien – Freiräume im offiziellen Kunstbetrieb der DDR. Die Ausstellungen und Aktionen im Leonhardi-Museum in Dresden 1963-1990," (Ph.D. diss., Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, 2009), 4.

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At Home in the Wild: Race, Power, and Domesticity in the Transatlantic Wallpapers of Zuber & Co.

Thomas Busciglio-Ritter

On July 24, 1833, French painter Jean-Julien Deltil (1791–1863) sent a letter to wallpaper manufacturer Jean Zuber (1773–1852) of Rixheim, Alsace.[1] The two men were working on a new project together: wallpaper featuring landscapes of the United States, with which Zuber intended to bolster his company's sales in the latter country (figs. 1 and 2). For this design, Deltil planned four scenes focused on New York, West Point, Boston and Niagara Falls.[2] The descriptions of the scenes, which were to be composed of physical landmarks, forms of transport, and various groups of people, betray Deltil's intention to use spaces and visual signifiers easily associable with the American continent from a European perspective, even if such designs implied taking liberties with geographic and scientific accuracy.[3] Despite Deltil's single written mention of Black

[1] Bernard Jacqué, "An Economic Approach to Scenic Wallpapers: A Study of the Archives of J. Zuber & Cie," in *French Scenic Wallpaper, 1795-1865*, ed. Odile Nouvel-Kammerer (Paris: Flammarion, 2000), 76.

[2] Letter from Jean-Julien Deltil, Fontainebleau, to Jean Zuber, Rixheim, July 24, 1833, Z 123, Correspondance, Archives Zuber, Musée du Papier peint, Rixheim, France. Translated from the French by the author. For a complete description of the scenes, see Thomas Busciglio-Ritter, "The Transatlantic American Landscape: Episodes in an Aesthetic and Material History (1810-1860)" (PhD diss., University of Delaware, 2022), 244.

[3] Such liberties include conflating unrelated geographic places, such as the Natural Bridge of Virginia and Niagara Falls, and using mostly fanciful vegetation as visual fillers.

figures, the actual designs also reveal the artist's determination to use Black figures as props in his compositions. Engaged in social interactions, these characters appear in all four scenes, sometimes alongside Indigenous figures.

Figure 1. Jean Zuber and Jean-Julien Deltil, *Views of North America: West Point and Boston Harbor*, 1834 [reprinted 1960s]. Woodblock-printed wallpaper, 12 ft 9 ½ in. x 49 ft 4 ⅛ in. Musée du Papier Peint, Rixheim, France. Photograph by the author.

The present article argues that these figures can be seen as an illustration of internalized ideas about race on both sides of the Euro-American Atlantic, which influenced the imagery of visual products like wallpaper. In this case, the design reflected a social and visual history of white identity constructed through allusions to an order of human races within nature. Moreover, the affordability and portability of Zuber's landscape wallpapers allowed them to circulate throughout the Northern Atlantic and be installed in domestic spaces in places as diverse as Ohio, Louisiana, and Georgia. There, the display of a Zuber wallpaper helped buyers support their own

Figure 2. Jean Zuber and Jean-Julien Deltil, *Views of North America: Natural Bridge and Niagara*, 1834 [reprinted 1960s], woodblock-printed wallpaper, 12 ft 9 ½ in. x 49 ft 4 ⅛ in. Musée du Papier Peint, Rixheim, France. Photograph by the author.

pretense at racial, economic, and social privilege, as well as project visual discourses about American scenery that perpetuated beliefs in racial hierarchies and an untamed exploitation of natural resources. Behind an apparent depiction of harmony and prosperity, the imagery of scenic wallpapers like Zuber's supported a transatlantic construction of a white American landscape.[4]

The racialized landscape of Zuber's wallpapers transpired in two instances, examined here. First, the visual sources used by Zuber and the artists he employed to create designs like the *Views of North America* contributed to a history of racially charged representation. This was especially manifest in the inclusion of African American figures dressed "in fine clothes" (to quote Deltil). Second, and more significantly, the spaces of production of the wallpapers in France and the U.S.A, and the circulation and display of Zuber's wallpapers in regions like the U.S. South,

[4] The phrase "panoramic wallpaper" (or "scenic wallpaper") is used to describe a type of printed design that is continuous across several rolls of paper. This creates a complete picture that covers several walls without being constrained by space, with scenes to be read together or in succession. Most designs featured lavish, imaginary landscapes, sometimes inspired by mythological subjects. Panoramic wallpaper was introduced in France at the turn of the nineteenth century.

prompted this complex imagery to intersect with local beliefs and political ideologies, reinforcing discourses of racial domination and exploitation in regions connected to the wider Atlantic World through the economy of slavery.

In that sense, this article builds upon the social approach of historian Catherine Lynn, whose 1980 volume *Wallpaper in America* still constitutes the most complete examination of this medium in the nineteenth-century United States.[5] Yet while Lynn's approach offers a useful framework, one of her assertions regarding the geographical dispersion of Zuber's market before the Civil War has to be nuanced. Contrary to previous scholars, Lynn acknowledged the presence of scenic wallpapers in the antebellum West and South, regions formerly believed to have been less exposed to this French production.[6] Yet she interpreted the desire of customers from these regions for Zuber products as a mere cultural emulation of the eastern seaboard.[7] According to her, the circulation of scenic wallpaper in the hinterland allowed the tastes of U.S. Northeasterners to permeate these regions and standardize consumption practices.

Zuber's business approach in the United States, however, reveals a willingness to directly expand in the South and thus cater to different customer tastes. By the late 1790s, wallpapers produced in France were encountered in homes throughout New England.[8] Yet the first sale of a panoramic wallpaper design in the country only occurred in May 1816, in Philadelphia.[9] Sensing a rising interest in this type of product, which he had helped develop, Jean Zuber finally opened a sales depot in New York City in 1828, renting a warehouse at 65 Cedar Street in Manhattan. The location was strategic: situated in the southern part of the island, halfway between the commercial thoroughfare of Broadway and the East River docks, where imported merchandise poured into the city.[10] From there, the company secured orders for imported sets from

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[5] Robert M. Kelly, "Wallpaper and America," *The Wallpaper* 1, no. 2 (February 2020): 4.

[6] "Very few scenic papers found their way below the Mason and Dixon line. They stayed mostly in or near the Northern seaport towns where they landed. To the dwellings of the old New Englanders they brought a riot of colour that appeared almost licentious after the severity of whitewashed walls." Nancy McClelland, *Historic Wall-Papers: From Their Inception to the Introduction of Machinery* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1924), 158.

[7] Catherine Lynn, *Wallpaper in America: From the Seventeenth Century to World War I* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1980), 13.

[8] Richard C. Nylander, Elizabeth Redmond, and Penny J. Sander, *Wallpaper in New England* (Boston: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, 1986), 123.

[9] Bernard Jacqué and Philippe de Fabry, "Notes sur la commercialisation du papier peint français aux États-Unis dans la première moitié du XIXe siècle," *Bulletin de la Société industrielle de Mulhouse* 797 (July 1985): 108.

[10] Raymond-François Zuber, *Nouveaux cahiers Zuber n° 8: Le regard de deux manufacturiers mulhousiens sur les États-Unis: Ernest Zuber et Vincent Steinlen à l'Exposition de Philadelphie de 1876* (Rixheim, France: Association pour le souvenir Zuber, 2015), 6.

Figure 3. Jean Zuber and Jean-Julien Deltil, detail of *Views of North America*, 1834 [reprinted 1960s], woodblock-printed wallpaper, 12 ft 9 ½ in. x 49 ft 4 ⅛ in. Musée du Papier Peint, Rixheim, France. Photograph by the author.

manufacturers of paper hangings.[11] In turn, resellers would offer Alsace-made wallpapers to customers in places as diverse as Cincinnati, Ohio, Norfolk, Virginia, and Mobile, Alabama.[12] This network ensured a wide dissemination of the sets, as was the case for the *Views of North America*, launched in 1834.[13] In the U.S. South and on its Western frontier, the *Views* became both intimate and performative in helping customers construct racial, economic, and social identities.

Numerous visual elements in Deltil's scenic designs, all approved by Zuber, proved ambiguous. In one scene, the elaborate greeting of a group of well-dressed Black figures, accompanied by a bow and the doffing of a top hat, is offset by the lack of decorum of a member of a nearby promenading group through her display of overt interest in the activities of the first group (fig. 3). While the image may suggest a space for the Black figures among the fashionably-dressed elite, Deltil's source for the scene presents another interpretation. Groups of Black figures were copied by the artist from *Life in Philadelphia*, a satirical portfolio of prints published by Edward Williams Clay (1799–1857) between 1828 and 1830, which was also distributed in Europe.[14] Some of Clay's sketches made their way to Britain and France after 1831.[15]

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[11] Letter from Ernest Fiedler, New York, to Jean Zuber, Rixheim, May 29, 1828, Z 123, Correspondance, Archives Zuber, Musée du Papier peint, Rixheim, France.

[12] Z 87, Statistique de vente aux États-Unis, 1836-1844, Archives Zuber, Musée du Papier peint, Rixheim, France.

[13] *Views of North America* [Vues d'Amérique du Nord], was sold as seven panels, or thirty-two lengths of paper printed with engraved woodblocks. It measured 13 ft. (3.90 m) in height and 49 ft. (15.04 m) in length. The décor became a commercial success on both sides of the Atlantic. See Bernard Jacqué, "De la manufacture au mur, pour une histoire matérielle du papier peint (1770-1914)" (PhD diss., Université de Lyon II-Lumière, 2003), 501.

[14] Robert P. Emlen, "Imagining America in 1834: Zuber's Scenic Wallpaper 'Vues d'Amérique du Nord'," *Winterthur Portfolio* 32, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1997): 196.

[15] Nancy Reynolds Davison, "E. W. Clay: American Political Caricaturist of the Jacksonian Era" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1980), 53.

For this scene, Deltil merely reversed Clay's figures from *Shall I hab de honour …* (1828), slightly altering some elements such as the man's hat (fig. 4). This original caricature, along with the entire *Life in Philadelphia* volume, mocked African American fashion, similar to many antebellum American prints published in cities like New York and Philadelphia. These images encouraged white middle-class consumption by satirizing poor and non-white audiences, their use of a racially-connoted dialect, and their lack of good taste in fashion. Though Deltil seems to have been oblivious to Clay's racist views towards free African Americans, his borrowings from printed sources, including ones published in France which were the primary material used by Deltil to sketch groups of Black figures in *Views of North America*, is useful in assessing how these characters were, from the onset, impacted by white transatlantic exchange and a Euro-American visual culture of race.

Figure 4. Edward Williams Clay, *Life in Philadelphia: Shall I hab de honour to dance de next quadrille wid you, Miss Minta?*, 1828, hand-colored etching, 8 x 7 ¼ in. Source: Library Company of Philadelphia, Philadelphia.

Deltil's attitude may have been prompted by the economic realities of the industrial sector and spaces of production in which he was employed. Wallpaper production had deep connections to textile industries, especially in Mulhouse, the largest trade center near Zuber's facilities in Rixheim. Wallpaper manufacturers benefited from the networks and the technologies developed for textile production. In 1827, for instance, Zuber began printing wallpaper using copper cylinders, a tool originally used for cotton cloths.[16] Zuber's eldest son himself produced a report on the economy of cotton in 1831, highlighting the family's interest in the material and involvement with corresponding business circles.[17] Cotton industries, however, depended in good part on the Atlantic slave trade between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.[18] Briefly abolished during the French Revolution, the *traites négrières* [slave trade] and slavery actually remained in place across France's colonial empire until 1815 and 1848 respectively.[19] In practice, the illegal trade of enslaved individuals was still widespread after this date and overseas slave labor was a vital support to industries in places like Mulhouse.[20] In that context, the city's entrepreneurs remained cautious about discussing issues of race, though their position was made increasingly difficult by international events, including the eventual outbreak of the U.S. Civil War. Local industrial newspapers attempted to downplay the importance of slavery in the conflict, going so far as to accuse the "North" of recklessly provoking the "South."[21] By restricting their views to economic aspects, some manufacturers in Mulhouse proved

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[16] Alfred Picard, *Le bilan d'un siècle (1801-1900), Tome quatrième, Mines et métallurgie. Industries de la décoration et du mobilier. Chauffage et ventilation. Éclairage non électrique. Fils, tissus, vêtements* (Paris: Imprimerie nationale, 1906), 106.

[17] Jean Zuber-Karth, "Rapport fait au nom de la commission d'enquête de Mulhausen, relativement aux manufactures de coton," in *Bulletin général et universel des annonces et des nouvelles scientifiques, Tome vingt-septième*, ed. André Étienne d'Audebert de Férussac (Paris: Arthus Bertrand, 1831), 152-154.

[18] Bernard Jacqué, "Note sur Mulhouse et la traite des Noirs," *Annuaire historique de Mulhouse* 30 (2019), 56.

[19] Literature on the subject is abundant. Major research works include Bernard Moitt, *Women and Slavery in the French Antilles, 1635-1848* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001); Olivier Pétré-Grenouilleau, *Les Traites négrières, essai d'histoire globale* (Paris: Gallimard, 2004); Frédéric Régent, *La France et ses esclaves: De la colonisation aux abolitions (1620-1848)* (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 2007); Christopher L. Miller, *The French Atlantic Triangle: Literature and Culture of the Slave Trade* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); and Alan Forrest, *The Death of the French Atlantic: Trade, War, and Slavery in the Age of Revolution* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2020).

[20] Based on reports of ships seized by French royal authorities, the illegal French slave trade of the nineteenth century has been assessed by Serge Daget, *Répertoire des expéditions négrières françaises à la traite illégale: 1814-1850* (Nantes, France: Comité nantais d'études en sciences humaines, 1988).

[21] Denis Guthleben, "La guerre de Sécession vue par *l'Industriel Alsacien*" (Master's thesis, Université de Haute-Alsace, 1999), 31.

their reluctance to criticize a system that helped provide the raw material fueling their industry. Their stance outraged French abolitionists.[22]

The complex relationship of Zuber's wallpaper imagery and economic networks to systems of racial differentiation and enslavement was nowhere more prevalent than when scenic views were installed in homes within, or in immediate proximity to, the so-called U.S. South, as the Winterthur Museum's acquisition of the *Views of North America*'s fragments in 2018 demonstrates. The provenance of the fragments in question highlights the popularity of Zuber's creations among smaller communities in the process of developing economically before the 1860s across the United States.

This particular set most likely originated from the now-demolished house of Chauncey Humiston Andrews (1823–1893), in Youngstown, Ohio, a residence whose furnishings were meant to uphold its owner's respectability as a new, wealthy, white entrepreneur. The son of an innkeeper, Andrews had gradually improved his social standing to being a captain of industry with stakes in railroads and coal mining.[23] His influence was such that he was even considered a serious candidate for governor of Ohio.[24] Following his marriage to Louisa Baldwin (1835–1917) in 1857, the couple commissioned a house to be built at 750 Wick Avenue, Youngstown, for which the Zuber wallpaper was purchased, though its exact location within the space remains unclear.[25] The fruits of American commerce promoted in Zuber's views would have appealed to ambitious customers like Andrews, eager to ensure unchallenged control over a rising Black middle class perceived as a potential economic competitor by white middle classes in a free state like Ohio.[26] Bordered to the South by slaveholding Kentucky and Virginia, Ohio witnessed influxes of southern enslaved people and African American citizens in search of freedom and economic opportunities.

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[22] In 1863, for instance, journalist Eugène Pelletan (1813-1884) published a diatribe against slavery, ironically titled "An Address to King Cotton," that targeted Mulhouse manufacturers by name for their complacency. See Eugène Pelletan, *Adresse au Roi Coton* (New York: H. de Mareil, 1863), 11-12.

[23] Clayton J. Ruminski, *Iron Valley: The Transformation of the Iron Industry in Ohio's Mahoning Valley, 1802-1913* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 2017), 98-99.

[24] "The Ohio Governorship," *The New York Times* XXXII, no. 9839 (April 1, 1883), 3.

[25] William Joseph Palmer, "To Raise the Standard of Architecture: The Work and Vision of Charles Henry and Charles Frederick Owsley in Youngstown, Ohio" (Master's thesis, Youngstown State University, 2000), 42-43. The will of Chauncey H. Andrews was probated on January 3, 1894; however, it has been impossible to determine the presence of any wallpaper from this document alone. The microfilmed document containing details of Andrews' possessions has been damaged. Georgene Fry (historian, Mahoning County Probate Court), email to the author, October 2021.

[26] On this subject, see Henry Louis Taylor, "John Mercer Langston and the Cincinnati Riot of 1841," in *Race and the City: Work, Community, and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970*, ed. Taylor (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 29-69. For a history of race relations in Cincinnati in the early nineteenth century, see Nikki M. Taylor, *Frontiers of Freedom: Cincinnati's Black Community, 1802-1868* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2005).

Located halfway between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, Youngstown itself stood at the center of one of several routes of the Underground Railroad, crossing the Mahoning River Valley toward a passage to Canada via Lake Erie. Less than eight miles from Andrews' house, the village of Austintown was a stop on one such route.[27] Chauncey Andrews's own father Norman had actually hosted both William Lloyd Garrison (1805–1879) and Frederick Douglass (1817–1895) at his Youngstown hotel in August 1847, as the two famed writers and orators participated in three abolitionist meetings in town.[28]

Garrison and Douglass' visit suggests that Youngstown was a place of opposing ideologies during the antebellum period, which is even more significant to consider when noticing that a specific element in the background of Deltil's West Point tableau may have been read ambiguously in the eyes of a customer like Andrews. Indeed, the artist included two Black figures markedly different from the others to the right of the composition (fig. 5). A man and a woman seem to emerge from a dense wilderness. Their garments are far less luxurious than those of the Black figures promenading at the forefront. While these groups appear engaged in leisurely activities, the isolated couple is clearly coded as part of a laboring class: their scant possessions hint strongly at their impoverished condition and accentuate an impression of distress. It is plausible that wallpaper owners, in states like Ohio, may have read in these two figures a reference to the thousands of enslaved African Americans who were indeed running toward freedom at the time. In Deltil's tableau, the man's gesture toward a large American flag flying over the landscape may further hint at their still precarious

Figure 5. Jean Zuber and Jean-Julien Deltil, detail of *Views of North America*, 1834 [reprinted 1960s], woodblock-printed wallpaper, 12 ft 9 ½ in. x 49 ft 4 ⅛ in. Musée du Papier Peint, Rixheim, France. Photograph by the author.

[27] Ronald Wesley Strock, *The Descendants of Joseph Strock of 1757* (Osceola, IN: Self-Published, 1984), 229. See also Bruce Chadwick, *Traveling the Underground Railroad: A Visitor's Guide to More Than 300* Sites (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing, 1999), 193.

[28] Letter from Frederick Douglass, Austinburg, Ohio, to Sydney Howard Gay, New York City, August 20, 1847. Reproduced in John R. McKivigan *The Frederick Douglass Papers, Series Three, Correspondence, Volume 1, 1842-1852*, ed. John R. McKivigan (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 236.

situation, equating the figures to self-emancipated people.[29] Hidden for now, these two figures seem on the brink of joining the U.S. polity, a prospect that would have been uncomfortable to some white viewers.

Figure 6. Jean Broc and Joseph Dufour, *Paul and Virginie Meet the Master of the Fugitive Slave*, 1824, woodblock-printed wallpaper, 6 ft 7 in. x 6 ft 11 in. Source: Musée des Arts Décoratifs, Paris, France. © Paris, MAD/Jean Tholance.

[29] This type of gesture was later reprised in transatlantic visual works celebrating emancipation. German painter Theodor Kaufmann (1814–1896), for instance, symbolically enacted the transition of enslaved figures from absence to presence in his painting *On to Liberty* (1867). The picture, presenting African American individuals shedding their invisibility for visibility, was inspired by an 1859 sketch of French artist François Auguste Biard (1799–1882), which he completed in Brazil and later displayed in New York City. Sympathetic to abolitionist causes, Kaufmann depicted the group running to an open field as they aim at a large U.S. flag far away in the distance. On Biard's painting and its influence on Kaufmann, see Amandine Piel, "Un peintre abolitionniste?" in *François Auguste Biard, Peintre Voyageur*, ed. Gérard Audinet (Paris: Paris Musées, 2020), 112; and Adriano Pedrosa and Tomás Toledo, eds., *Afro-Atlantic Histories* (New York: DelMonico Books, 2021), 108. On the composition of Kaufmann's painting, see Margaret C. Conrads, "Stories of War and Reconciliation, 1860-1877," in *American Stories: Paintings of Everyday Life, 1765-1915*, eds. H. Barbara Weinberg and Carrie Rebora Barratt (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 89.

In that sense, the fleeing couple would be more closely related to the representation of Black people in French décors like *Paul et Virginie*, marketed in 1824 by Zuber's main competitor, Joseph Dufour (1754–1827). Inspired by the novel of Jacques-Henri Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (1737–1814), the plot includes the harrowing scene of a woman in bondage throwing herself at the feet of the young Virginie to ask for forgiveness after deserting a plantation. The episode, set on the French-occupied island of Mauritius, became central to the wallpaper (fig. 6).[30] As in the *Views of North America*, Dufour's décor equates the figure of the self-emancipated bondsperson with a state of wilderness and unorderly nature, in contrast to the tidy layout of plantations, cities, or army camps. In Dufour's scene, however, Black individuals are stripped almost entirely. Undressed, vulnerable, and invisible, these figures were entirely exposed to the white gaze and its control.[31] In both wallpapers, the inclusion of Black characters roaming free were thus susceptible to reflecting fears of racial unrest experienced by the white upper class of Europe and North America. The degrading representation of Black people in the wallpapers of transatlantic domestic spaces helped assuage white anxieties by promising an uncertain future, and sometimes retribution, to those people of color resisting a naturalized racial order.

Meanwhile, in an antebellum U.S. South connected by trade routes to the rest of the Atlantic World, the purchase and installation of scenic French wallpapers would precisely become intertwined with the built environment of slave plantations. Pierre Denis de la Ronde (1762–1824), for instance, relied on enslaved labor to develop his property in Chalmette, Louisiana, reshaping the landscape into a series of sugarcane fields and eventually building a mansion in 1805. The estate, later known as "Versailles," made de la Ronde one of the most prosperous planters in Orleans Parish. Frequent resistance on the part of individuals he enslaved however pushed him to require the services of a newly-formed police [*gendarmerie*] in 1811 to maintain order on his

[30] Denys Prache, *Joseph Dufour: Génie des papiers peints* (Paris: Mare & Martin, 2016), 270. See also Elisabeth Leprêtre, *Paul et Virginie: un exotisme enchanteur* (Paris: Chaudun, 2014), 53.

[31] The idea of dressing/undressing, or robing/disrobing, non-white figures in nineteenth-century American visual culture in order to express racial control has been explored in Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, "The Insistent Reveal: Louis Agassiz, Joseph T. Zealy, Carrie Mae Weems, and the Politics of Undress in the Photography of Racial Science," in *To Make Their Own Way in the World: The Enduring Legacy of the Zealy Daguerreotypes*, eds. Ilisa Barbash, Molly Rogers, and Deborah Willis (Cambridge, MA: Peabody Museum Press, 2020), 297-325.

plantation.[32] De la Ronde transformed a bayou into a landscape of oversight, imposing a strict racial control that workers and visitors could perceive.[33]

De la Ronde's influence extended into the city of New Orleans itself, where he had forged networks and owned a townhouse on Chartres Street.[34] The city itself, as a major harbor, also provided him with the opportunity to purchase imported transatlantic objects, like furniture made in Europe, to help the construction of his identity as planter. Sometime before his death, he acquired Zuber's 1820 *Grande Helvétie* décor, representing a Swiss pasture scene (fig. 7). Although the location of the wallpaper inside his mansion, destroyed by a hurricane in 1915, has yet to be established, its presence on the estate is attested by the survival of fragments.[35] Within De la Ronde's domestic space, a product such as *La Grande Helvétie* would have offered an appealing vision of peaceful human development, respectful of nature. Its bucolic and idealized views made the (enslaved) landscape of the U.S. South intelligible within the context of a transatlantic Euro-American pastoralism, erasing the

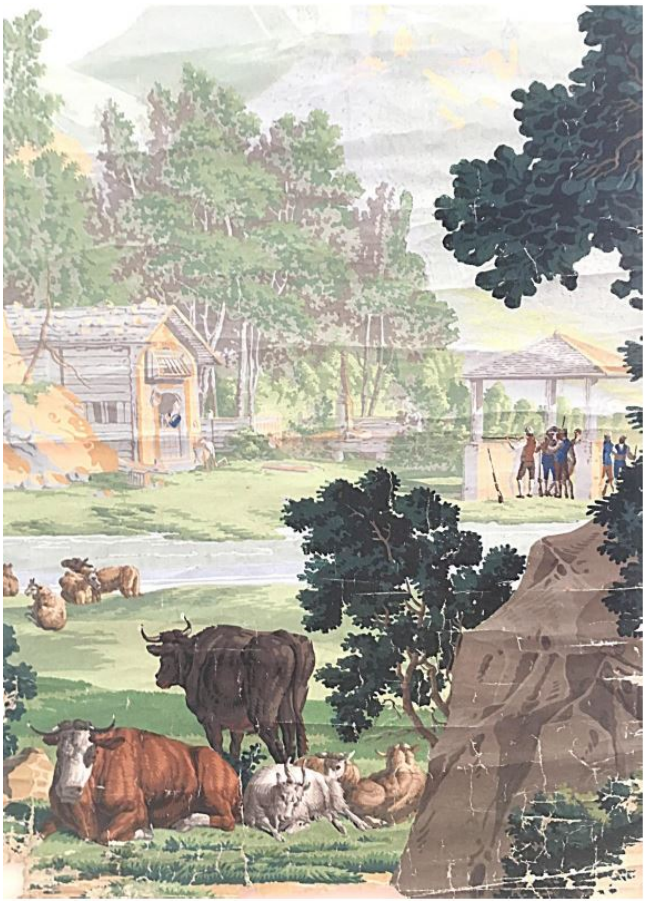

Figure 7. Jean Zuber and Pierre-Antoine Mongin, *La Grande Helvétie* [fragment], 1820, woodblock-printed wallpaper, dimensions unknown. Source: Special Collections, Tulane University Libraries, New Orleans, Louisiana.

[32] Jean-Pierre Le Glaunec, "Slave Migrations and Slave Control in Spanish and Early American New Orleans," in *Empires of the Imagination: Transatlantic Histories of the Louisiana Purchase*, eds. Peter J. Kastor and François Weil (Charlottesville, VA: University of Virginia Press, 2009), 228.

[33] Nicholas Mirzoeff, *The Right to Look: A Counterhistory of Visuality* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 49-50.

[34] Leonard V. Huber, *Landmarks of New Orleans* (New Orleans, LA: Louisiana Landmarks Society, 1984), 15.

[35] Jean Zuber, et. al. Wallpaper, Collection 83, Southeastern Architectural Archive, Special Collections Division, Tulane University Libraries, New Orleans, Louisiana. After examining floorplans, wallpaper scholar Ed Polk Douglas has advanced that the most likely location of the paper within de la Ronde's house would be a second-floor room, i.e., a less public-facing space. Ed Polk Douglas, email to the author, December 2021.

intrinsic violence of its settlement and exploitation, as well as reinforcing the white identity construction of a natural order of human races within nature.

