

Monoculture

A Recent History

Monoculture – A Recent History

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M HKA

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There are many words affiliated with ‘culture’ at large. We can for example think about ‘counterculture’ or ‘subculture’ as part of the lived communal experience outside or against the mainstream. We also have such words as ‘acculturation’ and ‘enculturation’ in ethnology to describe the ebb and flow of cultural transformation. And, of course, we have become increasingly aware of the contemporary discourse around ‘multiculture’ and multiculturalism. All of these, and many others, are facets of society, and can be seen as markers of the kind of culture we live in. We also have the word ‘monoculture’, and it is ‘monoculture’ that is the focus of this project. We concentrate on the artistic sphere and its role in society, rather than looking at the false dichotomy of monoculture and multiculturalism – in these times when the word ‘culture’ itself has come to be a loaded word, as a site of contention between the conception of one’s culture in opposition to those of others. We wish here to open up the question of what kind of society, and cultural space we want, taking into account human subjectivity along with its great capacities of creativity and empathy.

Monoculture is a word that has in itself several connotations that are context specific – thus having different usage depending on place, language and arena. So, what is monoculture? Like the word ‘culture’ (from the Latin *cultura* – meaning cultivation), monoculture comes from agriculture, to describe the practice of focusing on the cultivation of a single homogeneous crop or livestock species in farming (and the opposite of ‘polyculture’ which focuses on variety). It has been adopted in thinking about society, particularly in the social sciences, and so for many, it is understood in the societal and political senses of the word, to talk about patterns of social behaviour. Yet, despite

the variety of usage, these understandings are highly connected through their extension into ideology, and so to approach this subject is in fact to talk about many different interconnected things. At this point in time, with the COVID-19 pandemic raging around the world, reflections on the notion of monoculture become deeply relevant as it is clear that viruses such as this jump from animal to human because of the destruction of ecosystems, and that they spread because of our globalised world. Monoculture is, though, more than the homogeneity of a hyper-connected world. For this project, we wish to gain a more complex understanding of monoculture, which we define as: the homogeneous expression of a single social or ethnic group, as way to understand further the dynamics of culture and society.

The exhibition *Monoculture – A Recent History* approaches monoculture or ‘cultural homogeneity’ from various historical, social and ideological perspectives, but also philosophical and linguistic ones. In particular, as a museum for art and visual culture, we have looked at many different case studies from approximately the last one hundred years, to consider the impetus for monoculture and the monocultural self-image, and how this has been reflected in artistic work as well as in propaganda and philosophical thought. With so much emphasis on multiculturalism, and the contentions that have come with it in different societies, our intention was to look at what is considered, on the face of it at least, to be its opposite.

Amongst the diverse case studies – whether ideological, emancipatory, social or linguistic – it features some of the dominant ideologies of the 20th Century. This includes communist ideology of the USSR, and how this extended into Socialist Realist art, but also agricultural homogeneity in the form of the corn revolution. And we also consider aspects of Western modernity and liberal capitalism. Certainly, many consider the current homogenising effects of global capital as another hegemonic monoculturalism. In terms of emancipatory imperatives today, we might also think about communities that feel impoverished, legitimately, under the impact of globalisation. Such imposition of socio-economic conditions, might in turn lead to instances of an intolerant kind of monoculture. The kind of monoculture at risk of becoming influenced by ideology and identitarian

nationalism, which together with conflict, terror, mass-migration and the perceived counter-hegemony of identity politics – may even become unwilling to accept the presence of the natural ‘multiculture’ of individual subjectivity. But just as with the understanding of other cultural groups that are subject to prejudice and stereotyping, it is important that we do not look at any monoculture in terms of essentialism, even if it may profile itself as intolerant.

