

# Editors' Picks: Jasna Jakšić

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As part of a series, members of L'Internationale Online editorial board revisit the archive of the platform, selecting contributions that resonate for them, their practice and the Museum of the Commons project. Here Jasna Jakšić looks to articles by Max Haven, Lior Zalis and Françoise Vergès to consider debt, the colonial archive and the 'right to breathe'.

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The idea of commons opposes different kinds of exclusivism; be it the segregation of bodies based on class, race and gender, or the transformation of cultural heritage that once belonged to different communities in looted objects in museums and private collections. Segregation, extractivism, exoticisation are at the core of so-called western 'development'. They are also inseparable from the western canon of art as part of the dominant system of global capitalism. In his essay, Max Haven argues against vengeful and self-destructive policies of debt, austerity, and financialization. True primal debt, he writes, is to be found in the extraction of bodies, lands, and resources. Extractionism, to whom the west owes its development, was accompanied by the large-scale dehumanisation of whole populations, resulting in displacement, mutilation and extermination of unwanted bodies and seizure of lands and resources by occupation forces and colonial settlers.

The *fetish* – as a word, object or concept – occupied a central role within the imaginary of western modernism. As an object made by human skill, and through the systems and hierarchies of knowledge, religion and trade, the fetish has been extensively used as a colonial tool of dehumanization of the oppressed. While liberating it from the different layers inscribed by colonists who also create the irrational, savage world to be cultivated and controlled, the essay by Lior Zalis *The Colonial Archive of Fetishism* as part of the series *Insurgent Spiritualities* argues for fetishism that gives back life and spirit to the objects. It proposes an additional approach to New Materialism, while reinforcing previously neglected, criminalised and obscured practices.

As Françoise Vergès says the right to rest, to breathe, to recover is denied to many communities on a daily basis. The ongoing siege of Gaza, launched as a punitive action not only against Hamas but against the whole Palestinian population, has now taken more than 26,000 human lives, is justified as an act of 'self-defence'. But breath cannot be granted through the suffocation, destruction and

displacement of others. The recovery of wounded soils, bodies, pasts and presents may seem utopian, but remains vital for any reimagining of the future to take place. So too. As Vergés argues this involves the restitution of ancient debts and grabbed lands, the healing of wounds, and restoring dignity to bodies and narratives through repair, care and protection.

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**Max Haiven, 'Capital's Vengeful Utopia: Unpayable Debts from Above and Below', 2020**

**Lior Zalis, 'Insurgent Spiritualities (Chapter II): The Colonial Archive of Fetischism', 2021**



**De Marees, P., & Bry, T. de. (1603). *Sechster Theil der Orientalischen Indien, Warhafftige historische Beschreibung dess gewaltigen Goltreichen Königreichs Guinea, sonst das Goltgestatt von Mina genandt, so in Africa gelegen. Getruckt zu Franckfurt am Mayn: Bey Wolffgang Richtern.***

**L'Internationale Talks: 'Françoise Vergès — Breathing: A Revolutionary Act', 2022**



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