The claims of respectability and wealth made by slaveholding Southerners using French scenic wallpaper are especially marked in a case where Zuber wallpapers were turned into a visual language for the community's white elite. Clinton was located in central Georgia, on Mvskoke (Muscogee/Creek) land. Due to its geographical position and agricultural status, the community fashioned itself as a frontier outpost, an identity facilitated by the town's proximity to the Ocmulgee River, which until 1821 marked the border between Mvskoke lands and lands appropriated by Euro-Americans.[36]

This period also witnessed the organization of a community culture based on its fertile environment. Similar to places like Chalmette, the environment of Clinton was reinterpreted through a transatlantic vocabulary of landed gentry, which marginalized the racial foundations of its success. In 1820, for instance, the U.S. Census estimated that enslaved Black individuals represented more than 60% of the town's population.[37] Their reality of bondage and poverty co-existed with the identity-building enterprise of Clinton's slaveholders, who promoted the town as a bustling and respectable hub.[38] Projecting this image, houses in town adopted the stately architectural style of the Greek Revival and were furnished with imported objects.[39] Scenic French wallpapers entered into the makeup of these built environments.

Zuber's commercial networks reached this area of the United States early on, with customers in Augusta, Georgia, as early as the 1830s.[40] Clinton merchants and slaveholders, in turn, used scenic wallpaper as a token of economic privilege and a justification of their exploitation of natural resources. Among them was merchant Peter Lee Clower, Sr. (1775–1851). Clower saw the completion of his house in 1819 as a way to present himself as an established businessman.[41] The purchase and installation of scenic wallpaper designs helped stress the degree of his wealth while symbolically obfuscating the racial relations of domination that enabled it in the first place; in 1820, Clower was indeed enslaving twenty-eight individuals.[42]

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[36] Old Clinton Historical Society, *A Historical Guide to Clinton, Georgia, An Early Nineteenth Century County Seat* (Gray, GA: Old Clinton Historical Society, 1975), 2.

[37] Old Clinton Historical Society, *A Historical Guide to Clinton*, 2.

[38] Solomon Hoge, "Mansion House," *Macon Telegraph* 1, no. 28 (May 7, 1827), 4.

[39] Carolyn White Williams, *History of Jones County, Georgia, For One Hundred Years, Specifically, 1807-1907* (Macon, GA: J. W. Burke Company, 1957), 702.

[40] Z 87, Statistique de vente aux États-Unis, 1836-1844, Archives Zuber, Musée du Papier peint, Rixheim, France.

[41] Williams, *History of Jones County*, 198.

[42] William Lamar Cawthon, Jr., "Clinton: County Seat on the Georgia Frontier, 1808-1821" (Master's thesis, University of Georgia, 1984), 189.

One décor quickly acquired by Clower was Zuber's 1831 *Paysage à Chasses* [Hunting Landscape], a décor purchased at the same time by U.S. president Martin Van Buren (1782–1862) for his house, "Lindenwald," in Kinderhook, New York.[43] The design offers an idealized vision of the English gentry occupied with the eponymous activity within a lavish countryside. Under the shadow of ruined castles, a group of indolent figures is even seen leisurely picnicking at one end of the design as dogs pursue deer through marshlands. If both Van Buren and Clower could claim high social standing through their purchase of this Zuber design, its imagery would, however, have reflected two different approaches to privilege.

Posing as a gentleman farmer in Kinderhook, Van Buren remodeled the grounds of Lindenwald in an English garden style.[44] Used to welcome his guests and political allies, the space became the set of Van Buren's political staging, frequented by partisans of free labor and the so-called Barnburners faction of the Democratic Party, who opposed slavery and antagonized the South.[45] In contrast, in Augusta, Georgia, Clower would have perceived a radically opposite message in Zuber's scenes: a vindication of his status as a slaveholding planter and of his right to consume the resources of a slavery frontier, in the manner of an English landowner. In fact, his racial and economic exploitation would continue to increase. In 1850, Peter Clower was enslaving seventy-four individuals, plus an additional forty-seven people "co-owned" with his son Green A. Clower (1805–1877).[46]

In Clinton, as in Chalmette and Youngstown, Zuber's creations often reflected a certain ambiguous attitude towards racial relations, and their visuals could be easily adapted to suit the needs and ideologies of its various buyers. In the early nineteenth century, these discursive adjustments frequently revolved around Black figures, perhaps the most complicated elements of designs created by Deltil and others. Whether or not their buyers perceived a vindication of their elite status in the imagery of sets like *Views of North America*, these décors helped reaffirm the crucial role of a racialized

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[43] Maryellen Higginbotham, "Bits and Pieces, Paper and Pattern: Researching Wallpaper in Nineteenth-Century Vernacular Georgia," in *Georgia Inside and Out: Architecture, Landscape, and Decorative Arts: Proceedings from the Second Henry D. Green Symposium of the Decorative Arts*, ed. Ashley Callahan (Athens, GA: Georgia Museum of Art, 2005), 34.

[44] Leonard L. Richards, Marla R. Miller, and Erik Gil, *A Return to his Native Town: Martin Van Buren's Life at Lindenwald, 1839-1862* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2006), 30-33.

[45] Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 161-167. See also Michael Todd Landis, *Northern Men with Southern Loyalties: The Democratic Party and the Sectional Crisis* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014), 40-41.

[46] Slave Schedules, Division 47, Jones County, Georgia, Record Group Number 29, M432, Seventh Census of The United States, 1850, Records of the Bureau of the Census, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.

transatlantic landscape in devising and projecting multiple white American identities. From France to Ohio, Georgia, or Louisiana, these fantasized scenes of nature were met with an interest that an entrepreneur like Jean Zuber knew how to exploit.

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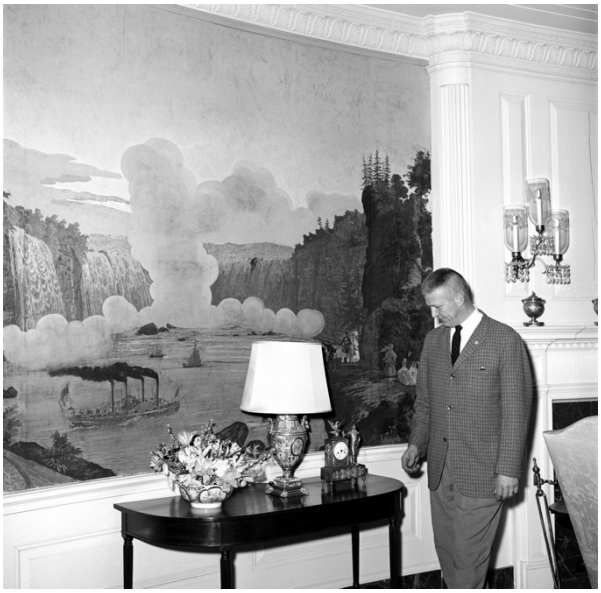
Views of a United Nation

a response by Sylvia Faichney

A black-and-white photograph from 1967 features a man in the Diplomatic Reception Room at the White House in Washington D.C. standing beside a console table, his hand moving towards the objects on it (fig. 1). A clock, a lamp, and a bowl-like vase with a bouquet of flowers appear to trouble this unknown figure, causing him to pause and consider his next move. In another photograph taken on the same day, the objects are gone (fig. 2). Since this room was meticulously designed in 1961 by the then First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy, we can envision our unknown figure as being in the act of carefully moving the objects, so they no longer obstruct the "historic wallpaper originally printed in Alsace in 1834" that the photographs document.[1] In the second image, the Niagara Falls scene from the Zuber & Co. wallpaper titled "Views from North America" is now unobstructed.

[1]Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers, 1961: 21 September-27 November, undated. Draft press release from the National Society of Interior Designers, date unknown, https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JBKOPP/SF033/JBKOPP-SF033-014.



(left) Figure 1. Robert Knudsen, unidentified man stands beside a table in front of antique wallpaper panels in the Diplomatic Reception Room, White House, Washington, D.C. The wallpaper, entitled "Views of North America," was produced by French manufacturer Zuber & Company in 1834, and features various scenes of the North American landscape. 27 February 1962. Source: White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. Public Domain.
(right) Figure 2. Robert Knudsen, detail of antique wallpaper panels in the Diplomatic Reception Room, White House, Washington, D.C. 27 February 1962. Source: White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. Public Domain.

Except, it's not. Unlike panoramic paintings like those displayed at World Fairs or museum exhibitions that showcase the artistry of a nation or artist with expansive representations of landscapes wrapping around a room uninterrupted, wallpapers in domestic settings tend to be fragmented in their final form. The sequence of their imagery is often cut into many parts to fit a space: in the photograph cited above, the imagery is cut twice. Consequently, we can only see fragments of staged romantic depictions of nineteenth-century life in the United States. This sense of fragmentation is reinforced with the inclusion of other objects, such as those removed from the table, as they tend to block "the view" of the wallpaper. Visual access is further challenged when people occupy the space, exemplified in another image of the room in which First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy poses with the "Diplomatic Reception Room Planning Committee" at the press event showcasing the finished room to the media (fig 3).

In this issue of *react/review*, Thomas Busciglio-Ritter addresses the production and distribution of wallpapers such as "Views of North American" in the nineteenth century, arguing that they are intertwined with a history "of racially charged representation" that constructs and validates a white aristocratic identity. In this essay, I shift viewpoints to consider elements of this wallpaper that construct and attempt to

Figure 3. Robert Knudsen, antique wallpaper from 1834 entitled "Views of North America" presented to the White House by the National Society of Interior Designers (NSID). L–R: Dora Brahms, Co-Chairperson of Diplomatic Reception Room Planning Committee; Edith Gecker, NSID Vice-President; Michael Greer, Co-Chairperson of Diplomatic Reception Room Planning Committee; First Lady Jacqueline Kennedy; Edward White, NSID President; William Gulden, NSID President Emeritus. The group stands in front of the newly installed wallpaper. Diplomatic Reception Room, White House, Washington, D.C. October 1961. Source: White House Photographs, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston. Public Domain.

validate the identity of a nation. From this vantage point, I argue that "Views of North America" is representative of a strategic fragmentation of conflict in pursuit of establishing a heritage for the newer nation, the United States.[2] The wallpaper's eventual installation in the White House in the 1960s showcases a political technique that uses representations of technological and social landscapes to obscure conflicts of exploitation and dispossession. This technique is related to the pursuit of constructing a shared heritage that undergirds a sense of community. Through a visual analysis of the technological and social landscapes I argue that "Views" is representative of a type of community knotted together by what historian David Nye calls the "American technological sublime." Additionally, taking into consideration of the wallpaper's placement in the White House during the Kennedy administration, it illustrates the U.S.

[2] For the remainder of the essay, I will refer to the title of this wallpaper as "Views."

as a diverse yet cohesive and powerful nation, composed of what President John F. Kennedy refers to as "a nation of immigrants."[3]

Depictions of Black and Indigenous people in visual media have a nefarious history: however, what is most surprising in "Views" is its harmonious integration of socially and racially diverse people. While Busciglio-Ritter notes this feature, I would like to extend his observation by associating this essence of harmony with an insidious quality of fragmentation. Firstly, the figures in this social landscape lack any traces of racial tension or segregation, specifically in the multiple depictions of fashionably dressed, racially integrated groups. Secondly, the wallpaper design showcases a working-class population who appear racially distinct yet equal.[4] And lastly, in depicting a scene of a group dancing to a drum, holding unidentifiable objects, and wearing regalia, the scene includes what we must presume is an Indigenous ceremony that has drawn an interracial audience.[5]

The significance of this harmonious, racially diverse community extends beyond confirming "multiple white American identities," that Busciglio-Ritter argues for.[6] Rather, harmony confirms the success of the great "American Experiment."[7] This type of representation is particularly significant in the nineteenth century, where the borders of the U.S. were in constant flux, wars were persistently on the horizon, and the process of fragmentating land-into-territory-into-property was bound to a relationship of

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[3] David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994); John F. Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1964).

[4] Though the interracial working-class groups are found by the harbor, there is not clear indication of enslaved individuals, or any utterance of the transatlantic slave trade although Charleston and Boston harbors were on this route.

[5] See Busciglio-Ritter's essay in this volume. It is important to note that from 1883 to 1978 ceremonies were banned. For an in-depth history of possible artistic references to these groups and scenes see Robert P. Emlen, "Imagining America in 1834: Zuber's Scenic Wallpaper 'Vues d'Amérique du Nord'," *Winterthur Portfolio* 32, no. 2/3 (Summer-Autumn 1997).

[6] To trouble this centering of whiteness and white experience, a question can be asked: what about people of other racial identities who consumed this imagery? For instance, enslaved individuals who installed the wallpaper in homes, or the Black and Brown people who labored in the rooms it was placed in, or the Indigenous peoples, banned in 1883 by the U.S. government from performing ceremony, who saw it at markets and trade fairs? It would be difficult to answer this, as the significance of this imagery to each person would be varied and depend on their individual tastes and background. However, the total erasure of racial conflict is linked with a larger strategy of fragmenting and abstracting histories of land and labor exploitation. For a twenty-first-century perspective of how Black students felt about this wallpaper, see: Rumaan Alam, "What to Do about a Room with a 'Vues'?," (*New Yorker*, June 29, 2020), https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/07/06/what-to-do-about-a-room-with-a-vues.

[7] This phrase is first cited in Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, 1835. It has been repeated frequently within pollical discourse.

dispossession of Indigenous land and exploitation of Black labor.[8] Ignoring this, the wallpaper celebrates a war for a democratic republic as rightfully won, made evident in its thriving, diverse, population of mostly well-dressed, employed, well-defended and entertained people. The wallpaper's exclusion of inequalities and brutalities extends the metaphor of fragmentation, and consequently highlights a crucial element related to nation building: the process of obscuring how limited and precarious access is to liberty, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness.

Another surprising element in "Views" is just that, the views. Although the wallpaper's name suggests that it encompasses a continent, in truth we only see a few snapshots of select Eastern states. At Niagara Falls, the billowing brown steam from a steamboat moves in tandem with the mists of water erupting from the bottom of the falls. Below the natural bridge, a horsecar follows a railroad trail woven between mountainous terrain. The forests surrounding West Point Academy are highly organized in comparison to the "wilderness" where a Black couple is standing. Busciglio-Ritter notes how the man in this couple is pointing outward, possibly towards the U.S. flag. However, in almost every group there are figures pointing, their arms stretching toward the scenes of industrial or natural wonders.

Of the identifiable places, West Point and Niagara Falls are both located in New York, and the natural bridge in Virginia.[9] In this imagined composite, the wallpaper offers up images of a varied landscape, highlighting its diverse population as well as impressive scenes of natural wonders and technological development. These scenes

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[8] Brooke L. Blower, "Nation of Outposts: Forts, Factories, Bases, and the Making of American Power." *Diplomatic History* 41, no. 3 (2017): 439–459. Blower's essay makes clear the uncertainty of spatial borders and claims to land within the nineteenth century. In a citation where she troubles the claim of land as US territory, Blower writes: "On-the-ground sovereignty differed greatly from wishful-thinking empires on paper. The fate of much of the territory Americans claimed under the Treaty of Paris and the Louisiana Purchase, which shows up so cleanly on maps as putative national territory, remained uncertain for decades. Even within the chartered boundaries of early states like Georgia, large sections of territory at first remained under foreign control. Until after 1812, many imagined that the lands between the Appalachian Mountains and the Mississippi River might be carved into European colonies, independent republics, or be ruled by Indian confederations, which were the region's reigning military powers. The status of the Trans-Mississippi West, in turn, remained unsettled until the second half of the nineteenth century" (443). For the abstraction of land into territory and private property see: Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409; and Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, Chapter 2 "Settler Colonialism" in *Not "a Nation of Immigrants": Settler Colonialism, White Supremacy, and a History of Erasure and Exclusion*, (Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 2021).

[9] The titles association of "North America" to be encompassed within this limited geography hints at the common misnomer of "America," as referring to only the United States. However, apart from the spatial obstruction which links the "U.S." to be representative of all North America, what is of particular interest are how the figures and the setting work together in an effort of picturing "America" as a united nation.

are reminiscent of the crowds and spectacles David Nye refers to in his book *American Technological Sublime*, which details a history of people in the U.S. coming together across color, creed, and class, to confront "impressive objects" in shared wonder, awe, and terror.[10] In this specific U.S. strain of sublimity, the group experience takes precedence over individual mediation, noted in European conceptions of the sublime. Nye cites the natural bridge in Virginia, railways, and Niagara Falls as the "impressive objects" to which swarms of people traveled to witness. The multiple figures in the wallpaper are pointing outward but are often painted doing so while looking at the person beside them, as if making sure they're seeing it too. The emphasis on the American technological sublime as a community experience works to downplay the conflicts emerging from spiritual, racial, and class differences across the new nation. This phenomenon highlights how a diverse republic is unified in their shared reactions to the expansiveness of the natural and industrial power of the United States.[11]

Of critical importance to the establishment of the U.S. was the abstraction of land into territory. U.S. ownership of land rested on the elimination of Indigenous possession. Ignoring Indigenous cultivation of the land, this "empty" terrain, sometimes referred to as "vast untamed wilderness," was cut into gridded territory and later into private property sold to settlers.[12] In 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act and legalized the forceful relocation of Indigenous peoples to reservations, often far away from their ancestral homes. Notably, the Indigenous group in the wallpaper is the only group *not* admiring these scenes of sublimity, appearing instead to be another "scene." In "Views" the space the Indigenous group occupies is detached from the land surrounding it. It's as if they were on an island, performing on a circular stage where a fashionably dressed Black and white audience watches from the perimeter. They are excluded from the group experience, while visually included within the boundary of U.S. territory. Excluding the Indigenous group from participating in the technological sublime makes a claim for who defines the "American" community. Here, Indigenous people are a scene, bound to a limited space, both a part of "America" while distinct from being "American": that is, eliminated as active agents participating in the industrializing modern world.

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[10] Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, xxiii.

[11] Nye, *American Technological Sublime*, 43.

[12] Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," 389. He writes, "settler society required the practical elimination of the natives in order to establish itself on their territory." He also makes note that elimination is specific to claims of land and ownership, however, the physical presence of Indigenous peoples formally is a strategy for the new nation(s) to distant themselves from the European nations. Also see Brenna Bhandar *Colonial Lives of Property: Land, Law, and Racial Regimes of Ownership* (Raleigh: Duke University press, 2018).

This nineteenth-century visual representation of erasing racial tensions and fragmenting land to construct some ideal harmonious community continued into the twentieth century. Before Jacqueline Kennedy installed "Views" in the White House's Diplomatic Room, her husband, John F. Kennedy, published an influential book titled *A Nation of Immigrants* (1958). In it, Kennedy describes a sense of community equally formed through experience, though differently than Nye's framing of sublimity. Rather, the then-senator drew out a historic community formed through immigration.[13] Kennedy presents a whitewashed history of settlement that articulates a united community formed through a shared history of being "immigrants," or always with an ancestral lineage beginning elsewhere. This imagined immigrant community included enslaved Black people and Indigenous people: an egregious claim that has been debunked since Indigenous people have occupied the continents for at least 15,000-20,000 years and drawing slavery into the category of "immigration" ignores a history of forced relocation.[14]

In 1961, roughly 130 years since this wallpaper was produced, Jacqueline Kennedy selected "Views of North America" to be installed in the Diplomatic Reception Room.[15] Also selected were several decorative objects that were crafted in the United States in the nineteenth-century.[16] Considering this curation, the room zooms in on a heritage and people united in an appreciation for the nation's natural wonders, technological advancements, and artistic skill. The installation of "Views" and the other objects within the Diplomatic Reception room, the point of entry for officials and occasionally a conference room, contributes to the formation of a national identity founded on an overwhelming positive community experience. The Diplomatic Reception Room showcases a settled "American" landscape denoting a cohesive

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[13] Kennedy, *A Nation of Immigrants*, 54.

[14] Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 2011), xix. Byrd uses the term "arrivants" to describe the Black experience of arriving in the Americas as distinct from the Euro-American "settler". Tiya Miles, "Beyond a Boundary: Black Lives and the Settler-Native Divide," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 76, no. 3 (2019): 417-426. Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, and Dina Gilio-Whitaker, *"All the Real Indians Died Off": and 20 Other Myths About Native Americans* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2016), 14-22. It is also important to note that many Indigenous nations and tribes have creation stories that specify their origins in the Western Hemisphere.

[15] This wallpaper appears to still be installed in the Diplomatic Reception room. There is no found evidence of the room being renovated since the 1960s.

[16] Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis Personal Papers. Textual Materials. Pamela Turnure Files. Subject files: White House: Diplomatic Reception Room, National Society of Interior Designers, 5 October 1961. JBKOPP-SF033-014. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. It should be noted that prior to decorating this room, Jacqueline Kennedy received pushback from the press after decorating other rooms in the White House with exclusively European art. See, Alam, "What to Do about a Room with a 'Vues'?," 2020.

community in a new nation, bound together by a shared experience of immigration and wonderment of the technological sublime.

Doors breaking up a composition, or a lamp or person obstructing visual access to the wallpaper, are visual elements of obstruction that can function as visual metaphors of the wallpaper's ideological function. As the visual analysis illustrates, “Views” is an extension of a particular political strategy of defining “American”: economically, politically, and spiritually diverse, but united, forming a cohesive group that makes up the citizenry of what today is called the United States of America. The histories of oppression that were essential to the building of the nation become particularly poignant in the 1960s, when protests by the Civil Rights movement and the Red Power Moment were held in response to experiences of discrimination and exploitation of their labor and land on the lawn of the White House. A house that with its pristine sense of organization, its clean neoclassical geometries and lush lawn, obscures that fact that it sits on the ancestral lands Nacotchtank (Anacostan) and Piscataway nations and was built and maintained with enslaved labor.

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In/Visibility: Beijing Queer Film Festival and Alternative Queer Space

Nathan Shui

One morning in September 2014, a group of Chinese and international filmmakers, artists, academics, and film enthusiasts gathered at the Beijing Central Railway Station to board the 11:15 AM train leaving for a village near the Great Wall of China.[1] Unaware of the logistics of the event they were about to embark on, the participants were only equipped with the scant knowledge to bring their laptops, as instructed by an anonymous email received the night before. Once gathered in train carriage number seven, they were greeted by a mysterious organizer, who handed each of them a flash drive. On the count of three, all passengers plugged the keys into their digital devices and pressed the play button in perfect unison, and thus commenced the seventh edition of the Beijing Queer Film Festival (which will be referred to as BQFF or the Festival for the remainder of this paper).

Founded in 2001 by Chinese film director Cui Zi'en and students from Beijing University, BQFF is China's longest-running independent film festival centered on queer media and visual culture. The most exhaustive research on the Festival has been in media-culture scholar Hongwei Bao's essay "Queer as Catachresis: The Beijing Queer

[1] Dean Hamer, "Hiding in Plain Sight: The Beijing Queer Film Festival," *Filmmaker Magazine | Publication with a Focus on Independent Film, Offering Articles, Links, and Resources*, January 7, 2015, https://filmmakermagazine.com/88879-hiding-in-plain-sight-the-beijing-queer-film-festival/.

Film Festival in Cultural Translation."[2] Bao extends the Derridean concept of catachresis from a linguistic analytical device, which examines the unstable relationship between signs and meanings, to interrogate the cultural translation between "the Euro-American archetype of gay identity" and the particular articulation of Chinese queer subjectivity.[3] Bao posits the phrase "Chinese queer" as an undetermined semiotic placeholder to register the complex socio-cultural process through which a particularly Chinese same-sex articulation is produced under the globalization of sexual and gender identities.

In this article, I approach the BQFF from a different vantage point than Bao by focusing on the issue of queer visibility. By queer visibility, I refer to a particular mode of queer self-manifestation that fluctuates between the states of concealment and disclosure—a contingent condition of existence that undergirds how sexual minorities in the People's Republic of China (PRC) negotiate and navigate power despite their culturally and politically constricted existence. The goal of this paper is two-fold. First, I explore how the Festival contributes to disrupting state power without using overtly aggressive tactics. Second, I argue that the astonishing longevity achieved by the BQFF organizers necessitates further scholarly attention to the cultural and political efficacy of an ambiguous queer visibility as enacted by the Festival tactics. Coming out as the dominant mode of queer liberation has come under increasingly critical scholarly skepticism in recent years. Its sweeping assumption of a pre-existent and closeted sexual subject, exacerbated by an oft-unspoken focus on cis-white men, risks disregarding the particular historical and material conditions from which non-Western queer subjectivities and experiences emerge. In response to the binary of coming out, scholars of queer studies, cultural geography, and urban history have now cultivated an intersectional sensibility of queerness that attends not only to gender and sexuality, but also race, class, historicity, and localized conditions.

Cultural geographer Andrew Tucker's book, *Queer Visibility: Space, Identity, and Interaction in Cape Town,* uses visibility to register the complex ways queer men living in different quarters of Cape Town, South Africa, carve out spaces of their own. For Tucker, the issue of visibility indexes more than the state of perception; rather, it describes a historical and cultural condition whose meaning is contingent upon the intersectional and localized network of race, class, gender, and sexuality.[4] As such, visibility destabilizes Western queer rhetoric by grounding the queer world in Cape Town on its own historical and sociocultural terms. By exploring the tensions between

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[2] Hongwei Bao, "Queer as Catachresis: The Beijing Queer Film Festival in Cultural Translation," in *Chinese Film Festivals: Sites of Translation*, ed. Chris Berry and Luke Robinson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 79–100.

[3] Bao, "Queer as Catachresis," 81.

[4] Andrew Tucker, *Queer Visibilities: Space, Identity, and Interaction in Cape Town*, RGS-IBG Book Series (Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), 15-16.

queer groups along different racial and class fault lines, visibility as a queer analytical category exposes the reproduction of discriminatory and racialized practices in Cape Town that the Western queer prism fails to detect. This essay joins Tucker and similar scholars to argue that coming out—and its mode of radical visibility to claim power and agency—need not, and should not be, the only way sexual minorities navigate the field of political and cultural forces in which their everyday lives are embedded. The Festival posits an alternative form of visibility whose continuous and generative oscillation between emergence and disappearance troubles the one-off politics of coming out. The Festival's alternating visibility deconstructs the metaphor of the closet by replacing its enclosed spatiality—and its presupposition of a final, true self—with a series of porous boundaries demarcated by what Fran Martin calls a "situated enactment."[5]

In what follows, I gravitate towards two artifacts—a cartographic collage produced at the Festival's ten-year anniversary (fig. 1), and the train carriage mentioned at the outset of this text, which I will analyze using Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome theory, and Hakim Bey's theory of the temporary autonomous zone. These two strands of thought help understand how the BQFF strategically organizes its public visibility to circumvent or disarticulate state power and to carve out a space of its own. I use this ambivalent visibility to challenge the hyper-visibility of queer activism modeled after the Stonewall riot and to emphasize the former's more practical and inclusive approach toward cultural and political dissent in non-Western political contexts. Ultimately, through a situated reading of the BQFF, I intend to shed light on the following questions: How can the Festival's spatial politics be read in ways illustrative of ordinary and unconfrontational queer politics in the contemporary People's Republic of China? How might sexual minorities appropriate state-regulated spaces to assert their own subjectivities without applying confrontational tactics? And how could such spatial appropriation be usefully mobilized and understood in terms beyond the narrow oppression-resistance binary undergirding Western-centric queer studies?

[5] In Martin's seminal essay "Surface Tensions: Reading Productions of Tongzhi in Contemporary Taiwan," the author describes the "situated enactment" in relation to an implied spectatorship—a group of audience for whom the queer visibility is intended. In the context of the Festival, questions of audience, and what queer visibility is for, are key to my inquiry. See Fran Martin, "SURFACE TENSIONS: Reading Productions of Tongzhi in Contemporary Taiwan," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 6, no. 1 (January 1, 2000): 68.