The most extremist example of monocultural ideology is that of National Socialism in Germany. A pertinent reminder of this is Psychologist Erich Rudolph Jaensch, president of the German Psychological Association in Nazi Germany, who developed an influential body of policies outlining Nazism as a biological movement. As well as outlining ideas of racial purity, Jaensch also describes the German and anti-German ways of looking. I think in particular of his book: *Der Gegentypus: psychologisch-anthropologische Grundlagen deutscher Kulturphilosophie, ausgehend von dem was wir überwinden wollen (The Antitype: Psychological-Anthropological Foundations of German Cultural Philosophy Based on What We Must Overcome)*, published in 1938 by Johann Ambrosius Barth in Leipzig. The ‘antitype’ to the German has inclinations towards the aesthetical, intellectual and the playful; whereas the German would possess rigid, unambiguous, stimulus-response relationships, with no space for interpretation. Thus, we see how Nazi pseudoscience saw identity in relation to perception – their ethnocentric monoculturalism also as a mode of seeing – leaving little space for individual human subjectivity. The cases of the *Entartete Kunst* and *Grosse Deutsche Kunst* exhibitions are well known as propaganda tools for how the Nazis used art to demonstrate an ethnocentric and monocultural conception of culture. It is a stark reminder that artistic impoverishment can reflect a wider societal impoverishment.

But, we are not specifically focusing on extremism in this project. The examples of cultural homogeneity are wider, and there is nothing to say that a monocultural society has to be necessarily prejudiced. Cultural homogeneity does not strictly imply ethnocentricity, one-dimensionality or impoverishment either. They could well be inclusive and transformational by nature. However, one question might be

how might a monocultural place also be an open and inclusive one? Case studies of monoculture and the construction of a monocultural imaginary have also been born from emancipatory or utopian imperatives. For example, the invention of artificial 'universal' languages, the most famous of which being Esperanto was intended to create a common vocabulary between different peoples of the world – a common layer of linguistic homogeneity. We also consider the context of cultural movements formed after decolonisation. For some thinkers, the cultural movement of *Négritude*, led by Léopold Senghor is an interesting example here. *Négritude* was certainly born as part of an emancipatory imperative. But it still might be described as an ethnocentric and state-sanctioned conception of culture. Jean-Paul Sartre, in his text *Orphée Noir (Black Orpheus)*, that was the preface to Senghor's book *Anthology of the New Negro and Malagasy Poetry*, famously described *Négritude* as an "anti-racist racism" for what he saw as its ironic monoculturality.¹ None the less, in this immediate period after decolonisation, a new, unambiguous self-image was desirable and perhaps necessary.

We have sought as much as possible to consider monoculture, not as something exclusively conservative or right-wing and thus antithetical to liberal culture, but rather as something that can be found across social and ideological partialities. Recent debates on identity politics and cultural appropriation, though intended as a means for seeking equality for those minoritised due to one's race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion or social class, have raised subsequent questions on whether this also becomes another form of cultural homogeneity, and one that allows little room for deviation or other forms of social liberalism. In this sense multiculturalism can also be monocultural. These debates are also being played out in the artistic sphere, in terms of the environmental conditions and freedoms of practice for artists, and also for how institutions work. We hope that this project allows us to think in more imaginative and constructive ways, rather than settling for one simple dichotomy or another.

A crucial dimension of this imaginative thinking is in the qualification of mindsets in terms of their openness and transformability. The philosophical undercurrent to our investigations in *Monoculture – A Recent*

History comes via the notion of 'ambiguity'. In particular, this is through the pioneering, and under-recognised work of the Polish-Austrian psychoanalyst Else Frenkel-Brunswik. Her scientific investigation into individual responses to ambiguous stimuli – or 'Ambiguity Tolerance' – makes correlation between our perception, cognitive function and social outlook. Ambiguity here, might for example be another person of ambiguous race, gender or sexuality, but could also be with other encounters such as with objects and sensorial experiences. We are putting art in this category, understanding that art can be fundamentally ambiguous, not only aesthetically, but also ontologically – in terms of the nature of its existence in society. In this sense, art is also a reflection of the ambiguity of the human condition. With the inclusion of ambiguity, artistically and philosophically-speaking, in this exhibition, we also wish to look at what practices, values, and ways of living or perceiving might be excluded by the formation of monocultures of all kinds. And what might it mean for citizenship, for democracy, for the scale of tolerance and intolerance towards diversity, for the search for common ground, for creativity, and for cultural institutions today?