Figure 1. Photo collage superimposed onto the city map of Beijing. From *Our Story: Beijing Queer Film Festival's Ten Years of Guerrilla Warfare*, directed by Yang Yang and Cui Zi'en (Beijing: Beijing Ku'er Ying Zhan Committee, 2012). Screenshot capture by author.

The Collage: BQFF's Guerrilla Spatial Tactics

The 2013 edition of BQFF kicked off with a film about its own history. Titled *Our Story: Beijing Queer Film Festival's Ten Years of Guerrilla Warfare*, the documentary leads the audience through the journey the Festival has arduously ventured through since its infancy.[6] One artifact featured in the film immediately captures the viewer's attention through its stark composition—a standard administrative map of Beijing on which is superimposed a collage of densely arranged photos (fig. 1). This collage acts as both a record of the BQFF's geography organized across its ten-year history and as an allegory of its quietly subversive, highly mobile spatial tactics.

The map of Beijing features the three subregions that make up the city's concentric urban configuration: the inner city, the inner-ring suburbs, and the outer-ring suburbs. The transport artery circulates along the historical axis put in place since the feudal Ming dynasty, further accentuating the geographic centrality of the inner city. The Forbidden City and Tiananmen Square occupy the very heart of the metropolis, serving as the embodiment of China's historical cultivation and political sovereignty respectively. Suggestive of the inner city's spatial privilege is its unchanged economic

[6] *Our Story: The Beijing Queer Film Festival's 10 Years of "Guerrilla Warfare,"* directed by Yang Yang and Cui Zi 'en, trans. Yang Yang et al. (Beijing: Beijing Ku'er Ying Zhan Committee, 2012).

and political prestige. The rest of Beijing has undergone tremendous urban transformations; by contrast, its inner city has remained the unassailable center of command. Reading the map from its center to the margin and following its north-south and west-east axis, an observer's gaze always gets pulled back to the inner city marked by the architectural icons of Tiananmen Square and Forbidden Palace, as if being pulled by the vortex of its concentric shape. The map serves to provide spatial guidance, and more importantly, to cartographically align the inner city's locational centrality with its cultural-political prominence. It is a diagrammatic representation of power par excellence.

Photographs are superimposed onto the city map, creating a collage out of the cartography of Beijing. The collage exhibits a subtle hint of intimacy, featuring photographs of smiling faces and cheering bodies suggestive of a robust communal solidarity. At the same time, the collage is provocative, using the forceful *mise en page* of these bodies to *overwrite* the city map, thereby contesting its political authority. The arrangement of the photos indicates the physical locations where each iteration of the festival has taken place. Each picture harbors variegated meanings and stories about the Festival. The collage assembles these fragmented moments and transmutes them into a mass of united bodies asserting their queer presence firmly onto the urban fabric of Beijing. Through this cartographic re-territorialization, the geopolitical center of Beijing, Tiananmen Square, is displaced and concealed. The city's concentric urban structure becomes short-circuited, its fabric rattled, and its power dispersed. Geographic landmarks and arterial infrastructures give symbolic precedence to the people who now have surfaced at the forefront of the cartography, troubling the geopolitical hierarchy inscribed in the capital city of PRC.

A sinuous path in bold blue color threads across the city map, marking out venues where past editions of BQFF were held. However, this linear path, bookended by two dots, indexes only a fuzzy description of the actual trajectory of the Festival's migration. As Deleuze and Guattari contend in *A Thousand Plateaus*, "a path is always between two points, but then-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both autonomy and a direction of its own."[7] In reality, the spatial movements of BQFF pulsated through a rhizomatic matrix spreading from a single point of creation, namely Beijing University, into multiple directions. To understand the variegated directions taken by different iterations of the BQFF, further contextualization of the event is needed.

The circle on the top left corner indicates the first and second editions of BQFF, held respectively at Beijing University and the then-semi-underground art district 798

[7] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 380.

Art Zone. The first edition suffered a premature termination after only one screening session and the second one followed a similar fate. With the threat of unpredictable cancellation, the Festival moved its third and fourth editions to Song Zhuang Artist Village on the far west periphery of Beijing. The art village is the most prominent rural art hub in North China, with over two thousand artist residents from various creative disciplines. Unlike the previous editions hosted as independently run events, the third and fourth editions were, to borrow the Deleuzian lexicon of Nomadology, "plugged into" the less politically sensitive Beijing Independent Film Festival as its queer-film unit. To encourage more dynamic interactions between the participants and filmmakers, the Festival changed its title to Beijing Queer Film Forum, emphasizing its nature as a platform for exchange and discussion. However, the rural migration also had its downsides. In particular, it compromised the event's founding principle of queer community building. As Bao points out, the art village's marginal location from the city discouraged the participation of urban queer folks due to their constrained spatial mobility; some could not spare a whole day to attend the event because of work commitments, and others simply lacked the necessary means to commute to the outskirts of the city.[8] Furthermore, the predominantly heterosexual attendees coming to the Independent Film Festival also unintentionally created an insecure environment for the queer participants to publicly display their identities out of fear of being recognized by acquaintances. Ultimately, moving outside the city of Beijing brought to light the challenge of maintaining the balance between fostering communities for sexual minorities and raising public awareness about the same-sex population for a broader, heteronormative public.

The fifth edition of BQFF ensued two years later in 2011. The Festival returned to the inner city. This "homecoming" was propelled by the tightening media censorship in China at large, which resulted in the closure of several Chinese Independent film festivals. The BQFF organizers initially booked Song Zhuang as its main screening venue, hoping the artist village would provide the same stability the Festival had enjoyed previously, but their reservation was canceled for unknown reasons only days before the inaugural screening. Determined to keep the show going, the Festival circled back to the city, where the organizers could take advantage of their extensive social circles to improvise plans as the Festival went.

And improvise they did. Unlike its previous incarnations based in fixed places, the 2011 BQFF had to leap from one venue to another in unpredictable patterns to steer away from censoring authorities. The circles dotting the collage in random patterns reflect the frequent and quick movements with which the Festival zigzagged though different places. Not all circled places were used as screening venues or were

[8] Bao, "Queer as Catachresis," 93.

used at all. Some functioned as failsafe sites in case the ongoing venue was canceled last minute, some did host screenings but were terminated prematurely due to police intervention, and the others were not considered as screening venues at all but places for post-screening discussions. In the documentary, one of festival founders, Yang Yang, shared what it was like keeping the Festival going at that time of extreme uncertainties during the Festival's fifth edition in 2011:

> The officers were from three different units [Bureau of Public Security, Bureau of Cultural Affairs, and Bureau of City Administration]. Each unit's representative asked us one question, and after hearing these three questions, we knew it was of no use to negotiate...during the talk, I already started to think about new festival locations. I knew it was impossible to negotiate with them. The committee decided that the Festival couldn't go out like that. We have to continue and to look for another venue. We immediately started to search for new places. We all started to rack our brains like crazy for possible places. In the end, we held the opening at the Beijing Vinyl Café . . . Organizing the rest of the Festival was a case of "playing it by ear."[9]

Yang Yang's account articulates the process whereby the Festival organizers succeeded in sustaining its momentum in its highly constrained spatial condition. By slipping into the urban network joined by everyday spaces, the Festival activated what Deleuze and Guattari call "the rhizomatic potential." This rhizomatic potential consists of the ability of a centerless and interconnected network to resurrect itself from conclusive destruction due to its lack of point of origin and therefore a heightened resilience to focused effort of eradication.[10] Quotidian spaces, such as book shops, restaurants, and tea houses, collectively constituted a lattice equipped with "multiple exits and lines of flights," allowing the Festival to swiftly move through and under the field of censorship.[11] These guerrilla-warfare tactics also reflect what Michel de Certeau described as the powerless people's quiet endeavor to navigate the environment strategized by the powerful—traceless, hard to locate, and always on the go.[12] Relying on not a fixed *emplacement* but a hyper-malleable mode of mobility realized by the organizers' queer social networking, the 2011 BQFF achieved what anthropologist Lisa Rofel describes as "nomadic activism."[13] That is, it engages in "maneuvering *within and*

[9] Excerpt from *Our Story: Beijing Queer Film Festival's Ten Years of Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Yang Yang et al.

[10] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 6-8.

[11] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 1.

[12] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

[13] Lisa Rofel, *Desiring China: Experiments in Neoliberalism, Sexuality, and Public Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 158.

around the various powers that shape subjectivities, social enterprises, political belief and economic inequality in China."[14]

What this nomadic activism further accomplished amounts to the appropriation and temporary transformation of the stratified, state-regulated space. China scholars have discussed the creative potency of queer activists to temporarily dislodge certain public spaces from the heteronormative reign through the creation of counter-publics. In her essay on Chinese Grassroots queer activism, "Going Public," Elisabeth Engebretsen states that Chinese queer grassroots activists demonstrate incredible abilities to "best manipulate the organizational terrain" to encourage queer public participation in anti-queerphobic mobilization.[15] Similarly, Rofel observes that Chinese queer activists are successful nomadic subjects who know how to use differentiation among governmental bureaus to influence political decision-making that benefits queer rights.[16] Bao, citing both Engebretsen and Rofel, argues that Chinese queer activism often takes on a carnivalesque performance to temporarily transform the public sphere to safely slip into queer dissents, no matter how subtle and undetectable.[17] These different strands of discussion about Chinese queer activism find a compelling point of convergence in the seventh edition of BQFF, specifically in train carriage number seven. BQFF's creative re-appropriation of the train carriage illustrates a particular queer spatial practice that is locally, culturally, and politically specific to the queer communities in most regions in China.

Train Carriage Number Seven: Ephemeral Queer Reterritorialization

Trains share certain affinities with Foucault's heterotopic ship, in the sense that they too operate as "a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is self-enclosed and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea."[18] But trains also move in less chaotic velocity than the Foucauldian ship, as their trajectory remains physically tethered to the dictation of the railway, which is further subjugated to the larger infrastructural network. Trains do not exist at the same level of autonomy as ships either, for their operation and movement are prescribed by intricate navigational systems such

[14] Rofel, *Desiring China,* 158.

[15] Elisabeth L Engebretsen, "Of Pride and Visibility: The Contingent Politics of Queer Grassroots Activism in China," in *Queer/Tongzhi China: New Perspectives on Research, Activism and Media Cultures*, ed. Elisabeth L Engebretsen and William F Schroeder (Copenhagen: NIAS - Nordic Institution of Asian Studies, 2015), 6.

[16] Lisa Rofel, "Grassroots Activism: Non-Normative Sexual Politics in Post-Socialist China," in *Unequal China: The Political Economy and Cultural Politics of Inequality*, ed. Wanning Sun and Yingjie Guo (London: Routledge, 2013), 158.

[17] Hongwei Bao, *Queer China: Lesbian and Gay Literature and Visual Culture under Postsocialism* (New Delhi: Routledge India, 2020), 120.

[18] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986), 27.

as the timetable, ticket dispenser, train station, and other external factors that put the vehicle in fixed spatial and temporal positions. A train is one part of a static infrastructure, the tip of a branch at the end of the reproduction system, and therefore a sub-territory to the field of state power.

However, after its departure from the station, while the train remains on track and therefore still attached to the regulatory system commanding it, its interior space takes flight to a temporarily untethered state, thereby creating what Hakim Bey refers to as a "temporary autonomous zone (TAZ)," an anarchistic space within which rules are temporarily bent and elided. TAZ is a term describing the temporary suspension and appropriation of the state-regulated space as "an uprising, which does not engage directly with the State, a guerrilla operation which liberates an area (of land, of time, of imagination) and then dissolves itself to reform elsewhere/elsewhen, before the State can crush it."[19] Referencing Deleuze and Guattari's theory of Nomadology, Bey's articulation of the TAZ explicates the precise working mechanism of BQFF's queer guerrilla warfare. "The TAZ is an encampment of guerrilla oncologists: strike and run away. Keep moving the entire tribe…the nomadic machine conquers without being noticed and moves on before the map can be adjusted."[20]

Using laptops and flash drives, the participants of BQFF temporarily turned train carriage number seven into a makeshift screening venue. In other words, they re-territorialized the space into something that deviated from its originally assigned purpose—a transportive vehicle turned into a queer performative stage. The critical mass of BQFF's participants also played a crucial role in this transformative process: one laptop playing a film would not have turned the carriage into a theater space, but a carriage full of people gathered for the same purpose, compounded with the sheer force of their assembly, did. It is important to recognize how the quiet act of watching the documentary in silent collectivity is itself a politically potent act of resistance, enunciated "in excess of what is said, and that mode of signification is a concerted bodily enactment, a plural form of performativity."[21] This intense process of spatial makeover happened swiftly. Once the train arrived at its destination, the BQFF participants quickly disembarked from the carriage and proceeded to the next meeting point. Everything went back to business as usual.

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[19] Hakim Bey, *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (Weehawken, NJ: Grim Reaper Press, 1985), 101.

[20] Bey, *T.A.Z.*, 102.

[21] Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 8.

Conclusion: (In)Visibility

The two case studies of the collage and the train carriage testify to the BQFF's oscillating status between disclosure and concealment, a strategic deployment of (in)visibility in the form of double presence at the level of both surface and subterranean manifestations. This surface-to-subterranean relationship is captured by Carl Jung, the psychologist who first introduced the botanical term "rhizome" into the philosophical field:

> Life had always seemed to me like a plant that lives on its rhizome. Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome. The part that appears above the ground lasts only a single summer. Then it withers away—an ephemeral apparition. When we think of the unending growth and decay of life and civilization, we cannot escape the impression of absolute nullity. Yet, I have never lost the sense of something that lives and endures beneath the eternal flux. What we see is blossom, which passes. The rhizome remains.[22]

I find Jung's description of the rhizome—the underground source of life force that becomes visible at seasonal intervals—illustrative of a more capacious and generative understanding of queer visibility, which does not confine one's sexual self to a rigid divide between disclosure or concealment but locates it in a dynamic and permeable exchange between the two. "Its true life is invisible, hidden in the rhizome": Jung's appreciation of the underground life source posits a stark contrast to the metaphor of "the closet" and its identarian politics of coming out. Although both the rhizome and the closet depend on the dichotomy of concealment and revealing, they hold polarizing assumptions regarding how this optic dyad might inform and empower one's subjectivity. Furthermore, there is also no single point of origin; queerness *is* networks that span underneath normative structures.

The closet indexes the modern assumption about the precondition of truth and authenticity, which attributes empowerment to radical identity transparency, usually achieved through the politically privileged action of "coming out."[23] The metaphor of the rhizome, on the other hand, assumes a mosaic state of translucency, neither unproblematically transparent nor resolutely opaque. The rhizome's alternating manifestation between visibility and invisibility thus challenges the closet by questioning the validity of its wholesale embrace of transparent selfhood. In the case of the BQFF, the unpredictable yet ephemeral eruptions of screening venues across the city of Beijing

[22] Carl Gustav Jung, *Memoirs, Dreams, Reflections*, ed. Aniela Jaffé, trans. Richard Winston (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 4.

[23] The Foucauldian architecture of the panopticon further dramatizes such a direct translation between power and visibility. We can also recall Eve Sedgwick's theorization of the closet as well as Michael Warner's concept of the queer counterpublics, which both contest the reductive dialectics of the gay-versus-straight binary.

articulate the logic of the rhizomatic visibility vis-à-vis disclosure and concealment. Indeed, the Festival's guerrilla-warfare spatial strategy demonstrates that the relationship between visibility and invisibility need not be mutually exclusive.

In his critique of the Occupy Wall Street movement, activist Emahunn Raheem Ali Campbell contended that the lack of serious efforts made by white occupiers to foster a safe environment for people of color—who run a much higher risk of police brutality—severely compromised the political potential of the movement.[24] Campbell's lamentation thus criticizes the useful but problematic notion of radical political visibility that often assumes the presence of a white, cisgendered body. The same critique is also applicable to the practice of queer dissension, especially when we consider the drastically variant degrees of queer precarity—depending on one's social and economic standing, their vulnerability to risks and retaliation fluctuate. On this pragmatic level, the BQFF's ambiguous relationship to visibility facilitates a more inclusive and encouraging environment for the socially precarious members of queer communities. It attends more specifically to the indigenous queer politics exercised by everyday people, who navigate the political and social landscape of PRC in a similarly ambivalent fashion. As Bao observes, "for many queer people in China, one does not need to be completely in or out. Being in and out depends on the specific context and the person who they met."[25] The contingencies of how many (but certainly not all) Chinese queer people choose to perform their gender identities and sexualities thus necessitate a flexible mode of and freedom to move between the state of "in" and "out."

The BQFF committee recently released the call for submission for the Festival's fifteenth edition. The event has grown from a campus-run festival to what the organizers call "a historical narrative made of cinematographic fragments" [无数个这样的影像碎片，构成了属于我们的历史叙事。Wu shu ge zhe yang de ying xiang sui pian, gou cheng le shu yu wo men de li shi xu shi].[26] It seems that the event has secured a certain degree of stability, and the possibility of virtual screening also partially mitigated the impact of spatial constrictions it faced in the early 2000s and 2010s. Still, it is crucial to look back at the spatial struggles BQFF endured in its earlier years to understand that the regulation and production of space are intimately tied to various modes of visibility. Just as becoming visible can be a potent expression of queer

[24] Emahunn Raheem Ali Campbell, "A Critique of the Occupy Movement from a Black Occupier," *The Black Scholar* 41, no. 4 (2011): 42–51.

[25] Bao, "Queer as Catachresis," 97.

[26] Zhengni Wazhao, "2022爱酷电影周征片正式开始！Call for Submission 2022 Love Queer Cinema Week [2022 ai ku dian ying zhou zheng pian zheng shi kai shi! Call for Submission 2022 Love Queer Cinema Week]," May 17, 2022, https://www.bjqff.com/15th-festival/call-for-submission-2022/. Quote translated by author.

dissent, invisibility or conditional visibility can also be used by queer communities to leverage for better mobility and autonomy to navigate the field of power.

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Alternative Modes of Mapping

a response by Alex Schultz

Nathan Shui's essay on the 2013 Beijing Queer Film Festival considers a new geography for queer spatial tactics of interpolation. In 2013, the festival took place not in a public square or park, but in a train car. Organizers chose this extra-governmental mobile space for practical as well as perhaps ideological reasons: Xi Jinping's government has increased scrutiny of public LGBTQ+ events and advocacy in the last decade, including canceling Shanghai Pride for the first time – and until further notice - in August 2020.[1] This crackdown has forced the LGBTQ+ community to rethink outreach and events, including using word-of-mouth rather than email marketing to publicize events such as the Beijing Queer Film Festival.

A documentary still-frame included in the author's essay displays a collage of photographs, blue lines, and other symbols affixed to what seems to be a typical road map of Beijing and surrounding areas. These annotations serve to make queer space visible while simultaneously obscuring official or government-approved modes of interacting with the city. For me, this brings critical attention to *any* map's discursive obstruction. Maps are not neutral depictions of fact: like any representation they are selective and rhetorical.

Rail or road maps, like the foundational layer of this artwork, are cartographic. They are produced with trigonometric and satellite data, but also a robust sense of imagined authority. For example, in the nineteenth century, British colonial engineers

[1] Steven Jiang, "Shanghai Pride Shuts down amid Shrinking Space for China's LGBTQ Community," CNN, August 16, 2020, https://www.cnn.com/2020/08/14/asia/shanghai-pride-shutdown-intl-hnk/index.html.

deployed trigonometric cartography to map Egypt in order to claim administrative and legislative purview. In both places, measurement technology took the form of mathematics, precise instrumentation, and rigorously prescribed and documented processes. These were in turn visualized into the map, a representation of land and land ownership that was considered more modern and more objective than, for example, Ottoman tax registers. The latter relied on local practice and practitioners who recorded land information textually in ledgers. As Timothy Mitchell has shown, the British colonial survey of Egypt was not more accurate than previous practice, but rather reconfigured space to facilitate the colonial economy, including the consumption of squatter's land for profit.[2] Even today with the widespread adoption of GIS data in software such as Google Maps, maps remain incomplete, imprecise, and selective two-dimensional representations of three-dimensional space. Indeed, the priorities of a map reveal much more about the map-makers than the space itself.[3]

The official roadmap of Beijing did not make room for queer spaces, so the Queer Festival artists added them. These spaces are not mapped using traditional cartographic symbols, but the faces of real people. Such a precise obstruction questions the authority of maps, and thus the authority—and reach—of the state. Indeed, the map is transformed into something beyond a cartography. Rather, it declares the festival as a spatial practice.[4] The new map makes space for the ephemeral and the experiential while simultaneously occluding state claims to all ways of moving and being in Beijing.

In a security state, governance is rooted in constant and pervasive fear.[5] However, the fear runs both ways. Regimes and their agents practice systematic and often violent oppression because they fear the power of people, especially in the form of community action. Even ostensibly apolitical events such as the Beijing Queer Film Festival are considered a threat: as Shui notes, officers from three different police units questioned organizers, and eventually shut down the 2011 festival. Holding the festival in spite of repeated state intervention is an act of resistance. Doing so in a mode that

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[2] Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). Matthew Edney has explored similar issues of colonial governance and the process of map making in India. See: Matthew Edney, *Mapping an Empire: The Geographical Construction of British India, 1765-1843* (Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

[3] Swati Chattopadhyay, "Cities and Peripheries," *Historical Research* 83, no. 222 (2010): 649–71.

[4] The cartographic mode is only one among many ways of visually representing cognitive spatial mapping. For an interesting discussion of this issue, see: Matthew Edney, "This Is Not a Map," Mapping as Process, accessed January 20, 2023, https://www.mappingasprocess.net/blog/2017/12/14/this-is-not-a-map.

[5] For some discussion of this and creative modes of subversion and resistance, see: Paul Amar, *The Security Archipelago: Human-Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism* (Duke University Press, 2013); Lisa Wedeen, *Ambiguities of Domination: Politics, Rhetoric and Symbols in Contemporary Syria* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999/2015).

frustrates surveillance efforts and official cartographies is not only necessary, but critically, a disruption of the hegemony of state knowledge.[6]

[6] Shui characterizes these as ambivalent processes. This event and its tactics also bring to mind classic examples of petty resistance, including humor, foot-dragging, and recalcitrance. See: James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985); Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2013).

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Confection and the Aesthetic of Collapse: Luis Vasquez La Roche's Sugar Cane Field Performances

Ashleigh Deosaran

Introduction

On a sunny summer evening in late August 2021, I arrived at my doorstep in Chicago to find a much-anticipated delivery from my home-nation, Trinidad, the southernmost island of the Caribbean archipelago. I sliced through a layer of gray packaging to find a shoebox tightly encased in plastic wrap. With each excision from the plastic, a sickly-sweet stench filled the apartment. Prying the box open—with some effort, as its lid was stuck shut by a viscid amber substance (fig. 1)—I found that the shipment arrived in a state of near-total collapse after its the 2,600-mile journey. Tawny beads and shimmering fragments flecked the cardboard interior, melting with each passing moment (fig. 2). Inside lay a pair of partially crushed caramel-colored shoes which, even in its original undamaged state, only bore superficial resemblance to the sneakers one might expect from a box featuring the internationally legible Nike name and logo (fig. 3). Cast entirely in brown sugar, the pair had been sculpted and

Figure 1. Luis Vasquez La Roche, Untitled, 2021, sugar sculpture in cardboard, dimensions variable. Photograph by the author.

shipped by a close friend and collaborator, Venezuela-born artist Luis Vasquez La Roche. They exemplify what I define in this paper, through Vasquez La Roche's recent confectionary sculptures and performances, as an aesthetic of collapse.

Figure 2. Luis Vasquez La Roche, Untitled, 2021, sugar sculpture in cardboard, dimensions variable. Photograph by the author.

The experiment fit squarely into Vasquez La Roche's oeuvre, characterized by site-specific, physically taxing performances with materials that signal fraught histories related to their value, color, extraction, and consumption.[1] Whether he is constructing a temporary monument using red clay brick and palm oil blackened with gunpower or using the substance to coat his flesh entirely, his body seems to be visually spliced with the material and spatial histories within which he performs. He attends to the ways in which the Black body is enmeshed with/in these architectures and the extracted matter indexical to violent Circum-Atlantic histories. I argue that Vasquez La Roche's recent performances in the Couva community of central Trinidad enact collapse not only literally—taking his interest in ephemerality to its furthest extent—but also conceptually, anticipating a post-collapse future that departs from the idealism of colonial-imperial images.[2]

[1] The work also fits into a well-established canon of contemporary experiments with sugar and sculpture in visual arts practices throughout the Americas. Some include United States artist Kara Walker's monumental "A Subtlety" (2014); Bahamian-born U.S.-based artist Janine Antoni's "Gnaw" (1992) and "Lick and Lather," (1993); Cuban artist Magdalena Campos-Pons' "Sugar/Bittersweet" (2010); and Brazilian artist Tiago Sant'Ana's recent series of analogous "Sugar Shoes" (2018).

[2] In a very recent performance not addressed in this paper, "Cómo Saltar la Cuerda de la Manera Correcta" (How to Jump Rope Correctly), he intermittently skips and lashes out with a whip in an old sugar mill in Canóvanas, Puerto Rico. During his residency with the Trinidad-based artist collective and space Alice Yard at *documenta fifteen* in July 2022, La Roche performed the work with a rum soaked whip

Literal collapse is invoked in performances that mount a physical breakdown of materials, such as *But the Real Ones, Just Like You*, *Just Like Me* (2021), in which Vasquez La Roche destroyed a sugar shoe amidst the infrastructural remnants of an abandoned sugar refinery (fig. 4). In this article, I contextualize this performance as a counter to historic visualizations of the Caribbean sugar plantation during colonialism, as in the idealized sugarscape vistas rendered in the late nineteenth century by British artist Richard Bridgens. Vasquez La Roche additionally explores an aesthetic of collapse through a secondary, post-literal mode that compresses ostensibly divergent materials, spaces and times. In *Canchas de Algodón de Azúcar* (2020), for example, Vasquez La Roche visually foregrounds the refinery's absence and predicts a future in which literal collapse may culminate in ecological renewal and supersede reparative constructions. This performance, which emphasizes a vision of the plantation in a post-decay future, enacts a temporal cohesion between history and future, as well as a spatial collapse between plantations and the recreational site of a basketball court. A conceptual aesthetic of collapse moves beyond actual collapse to imagine a future beyond deterioration, limning multiple spatio-temporal referents through an Afrofuturist lens. Throughout the history of the genre, Afrofuturist works of literature, art, and poetry have responded to apocalyptic scenarios and problematized Anthropocentrism while imagining post-collapse possibilities as a form of liberation from the constraints of both history and the present. As philosopher and environmental theorist Fréderic Neyrat has deftly stated, the "inaugural paradox" of Afrofuturism is to "invent the future even when there is no longer any possible future."[3] For visual artists like Vasquez La Roche, Afrofuturist

Figure 3. Luis Vasquez La Roche, Untitled, 2021, sugar sculpture in cardboard, dimensions variable. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

which he occasionally put into his mouth. For more, see his website: https://www.luisvasquezlaroche.com/como-saltar-la-cuerd-documenta.

[3] Frédéric Neyrat, "The Black Angel of History," trans. Daniel Ross, *Angelaki* 25, no. 4 (July 3, 2020): 127.

inventiveness can help us to fathom the paradoxical endorsement of ruin for the sake of renewal, constituting what I describe as an aesthetic of collapse.

Figure 4. Abandoned sugar refinery in Couva, Trinidad, 2022. Photograph by Luis Vasquez La Roche.

Contextualizing Vasquez La Roche's work through a now-rusting refinery perimetric to his interventions, I argue that reading his performances through an aesthetic of collapse can reframe decay as a productive and promising force. In her review of Brian Meeks' text on political revolution in the Caribbean, Maziki Thame has suggested, "there is potential in collapse, in hegemonic dissolution, in disorder."[4] Following Meeks' recognition of the "implicit potential for a democratic renewal" amid political tumult,[5] Thame suggests that crisis and collapse can herald equitable Caribbean futures rooted in revolutions that impel "radical change, the actual turning of things upside down."[6] Taking seriously this potential, I propose that an accompanying aesthetic of collapse, defined through Vasquez La Roche's practice, allows us to embrace the inevitable literal collapses of colonial and capitalist infrastructures and envision through conceptual collapse the potential for post-decay renewal.

[4] Maziki Thame, "Democracy and the End of Revolution in the Contemporary Caribbean," *Small Axe* 20, no. 2 (July 2016, No. 50): 174. See also Brian Meeks, *Critical Interventions in Caribbean Politics and Theory* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2014).

[5] Meeks, *Critical Interventions*, 133.

[6] Thame, "Democracy and End of Revolution," 174.

Countering Saccharine Colonial Visions

Sugar was planted on Trinidadian soil by French immigrants arriving on the island under Spanish colonial rule in the mid-eighteenth century.[7] The majority were wealthy, white plantocrats retreating from fraught religious conflicts in a recently captured British Grenada, rebellions in Martinique, Guadeloupe, and St. Lucia, as well as nascent revolutions brimming in France and Saint-Domingue.[8] In 1797, British invaders captured the colony from the Spanish, which further catalyzed migration to the colony from the English metropole in the following decades. Among these newcomers was British artist and plantocrat Richard Bridgens. He depicted his new surroundings—including the family-owned sugar estate of his wife, Maria—in a series of lithographs published in *West India Scenery* (1836).[9] As Amar Wahab argues, Bridgens' images levied a "colonial will to power" and "pro-plantation logic" that mounted an "aesthetic defensive" against anti-slavery critique in the nineteenth century.[10] Wahab recognizes the depictions as rejoinders to regional unrest spurred by the Haitian revolution, culminating in the emancipation of enslaved people in 1838. He reads Bridgens' depictions of his estate and other sites on the island—published merely two years before emancipation—as part of a broader visual campaign to emphasize their placidity and progressiveness. This visual campaign, as art historian Krista Thompson shows, was circulated abroad through images like those of Bridgens' that made colonial transplantation and enslavement more palatable for audiences in the U.S. and Europe.[11] Such representations of the tropics were exported abroad to veil the realities of violence, extraction, and ecological devastation across the circum-Atlantic. Centuries later, Vasquez La Roche's *But the Real Ones* (2021) counters these idealized depictions by staging the field as a site of contention, ambivalence, and literal collapse.

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[7] While this island is one of two that now make up the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, this paper deals exclusively with Trinidad, which underwent a colonial history separate from Tobago until the two were unified under British colonial rule in 1889.

[8] The untapped agricultural potential in Trinidad was also appealing to those interested in establishing a thriving plantation economy after having sapped the soil of the other islands, making Spain's offer of several acres to any colonist willing to settle the land near irresistible. Linda Newson, "Foreign Immigrants in Spanish America: Trinidad's Colonization Experiment," *Caribbean Studies* 19, no. 1/2 (1979): 133–51. 133.

[9] Richard Bridgens, et al., *West India Scenery: with Illustrations of Negro Character, the Process of Making Sugar, & from Sketches taken during a Voyage to, and Residence of Seven Years in, the Island of Trinidad* (London: Robert Jennings & Co., 1836). Judy Raymond provides extensive biographical information on Bridgens' life before and during his relocation to Trinidad from England in *The Colour of Shadows: Images of Caribbean Slavery* (Coconut Creek, FL: Caribbean Studies Press, an Imprint of Educa Vision, 2016).

[10] Amar Wahab, *Colonial Inventions: Landscape, Power and Representation in Nineteenth-Century Trinidad* (Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010): 95-98.

[11] Krista A. Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics: Tourism, Photography, and Framing the Caribbean Picturesque* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.

Like many of his contemporaries interested in tropicalized landscapes, Bridgens obscured plantation life behind a veil of benevolent stolidity. Such is the case of *The Field Negro* (fig. 5), which depicts an enslaved man in contrapposto stance before stalks of sugar cane, wearing an impossibly neutral, even contented expression. An appearance of ease in the figure's relaxed gait and unsoiled tools obscures the dangers and discomfort of his labor in the surrounding sugarcane fields. Although Bridgens also imaged more 'realistic' depictions of active laboring bodies in fields, such as *Cane Cutters* (fig. 6), the perspective takes what Susan Libby describes as an authoritative position, fostering "an all-seeing gaze" by which "the reader is invited to share their view and assume their right to dominate."[12] Indeed, the image is presented from an elevated view, far removed from the swinging arms and bent backs of the workers who cut looming stalks twice their height. Yet Bridgens is also careful to include in the foreground toward the left of the composition laborers who are at rest, drinking in the cool shade. The artist included scenes of rest and recreation within images of labor to position Trinidad as a progressive colony, protecting his financial interests against rising abolitionist sentiment.

Figure 5. Richard Bridgens, A Field Negro, c. 1832–1836, lithograph, 10.5 x 14.6in, from *West India Scenery* by Richard Bridgens. Source: Caribbean Views Collection, British Library, London.

At the same time, he positions at the center of this dynamic scene a white overseer whose pointed arm makes clear the hierarchy of plantation labor. An almost identical figure is repeated in "Interior of a Boiling House" (fig. 7), where enslaved laborers can be seen heating and ladling cane juice to produce a sugary syrup for eventual processing into crystals. The disciplinary gesture is once again a central fixture, fitting squarely within its single point perspective and carefully ordered architectural

[12] Susan H. Libby, "The Mechanical Plantation: Picturing Sugar Production in the *Encyclopédie*," *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* 47 (2018): 76.

Figure 6. Richard Bridgens, Cutting Canes, c. 1832–1836, lithograph, 10.5 x 14.6in, from *West India Scenery* by Richard Bridgens. Source: Caribbean Views Collection, British Library, London.

Figure 7. Richard Bridgens, Interior of a Boiling House, ca. 1832-1836, lithograph, 10.5 x 14.6in, from *West India Scenery* by Richard Bridgens. Source: Caribbean Views Collection, British Library, London.

elements, including barred windows from which not even the billowing smoke can escape. Driven by an impetus to depict and defend the racialized labor hierarchies on which his family depended for income, Bridgens' illustrations sought to balance narratives of 'civilizing' enslaved people through strict discipline with glimpses of an ameliorative colonial society.

Given Bridgens' aesthetic and financial investment in bolstering the sugar industry in Trinidad, he would likely be dismayed at its eventual collapse. His efforts to maintain and image plantation architectures in Trinidad would prefigure a centuries-long attempt at upholding and profiting from the sugar industry by colonial and independent governments alike until the commodity was finally forsaken in 2003. One year prior to such demise, contemporary multi-media artist Luis Vasquez La Roche migrated with his family from Venezuela to the Couva community. Decaying plantation remains and surrounding cane fields have since become a landmark in his performances. Against the backdrop of the sugar industry's botanical and architectural remnants, he highlights a series of collapses that are intrinsic to the recently scrapped nationalized project, the subsequent precarity of the community's socio-economic wellbeing, and the uncertain futures of nearby inhabitants.

Whereas Bridgens' illustrations sought to portray the plantation as a site of benevolent discipline, Vasquez La Roche's *But The Real Ones, Just like You, Just Like*

Me (2021) complicates historic and contemporary ideas of labor and recreation. The project involved the creation and destruction of a pair of sneakers, the *Air Jordan 1*, modeled in unrefined (brown) sugar (fig. 8). During the performance, Vasquez La Roche 'shines' the sugar shoe amid the cane, brushing and rubbing its glossy surface, letting it crumble in his hands. The sharp edges of the sugar cut his flesh and his blood blends with the softening sugar. The mixture drips to the ground and the sculpture is destroyed, suggesting a contradictory and ambivalent process of collapse that rejects Bridgens' ordered compositions.

Figure 8. Luis Vasquez La Roche, But The Real Ones, Just like You, Just Like Me, 2021, photograph. Photograph courtesy of the artist.

While the basketball shoe harkens to recreational activity, it also signals the commercial enterprise of professional sport, an industry that parallels sugar in that it heavily relies on the labor of Black communities through the (often unfulfilled) promise of social mobility. Recalling Bridgens' emphasis on rest and labor in *West India Scenery*, Vasquez La Roche's decision to cast sugar into a sneaker signals towards an anti-colonial aesthetic that troubles the co-optation of recreation by the entertainment industry in what poet and scholar Elizabeth Alexander has problematized as "the gladiatorial arenas of basketball," placing it in a broader history of spectacle and violence against the Black body.[13] Instead of uncritically positioning recreation in opposition to the kinds

[13] Elizabeth Alexander, "'Can You Be Black and Look at This?': Reading the Rodney King Video(s)," *Public Culture* 7, no. 1 (1994): 78.

of forced physical labor depicted in Bridgens' images, Vasquez La Roche's performance entwines both historic and contemporary recreation and exploitation.

Aside from the shape of the mold, Vasquez La Roche's use of brown, unbleached sugar is significant in the context of colonial-era food processing. As historian Elizabeth Heath has argued, bleaching sugar was part of a centuries-long project of assimilating European bodies to the exotic commodity of sugar and vice versa.[14] In France, she writes, historical texts reorganized and reeducated the public in order to "acclimatize European senses to colonial consumables."[15] Sugar's marketing, Heath notes, involved training consumers to recognize "a well-established hierarchy ranging from the modest brown *sucre brut*, or muscovado, to the more refined crystallized brown sugar (cassonades) and the highly desirable white sugars, crystallized or powdered."[16] Unappetizing textures and tastes were attributed to brown sugar and justified by racist colonial narratives on the history of its origin and use outside of the metropole. Whereas 'uncivilized' consumers in the colonies preferred the cane sugar in its 'raw' state, European consumers distinguished themselves as superior by availing the means of 'refinement.'[17]

As a result, the sugar shoe is resistant to an essential component of sugar's colonial commodification: purification. Vasquez La Roche satirizes this historic disdain for the unrefined commodity's brownness and the racialized/colorist hierarchies that underpin it by making the sneaker impossible to scrub 'clean' without destroying it. In addition to its literal collapse, a series of material collapses coagulate within the sugar shoe, beginning with Vasquez La Roche's myriad references to and subsequent obliteration of color. He creates a 'naturally' brown version of the Chicago 'Bred' Air Jordan 1, originally designed in the 1980's with a red, white, and black colorway, inspired by the Chicago Bulls uniform.[18] The colors of the original design are obscured by the shoe's casting in brown sugar, but they also reemerge through the artist's flesh and red blood. This material interpolation of the artist's body into the sugar shoe and the very soil beneath his feet, complicates classed and racialized identities across the Atlantic, from the eponymous basketball legend Michael Jordan's position as a celebrity-cum-entrepreneur in an industry overwhelmingly influenced by white, wealthy team owners to the consumers and wearers of the Nike product. The legibility of shared colors between these respectively artificial (refined sugar, leather) and natural (sugar cane, flesh, blood) materials collapse in the amber shine of Vasquez La Roche's brown

[14] Elizabeth Heath, "Sugarcoated Slavery: Colonial Commodities and the Education of the Senses in Early Modern France," *Critical Historical Studies* 5, no. 2 (2018): 169–207.
[15] Heath, "Sugarcoated Slavery," 193.
[16] Heath, "Sugarcoated Slavery," 194.
[17] Heath, "Sugarcoated Slavery," 199.
[18] The moniker 'Bred' refers exclusively to the version of the sneaker featuring black and red.

sugar referent. By splicing the materiality of sugar, flesh, and rubber, Vasquez La Roche denaturalizes both the ostensibly 'unrefined' colonial commodity and the racialized product. As such, both sugar and flesh become as recognizably commoditized in the economies of racial capitalism as the Nike branded footwear itself.

The Collapse of the Sugar Industry

The paradox of maintenance in Vasquez La Roche's performance—that the act of 'cleaning' the shoe catalyzes its literal collapse—echoes the demise of the infrastructural remains nearby after decades of investment by Trinidad's post-independence government. The refinery was built alongside supporting infrastructure for transporting cane from northern plantations to the compound via railroad in the early twentieth century. Although it operated post-slavery, the exploitation and violence that supported racialized labor hierarchies persisted, and the local working class continued to uphold the industry under British overseers for little more than starvation wages.

Visual representations of sugar in the early to mid-twentieth century signaled a new era of sanitized and idealized landscapes and labor conditions focused on the modernization of the plantation. Images used in postcards from the 1930s were, like Bridgens' illustrations, made to circulate abroad, although they were no longer positioned as a defense of slavery. Whereas Bridgens pictured the sugar plantation to counter abolitionist fervor, the postcards created one century later imaged the newly built refinery in Couva as part of a touristic marketing endeavor taking shape across the Anglophone Caribbean. As Krista Thompson has argued, they framed the islands as ideal tourist destinations "to

Figure 9. Photographer unknown, A Sugar Factory, postcard c. 1930s, Couva, Trinidad. Source: Michael Goldberg Collection, University of the West Indies, Trinidad.

convince primarily white travelers to majority Black colonies that the 'natives' were civilized."[19]

As a result, many postcards from the region were sent abroad, evidenced by a collection at the University of West Indies in Trinidad which was re-circulated to the island from the archive of an American dentist.[20] Located in the Michael Goldberg collection is an image of the Couva cane fields in which a group of laborers form a row and face the viewer, standing in front of the new refinery (fig. 9). In this postcard, the once-prominent cane stalks from Bridgens' illustrations are displaced by the mechanical means of their refinement and transport. The group's bodies are no longer dwarfed by gigantic palm trees, but a vertical smokestack stretching beyond the top of the frame. Shifting emphasis from botanicals to feats of modernist innovation and engineering, this new mode of visualization established the colony as a thriving enterprise. As Thompson argues was common to touristic "human-scapes" created at this time, the image spotlights "inhabitants who seemed loyal, disciplined, and clean British colonial subjects."[21] No longer turned away from the viewer's elevated gaze, the inhabitants appear to greet the potential visitor.

At the end of World War II in 1945, the industry's position at the forefront of Trinidad's economy had weakened. By the late twentieth century, the booming oil industry beckoned longtime cane field laborers of Couva to a nearby industrial estate, which became a hub of chemical refineries, gas production, a shipping port, and other lucrative new trades.[22] Ironically, the immense profits garnered from the competing energy sector constituted the primary source of funds tapped by the Trinidadian government to keep the failing sugar industry afloat through the remaining decades of the twentieth century.[23] Despite continued government subsidization, the industry collapsed following the abandonment of the sugar refinery, Brechin Castle, and the obsolescence of the railway system, and severance from surrounding working-class communities.

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[19] Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 6.

[20] "Michael Goldberg Collection," University of the West Indies Library Database, accessed November 02, 2022, https://archivespace.sta.uwi.edu/repositories/2/resources/112.

[21] Thompson, *An Eye for the Tropics*, 6.

[22] Frank Rampersad, *Fundamental Structural Change in the Organization of the Sugar Industry: A Programme for the Survival of Caroni* (Trinidad and Tobago: Rampersand, 1983), 1.

[23] Lovell Francis, "Massa Day Not Done! Lome and the Trinidadian Sugar Industry 1975-2005/Massa Day No Hecho! Lomé y La Industria Azucarera de Trinidad y Tobago 1975-2005," *Memorias (Barranquilla, Colombia)* 10, no. 19 (2013): 1-29.

Figure 10. Luis Vasquez La Roche, Canchas de Algódon de Azúcar, 2020, video still. Image courtesy of the artist.

Post-Collapse Potentiality: Conceptual Collapse and Future Cane Field Constructions

Departing from the idealistic vision of modernity in this colonial-era postcard, Vasquez La Roche's performances anticipate a future in which locals are not conscripted for visual campaigns for sugar or tourist industries, but wrest control of the former plantation's physical space toward their own ends. In *Canchas de Algodón de Azúcar* (2020), he collaborates with his sister to erect a basketball hoop from their childhood home in a desolate sugar cane field. Video documentation depicts them wearing burdensome astronaut gear, as though navigating a dystopian future (figs. 10–11). By inserting the science-fictional trope of the wandering space explorer into a proto-capitalist plantation turned modernist national icon, Vasquez La Roche connects and collapses the future-oriented fantasies of French and British colonial agents to those of the newly independent mid-twentieth century Trinidadian government. Through the conceptual collapsing of time (colonial histories to apocalyptic futures) and cultural referents (literature and recreation), Vasquez La Roche tethers the work to the present, preventing these explorers from wandering too far into the ostensible otherworldliness of science fiction. He connects the inevitable failure of the modern sugar industry to a possible future in which the fallout of its past and present continues to be navigated.

Figure 11. Luis Vasquez La Roche, Canchas de Algódon de Azúcar, 2020, video still. Image courtesy of the artist.

The spacesuit donned by the performers is called *OYA-9394*, after the Yoruba Orisha, Oya, and inspired by Octavia Butler's 1993 novel *Parable of the Sower*. Following the journey of a young African American girl named Lauren Oya Olamina in 2024—a time that Butler presciently portrayed as one of social and ecological collapse—the protagonist embraces a religion called *Earthseed*, founded on the premise of inevitable change as divinity.[24] Re-constituting Butler's fiction, Vasquez La Roche conceives of the suit as potential means of navigating the hazardous conditions faced by marginalized communities at the brink of environmental degradation such that *OYA-9394* becomes a haven within the abandoned cane field. It raises questions about the sustainability of today's extractive industries, particularly those with an overreliance on Black bodies that—not unlike the sugar industry—are primed to collapse under the weight of their own exploitative practices.

[24] Butler does not make overt connections to West African religion beyond the deity after which her protagonist is named. However, scholar Deborah Wood Holton draws parallels between the novel's ecofeminist themes, Black strategies of survival, and Yoruba culture, underpinned by an embrace of and adaptation to change. See Deborah Wood Holton, "Musings on Octavia E. Butler's Parable of the Sower," *About Place Journal* 3, no. 2 (2014). https://aboutplacejournal.org/issues/voices/section-1/deborah-holton/.

Despite the series of collapses that signal violence and crisis, Vasquez La Roche's West African religious referents via Butler's speculative fiction also harken Afrofuturist literary frameworks that insist on survival. While the performers' spacesuits suggest that the historically hostile environment of the plantation has reached its zenith, the continued return to these sites for occupation and, somewhat ambivalently, recreation suggests a potential for constructing new forms or survival and joy in the wake of collapse. In the performance's documentation, the artist and his sister move purposefully into the eerie twilit fields, working to install a basketball hoop amid the tall grass (fig. 12). Their surroundings occasionally betray this apparent isolation with the red blinking of a cell tower, or the streetlights reflected in their helmets, but these architectures remain peripheral to the chain-link hoop suspended from an NBA branded backboard.

Figure 12. Luis Vasquez La Roche, Canchas de Algódon de Azúcar, 2020, video still. Image courtesy of the artist.

Although this structure alludes to the ongoing commoditization and spectacularization of Black labor through sport, the performance also invokes nostalgia and personal memory as Vasquez La Roche works with his sister to repurpose their childhood basketball hoop. The title references both cotton and sugar plantations, as *algodón de azúcar* translates to 'cotton from sugar' describing the delicate dessert,

cotton candy. Each word is laden with violent colonial histories, yet these materials are combined to produce an ironically pleasant referent to a treat typically associated with childhood. The eponymous phrase exceeds the sum of its parts, just as the performance embroils extraction, recreation, colonialism, community, and the potential for play in the post-collapse future.

Across his performances, Vasquez La Roche's repetitive, entangled, and at times paradoxical acts of destruction and reconstruction indicate that imagining not only ruin but also its aftermath may be a necessary precursor for a livable future. In her Afrofuturist-adjacent departure from accelerationism, artist, curator, and writer Aria Dean champions works of visual and musical culture that "participate… in a blacceleration toward the end of the world."[25] She proposes that accelerationist theorists, who claim that "the only way out of capitalism is through it," have overlooked slavery as foundational to the structuring of global capitalism. Resisting the impulse to "reclaim" accelerationism, Dean describes theories of non- and anti-humanism in Black radical thought as *already* indispensable from considerations of capitalism, hence the portmanteau, blacceleration. Arguing that Afrofuturist cultural production recenters Black bodies as a primary accelerationalist force, she describes U.S. rapper Busta Rhymes' apocalyptic albums as quintessentially blaccelerationist art.[26] Her description of his music closely resonates with Vasquez La Roche's sugar cane field interventions:

> by putting the black man at the center of the apocalypse—as both the agent of the world's demise and its inheritor—these works resonate…with the child of these strange bedfellows, black radical thought and accelerationism.[27]

Like the Afrofuturist icons to which Dean refers, *Canchas de Algodón de Azúcar* (2020) portends the catastrophe of capitalism advocated by blaccelerationism through the spatio-temporal flux inherent to conceptual collapse while rebuilding the site as a symbol of post-collapse possibility.

Conclusion

Unexpected intersections between media, materials, and the histories of their production underlie Vasquez La Roche's practice. His sculptures, made from a range of edible, inedible, ephemeral, and found materials, eventually become props for public performances which blur the line between humans—formerly enslaved and indentured bodies—and non-human materials—leather, cane, soil, steel—in ways that accentuate

[25] Aria Dean, "Notes on Blacceleration," *E-Flux* 87 (2017). https://www.e-flux.com/journal/87/169402/notes-on-blacceleration/.
[26] Dean, "Notes on Blacceleration."
[27] Dean, "Notes on Blacceleration."

and accelerate the various forms of collapse that underlie colonial and capital production. From field to factory, Vasquez La Roche probes the violent history of imperial-colonial extraction and its later manifestation in post-independence industrialization. As such, he critiques the desire to develop a Trinidadian economy atop the foundations of a violent, unsustainable plantocracy, exposing the limitations of reclaiming colonial tools. Following Audre Lorde's landmark provocation, Vasquez La Roche's performances do not attempt to appropriate or rehabilitate these tools in service of dismantling the master's house but instead suggest that social and architectural infrastructures might simply be left to rot.[28] In what might be called a blaccelerationist practice, Vasquez La Roche bears witness to demise while enacting his own feats of literal/material and conceptual/spatio-temporal collapse. Instead of attempting to resuscitate the fallen and failed socio-economic and material infrastructures of history, engaging in a strategy of collapse may yet unmoor Caribbean communities from the cycles of exploitation and extraction that were promised during and have remained undelivered since independence from European colonial rule.

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[28] See Audre Lorde, "The master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*, Crossing Press Feminist Series (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984), originally delivered at the Second Sex Conference, New York, September 29, 1979. I make a similar argument for iconoclastic interventions and catalyzed collapse of monuments to colonial figures in "Proposal for a New Necropolis," *PREE Literary Magazine*, PREE Views 2 (2020), https://preelit.com/2020/08/04/proposal-for-a-new-necropolis/.

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Collapsing Autopia:
Feliza Bursztyn's *Chatarras*

a response by Letícia Cobra Lima

Luis Vasquez La Roche's approach to the history of extractive colonialism in Trinidad centers matter—the bodily, natural, and manufactured substances indexical of the ruinously systematized invasion, oppression, and exploitation in the Caribbean. He performs upon the soil where, half a century ago, sugarcane thrived——an industry that, throughout Latin America, relied on enslaved, and later precarious, racialized labor. The site now witnesses the artist's post-collapse retelling and reclaiming of past, present, and future, as it lays bare colonial-imperial teleologies of progress. In "Confection and the Aesthetic of Collapse," Ashleigh Deosaran situates Vasquez La Roche's multimedia artwork within Trinidadian history by setting the farcically conciliatory colonial discourse about the region's sugar plantations and its workers, found in prints and postcards dated from the nineteenth to the early twentieth century, against Vasquez La Roche's prescient performance. The artist's engagement with an aesthetic of collapse is described as threefold by Deosaran: a physical collapse of sculptures that melt and become undone; a temporal collapse, as he substantiates the continuities between the colonial archive and contemporary culture and its biases; and a conceptual collapse, conceiving aesthetics for a decolonial, post-capitalist future where the rusting ruins of historical violence attest to the failure of ideologies of empire.

Deosaran's aesthetic of collapse is a productive framework in observing the work of another Latin American artist, sculptor Feliza Bursztyn (1933-1982), known for her junk metal assemblages and kinetic sculptures. Bursztyn's conceptualization and production

of artworks are intertwined with the collapse of mid-century developmentalism in Latin America, as she scavenged metal fragments of post-industrial, post-consumption waste, often selecting auto body parts. These were transformed into artworks of various sizes through what the artist considered to be destructive procedures: cutting, welding, folding. Bursztyn subverted gender norms and expectations in Latin America at the time, by utilizing tools and material from male-dominated trades, developing an idiosyncratic *oeuvre* that remains relevant in its haunting, rusted presence. Assemblages *Flor* (Flower, 1974) and *Chatarra de Automóvil* (Automobile Junk, 1980-81), analyzed here, provide insight into her artistic praxis—saturated, as it shall be demonstrated, with collapse.

Cars and trucks were among the main products that reached Latin American markets from the United States following World War I, in exchange for raw materials extracted from the region. In the 1930s, automotive infrastructure was among the defining measures of the Good Neighbor policy, when automotive travel through the American continent was made possible by the Pan American Highway.[1] During World War II, importation of motor vehicles from the United States was halted as a result of the war effort, allowing national automotive industries in Latin America to flourish. After the conflict, foreign companies proceeded to build automotive plants in the region.[2] The zeitgeist of developmental optimism and consumerism centered on cars is termed here as an "autopia." British architectural critic Peter Reyner Banham Hon coined this concept in his description of the four built ecologies of Los Angeles, to qualify the city's reliance on highways and its driving culture.[3] Heavily bolstered by U.S. American, post-war ideals of modernity, automotive infrastructure was expanded in metropolitan regions of Latin America over other means of transportation from the mid-to-late twentieth century, making driving inexorable. While it allowed the connection between far off regions and cities, it fundamentally, and often detrimentally, changed the lived experience, environment, and culture of the region. Bursztyn's auto body part assemblages whisper the ever-looming collapse of this imperialist, unsustainable autopia.

Born in Bogotá, Colombia, to Polish Jewish immigrant parents, Bursztyn trained as an artist from the early to late 1950s in the Arts Student League of New York, with a focus on painting, and the Académie de la Grande Chaumière in Paris, where she studied sculpture under cubist Ossip Zadkine.[4] Zadkine introduced Bursztyn to Noveau

[1] Amy Spellacy, "Mapping the Metaphor of the Good Neighbor: Geography, Globalism, and Pan-Americanism during the 1940s," *American Studies* 47, no. 2 (2006): 39–66, 52.

[2] Joel Wolfe, "Populism and Developmentalism," in *A Companion to Latin American History*, ed. Thomas H. Holloway (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, n.d.), 347–64, 349; 354.

[3] Reyner Banham, *Los Angeles: The Architecture of Four Ecologies* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971).

[4] Marta Dziewańska and Abigail Winograd, Feliza Bursztyn: Welding Madness (Milan: Skira, 2022), 12.