We hope with this project to raise awareness of the notion of monoculture, and its various manifestations. Used frequently in parts of Anglo-Saxon media and in social sciences, the word 'monoculture' is not recognised widely in every context, although, we might witness increasing usage in some places. In the Benelux, where this exhibition takes place, and where the word is associated mostly with agriculture, we witness it arriving into mainstream discourse. For example, in December 2019, Joachim Pohlmann, writer and Chief of Staff to the N-VA's (New Flemish Alliance) Minister Jan Jambon responsible amongst other things for culture, argued, in a lecture critiquing post-modernism and cultural relativism as being essentially without a core, that "a super-diverse society can only survive if there is a 'monocultural core'", being a goal "shared and served" by everyone.² We can identify a steadily increasing proliferation of the term in mainstream discourse. Monoculture is a word to describe a high degree of cultural homogeneity, and certainly does not have to be a matter of ideological projection. Reflecting on this notion can help us to develop the necessary vocabulary to talk about important societal questions, that are all too often reductive or partisan.

We would like to thank all the artists for their essential role in the making of this exhibition. They have brought diverse and meaningful reflections on the subject of monoculture. We would also like to thank all the lenders for their generosity in loaning artworks, including many exemplary historical works. As with a number of exhibitions M HKA has organised in recent years exploring questions we feel to be relevant for society and culture at large, *Monoculture – A Recent History* is trans-disciplinary. Along with its core focus on visual art, we also include examples of propaganda and philosophical literature into a dialogue. For this, we are grateful for the collaboration with several cultural archives and collections, particularly the Arthur Langerman Archives for Research into Visual Anti-Semitism (ALAVA), and the cultural archives of Flanders: AMSAB – Institute for Social History; Liberas – Central Archive of the Liberal Movement and Liberal Ideas; and KADOC Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society.

I would like to express my gratitude to Åsa Sonjasdotter and Philippe Pirotte for their extremely fascinating and insightful texts, bringing complex thinking to different historical movements relevant to the subject of monoculture. I would also like to thank all my colleagues at M HKA, who have supported the ambitions of this project from beginning to end. I thank Ekaterina Vorontsova for assisting me ably with research and curatorial insights for this exhibition, and for contributing texts that together with those of myself and our colleague Piet Van Hecke, comprise much of the content of this book.

This exhibition is part of 'Our Many Europes', a four-year programme of the European museum confederation L'Internationale. The confederation brings together seven major European art institutions: MG+MSUM (Ljubljana, Slovenia); Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid, Spain); MACBA (Barcelona, Spain); M HKA, (Antwerp, Belgium); Museum of Modern Art (Warsaw, Poland), SALT (Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey) and Van Abbemuseum (Eindhoven, the Netherlands); together with partners: HDK-Valand (Gothenburg, Sweden) and NCAD (Dublin, Ireland). We thank the Creative Europe programme for their support.

This exhibition and catalogue also coincide with the publishing of the book *The Aesthetics of Ambiguity – Understanding and Addressing Monoculture*, published as part of the Antennae series by Valiz. I am grateful to Pascal Gielen for his collaboration in co-editing the book. All of these were additionally preceded by the conference *Considering Monoculture*, co-convened by M HKA, Van Abbemuseum and deBuren, and which took place on 27 & 28 February 2020 at deBuren, Brussels. It took place at a certain moment before the COVID-19 pandemic changed our daily routines. The pandemic is a reminder that events, local and global – violence, social justice movements, local machinations, geopolitics, health, and other black swans – can become an unavoidable part of the backdrop to exhibition content. If dealt with meaningfully, these contexts can and should add further relevance to the work of cultural institutions, and highlight the important contributions we can offer to the debates and concerns in society.