Réalist sculptor César Baldaccini, with whom she first experimented with welding and compacting junk metal using a hydraulic press.[5] Returning to Bogotá in 1958 at the end of the military dictatorship of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla (1953-57), she found herself in a city without foundries that she could use, and lacked the financial means to even purchase *la chatarra*, that is, junk metal.[6] The artworks included in her first exhibition at the Museo de Arte Moderno de Bogotá, *Las Chatarras* (The Junk, 1964), were created with instant coffee tins she found at a friend's house.[7]

In 1960, Bursztyn moved into a garage previously used by her father's textile factory, now converted into a living space and sculpture studio.[8] She frequented auto repair shops and junkyards to attain metal components with which to work, imposing an unsettling presence in spaces where few, if any, women could be found. By collecting and assembling leftovers of industrial production with tools utilized by mechanics or construction workers—male-dominated fields in Colombia at the time—earned her the title "the crazy woman" (*la loca*): a sexist, ableist moniker, but one that uncoupled her public image from traditional gender expectations and facilitated unconventional artistic practices. As she recounted in 1979: "I took advantage of being called crazy, and insisted on it, to really do what I wanted. Because I believe that we live in a sexist world. To be a sculptor and not a man is very difficult."[9]

Unprecedented in Colombia, Bursztyn's sculpture was initially deemed "anti-aesthetic" by the conservative public who favored traditional media.[10] Art critics—including Marta Traba, a pivotal figure in modern and contemporary art in Colombia—were however supportive of her work and its innovative formal repertoire.[11] The artist aimed at subverting sculptural procedures, and found in *la chatarra* the flexibility to create objects of variable sizes by manipulating metal through fire: "I love fire and the medium. The art of destruction, as it were. In fact, my work is the exact opposite of how sculpture is conceived. A sculptor draws a shape, searches for the material for said

[5] Adriana Peña Mejía, "Historia de la escultura moderna y de los viajes culturales de artistas colombianos a París después de 1945[*]," *Historia Crítica*, no. 58 (October 1, 2015): 139–54, 149.

[6] Camilo Leyva, Manuela Ochoa, and Juan Carlos Osorio, *Feliza Bursztyn: Elogio de la Chatarra* (Bogota: Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2009), 75; Maritza Uribe de Urdinola, "En Un País de Machistas, ¡hágase La Loca!," *El Tiempo: Revista Carrusel*, November 30, 1979, 15.

[7] Uribe de Urdinola, "En Un País de Machistas, ¡hágase La Loca!," 15.

[8] Leyva, Ochoa and Osorio, *Elogio de la Chatarra*, 77.

[9] Uribe de Urdinola, "En Un País de Machistas, ¡hágase La Loca!," 15; my translation.

[10] Peña Mejía, "Historia de la escultura moderna," 150.

[11] Peña Mejía, "Historia de la escultura moderna," 150.

shape, and executes it. (…) I go to junkyards, look at what they have, and then figure out what I am doing with it. I do not plan. I work directly with what I have."[12]

Bursztyn's employment of collapse as an aesthetic and conceptual procedure can be observed in works composed of autobody parts. For instance, *Flor* (Flower, 1974) is a public sculpture standing in front of the Museo de Arte Moderno La Tertulia, in Cali, Colombia (fig. 1). Car bumpers sourced from junkyards in Bogotá, crumpled by crashes, are bunched together and welded from below in a circular arrangement onto a simple rectangular stand. The free-standing intertwined auto parts boast an organic quality despite their engineered, mass-produced origins. They are jagged, angular petals to a budding flower with no stem. In the context of the Museo La Tertulia, *Flor* interacts with both the modernist façade and colonnade of the museum, and the native flora of the mountains that surround it, reverberating with both the built and the native environs.

Figure 1. Feliza Bursztyn, *Flor*, 1974, welded found metal. Collection of public art of the Museo de Arte Moderno La Tertulia (photograph provided by Pavel Vernaza, 2019, CC-BY-SA-4.0, open access via Wikipedia Commons).

[12] My translation. Miguel González, "Feliza Bursztyn," *Arte en Colombia*, no. 17 (December 1981), https://www.artnexus.com/es/magazines/article-magazine-artnexus/5eea87dafa570d46cd6155ef/-17/feliza-bursztyn.

If in *Flor* the assembled pieces retain their automotive origin in shape, in *Chatarra de Automóvil* (Automobile Junk, 1980-81) the metal, sourced from variously colored cars, is corrugated, folded, welded, into seemingly impossible angles (fig. 2). Its title is matter of fact, referencing naught but the artwork itself, the viewer thus made to ruminate on the intricacies of the material, the gradient of primary colors to oil stains and even rust. The gesture of the artist evokes a presence, a choreography of artistic labor memorialized in weld lines and spatter. In *Flor* the acts of collecting, selecting, and arranging the parts is put into relief, while in the later *Chatarra de Automóvil* the ease of expression gained through the practice of metalwork is evident. The metal gains plasticity and fluency—though clearly identifiable as junk metal, it is imbued with a novel morphology, literally bending to Bursztyn's will. From cutting-edge technology of yore to overflowing junk, *la chatarra* leads the artist to an idiosyncratic set of artistic practices that magnifies everyday cycles of capitalist decay through destruction.

Figure 2. Feliza Bursztyn, *Chatarra de Automóvil*, 1980-81, welded found metal. Exhibited in *Feliza Bursztyn: Elogio de La Chatarra*, Museo Nacional de Colombia, 2009-10 (photograph provided by Guillermo Vasquez, 2010, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0, https://flic.kr/p/7BaQKp)

In sourcing scraps, the refuse of mass production and upper- and middle-class lifestyles, the artist puts into relief cycles of designed obsolescence and waste production imbricated in capitalist production and consumption. If Luis Vasquez La Roche performs in front of the rusted structures of the sugar industry, Bursztyn sorts through the profuse, decaying remnants of an autopia. This car-centric, modernizing impetus determined and reshaped the infrastructure in Latin American countries from the mid- to late-twentieth century, having disastrous consequences to the quality of life in cities and in the natural environment. The extraction of fossil fuels, such as petroleum and natural gas, continues to disrupt biomes and indigenous communities that populate

them. Reliance on such resources increases air pollution, and the massive circulation of cars generates congestion and reduces walkability in urban spaces.[13]

La chatarra is the collapse of autopia as idea and material culture, while Bursztyn relied on the freedom of movement and action provoked by a collapse of gender expectations towards her eccentric public figure. The metal, originally molded by heavy machinery, must be pleated, cut, joined, welded by hand, losing its previously designed shape through a series of destructive procedures, being increasingly emptied of its intended purpose. Ontological collapse, the original purpose and nature of an object or part negated in favor of its potential for transformation, is followed by the temporal collapse inherent to assemblage. Unearthed from times and spaces undistinguishable in the junkyard, components are made to interact into a tridimensional palimpsest, original (con)texts only half legible and collapsing into one another.[14] That which was discarded in the past and decayed in the present is thrust back into visibility and communicability, its meanings highly contingent on the viewer's interpretation.[15]

Ashleigh Deosaran posits the apt lens of collapse, through which one may assess the many facets and complexities of modern and contemporary art from Latin America and the Caribbean. In these domains, the lingering aftereffects of colonization and subalternation are continuously interrogated, bringing to the fore current systems that sustain class-based, gendered, and racialized oppression. Collapse allows us to envision alternative, creative routes through the impending downfall of arbitrary, immoral systems towards renewal, resistance, and agency.

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[13] Lisa Viscidi and Rebecca O'Connor, "The Energy of Transportation: A Focus on Latin American Urban Transportation," in *Energy and Transportation in the Atlantic Basin*, ed. Paul Isbell and Eloy Álvarez Pelegry (Washington, D.C.: Center for Transatlantic Relations / Brookings Institution Press, n.d.), 91–126, accessed January 27, 2023. For a critique of the sociopolitical impact of cars, see André Gorz, "The Social Ideology of the Motorcar," 1973, 594ES, Atlas of Places, https://atlasofplaces.com/essays/the-social-ideology-of-the-motorcar/.

[14] Palimpsest originally refers to a parchment upon which information was inscribed after an earlier inscription had been erased. The act of erasing an inscription left traces of it on the surface, which interacted with the succeeding text. Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *Post-Colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2007), 158.

[15] Jonathan D. Katz, "'Committing the Perfect Crime': Sexuality, Assemblage, and the Postmodern Turn in American Art," *Art Journal* 67, no. 1 (March 1, 2008): 38–53, 49.

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Black Magnolia:
Counter-Narrating a Plantation Tourist Site

Connor Hamm

In 1870 Reverend John Grimké Drayton (1816-1891) oversaw what many people believed was a miraculous conversion: the Episcopal minister had transformed his rice plantation into a 500-acre garden and opened it to the public as a tourist site, making the property located in Charleston, South Carolina, the first plantation attraction in the postbellum Deep South.[1] Magnolia Plantation was now Magnolia Gardens, an extravagant English country-style garden where rare camellias and azaleas triumphed into floral jungles; a collection of Japanese-style footbridges festooned man-made ponds; a maze of rose hedges fostered an aristocratic flair; and a potpourri of cypresses, live oaks, and of course, magnolias swayed in the humid coastal breeze.[2] The estate soon became a nationally-known destination that hosted hundreds of visitors annually and featured prominently in newspapers, magazines, and travel guides, which referred to Magnolia with such effusive sobriquets as "Charleston's Fairy-Land" and "Elysium."[3] This seemingly Edenic reinvention, however, concealed less blissful realities.

The federal government's failure to adequately assist the newly free population left Magnolia's former slaves with little choice but to stay on after the Civil War (1861-1865) and toil under their old master. These emancipated men and women beautified

[1] Derek Fell, *Magnolia Plantation and Gardens* (Layton, Utah: Gibbs-Smith, 2009), 14.
[2] Fell, *Magnolia Gardens*, 12-14.
[3] Frances Duncan, "Magnolia Gardens: A Visit to Charleston's Fairy-Land," *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*, May-October 1907, 513.

the plantation through backbreaking labor, under grueling conditions, for minimal pay. They and other Black laborers worked thereafter as gardener-guides, tending the grounds and shepherding white guests on tours of the property. By the early twentieth century, other estates had adopted the "Magnolia playbook" by reinventing as tourist attractions, relying upon entirely Black workforces, and maintaining whites-only admissions policies.[4] Following the Jim Crow era (c. 1877-1966), these estates ceased using exclusively Black workers and admitting only white guests, but plantation tourism has since shown no signs of slowing down. Drayton's descendants still own Magnolia and operate it as a tourist attraction, and today it seems as if one cannot throw a rock anywhere in the South without it hitting a plantation that has been remodeled into a public garden, heritage site, bed-and-breakfast, or history museum.

A growing body of scholarship attempts to reckon with the racial dynamics of plantation tourism. In the landmark 1991 study, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*, sociologists Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small identify what they call the "white-centric" model of history on display at most plantation sites. This model, they argue, tends to downplay slavery, glorify slave-owners, and mythologize antebellum society in order to appeal to a predominantly white customer base, an assessment that applies to Magnolia today.[5] More recent scholarship seeks to challenge such "whitewashing" by recounting plantations from the perspectives of the enslaved.[6] As eye-opening as this discourse is in exposing how plantations in the living present (could) narrate histories of slavery, it fails to see that plantations emerged as tourist attractions in the early Jim Crow era, thereby overlooking the full historicity of the very practice under scrutiny. In the otherwise brilliant *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation*, cultural historian Jessica Adams typifies scholarly misconceptions about the onset of plantation tourism when she writes that the "plantation became popular as a film set in the early

[4] Two such sites include Middleton Place, also in Charleston, and the Lewis Plantation and Turpentine Still, located in Brooksville, Florida.

[5] Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small, *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (Washington, DC and London: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002).

[6] Some important works in this vein include Fath Davis Ruffins, "Revisiting the Old Plantation: Reparations, Reconciliation and Museumizing American Slavery," in *Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations*, ed. Ivan Karp et al., (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 395-434; Perry L. Carter, David Butler, and Owen Dwyer, "Defetishizing the Plantation: African Americans in the Memorialized South," *Historical Geography* 39 (2011): 128-146; Alan Rice, "Museums, Memorials and Plantation Houses in the Black Atlantic: Slavery and the Development of Dark Tourism," in *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism*, ed. Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009), 224-246; James Oliver Horton and Lois E. Horton, *Slavery and Public History: The Tough Stuff of American Memory* (New York: New Press, 2006).

to mid-twentieth century and, later, as a tourist destination."[7] Such misdating confines plantations' Black histories to the period of enslavement and ignores the fact that plantation tourism depended upon the continued subjugation of freed men and women not long after abolition. The case of Magnolia makes clear, however, that emancipated workers *lived* the transition to plantation tourism, contributing in no small part to its commercial success. Their labor—beautifying and maintaining the grounds, interacting with tourists, posing for photographers, etc.—mediated the landscape into a physical and symbolic space of white leisure and adapted the property to the socio-economic realities of America's burgeoning consumer culture.

How did Magnolia's former slaves and those workers who were born after abolition face tourism's exploitative conditions through life-affirming acts of resilience and resistance? The paucity of surviving testimonials from these subjects makes answering this question rather difficult, as does the contrasting abundance of archival evidence attesting to the brutality of slavery and its afterlives. Because of this disparity, literary theorist and cultural historian Saidiya Hartman warns that scholars can easily "reinforce the spectacular character of black suffering" by reiterating the "routinized violence of slavery and its aftermath," while Katherine McKittrick, a theorist of critical Black feminisms, similarly cautions that scholars run the risk of "analytically reprising [the] violence" of slavery and "reproducing knowledge about black subjects that renders them less than human."[8] The task, McKittrick notes, is to find ways "to write blackness by ethically honoring but not repeating anti-black violences."[9] I seek to strike this balance by drawing on the work of Hartman, McKittrick, and historian Tiya Miles, who notes that scholars must practice "imaginative restraint" when attempting to recreate the social worlds and lived experiences of those subjects marginalized in and by the archive.[10] With due caution, I counter-narrate Magnolia from the perspectives of its Black workers, approximating their lived realities from records and research on other enslaved and freed subjects, and projecting their subjective experiences back into period accounts and historical images of the estate. I pay particular attention to how they inhabited the landscape to their benefit, managed interactions with tourists, and

[7] Jessica Adams, *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2007), 10.

[8] Saidiya Hartman, *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery, and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 3.

[9] Katherine McKittrick, "Mathematics Black Life," *The Black Scholar* 44, no. 2 (Summer 2014): 18; 20.

[10] Miles suggests "imaginative restraint" to those scholars utilizing Hartman's method of "critical fabulation." Critical fabulation is a way of narrating the archival gaps and inadequate records of subaltern subjects with imaginative license. For more on critical fabulation see Saidiya Hartman, "Venus in Two Acts," *Small Axe* 12, no. 2 (June 2008): 1-14. For Miles' take see Tiya Miles, *All That She Carried: The Journey of Ashley's Sack, A Black Family Keepsake* (New York: Random House, 2021), 17-18.

created bonds of support amongst one another. With the site's workers as *my* guides, I endeavor to uncover Black Magnolia.

In the Shadows of the Garden

For emancipated Americans, the abolition of slavery represented freedom, hope, and change, but also danger, hardship, and uncertainty. Although Reconstruction (1866-1877) afforded a small minority of the newly free population the ability to attain an education, acquire property, and even open businesses, Magnolia's former slaves were but a handful of the overwhelming majority who struggled without enduring federal assistance.[11] The government's failure to follow through on its promise of providing freed men and women with reparations ("40 acres and a mule") frustrated their efforts to obtain economic independence. "I heard about the 40 acres of land and a mule the ex-slaves would get after the war," recalled Frances Andrews, a former slave from South Carolina, "but I didn't pay any attention to it. They never got anything."[12] Anne Broome, another former slave from South Carolina, held on to the possibility that reparations would one day come. "Now in our old ages," she ached, "I hope they lets de old slaves like me see de shine of some of dat money I hears so much talk about."[13] The lack of compensation and opportunities for emancipated Americans confined many of them to new forms of servitude under their old masters, many of whom still owned their plantations. "Emancipation left the planters poor, and with no method of earning a living," observed leading sociologist and historian W.E.B. Du Bois in *Black Reconstruction*, "except by exploiting Black labor on their only remaining capital – their land."[14] While most planters effectively re-conscripted former slaves into unfree labor through sharecropping, Drayton did so through tourism.[15]

With alternative options few and far between, Magnolia's emancipated workers undertook the backbreaking labor required to cultivate the estate in the manner of an English country garden. This landscaping style had emerged in the eighteenth century

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[11] Lonnie Bunch, "Emancipation evoked mix of emotions for freed slaves," *The Washington Post*, September 7, 2012, accessed online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/emancipation-evoked-mix-of-emotions-for-freed-slaves/2012/09/07/57ad5184-f15a-11e1-892d-bc92fee603a7_story.html.

[12] Interview with Frances Andrews, *South Carolina Slave Narratives: A Folk History of Slavery in South Carolina from Interviews with Former Slaves* (Federal Writers' Project, 1936-38; reis. Bedford, MA: Applewood Books, 2006), 18.

[13] Interview with Anne Broom, *South Carolina Slave Narratives*, 106.

[14] W.E.B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America, 1860-1880* (1935; reis. New York: Meridian, 1965), 671.

[15] For more on sharecropping see Roger L. Ransom and Richard Sutch, "The Ex-Slave in the Post-Bellum South: A Study of the Economic Impact of Racism in a Market Environment," *The Journal of Economic History* 33, no. 1 (March 1973): 131-148.

on English estates as a reaction to the French formal garden that had long been in vogue with the European aristocracy. Unlike the rectilinear, symmetrical order of the *jardin à la française* (the exemplar of which is Versailles), the more "informal" and "natural" English country garden imitated an idyllic pastoral landscape. It typically consisted of rolling hills beset with groves of trees and decorative lakes or ponds, and some sort of Arcadian "set piece" like a temple, grotto, or recreated ruin. Over time, this style acquired more "gardenesque" elements like carpets of floral varieties, as well as orientalist features like ornamental pagodas.[16] The freed men and women tasked with translating this style to Magnolia beautified the plantation's systemized rows of rice paddies into expansive, grassy lawns embellished with azaleas and camellias; created a constellation of winsome ponds adorned with little footbridges; laid a series of meandering paths bedecked with charming pergolas and trellises; and performed sundry other tasks that prepared the property into a space of recreation and leisure for white tourists. In so doing, these former slaves erased from the grounds and indeed from public imagination much of the evidence of their enslavement.

Figure 1. Postcard of Magnolia c. 1900-20, hand-colored postcard, approx. 3.5 x 5.5in. C.T. American Art. Source: College of Charleston Libraries, Charleston, South Carolina.

[16] For more on English Romantic gardens see Elizabeth Barlow Rogers, Elizabeth S. Eustis, and John Bidwell, eds., *Romantic Gardens: Nature, Art, and Landscape Design* (New York: Morgan Library and Museum, 2010); Mark Laird, *A Natural History of English Gardening, 1650-1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), and Thomas J. Mickey, *America's Romance with the English Garden* (Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2013).

Figure 2. Postcard of Magnolia c. 1900-20, hand-colored postcard, approx. 3.5 x 5.5in. C.T. American Art. Source: College of Charleston Libraries, Charleston, South Carolina.

Popular media amplified Magnolia's beautified image and promoted the estate as a spectacular wonderland for white tourists. Dramatic photographs of the site's Spanish moss-bearded trees and flower-flanked ponds graced several pages of the 1893 publication *Art Work of Charleston*.[17] The 1900 edition of *Baedeker's Guide to the United States*, then the premier travel publication, urged sightseers: "No one in the season (March-May) should omit to visit the…Gardens of Magnolia (reached by railway or steamer), on the Ashley, the chief glory of which is the gorgeous display of the azalea bushes, which are sometimes 15-20 ft. high and present huge masses of vivid and unbroken colouring."[18] In the early twentieth century, Detroit Publishing Company mass-produced and circulated colored postcards of the estate around the country to prospective visitors (figs. 1 and 2). The estate was even promoted as a glamorous destination in a 1938 *Philadelphia Inquirer* advertisement for Chesterfield Cigarettes featuring Metropolitan Opera star and Broadway actress Grace Moore (fig. 3). The cigarette advertisement in particular—which features the rosy-cheeked celebrity wearing an angelic white dress while reveling about the gardens in a scene of neo-Rococo exuberance—suggests the innocence, playfulness, and sentimentality with which white America approached Magnolia, and by extension, the institution of the plantation more generally. The modern phenomena of mass media, consumer culture,

[17] *Art Work of Charleston*, Part Six, Historic Charleston Foundation (Chicago: W.H. Parish Publishing Company, 1893), unpaginated.

[18] Karl Baedeker, ed., *Baedeker's Guide to the United States* (New York: Scribner's, 1900-01), 390.

and popular leisure thus intersected with landscape design to constitute the plantation's romanticized visual culture and re-present the estate from a space of Black servitude to one of white fantasy. The Black figure is tellingly absent from these representations. As with most Jim Crow-era tourist sites, Magnolia catered exclusively to white, primarily middle- and upper-class tourists, and was strictly off-limits to African American visitors. This visual culture therefore broadcast the fact that plantation tourism, like plantation agriculture, would maintain what abolitionist Frederick Douglass called "the color line."[19]

Figure 3. Advertisement featuring Magnolia. Chesterfield Cigarettes. Source: Philadelphia Inquirer, May 22, 1938.

Magnolia's Black workers did inhabit the landscape, sometimes in ways invisible to whites. Scholars have uncovered the specialized practices the enslaved developed in order to negotiate landscapes of unfreedom, including passing down practical knowledge of plants, roots, and herbs[20]; sharing strategies of terrestrial navigation and celestial wayfinding[21]; creating hidden paths and hiding spots where covert activities could take place[22]; and communicating in code on the "grapevine telegraph" by singing, marking trees, and mimicking animal calls.[23] Although Magnolia's workers were now free, the ever-present threats of Jim Crow laws and lynching bees, as well as the regular presence of white tourists, may have compelled them to adapt some of these clandestine

[19] W.E.B. Du Bois popularized the term in *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), but Douglass is credited with first using the term. For more see Frederick Douglass, "The Color Line," *The North American Review* 132 (1881), 567-579.

[20] Judith Carney, *Black Rice: The African Origins of Rice Cultivation in the Americas* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001).

[21] Dennis B. Fradin, *Bound for the North Star: True Stories of Fugitive Slaves* (New York: Clarion Books, 2000).

[22] Rebecca Ginsburg, "Freedom and the Slave Landscape," *Landscape Journal* 26, no. 1 (2007), 36-44.

[23] Sergio A Lussana, "Enslaved Men, The Grapevine Telegraph, and the Underground Railroad," in *My Brother Slaves: Friendship, Masculinity, and Resistance in the Antebellum South* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2016), 125-146.

practices to the property's new landscape, creating a secret garden-within-the-garden only perceptible and accessible to them. They may have even taken some liberties by arranging a flowerbed here, a tree line there, diverting a path this way and remodeling a bridge that way in order to extend their covert geographies further beyond tourists' purview. Indeed, the steady stream of visitors trampling everywhere about, paying little to no mind to the site's human histories, could have compelled Magnolia's caretakers to create secret spaces or spots that were effectively inaccessible to outsiders: a non-descript grave marker for a child gone too soon, perhaps, or a disguised looking post where workers could surveil visitors and even Drayton himself. This mastery over the landscape, camouflaged though it was, would have allowed former slaves a certain ability to manage interactions with tourists, the least predictable, and most fraught, element of their jobs.

Black Labor, White Leisure

The dynamics between workers and visitors—between Black labor and white leisure—can be gleaned from their face-to-face interactions. Some of Magnolia's female workers served as guides who led guests like travel writer Frances Duncan on tours of the property. Duncan visited Magnolia in 1907 on assignment for *The Century Illustrated Monthly Magazine*. The "group of voluble negro guides" the writer encountered must have left quite the impression on her, as she described in detail the guide who accompanied her tour. Duncan found "herself under the wing of an elderly negress, who, with the solicitude of a hen for a brood of incautious chickens, was ushering her little flock along the path." At some point, though, the writer wandered off and got lost among Magnolia's hundreds of acres. After a few disorienting minutes, Duncan heard "the sound of approaching footsteps; then the shriek of a whistle." It was "the ancient negress, who, displeasure in every line of her face and feature, had come to look for the truant escaped from her safe convoy."[24]

Duncan may have exaggerated this anecdote for dramatic effect, but her account nevertheless captures the dialogic of power relations between workers and tourists. Even though Magnolia's employees were free, tourism's conditions of display recommodified their laboring Black bodies into objects of consumption for white spectators. That said, the guides were nominally in charge of guests, and in their supervisory roles possessed some authority, however temporary and tempered, over white folks. Yet the attendants' power, such as it was, had been vouchsafed them by the Drayton family to protect the gardens from tourists on the family's behalf, and for that reason, could just as easily have been taken away. Duncan also exhibits the patronizing attitudes and language white Americans reserved for African Americans,

[24] Duncan, "Magnolia Gardens," 516-519.

and conveys, perhaps unwittingly, the means by which African Americans put up with and tolerated white folks. The guide, whose intimate knowledge of the landscape allowed her to quickly find the writer, communicated her "displeasure" the way an adult might do to a child. Her expression represents writ large how Black America viewed (and often still views) white America: immature, foolish, and reckless. These racial dynamics were further interpolated by guides' gender and age.

Figure 4. William Henry Jackson, *Aunt Phoebe*, c. 1901, dry plate negative, 8 x 10in. *Magnolia-on-the-Ashley* series. Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of

The specific woman Duncan refers to as the "elderly negress" may be the attendant immortalized as "Aunt Phoebe" in a single photograph taken circa 1901 by travel photographer William Henry Jackson (1843-1942). The original black-and-white dry-plate negative shows the employee standing broom-in-hand beside a riot of Magnolia's famous azaleas (fig. 4). Her outfit—an aproned dress, kerchief, and bandana—evokes the stereotypical outfit of the mammy, a caricature that represented older Black women as nurturing, matronly figures contented with lives of domestic servitude. This characterization colors Duncan's description of the "ancient negress" who dutifully cared for "her little flock." Historian Kimberly Wallace-Sanders notes that the mammy's typical attributes, including her "effortlessly soothing voice, her infinite patience, her raucous laugh, her self-deprecating wit, her implicit understanding and acceptance of her inferiority and devotion to whites—all point to a long-lasting and troubled marriage of racial and gender essentialism, mythology, and southern nostalgia."[25] Scholars like Wallace-Sanders and Melissa Harris-

[25] Kimberly Wallace-Sanders, *Mammy: A Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 2.

Perry have analyzed how the mammy stereotype infantilized white Americans, romanticized interracial relations, and burdened Black women with expectations of excessive self-restraint, leaving a lasting imprint on ideas of African American womanhood to this day.[26] What I am interested in is whether Magnolia's female guides negotiated the "faithful servant" stereotype in order to ensure their employment and livelihood.

To put it more straightforwardly, who was Aunt Phoebe? At the time, "Aunt" was a stereotypical moniker for formerly enslaved women, and "Phoebe" or "Phebe" was particularly common. Writer Essie Collins Matthews formalized such stereotypes in her 1915 book *Aunt Phebe, Uncle Tom, and Others: Character Studies Among the Old Slaves of the South, Fifty Years After*.[27] Matthews interviewed several "Aunt Phebes" and "Uncle Toms," the female and male versions of the "happy slave" archetype made famous by author Harriet Beecher Stowe, taking special care to mention the fondness with which they remembered "slavery times." Jackson could have easily projected the "Aunt Phoebe" character onto the guide and titled the photograph accordingly, with no regard for the woman's real name.

But what if the attendant played up the persona in accordance with tourists' expectations? "Aunt Phoebe" was a relatively common character name in minstrel shows, including those performed by African American entertainers.[28] Historians Eric Lott and Rachel Sussman have observed how blackface minstrelsy sublimated America's "racial unconscious" under the guise of lively entertainment, while anthropologist and writer Zora Neale Hurston, writing some years earlier, noted that many of these racist caricatures were ironically based on Black interpretations of white forms of expression.[29] The "Negro is a very original being," Hurston insisted in "Characteristics of Negro Expression," an essay from 1931. "While he lives and moves in the midst of white civilization, everything that he touches is reinterpreted for his own use…His

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[26] Melissa Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011).

[27] For more on the "Aunt" and "Uncle" character-types after slavery see Essie Collins Matthews, *Aunt Phebe, Uncle Tom, and Others: Character Studies Among the Old Slaves of the South, Fifty Years After* (Columbus, OH: The Champlin Press, 1915).

[28] For more on Aunt Phoebe characters and Black minstrelsy see Henry T. Sampson, ed., *Blacks in Blackface: A Sourcebook on Early Black Musical Shows* (Plymouth, UK: Scarecrow Press, 2014): 176, 693, 1206, 1463, 1478.

[29] In fact, the very name Jim Crow is a based on a Black character created in the late 1820s by white minstrel performer Thomas "Daddy" Rice, Jump Jim Crow, whom he based on a disabled Black stableman from Louisville enslaved by a Mr. Crow. For more see Eric Lott, "Love and Theft: The Racial Unconscious of Blackface Minstrelsy," *Representations* 39 (Summer 1992), 23-50; Rachel Sussman, "The Carnavalizing of Race," *Etnofoor* 14, no. 2 (2001), 79-88.

interpretation has been adopted by the white man himself and then re-interpreted."[30] If Aunt Phoebe did play up stereotypical associations, she likely engaged in this self-conscious mimicry, with multiple degrees of irony, for her own survival. This is not to say that she took much pleasure from the situation. Returning to Jackson's photograph, Aunt Phoebe appears stilted and even slightly restive, as if waiting for the photographer to finish. She eyes him as much as he gawks at her. Looking directly at the camera, she squints her eyes, furrows her brow, and purses her lips. Her unswerving stare meets Jackson's touristic gaze and betrays a growing exasperation. She seems to be thinking, "Will this man hurry up!" This is not the warmhearted countenance of the kindly, ever-patient mammy; this is an expression of annoyance that recalls the displeasure Duncan noticed "in every line" of her guide's "face and feature." Tourists may have wanted to see the guides as nostalgic caricatures of Black femininity, but attendants like Aunt Phoebe let visitors know exactly who they were looking at.

Figure 5. William Henry Jackson/Detroit Publishing Company, *Aunt Phoebe*, c. 1901, hand-colored postcard; approximately 3.5 x 7in. *Magnolia-on-the-Ashley* series. Source: Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University, Atlanta, GA.

What about the guides' male coworkers? The historical accounts that mention the site's guides refer exclusively to women, and the sole mass-produced postcard to depict any of the site's workers shows only Aunt Phoebe (fig. 5). The gendered division of labor that positioned female guides as the public faces of Magnolia seems to have confined the estate's male workers to more "behind the scenes" roles like groundskeepers, carpenters, and handymen. The relative visibility of female workers and invisibility of male workers cannot be divorced from what journalist W.J. Cash coined the "Southern rape complex" in his 1941 book *The Mind of the South*. Cash notes that many white Southerners feared the "danger of the Southern white woman's

[30] Zora Neale Hurston, "Characteristics of Negro Expression," in Robin G. O'Meally, ed., *Jazz: Cadence of American Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 308 [1931].

being violated by the Negro."[31] This racist hysteria ignored the sexual violence perpetrated by white men on Black women and girls and revealed more than anything the sensitivity and insecurity of white masculinity. It rationalized and often occasioned lynching as a highly visible, spectacular form of punishment for those Black men accused of assaulting white women and sexually transgressing racial boundaries. More often than not, these allegations were mere pretenses contrived to justify mob violence. Perhaps the tendency of white folks to mask their violence as victimhood is why the guides treated visitors like "a brood of incautious chickens," because the workers recognized the danger white guests posed to *them*. If this were the case, the guide who raced to find Duncan would have been less concerned for the writer than for one of her male coworkers. The lack of legal recourse for African Americans in the Jim Crow South would have made it all the more likely that Magnolia's employees looked out for one another by engaging in acts of mutual protection and collective security.

Figure 6. William Henry Jackson, The Caretakers, c. 1901, dry-plate negative, *Magnolia-on-the-Ashley* series; 8 x 10in. Source: Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress, Washington DC.

[31] W.J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Vintage Books, 1941), 117.

Another photograph of Jackson's, *The Caretakers*, highlights six of Magnolia's employees, four men and two women, including Aunt Phoebe on the right (fig. 6). In this image, no eyes meet the photographer's camera; the workers look downward and edgeways while holding their tools. They appear less defiant than Aunt Phoebe gazing back at Jackson in her individual photograph, as if submitting as a group to the prying lens. Another interpretation recognizes their averted faces as a refusal to engage the photographer entirely on his terms. In such a reading, the subjects deny Jackson the condescending image of Black servitude by diverting their eyes, turning their heads, and looking anywhere but the camera. Together they engage in what historian Stephanie M. H. Camp calls the "everyday forms of resistance" that enslaved subjects regularly utilized on the antebellum plantation and "that might otherwise appear to be little more than fits of temper." Some examples include dragging feet, losing tools, and feigning illness.[32] Looking at *The Caretakers*, Magnolia's workers have adapted such "hidden or indirect expressions of dissent" and "quiet ways of reclaiming a measure of control" to the realities of tourism.[33] Whereas before they negotiated the vision of the overseer, they now face the gaze of the photographer. Aunt Phoebe and the others jointly unsettle Jackson's objectifying intentions and make the photograph less an image of servitude than solidarity. When read against the grain, *The Caretakers* reminds us that Magnolia's history can be found in the bonds the site's workers forged amongst themselves, connections that allowed them to exercise some mastery over the estate.

[32] Stephanie M. H. Camp, *Closer to Freedom: Enslaved Women and Everyday Resistance in the Plantation South* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2004), 2.
[33] Camp, *Closer to Freedom*, 2.

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The Lure of the Lash: Spectacular Violence and White Ethnonationalism at an Australian Convict Site

a response by Megan J. Sheard

In the winter of 2021, I took a tour of the former convict settlement of Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour, lutruwita/Tasmania.[1] With dramatic relish, our tour guide explained that an especially brutal version of the cat-o-nine-tails was used to punish infractions by the convicts incarcerated there. Nicknamed the Macquarie Cat, the lash had added to its original knotted cord design small pieces of lead which cut ferociously into the backs of the punished. With a macabre enthusiasm reminiscent of theatrical pirate imitations, our guide proclaimed that the Cat could cut to the bone in three lashes. I let out a little noise, clearly being insufficiently piratical. The other visitors, possibly more accustomed to the variety of macabre drama that accompanies the narration of convict history in Australia, made no sound, but they looked a little uneasy as they huddled under the shelter from the pouring rain of a winter's day in Macquarie Harbour.

This moment crystallized the strange blend of historical rigor and darkly romanticized violence present in narrations of convict sites in an unmissable fashion. It was a tension I had noticed in tour guide narratives and institutionally produced interpretive materials at other convict sites in lutruwita/Tasmania, particularly at the

[1] In this response, I use the palawa kani term for Tasmania where practicable, while acknowledging the contested status of dual naming in Tasmania with respect to inclusivity. Where I address Tasmania as it appears in colonial discourse specifically, I use only Tasmania; for practicality, I do the same for grammatical variations, e.g. Tasmanian.

large Port Arthur Penal Settlement, in Paredarerme/Oyster Bay country in the state's southeast. Founded in 1830 as a small timber station, the settlement grew into the state's largest site of secondary punishment for male convicts who reoffended, and made use of the peninsula's highly defensible isthmus in its carceral strategy. It is today a protected historic site with an extensive set of interpretive materials and tours to facilitate the visitor's encounter with the deprivations of convict life.[2] The description of the Macquarie Cat at Sarah Island distilled a broader ambivalence in the way these materials present convict sites: a prosaic episode in what Hamish Maxwell-Stewart has called the "historiography of the lash."[3]

Like the transformation of a rice plantation and site of Black enslavement into an English-style garden discussed by Connor Hamm in this volume, Port Arthur has navigated the process of reinventing a site of involuntary and often brutal labor as a tourist destination, a transformation already underway at its closure in the late-nineteenth century. However, while U.S. plantations suppress their violent histories through reinvention, Australian penal settlements instead offer up their brutality as spectacle. This tendency continues alongside a growing body of historical scholarship on convict life, research which is being actively incorporated into visitor experiences. If Hamm's exploration of the Black history of Magnolia Gardens troubles romanticizing it as a space of white leisure—as surely it must—how can such revelry in spectacularized violence against convict bodies coexist with the meticulous unearthing of their stories?[4] I suggest that the answer lies partly in the historically specific form of white ethnonationalism that has grown up around convict narratives in Australia, in which white tourists identify themselves with convicts rather than their masters. In

[2] James Findlay notes that this ambivalent character makes visiting convict sites part of "dark tourism," a practice—and an industry—premised upon the fascination with sites of human trauma. See James Findlay, "Cinematic Landscapes, Dark Tourism and the Ghosts of Port Arthur," *History Australia* 16, no. 4 (2019): 678–694.

[3] Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, "Convict Workers, 'Penal Labour' and Sarah Island: Life at Macquarie Harbour, 1822-34." In *Representing Convicts: New Perspectives on Convict Forced Labour Migration*, eds. Ian Duffield and James Bradley (London: Leicester University Press, 1997): 142-162.

[4] This duality is often inherent in the research process itself. For example, a history of public archaeology at Port Arthur notes the development of themes for public tours introducing tourists to the site which include "a bold social experiment" to describe the Puer Boy's Prison, and Jeremy Bentham's phrase "a machine for grinding rogues honest" as the overarching Port Arthur guidebook catchphrase. While capturing important historical themes, such phrases are steeped in the perspective of the colonizer and the masters in particular, presenting visitors with an idea of arguably-virtuous reformatory experimentation rather than a carcerally-structured colonialism. See Jody Steele, Julia Clark, Richard Tuffin, and Greg Jackman, "The Archaeology of Conviction: Public Archaeology at Port Arthur Historic Site," In *Past Meets Present: Archaeologists Partnering with Museum Curators, Teachers, and Community Groups*, eds. John H. Jameson, Jr. and Sherene Baugher, 69–85 (New York, NY: Springer New York, 2007): 74-75.

lutruwita/Tasmania, such identifications take place against a longer history of colonial romanticizing of landscape that some have referred to as the "Tasmanian Gothic."[5]

Such romanticization of Tasmanian landscapes can be seen in a series of travel posters produced by the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau in the 1930s. These posters share with the postcards and advertisements of Magnolia Gardens an adjacent visual language of the picturesque, and extolled Tasmania's virtues as a tourist destination to a white public. The series draws on a striking art deco style of bold, contrasting colors to praise Tasmania's natural beauty, accompanied by slogans such as *Tasmania, The Wonderland* and *Tasmania, the Switzerland of the South*.[6] Tasmania emerges in the posters as a landscape of leisure and escape: *Tasmania, The Angler's Paradise*. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the dramatic views of the landscape framed for the prospective tourist's

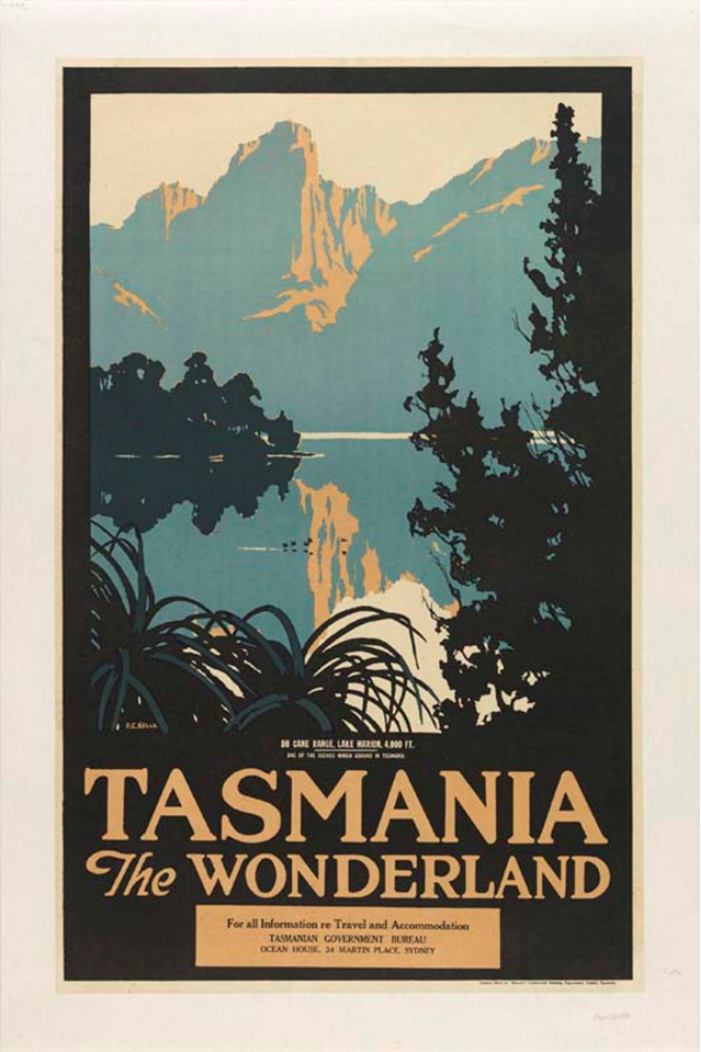

Figure 1. Harry Kelly, 193-. *Tasmania, The Wonderland*, colored lithograph on paper with linen backing, poster 102 x 64cm, backing 114 x 76cm. Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau. The image shows the Du Cane Range, Lake Marion, on the edge of Lairmairrener/Big River country. Source: Tasmanian Archives, Hobart: 849231.

[5] Relating especially to art, literature, and film. For the original articulation of the concept, see Jim Davidson, "Tasmanian Gothic," *Meanjin* 48, no. 2 (1989): 307–24; for a discussion which inflects the idea to include the memory of Tasmania's genocidal war against Tasmanian Aboriginal people, see Greg Lehman, "Tasmanian Gothic: the art of Tasmania's Forgotten War," *Griffith Review*, no. 39 (2013): 193–204.

[6] The posters share a visual vocabulary with the U.S. Works Progress Administration's "See America" series in the 1930s, as well as its strategy of evoking national pride by constructing a sense of shared history and geographical specificity. See Cory Pillen, "See America: WPA Posters and the Mapping of a New Deal Democracy," *The Journal of American Culture* 31, no. 1 (2008): 49–65. Though outside the scope of this response, global economic depression forms an important context for such advertising strategies in both cases.

gaze show no traces of the Aboriginal histories and practices animating them, projecting instead a romantic wilderness ready for discovery (fig. 1).[7]

Two of these posters feature the settlement at Port Arthur. One, entitled *Historic Tasmania: Port Arthur*, displays the ruins of its convict-built gothic revival church. Built from striking red-banded Tasmanian sandstone in 1836-7 as an experiment in interdenominational worship to accommodate Catholic and Protestant convicts, the church has a striking presence on the gently sloping grounds of the Port Arthur settlement, with its multiple spires and crenellated tower. The poster shows the church from a vantage point on the hillside above, its roof missing due to a fire in 1884 that gutted the building (fig. 2). No other structures are visible in the image aside from a white-posted fence arcing across a hill, suggesting the quietude of an abandoned pastoral landscape, with a single sailboat anchored peacefully by Point Puer in the background. The softly graduated blues of the cove throw the bespired profile of the rosy-hued ruins into relief, as sunlight illuminates walls within naked lancet openings and casts long shadows across the ground. In keeping with the romantic trope of using figures to emphasize the grandeur

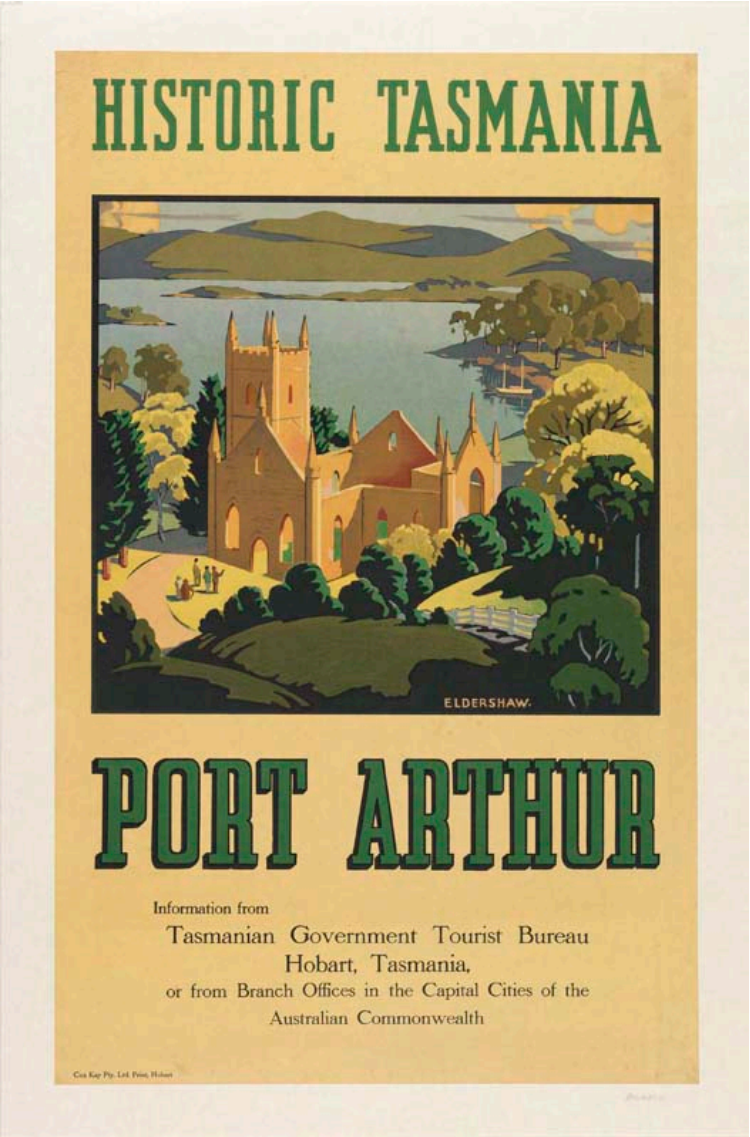

Figure 2. John Eldershaw, 193-. *Historic Tasmania, Port Arthur*, colored lithograph on paper with linen backing, poster 101 x 63cm, backing 111 x 73cm. Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau. Source: Tasmanian Archives, Hobart: 849230.

[7] Tasmania's Aboriginal population is comprised of many clans grouped into eight distinct nations: for a map showing regional boundaries, see Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS), "Map of Indigenous Australia," 2022. Accessed 5 May 2023. https://aiatsis.gov.au/explore/map-indigenous-australia.

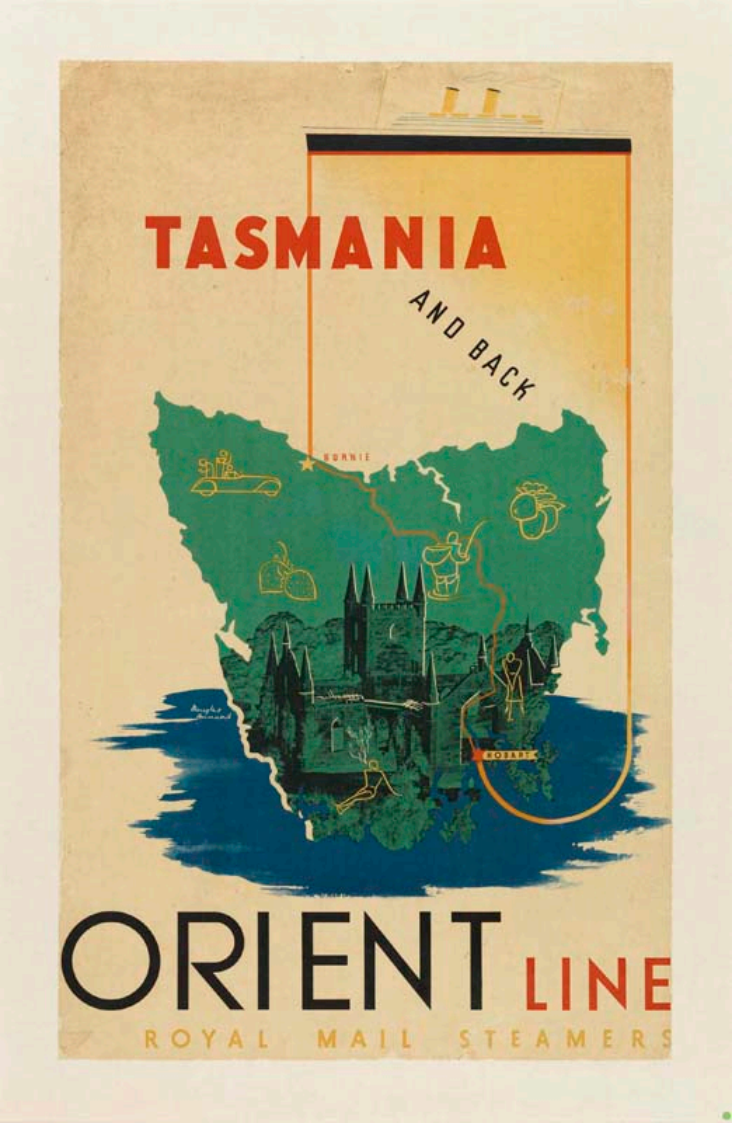

Figure 3. Douglas Annand, 193-. *Tasmania and Back, Orient Line Royal Mail Steamers*, colored lithograph on paper with linen backing, poster 99.3 x 61cm, backing 111.3 x 63cm. Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau. Source: Tasmanian Archives, Hobart: 834251.

of the landscape, five small figures are visible on a patch of yellow grass before the church's façade: one gestures toward it, indicating their status as sightseers. These visual tropes make the church appear as a remnant of historic labor in an ancient landscape.

Such idealization of the convict church at Port Arthur appears in a second poster advertising Orient Line Royal Mail Steamers as a way to travel to *Tasmania—and back* (fig. 3). Here, stylized line drawings of Tasmania's attractions are scattered across the state's land mass in the form of figures participating in leisure activities and drawings of berries and apples. Transposed over the lower portion of the state's land mass is a depiction of the Port Arthur church, with its recognizable spires and roofless emptiness. The ruins are not specifically identified in any way and seem to stand in for historicity itself, as imagined through settler ideas of architectural monumentality: part of a visual canvas of leisure and the consumption of a romanticized historical past, all accessible via a neat return passage on the Orient Line.[8]

[8] For a more detailed treatment Romanticism's translation into a territorial ideology and the Tasmanian visual tradition that grows up around it, see Jarrod Hore, *Visions of Nature: How Landscape Photography Shaped Settler Colonialism* (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2022), Chapter 5. Hore demonstrates that images of ruins and monumental landscapes help to establish a specific sense of settler colonial time in Tasmania, which projects Aboriginal people into the past. As Hore notes, romantic conceptions of landscape become absorbed into global settler colonial wilderness narratives in the late-

These depictions of Tasmania reconstitute a site of forced labor as an encounter with a romantic and ancient historicity, offering it up for consumption for white tourists in an interpretive tradition that continues into the present. This imagination of landscape becomes powerfully joined to a new "convict consciousness" during the later reinvention Port Arthur as a foundational site of Australian history between the 1970s and 1990s, with convicts recast as noble pioneers as part of Australia's "underdog" nationalism. As archaeologist Greg Jackman has argued, this was especially evident after the Bicentenary in 1988, when every woman and her dog suddenly discovered a convict ancestor.[9] As Jackman notes, such identifications—valid or spurious—are linked to a white ethnonationalist projects of seeking common origins which are also geographically specific.[10] Against the background of a landscape already invested with gothic drama, the claims on convict identity by a white Australian public allow the drama of identity-forging violence to coexist with detailed narratives of convict lives with surprising ease. The power of this story means that the fact that most white Australians descend from free settlers never raises the alternative possibility of identifying with the convict's masters.

The comparison with former sites of slavery is useful precisely because the idea of spectacularizing violence against slaves is so unthinkable, even and especially for descendants of slaveholders wishing to rake in profits from their landholdings. If that possibility is troubling, romanticizing violence against the bodies of the transported should be too. The non-permanent nature of convictism, its diverse racial profile, and the central ideological role of criminality (real or imagined, since convicts might be paupers stealing to survive or political dissidents) give convictism an ambiguous status, in which we are left to wonder if it might have been deserved and if, in any case, it was really "that bad," especially when some former convicts later became prosperous members of the white settler classes. However, I suggest that foregrounding such questions is the product of an Australian nationalist imagination which has already accepted convicts as renegade forefathers foundational to "our" identity—the gendered designation intentional here since convicts are overwhelmingly imagined as male.[11] With paternity identified, all that remains is to reckon with that heritage and what it means for a white "us," in spite of overwhelming evidence of Australia's multicultural

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nineteenth century, an observation particularly pertinent to Tasmania, where the uptake of wilderness discourse by environmentalism has made it especially hard to eradicate.

[9] Greg Jackman, "From Stain to Saint: Ancestry, Archaeology and Agendas in Tasmania's Convict Heritage—A View from Port Arthur," *Historical Archaeology* 43, no. 3 (2009): 101-112, 103.

[10] Jackman questions the veracity of the 49% of Tasmanians claiming convict ancestry in 1999 as compared with the 50% of the population made up of convicts in 1847, given the significance of post-convict migration.

[11] Convict women were in transported in much smaller numbers, although this is not enough to account for their relative absence from the Australian popular imagination.

demography. Hamm's project of reconstructing Black histories of U.S. plantations and their subsequent touristic manifestations has a potency that the best scholarship on convict perspectives struggles to achieve, since the latter have been coopted in advance into a white ethnonationalist story.[12]

Rather than speculating on the moral status of convictism, a more useful set of questions is suggested by linking it with land colonization and global movements of labor. Like slavery, convictism was one of many forms of unfree labor providing the muscle power for colonization around the world; the arrival of convicts in Australia was linked directly to U.S. history via North American refusal to accept British convicts after the American War of Independence.[13] Instead of investing convict stories with disturbing world-birthing drama, we should read them against the horizon of their conscription into the dispossession of Aboriginal lands. If depictions of the Port Arthur convict church in 1930s travel posters construct a mythic past from a nineteenth-century ruin—the oldest settler architecture you can lay your hands on in Australia—they belie the genuine ancientness of the cultural landscape it occupies, landscape occupied by Paredarerme/Oyster Bay clans for 60,000 years and counting.[14] In this sense, no history from the perspective of involuntary laborers—slaves or convicts—can be complete without accounting for the settler colonial context for which their labor is a crucial condition of possibility.

[12] An important exception here is an emerging literature on convicts of color, including Aboriginal people removed from their own Country. See Kristyn Harman, *Aboriginal Convicts: Australian, Khoisan and Maori Exiles* (Sydney: NewSouth Publishing, 2012).