Nav Haq

Associate Director, M HKA

A Monoculture Glossary

Notes

- 1 Sartre, Jean-Paul. 1976. *Black Orpheus*, trans. S.W. Allen. Paris: Présence Africaine. First published in L. S. Senghor, ed., *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française, précédée de Orphée Noir par Jean-Paul Sartre*. Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948. 'ce racisme antiraciste est le seul chemin qui puisse mener à l'abolition des différences de race'.
- 2 As described in the article: Ruud Goossens and Matthias Verbergt, "Joachim Pohlmann de ware minister van Cultuur" ("Joachim Pohlmann the Real Minister of Culture"), *De Standaard*, Saturday 15 February, 2020. "A December evening in 2019. 'Arty-farty' cannot describe the company in front of which Pohlmann will speak for the first time since his appointment as Chief of Staff.

The Flemish-minded think tank Vives has invited him for a lecture on identity at the Irish College in Leuven. Around a hundred people are seated in the hall, including ex-KBC CEO Remi Vermeiren and Vives director Joep Konings. Pohlmann argues that a super-diverse society can only survive if there is a "monocultural core", a goal that is "shared and served" by everyone. Until fifty years ago, that core was Christianity. "But after the death of God, we are in a huge moral crisis", he says. "What is the cultural core of our secular society today? We will be debating that for at least another fifty years". (own translation.)

Agriculture

Agriculture is the practice and livelihood of cultivating plants and livestock. The practice was an essential development in sustaining human civilisation, as farming of domesticated species led to large enough quantities of food to enable people to live in cities. Industrial-scale agriculture based on monoculture techniques in the twentieth century dominate agricultural production. Crops in particular have a certain capacity to adapt to local cultivation conditions and to human-nutritional requirements and tastes; something that brings both food security, health and culinary gratification to communities. By inbreeding plants for several generations, it has been possible to empty them from almost any genetic variation. This is referred to as ‘modern plant breeding’, which is also protected by legislation. Since the UPOV (International Union for

the Protection of New Varieties of Plants) convention, which brought legislation of restrictions on intellectual property for new plants of 1962, only distinct, officially recognised plants are allowed for commercial cultivation within countries that have signed the convention, including all the members of the EU.

Allochtoon

The term ‘allochtoon’ is Greek in origin and literally means “from another soil”. It was originally used in geology as an adjective for something ‘brought from elsewhere’, or ‘formed from material brought from elsewhere’. In the early 1970s, the term ‘allochtoon’ was introduced in the Netherlands as a noun, as a more neutral alternative for foreigner or immigrant. In Flanders, in the 1960s and 1970s, the terms ‘guest worker’ and ‘foreigner’ were used, and from the 1980s onwards, the

term 'migrant' became popular. Because many young people who are referred to as migrants were born in Belgium, this word was no longer considered adequate. Since the 1990s, the word 'allochtoon' has been increasingly used in public debate, academic circles and in the media. The official definition considers a person to be an 'allochtoon' if at least one of the parents was born abroad. Additionally, it makes two distinctions: firstly, the difference between first and second generation persons of foreign heritage, and secondly, the differences between Western and non-Western persons of foreign heritage. Since 2010, 'allochtoon' has been considered as possessing negative connotations, and various authorities and media (for example the City of Ghent and the newspaper *De Morgen*) go so far as to now exclude the word from their communication.