[13] For a discussion of the connection between white Australian ethnonationalism and U.S. history in the development of the "White Australia" Policy, see Marylin Lake, "White Man's Country: The Trans-National History of a National Project," *Australian Historical Studies* 34, no. 122 (2003): 346–363.

[14] I follow Patsy Cameron's use of "clans" rather than the more common "tribes" here, in part to avoid the colonial loading of that term. See Patsy Cameron, *Grease and Ochre: The Blending of Two Cultures at the Colonial Sea Frontier*, (Hobart, TAS: Fullers Bookshop, 2016). For a discussion of the tension between external stereotyping and internal identity in the term, see also Daniel P. Biebuyk, "On the Concept of Tribe," *Civilizations*, 16, no. 4 (1966): 500-515.

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research spotlight

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Un-Mapping Water Labor: Quantitative Slippages in Occupied Cairo

Alex Schultz

Research(ing) and Resistance

Like any doctoral student, I wanted to write a compelling dissertation with meticulous archival research. The archive is often defined as the state's official depository of administrative documents. In my case, the National Archives in Egypt has somewhat mythic status: an object of perennial desire that can prove frustratingly difficult to access. And yet, there is a frequently expressed fear among students that a dissertation written without this experience is insufficient.[1] I had plans to use the National Archives to reconstruct a history of urban water. Instead, things turned out differently. When Covid-19 hit in 2020 I had a two-year-old son, and my daughter was born in July of that same year. Caring for young children among myriad covid restrictions foreclosed a return to Egypt, official security clearances in hand or otherwise.

It was imperative at that stage to make new plans. I started with photographs and archival research from a previous trip, including a slew of precious digital copies of maps from the Centre des Études Alexandrines. I explored digitized photograph and

[1] The National Archives in Arabic is the Dar al-Watha'iq al-Qawmiyya. I was not able to visit either for my dissertation research, but plan to go (government approvals permitting) in winter of 2023 and summer of 2024. Any scholar of modern Egypt has a story about accessing the archives. For one narrative, see: Lucia Carminati, "Dead Ends in and out of the Archive: An Ethnography of Dar al Watha'iq al Qawmiyya, the Egyptian National Archive," *Rethinking History* 23, no. 1 (2019): 34–51.

archival collections.[2] I scrolled through Eastview's Middle Eastern and North African Newspapers and *al-Ahram* digital archives, seeking any references to Cairo and Alexandria's municipal water systems.[3] As it turned out, an unexplored narrative of local water practices resided in many different places and objects outside of the official government archive, including photographs of water carriers, a sentence or two in local news sections on public taps, notices of drowning deaths or water syphoning in police columns, and advertisements about water cleansing tablets.

British colonial reports are widely available online. These often contained brief yet tantalizing discussions of the tension between local water practices and modern bureaucratic methods of water management. In the 1898 edition of a Public Works Department report that I downloaded from HathiTrust, a government official argued that an accompanying "plan" visualized the challenges of managing rainwater removal in Cairo (see figs. 1 and 2):

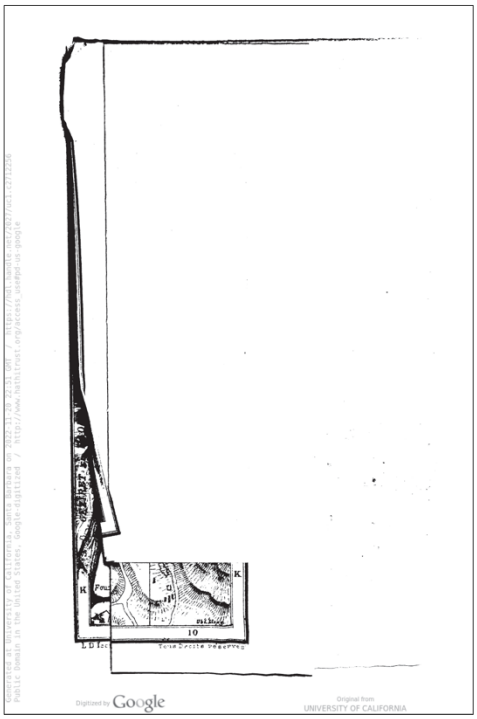

Figure 1. Folded-over map page in digitized book. Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1898*, Bulaq: Government Press, 1899. Digitized by Google.

> Work, during wet weather, or when a large pipe breaks, is the most difficult of any undertaken by this service (the Scavenging Department), and is still very unsatisfactory. The attached plan, showing the amount of water and mud removed after the heavy rain of the 12th of November will give a fair idea of the work that we have to carry out.[4]

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[2] Calisphere, "Calisphere: The deeper you look, the more you discover," accessed November 20, 2022, https://calisphere.org/; Victoria and Albert Museum, "V&A Explore the Collections," accessed November 20, 2022, https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections; Bibliotheca Alexandrina, "Thakirat Masr al-Mu'asira," accessed November 20, 2022, http://modernegypt.bibalex.org/collections/home/default.aspx.

[3] Al-Ahram archive is available only through paying institutions. Select titles of other papers can be viewed for free. All titles are part of Eastview's Global Press Archive. For more information: "Global Press Archive," *East View* (blog), accessed November 20, 2022, https://www.eastview.com/resources/gpa/. For an overview of the press in the Middle East see: Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); for the press in Egypt, see: Beth Baron, *The Women's Awakening in Egypt: Culture, Society, and the Press* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); and Hoda A Yousef, *Composing Egypt: Reading, Writing, and the Emergence of a Modern Nation, 1870-1930* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2016).

[4] Egypt, Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1898*, 220.

Figure 2. Map of Cairo, undated. Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1898*, Bulaq: Government Press, 1899.

Insufficient Drains

Cairo's notorious late nineteenth-century drainage problem was a matter of scale, as well as systemic neglect. [5] Its population exploded during this time as people pursued new business and labor opportunities.[6] An increase in the number of middle-class and wealthy inhabitants provided service opportunities for the working class. Poor

[5] Two excellent studies: Ghislaine Alleaume, "Hygiène Publique et Travaux Publics: Les Ingénieurs et l'assainissement Du Caire (1882-1907)," *Annales Islamologiques* 20 (1984): 151-82; Shehab Ismail, "Engineering Metropolis: Contagion, Capital, and the Making of British Colonial Cairo, 1882-1922," Ph.D. Diss, Columbia University, 2017.

[6] John T. Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/ucb/detail.action?docID=3408424; Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987).

migrants and locals performed necessary low-wage day labor, such as construction and street sprinkling, the latter a necessary daily task to settle Cairo's dirt streets and alleys.

This population increase put a strain on Cairo's water and waste infrastructure, which prior to this period was largely localized and informal.[7] Nightsoil men, *zabbalin* (garbage men), and scavengers managed the brunt of the city's sanitation.[8] For example, they collected and sold the city's solid waste locally, to public bath proprietors for valuable boiler fuel, and to farmers for fertilizer. Under this system, waste was a valuable natural resource and a way for Cairo's poor to make ends meet.[9]

But British colonial officials represented Cairo's waste removal system as antimodern and offensive.[10] For example, in the 1899 issue of the Public Works Department Reports, a table ranks Cairo's public baths, rated from "fairly clean," to "extremely dirty" (fig. 3).[11] Perhaps as evidence, the author lists in his table the amount of cubic meters of rubbish (fuel) stored in and around the bath. It is not clear from the report how such numbers are derived. Indeed, the labelling admits that it is guesswork: "estimated amount of rubbish stacked and in place for many years."[12] Although the author notes that the baths are efficient and multifunctional, he does not consider them as essential public service charitable institutions that provided places to bathe, socialize,

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[7] Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Cairo: 1001 Years of the City Victorious* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 70-74; Amin Sami, *Taqwim al-Nil* (al-Qahira: Matba□at al-Amiriya, 1915), vol. 3, no. 2, 858-859; Samir Saul, *La France et l'Égypte de 1882 à 1914: intérêts économiques et implications politiques* (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 1997), http://books.openedition.org/igpde/746. For more information on the potable water system, see my dissertation: Alexandra Schultz, "Living and Dying in Water: Fluid Infrastructure Disruptions in Urban Egypt (1870-1935)," Ph.D. diss., University of California Santa Barbara, 2022.

[8] Until recently, the city's zabbalin were largely members of the Coptic community living in a suburb of Cairo near the Moqattam Hills. They have a reputation of being extremely efficient, but recently the government has sought to do away with the system, in part saying that there is too much garbage in the neighborhood streets where the zabbalin are sorting. See: Amelia Soth, "Cairo's Zabbaleen and Secret Life of Trash," *JSTOR Daily*, November 30, 2022, https://daily.jstor.org/cairos-zabbaleen-and-secret-life-of-trash/.

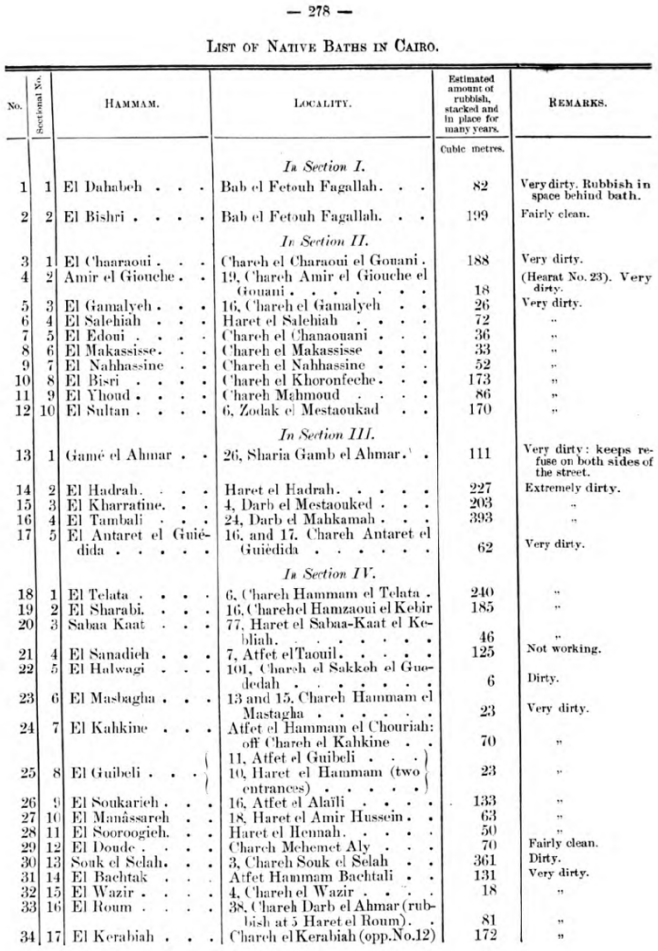
[9] Chalcraft, *Striking Cabbies*, 70.

[10] The accounts are so numerous that they form a trope. Government publications, such as the reports of the public works department or the reports of the public health department frequently address the baths in a negative fashion. One useful source: Abbate Onofrio. "Questions hygieniques sur la ville du Caire." *Bulletin de l'Institut Egyptien* 2, no. 2 (1881): 55–69. It is worthwhile to note that nightsoil men were still an important part of most European cities at this time as well, including London and Paris. See: David Barnes, *The Great Stink of Paris and the Nineteenth-Century Struggle against Filth and Germs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

[11] Egypt, Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works*, 1899, 277-279.

[12] Egypt, *Report on the Department of Public Works*, 1899, 278-279.

cook and sell food, and recycle waste.[13] Despite this and similar concerns, the British seemed in no hurry to pay to maintain or improve public works, such as dredging Cairo's main canal, building storm drains, or installing sewers.[14] Indeed, a sewage collector was not installed in Cairo until 1907.[15] Cheap, uneven logistical responses to catastrophic situations such as rare torrential rain were the rule.



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LIST OF NATIVE BATHS IN CAIRO.

No.	Sectional No.	HAMMAM.	LOCALITY.	Estimated amount of rubbish, stacked and in place for many years.	REMARKS.
				Cubic metres.	
			In Section I.		
1	1	El Dahabeh	Bab el Fetouh Fagallah.	82	Very dirty. Rubbish in space behind bath.
2	2	El Bishri	Bab el Fetouh Fagallah.	199	Fairly clean.
			In Section II.		
3	1	El Chaaraoui	Chareh el Charaoui el Gouani.	188	Very dirty.
4	2	Amir el Giouche	19, Chareh Amir el Giouche el Gouani	18	(Hearat No. 23). Very dirty.
5	3	El Gamalyeh	16, Chareh el Gamalyeh	26	Very dirty.
6	4	El Salehiah	Haret el Salehiah	72	"
7	5	El Edoni	Chareh el Chanaouani	36	"
8	6	El Makassisse	Chareh el Makassisse	33	"
9	7	El Nahhassine	Chareh el Nahhassine	52	"
10	8	El Bisri	Chareh el Khoronfeche	173	"
11	9	El Yhoud	Chareh Mahmoud	86	"
12	10	El Sultan	6, Zodak el Mestaoukad	170	"
			In Section III.		
13	1	Gamé el Ahmar	26, Sharia Gamb el Ahmar.	111	Very dirty: keeps refuse on both sides of the street.
14	2	El Hadrah	Haret el Hadrah.	227	Extremely dirty.
15	3	El Kharratine	4, Darb el Mestaouked	203	"
16	4	El Tambali	24, Darb el Mahkamah	393	"
17	5	El Antaret el Guiédida	16, and 17, Chareh Antaret el Guiédida	62	Very dirty.
			In Section IV.		
18	1	El Telata	6, Chareh Hammam el Telata	240	"
19	2	El Sharabi	16, Charehel Hamzaoui el Kebir	185	"
20	3	Sabaa Kaat	77, Haret el Sabaa-Kaat el Kebliah.	46	"
21	4	El Sanadieh	7, Atfet el Taouil.	125	Not working.
22	5	El Halwagi	101, Chareh el Sakkoh el Guedidah	6	Dirty.
23	6	El Masbagha	13 and 15, Chareh Hammam el Mastagha	23	Very dirty.
24	7	El Kahkine	Atfet el Hammam el Chouriah: off Chareh el Kahkine	70	"
25	8	El Guibeli	11, Atfet el Guibeli 10, Haret el Hammam (two entrances)	23	"
26	9	El Soukarieh	16, Atfet el Alaïli	133	"
27	10	El Manâssareh	18, Haret el Amir Hussein	63	"
28	11	El Sooroogieh	Haret el Hennah.	50	"
29	12	El Doude	Chareh Mehemet Aly	70	Fairly clean.
30	13	Souk el Selah	3, Chareh Souk el Selah	361	Dirty.
31	14	El Bachtak	Atfet Hammam Bachtali	131	Very dirty.
32	15	El Wazir	4, Chareh el Wazir	18	"
33	16	El Roum	38, Chareh Darb el Ahmar (rubbish at 5 Haret el Roum).	81	"
34	17	El Kerabiah	Chareh el Kerabiah (opp. No. 12)	172	"

Figure 3. Table of Baths (Hammams) in Cairo, numbered, named, and rated. Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1899*.

[13] Most could afford the meager charge of one piastre or *qirsh* (1/100 of an Egyptian pound) to use the bath regularly. Egypt, Report on the Department of Public Works, 1899, 277; Dalila El Kerdany, "Hammam Folklore Dynamics in Cairo: Lessons from Operation to Regeneration," *International Journal on Architectural Research*, 2, 3 (November 2008): 29-41.

[14] Cairo did not have a separate municipal budget until the 1930s, thus its expenses were controlled directly by the Public Debt Commission, a committee composed of colonial officials to extract investor's funds from the bankrupt country. For more on this, see: Aaron Jakes, *Egypt's Occupation: Colonial Economism and the Crises of Capitalism* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2020).

[15] See, Ismail, "Engineering Metropolis," especially chapter three. The map of the project was printed in the 1911 report, but like the map under discussion was not unfolded for scanning by the google digitizer. The map is available on Madaq. See: "1911 – Drainage Project," al-Madaq, accessed November 20, 2022, https://bit.ly/3UVO02I.

Maps and Tables as Representations

Let's return to the rainstorm mentioned at the beginning that occurred on November 12, 1898, and the plan the report's author suggested would clarify the Scavenging Department's challenges. Like many google-digitized resources on HathiTrust, the scanner had not unfolded the page to scan the plan (fig. 1). I ran across this problem frequently, including in my search to uncover plans and diagrams of water works such as dams and weirs. (fig. 4). I came to expect it and consider it a pattern that likely represents valuing quantity over quality, and the textual over the visual. So, I requested a high-resolution digital copy from UC Berkely through interlibrary loan (fig. 2).[16] I am not sure what I expected, but it turned out to be a fairly typical map of Cairo with some minimal citations. The clarification it provided was perhaps not what the author intended. Indeed, the map itself was quite useless without its corresponding table, a necessary aid the quote above does not mention. But what information does the map convey, and how?

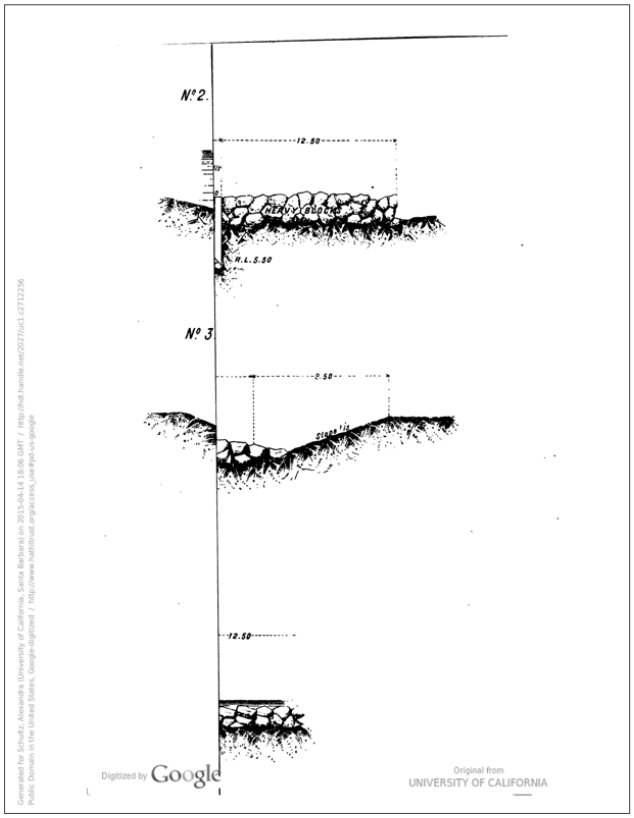
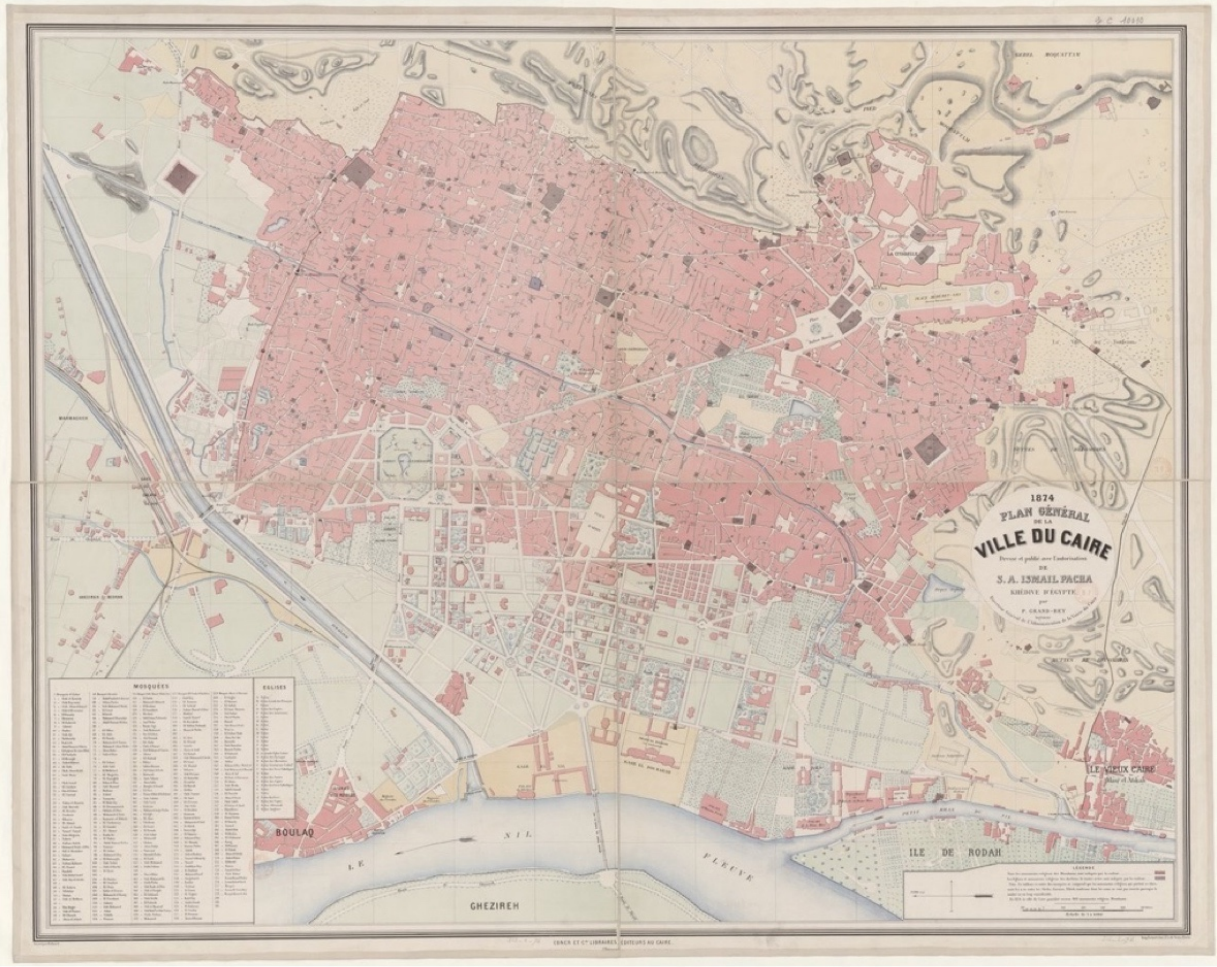


Figure 4. Folded-over scanned insert of a weir (small dam). Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1898*, Bulaq: Government Press, 1899. Digitized by Google.

Maps of Cairo typically do not indicate individual building footprints. One example is the Grand Map (fig. 5). Like the map from the report, few if any individual building footprints are legible. Rather, Cairo emerges as a pattern of bent and irregular passageways, encasing correspondingly irregular blocks, presumably sets of closely-packed buildings (figs. 2 and 6). There are three different types of numbering systems on the map: 1) small, thin numbers that correspond to an absent list of street names, 2) short, bold numbers placed near monuments that likely refer to the same absent key, this time a list of monuments or sites of interest, and 3) large, bold serif numbers from 1-32 that cluster in the newer western suburbs of the city, such as Azbakiya (figs. 2 and 7). The latter group of numbers refers to the table (fig. 8), which compares the amount

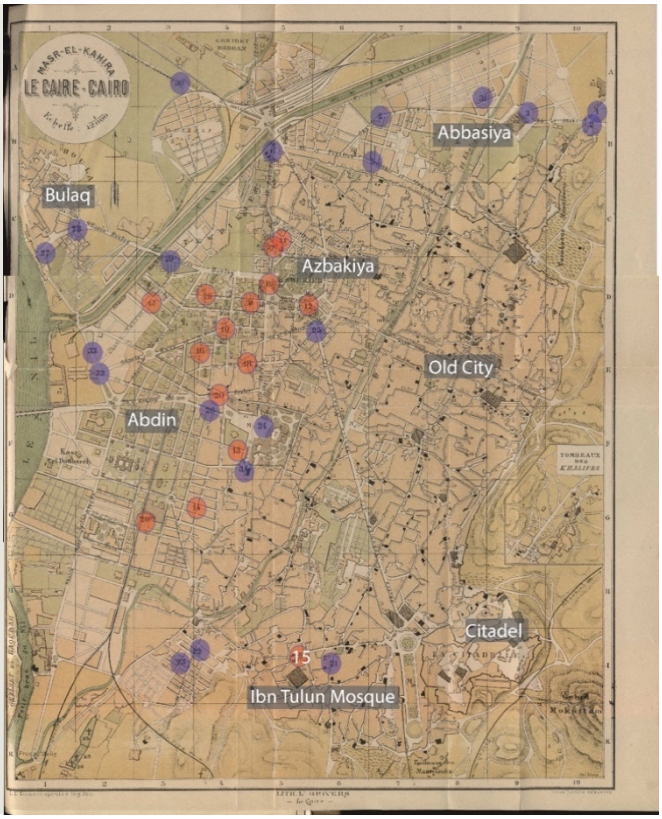
[16] Egypt, *Report on the Department of Public Works* 1898 (Bulaq: Government Press, 1899). Unpaginated, inserted between pages 20 and 21.

of rainwater and dust removed by men to that removed by machine. There are two sets of three columns. The first group of numbers corresponds to those on the map, and two columns to the right indicate the number of carts removed of water and dust. For example, 2,347 carts of water and 64 carts of dust were removed by machine pump from location 15, an area on the map near Ibn Tulun mosque, an upscale neighborhood with many large homes of local nobility, including the seventeenth-century Ottoman Manzil Kritliyya (figs. 7 and 9). This number is the highest of those listed in the table, but what exactly that means is not clear. Does the number refer to all rainwater removed from that neighborhood, or only from the area over which it hovers, the plaza in front of the Mamluk madrasa of Sarghitmish?



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 5. A typical detailed map of Cairo produced by the director of the Voirie (Roads) Department. The pink blocks are buildings. The box in the lower left is a key that indicates mosques and churches in the city. The plan includes the names of some roads, major buildings (such as palaces, government buildings), and historic sites. Plan général de la Ville du Caire, 1874. Dressé et publié avec l'autorisation de S.A. Ismail Pacha Khédive d'Egypte par P. Grand Bey. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Cartes et Plans, GE C-10010.



(left) Figure 6. This photograph shows a street in Old Cairo. Most people are blurry as they are moving, whereas the buildings are distinct. This was a limitation of photographic technology at the time. Beniami Facchinelli, Strada Bab El Bahr, c. 1873. Source: Bibliothèque nationale de France, Département Estampes et Photographie, BOITE FOL B-EO-1717.

(right) Figure 7. Map of Cairo, undated (also seen in figure 1). Additional annotations made by the author include neighborhood and cite names in white on gray, and blue and purple dots to highlight locations of rainwater clearance. Red circles indicate water and dust removed by hand pump or machine, purple by hand (as per table, figure. 8). Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1898*, Bulaq: Government Press, 1899.

How many laborers did it require to handle one of the hand or machine pumps, and how many worked to fill the carts labeled "filled by men?" What tools did they use, how big was a cart, and was the cart moved by animals or also by men from the flood site? Rain clearance policy, as well as its logistics, is elusive in this pair of documents. Indeed, without the table the map tells us only one thing for certain. Clearance was selective, and focused on the newer western districts of Cairo, areas with high percentages of Ottoman and Egyptian elites and Europeans. No clearance of rainwater was attempted in the old city, by far the densest and most populous area of greater Cairo (see fig. 7). The majority of the city's residents, it would seem, did not benefit from the Public Works Department's efforts.

Quantitative Othering

It was not uncommon for colonial British reporting to quantify people as productivity.[17] After all, a primary goal of colonization was resource extraction. The British colonial government ran Egypt like a corporate enterprise, thus its goal was to earn a profit off its "investments." The budget and financial statement are typical examples. For a government, a budget ostensibly estimates surplus or deficit. Officials can scrutinize actuals at the end of a fiscal year to determine whether a department is performing optimally. However, such calculations are not objective, but representations of values within a particular system.

TOTAL AMOUNT OF CARTS WORKING ON THE 12TH NOVEMBER, 1898, AND THE FOLLOWING DAYS IN THE WET WEATHER.

Carts filled by Hand Pumps and Machines.			*Carts filled by Men.*		
NUMBER*	WATER	DUST	NUMBER*	WATER	DUST
7	673	42	1	368	22
8	446	26	2	92	17
9	783	29	3	37	9
10	1,331	42	4	437	22
11	1,781	34	5	173	20
12	622	25	6	19	6
13	972	30	21	113	22
14	1,563	42	22	104	17
15	2,347	64	23	87	13
16	62	7	24	63	15
17	713	38	25	89	32
18	73	43	26	42	12
19	32	19	27	117	8
20	86	18	28	132	27
20 *bis*	738	32	29	19	6
			30	23	5
			31	26	20
			32	16	8
			33	14	6
			34	72	23
Total.	12,222	491	Total.	2,043	310

* The figures in this column refer to those on map opposite.

Figure 8. Table corresponding to map in figure 1. Source: Ministry of the Interior, *Report on the Department of Public Works 1898*, Bulaq: Government Press, 1899.

Tables provide a neat grid in which data can be placed and calculated. The form of a table has rhetorical value and presents data as logical. In my case, a table presents people (manual labor) and machine as opposite, and the latter as more efficient. After all, the table shows that hand and machine pumps clear more carts of water and dust than manual labor alone. However, machines and manual labor are not so distinct. In the same report, narrative descriptions of labor muddle the table's argument, even as they also represent Cairo's laborers as inefficient: "There is a great scarcity of drivers [for the scavenging department], and those that offer themselves are usually of a very bad class. They require looking after, and are a continual source of anxiety."[18] Like the table, these narrative descriptions orientalize and dehumanize the

[17]Aaron Jakes has recently shown how British colonial officials held a highly reductive and quantitative understanding of Egyptian self-regard. This was part of colonial economism employed in Egypt at the time. See: Jakes, *Egypt's Occupation*. For statistics in India, see: Sreenivas, *Reproductive Politics*. For the use of statistics to quantify slave labor, see: Caroline Oudin-Bastide and Philippe Steiner, *Calculation and Morality: The Costs of Slavery and the Value of Emancipation in the French Antilles*, Oxford Studies in the History of Economics (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019).

[18] Egypt, *Report on the Department of Public Works*, 1898, 221.

people resisting the Public Works Department and its officials. But they also show that machines were useless without them.

Figure 9. Manzil Kritliyya/Gayer-Anderson Museum. This is an example of a seventeenth-century house for an Ottoman notable, such as a bey or a pasha. The mosque directly abuts the Ibn Tulun Mosque (just south of number 15 on map, figure 2 and 7). Cairo, 2014. Photograph by author.

Qualified Absences

The map, table, and descriptions present at least two narratives: the claim that manual labor was inefficient for managing Cairo's drainage, and that the people resisted unilateral so-called sanitation practices, especially as such practices often left them in the dust.[19] But resistance is represented in the report from the perspective of a British colonial official. I needed alternative perspectives, and I knew that Cairenes were not shy about sharing their disapproval of the British government and its agencies in newspapers. Fortunately, I had a very specific date to work with: the rainstorm occurred on November 12, 1898.

[19] I argue in more detail in my dissertation that subaltern resistance defines water access in urban Egypt. My archive is a collection of representations of these instances of resistance. See: Schultz, "Living and Dying in Water."

Al-Ahram staff reported on the rainstorm and its challenges in the local news section of the paper. The first mention is on November 14, 1898, and reads in part:

> Cleanup work continued today in the capital to clear the water and mud from the rain. We thank the department for paying attention to this. Particularly Mr. Bray the head (of the department) who oversaw the project himself. However, the work is not sufficient for the mud and water as the rain that fell from the sky turned the streets into rivers. This matter first and foremost brings attention to the problem of running water and the need for drains.[20]

The language and syntax of this short article is very similar to others of its kind. It acknowledges the event, and the work being done to address it, including the name of a specific official. It also includes a modest critique and reference to a larger, well-known problem. Similar reporting covers a range of water public works issues, including maintenance of the city's canals, and the distribution of public taps. Such notices are often very short, and the importance of them can best be read in pattern.[21]

A much longer article appeared the following day.[22] The anonymous author is clear that rainwater clearance efforts are laborious, and unevenly distributed:

> I have not described the number of men who tire [from the work] or the amount of mud; or some of the police that [illegible] the water from the main streets. They continue to use pumps and have not run out of work for two days. But this has taken place only in my quarter of Azbakiya and Abdin. Some streets outside and in the rest of the city remain in mire that can only result in fever and death.[23]

Like the reports, these articles are selective representations of the issue. But the representations are not identical and emphasize different things. As a group, the evidence emphasizes manual labor as central to rainwater clearance.

Another Approach to Structure/Infrastructure

Water management in Cairo required labor. That labor was largely manual, and without it, the machines of water infrastructure were quite useless. Studies on infrastructure had tended to prioritize the perspectives and prerogatives of technocrats

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[20] *Al-Ahram* (November 14, 1898): 2.

[21] I discuss the patterns of reporting on public tap problems in my dissertation. See: Schultz, "Living and Dying in Water."

[22] This is significant. Usually Cairo's local news section, "al-Asima," includes many different small and large news items, and takes up anywhere from three columns to an entire page of the paper.

[23] *Al-Ahram* (November 15, 1898): 2. The author clearly criticizes the government and the British in this article as well.

and engineers.[24] This is not surprising considering they are the ones who wrote about public works infrastructure. They also had the authority to make change, or otherwise. However, this perspective marginalizes the people and bodies involved in construction and maintenance, as well as the vast majority of everyday users of public works infrastructure. Urban Cairenes today continue to struggle with drainage issues during the rare torrential rain.[25] Such challenges are perennial, and now as in the past, newspapers and other popular outlets serve to remind us that it is important to seek out the perspective from the street, rather than taking a bureaucrat's word for it. Taking the time to recover unfolded maps and scrutinize tables is, and presents, an alternative narrative, especially when the bureaucratic archive remains elusive.

Acknowledgements

Research for this article was supported by funds the History of Art and Architecture Department and the Center for Middle East Studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

[24] Jennifer Derr and Ismail Shehab routinely also include the perspective of laborers and local Egyptian and Ottoman engineers rather than only the colonial perspective. Shehab Ismail, "Engineering Metropolis"; Jennifer Derr, "Labor-Time: Ecological Bodies and Agricultural Labor in 19th and Early 20th-Century Egypt," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 50, no. 2 (2018): 195–212.
[25] For example: Rayhan Uddin, "'Complete Standstill': Heavy Rain Floods Cairo," *Middle East Eye*, October 23, 2019, http://www.middleeasteye.net/news/cairo-hit-flooding.

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reviews

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"From Palestine with Art": Dreams of Sovereignty and Acts of Resistance at the 2022 Venice Biennale

exhibition review by Rachel Winter

For the 59th Venice Biennale, curator Nancy Nesvet and the Palestine Museum US in Woodbridge, Connecticut, organized the Collateral Event "From Palestine with Art" at the Palazzo Mora (European Cultural Center). "From Palestine with Art" presents the work of nineteen contemporary Palestinian artists who invite audiences to imagine a new landscape and way of life in a liberated Palestine. The exhibition interweaves moments of joy with themes of struggle, resistance, and injustice. The artists and curators turn away from gratuitous images of suffering and violence to embrace creative forms of fighting and solidarity where happiness and presence is a radical act of resistance. As Israel continues to occupy Palestinian land and execute unprovoked military actions against unarmed civilians, the exhibition shows that Palestinians are still here. Their presence, even if far from the Biennale's main events, is a visual argument for liberation, while its physical distance is indicative of the ways that many aim to neglect the current situation.

"From Palestine with Art" is both spatially and cognitively separate from the Venice Biennale's main sites and attractions. At 2.7 kilometers from the Giardini, and 1.8 kilometers from the Arsenale, the event is distinctly removed from the primary landscape. To reach the exhibition, one not only traverses the labyrinthian Venetian streets, but also passes by many other small, independent exhibitions operating outside the Biennale's confines. "From Palestine with Art" is the only Biennale event at the European Cultural Center, which does not offer any financial or ideological support. The

Venice Biennale's only assistance is to recognize the exhibition as a Collateral Event, meaning it is included in the official program, and that the event may utilize the lion logo. Collateral Events, however, also come at the hefty price of a 25,000-euro participation fee.

Figure. 1. Installation shot, "From Palestine with Art," featuring work by Nabil Anani. Photograph by the author, courtesy of the author, Faisal Saleh, and the Palestine Museum, US.

"From Palestine with Art" is designed to unpack the particularities of Palestinian landscapes, geographies, cultures, and people. Upon entering the exhibition, the sounds of an *oud* transport you away from Venice. The first view presents the lush olive trees and verdant rolling hills of Palestine (fig. 1). Directly below the exhibition title is Nabil Anani's *In Pursuit of Utopia #7* (2020), a painting which expresses a longing for a thriving Palestinian nation on a bountiful land abundant with viable produce. Such a geography is shaped by people who live freely and thrive on their territory. As the title suggests, Anani's work proposes a potential future for Palestine—if it were given the right to exist.[1]

[1] In 1917, the Balfour Declaration announced British support for Jewish populations to have a home in Palestine, and soon after, Palestine became a British mandate. In 1948, Israel proclaimed itself a state,

To so vividly evoke Palestine's sovereignty at the Venice Biennale is to question the idea of the nation-state that organizes and defines the event and the ways we think about exhibiting nationalism on a global stage. Since 1895, the Biennale's main site has been the Giardini, which is comprised of a large, central building that features an international group exhibition, and twenty-nine national pavilions belonging to mostly European countries.[1] The other key site is the Arsenale, a former production center transformed into a venue for the Architecture Biennale in 1980. Many non-Western countries have pavilions here, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the Republic of Kosovo, Lebanon, Indonesia, Ireland, Malta, and most recently, the Sultanate of Oman. This allocation points to a hierarchical world order tenuously constructed along the lines of the Global North and Global South. Countries without national pavilions, such as the Syrian Arab Republic or Nepal, must lease space in Biennale-approved venues throughout the city in a process similar to those planning Collateral Events. Because Palestine is not recognized as a nation by the Italian government, it cannot have a national pavilion at the Giardini or Arsenale.

Notably, Collateral Events offer an alternative opportunity for representation and participation for those who want to engage the Biennale's vast audiences, but who also wish to, or are forced to, remain on the event's peripheries. These audiences are what drew the Palestine Museum US to participate. As the museum's director Faisal Saleh explained to me, he applied for an exhibit at the Venice Biennale because it is the apex of the art world, and it has many visitors. Saleh did not think the proposal would be accepted because Palestine is a "radioactive" term in Europe and a controversial subject for many American museums. However, "From Palestine with Art" was invited to participate after a lengthy review process. Saleh is excited that the Biennale and its curators wanted to "give people a voice who did not have a voice."[2]

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and the United States was quick to recognize its authority. The events of 1948, which were prefaced by years of violence, strife, and colonial encounters, are referred to by Palestinians and historians as the *nakba*, meaning catastrophe, referring to the destruction of Palestine and displacement of Palestinians in an effort to build an Israeli state that excluded Arab populations. Much of mandatory Palestine became present-day Israel. Since then, the Israeli government and army have perpetuated targeted violence against Palestinians and continued to forcibly displace, erase, and eradicate Palestinians to bolster an Israeli state in a process known as genocide. Remaining Palestinian territories are now occupied, and many Palestinians live under brutal, neocolonial conditions while facing ongoing genocide. On this history, also see: Adila Laïdi-Hanieh, "Contemporary Palestinian Cultural Paradoxes," in *Palestine c/o Venice*, ed. Salwa Mikdadi (Beirut: Mind the Gap, 2009), 22-24.

[1] "La Biennale di Venezia: History 1895-2021," last modified date unknown, https://www.labiennale.org/en/history. The exception to this is the Egyptian pavilion, which is located at the Giardini.

[2] Faisal Saleh, Conversation with the author, October 21, 2022. Palestine also had a Collateral Event in 2009 curated by Salwa Mikdadi, which was Palestine's very first Biennale participation. See: Salwa Mikdadi, ed., *Palestine c/o Venice* (Beirut: Mind the Gap, 2009).

"From Palestine with Art" illuminates a collective mosaic of those who identify as part of a nation without a free territory. The exhibition's arc moves clockwise around the room from landscapes to the idea of lived experiences, beginning with two paintings by Ghassan Abu Laban and another by Suzan Bushnaq (fig. 2). In Abu Laban's *Jidar* (2022), two faces peer out from behind a wall formed through blocks of color and paint drips. Abu Laban's gestural, abstract approach renders a hard barrier into something soft and flexible. The act of navigating barriers, walls, and other obstacles is one well-known to those living in the Occupied Territories. Yet two faces appear from behind the wall in an act that commands their presence in the face of exclusion and erasure as an act of resistance and a demand for sovereignty, one that perhaps begins by demolishing these walls.

Figure. 2. Installation shot, "From Palestine with Art," featuring work by Ghassan Abu Laban and Suzan Bushnaq. Photograph by the author, courtesy of the author, Faisal Saleh, and the Palestine Museum, US.

Indeed, it is not only the painting that is an act of resistance, but the exhibition itself by defying the silence around Palestine and Israel's domination of art and news media, including at the Venice Biennale. Israel's pavilion is located prominently next to that of its key ally: the United States. This year, the U.S. pavilion received a great deal of attention, and rightly so, for exhibiting the larger-than-life sculptures of Simone Leigh—the first Black woman to represent the U.S. at the Biennale. *Simone Leigh: Sovereignty* addresses the "construction of Black femme subjectivity" while adopting and adapting vernacular architectural forms. Her ruminations on these complex questions are rendered through "materials and processes associated with the artistic

traditions of Africa and the African diaspora."[3] These lines of inquiry become part of the pavilion's architecture, which is outfitted with straw and thatch. Next door, Israel's white Bauhaus-inspired modernist pavilion exhibits Ilit Azoulay's *Queendom*, whose inkjet prints on lightboxes question themes of sovereignty.[4] By exploring an interconnected Middle East through archives of Islamic art, Azoulay employs images and their transformational capacity to consider art's sovereignty, hypothesizing what could happen if we think about art beyond national representation.[5] The intimate proximity of the two pavilions is an architectural monument to the relationship between the U.S. and Israel and speaks to their political alignment against Palestinian statehood.[6]

(left) Figure 3. Intervention at the Israel Pavilion at the Venice Biennale, October 6, 2022. Photograph by the author. (right) Figure 4. Installation shot, "Queendom." Photograph by the author.

[3] "Sovereignty," last modified 2022, https://simoneleighvenice2022.org/sovereignty/.

[4] "Israel: Queendom," last modified unknown, https://www.labiennale.org/en/art/2022/national-participations/israel.

[5] Notably, questions about national representation were also posed by Palestinian writers and thinkers at the 2009 Venice Biennale. See: Vittorio Urbani, "What if…? "Come sarebbe se…?"," in *Palestine c/o Venice*, ed. Salwa Mikdadi (Beirut: Mind the Gap, 2009), 7.

[6] While the US pavilion was erected in 1930, Israel's pavilion was constructed in 1952. This architectural relationship was also mentioned in 2009. See: Mikdadi, *Palestine c/o Venice*, 9.

The irony of the U.S. and Israel's inquiry into sovereignty was not lost on attendees. During my visit on October 6, 2022, I witnessed a radical political intervention unfold outside Israel's pavilion. Four young women, who switched between Arabic and English, wrote phrases decrying Israel's violence on free exhibition trifolds explaining Azoulay's work (fig. 3). In a remarkable transformation of the ordinary, one of the girls used her lip gloss to write "Free Palestine." The four hung their posters on the pavilion's title, a prominent place that obscured the official text and caught the attention of audiences as they entered and exited (fig. 4). Soon after they placed their signs, the pavilion's attendant saw them, photographed their signs, and called security. The girls whispered *yalla* to each other repeatedly (meaning hurry, or let's go in Arabic) before scurrying off. The attendant removed the signs, and the *carabinieri* (military national guards) soon caught up with the girls. After an extensive conversation, it seems they were released, and some of them attended other Biennale events the next day.

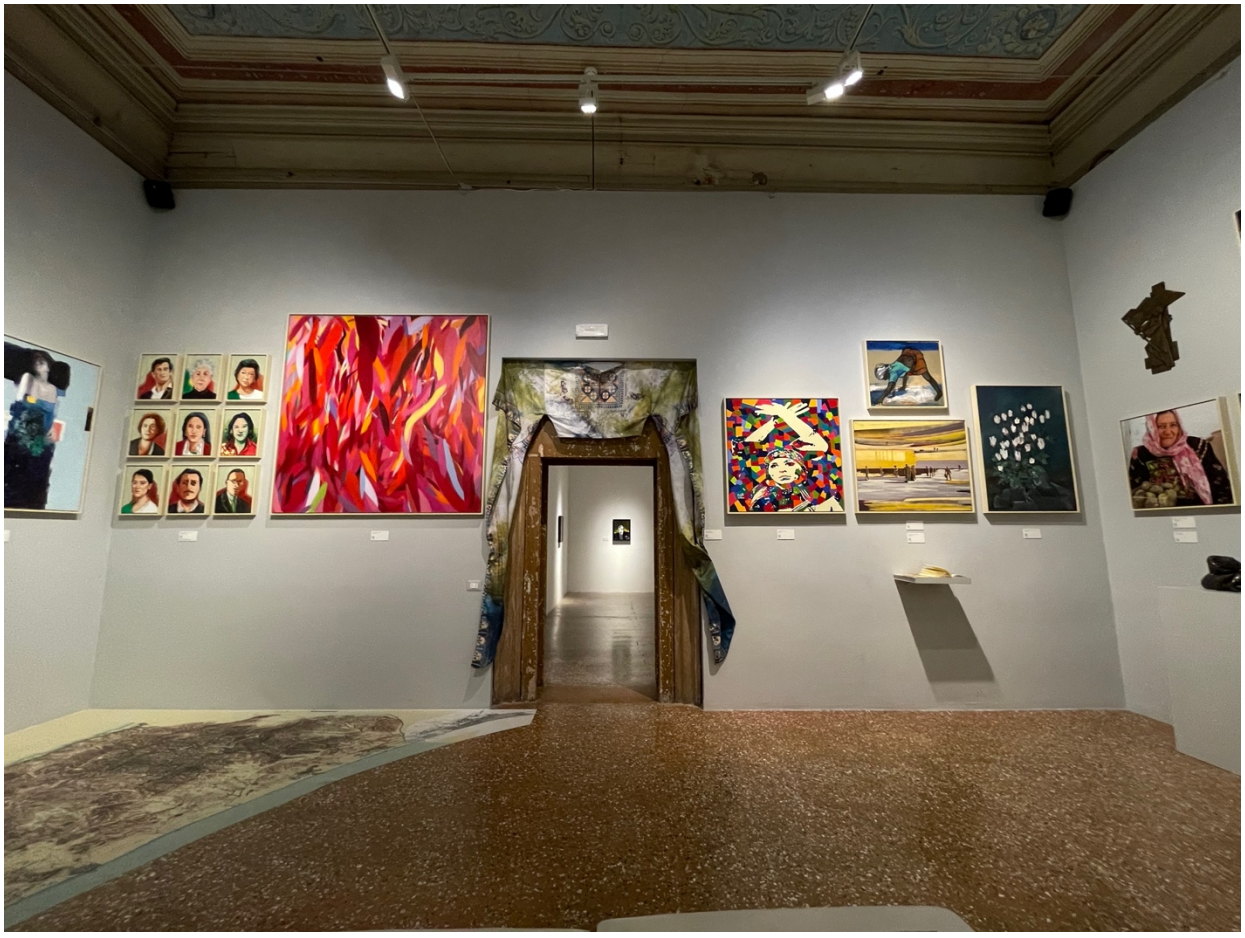

Figure 5. Installation shot, "From Palestine with Art," featuring work by Jacqueline Béjani and Samia Halaby on the left, and Nameer Qassim, Mohamed Khalil, Mohammed Alhaj, and Karim Abu Shakra on the right. Photograph by the author, courtesy the author, Faisal Saleh, and the Palestine Museum, US.

Sovereignty is also central to "From Palestine with Art." On the third wall, there are nine portraits by Jacqueline Béjani titled *Palestinian Portraits* (2022), and Samia Halaby's new painting *Venetian Red* (2021) (fig. 5). If the figures in previous paintings were abstract representations, Béjani provides recognizable faces to the broader imaginary of a Palestinian population by depicting well-known figures, including poet Mahmoud Darwish, painter Samia Halaby, and actress Hiam Abbas, among others. Many of Béjani's subjects are vocal proponents of Palestine's sovereignty and use their creative platforms to call out Israel's violent occupation. Below Béjani and Halaby's works is Salman Abu Sitta's re-creation of an 1877 Map of Palestine (fig. 6). This juxtaposition of people and place metaphorically returns individuals to stolen land and calls attention to Palestine's erasure from cartographic records after Israel's founding.

Fig. 6. Installation shot, "From Palestine with Art," featuring work by Salman Abu Sitta. Photograph by the author, courtesy the author, Faisal Saleh, and the Palestine Museum, US.

Additional figural works to the right of Béjani and Halaby's paintings further reiterate calls against neocolonial injustices (fig. 5). In Nameer Qassim's *Enough* (2020), two hands unite in a gesture intended to represent a rejection of the violence that takes away life and dreams. Likewise, in Mohamed Khalil's *The Salt Worker* (2021), which

hangs over Mohammed Alhaj's *Immigration* (2021), and next to Karim Abu Shakra's *Cyclamen* (2021), the challenges women face related to low wages and immigration are placed against the context of the land women are supposed to nurture.

The final wall continues the theme of women's resilience (fig. 7). On the wall, Mohamed Alhaj's sculptures reference the way displaced bodies move through space by utilizing and layering abstract shapes that mimic human forms. Nadia Irshaid Gilbert's photograph, aptly titled "Woman Carries the Weight of our Past and Future," hangs between the sculptures, foregrounding the role women play as advocates for women's rights and supporters of the ongoing battle for self-determination. Below, four photographs by Hanan Awad, Rula Halawani, Rania Matar, and Lux Eterna, and sculptures on pedestals by Sana Farah Bishara, honor the way women find their identities and craft their own representations amidst these hardships.

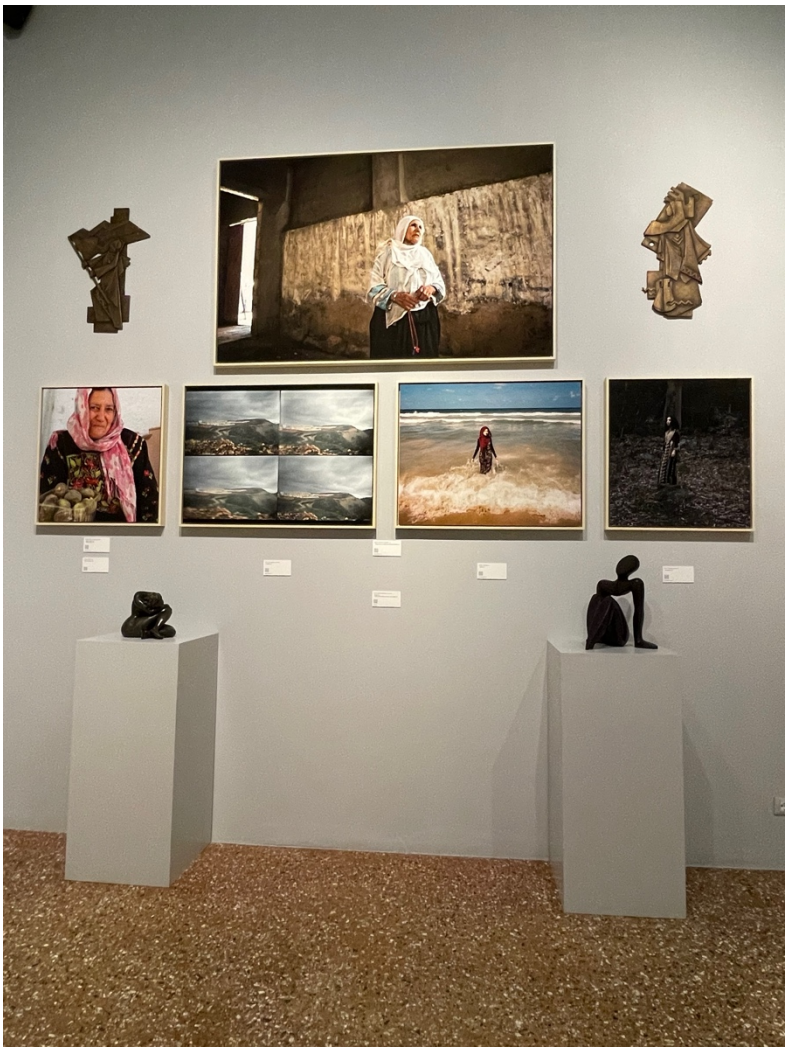

Fig. 7. Installation shot, "From Palestine with Art," featuring work by Mohamed Alhaj, Nadia Irshaid Gilbert, Hanan Awad, Rula Halawani, Rania Matar, Lux Eterna, and Sana Farah Bishara. Photograph by the author, courtesy the author, Faisal Saleh, and the Palestine Museum, U.S.

Saleh explained that if people leave the exhibition and say "yes there are Palestinians and there is a Palestine," then they've accomplished their goal. During the exhibition's seven-month run, roughly 400-500 people visited each day, and generally responded positively. The Biennale's choice to accept "From Palestine with Art" is a hard-won achievement in a long and continuous fight for recognition. Epitomized by the actions of the four girls at the Israeli pavilion, the fight for liberation is one marked by past, present, and future acts of resistance.

I asked Saleh about his future plans, and he said that "this is just the beginning." This too represents a step toward a potential future in which museums and biennales position Palestine and Palestinian artists front and center.

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Alexander Luckmann is a Ph.D. student in the History of Art and Architecture at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He researches modern and contemporary architecture in Germany and the United States, with foci on religious architecture, historic preservation, and the relationship between architecture and landscape. He is co-guest editor of a special issue of *Art in Translation* on "Constructing and Reconstructing Twentieth-Century German Architecture." He has written on contemporary issues in architecture and society for publications including *Slate*, *The Architect's Newspaper*, and the *Cleveland Review of Books*. He previously worked as a landscape designer at Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

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Rachel Winter is the Assistant Curator at the Eli and Edythe Broad Art Museum at Michigan State University, and an art historian of contemporary West Asia and North Africa. Winter recently curated the major exhibition *Blind Spot: Stephanie Syjuco*, which was supported by the Terra Foundation for American Art, and was part of the curatorial team for exhibitions featuring Zaha Hadid Design and LaToya Ruby Frazier. She is now co-editing the forthcoming book *Samia Halaby: Centers of Energy* (working title) with Elliot Josephine Leila Reichert, which will accompany exhibitions at the Eskenazi Museum of Art and the MSU Broad Art Museum in 2024. Concurrently, Winter is completing her Ph.D. in art history at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where her dissertation explores how art museums in the US and the UK came to be interested in the idea of contemporary art from the Middle East beginning in the 1970s.