Ambiguity

The term ambiguity comes from Latin and means 'at least two-sided', 'unresolved', 'uncertain' or 'indecisive'. Ambiguity manifests in language, in thinking, and as a property of the things we experience. These might include objects, images,

places, concepts and even other people. Until Immanuel Kant, Western philosophy mainly tried to eliminate ambiguity. Philosophers such as Søren Kierkegaard, Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Simone de Beauvoir have rejected the ideal of this unequivocalness, which still lives on in the natural sciences. Today, ambiguity is a key concept for philosophers, social scientists, writers and artists who oppose unequivocal interpretations of reality, understanding that to be human is also to be fundamentally ambiguous or unresolved. Psychoanalyst Else Frenkel-Brunswik made a correlation between our tolerance of ambiguous things and our social outlook – the more tolerant we are of ambiguous stimuli, the more we tend to appreciate an open tolerant society.

Art

Art could be defined as the activity of creating visual, literary, performance, decorative and auditory forms that reflect human facets such as emotion, beauty, opinion, memory and belief. Ever since early humans began making art, it has been closely connected to spirituality and worship. Art in the Western world

arguably became modern after leaving the space of religion, taking on new modes of aesthetics and values. Philosophers such as Thierry de Duve have looked to understand what contemporary art is ontologically speaking, finding it to be of ambiguous status in society, and a unique category of experience.

Assimilation

Assimilation is the process in which a minority, individual or group are absorbed as part of a dominant group. They may on the one hand come to assume the values, behaviour, and beliefs of the dominant group, but might well also influence or add to their culture. Throughout history there have been different forms of cultural assimilation, and may involve either a quick or a gradual change depending on the circumstances and the specificity of the group. Full assimilation occurs when members of a society become indistinguishable from those of the dominant group. Assimilation can be forced or natural. Forced assimilation is particularly relevant in regards to groups colonised from the 18th – 20th centuries. This type of assimilation included religious conversion, changes of gender

roles, division of property among foreign powers, elimination of local economies and traditions. Assimilation is also seen in contrast to multiculturalism, as multiculturalism seeks cultural differences to coexist within a community. In reality this is a false polemic, as multiculturalism and assimilation can be simultaneous processes.

Capitalism

Capitalism is an economic and political system based on private ownership of the means of production for goods and services in the free market. Often seen as contrary to the principles of socialism, which redistributes wealth via taxation, free market (*laissez-faire*) capitalism implies the reduction of governmental interference in the economic affairs of individuals and society to a minimum. This has been the model adopted by the US, where participation in the capitalist system is synonymous with freedom. Seen by some as an ideal modern and even moral system (Ayn Rand), for its critics however, the liberal capitalism is seen as the driving force of growing disparity between the wealthy and the poor, as well as unsustainable and exploitative.

The words 'capital' and 'cattle' are derived from the same Latin root (*caput* meaning 'head'), to denote movable property.

Communism

Communism is a socio-economic system structured upon the idea of public ownership of the means of production as the basis of social equality. Within communist society, intended as classless, each person contributes and receives according to their ability and needs. Communism encompasses a wide variety of ideologies, movements and schools, the most prominent of which is associated with Karl Marx's economic and philosophical theories, as well as his critique of capital. While the possibility of existence of communist states is still a matter of debate, it is widely associated with the former Soviet Union's political and economic model.

Citizen/Subject

A citizen is an individual who is a member, recognised under law, of a sovereign socio-political community, such as a nation state. A person can possess multiple citizenships of different nations, and a person without citizenship

is considered a stateless person. The status of subject correlates with citizenship, but often tends to be applied in nations with a monarch as the prime source of authority. Historically, a citizen has civil rights, whereas a subject has none under the domination of a monarch.

Civilisation(s)

Widely used in the singular form until late 19th – early 20th century, the term 'civilisation' has been understood, in one sense, as an advanced culture and society in contrast with barbarism and 'primitive' cultures. It also may refer to the historical progress of humanity, and the totality of its achievements in various facets of life. The shift from Western-centred orientation questioned the single linear progression of history and allowed to talk about civilisations, in plural. The term civilisation is also used as a description of the broadest cultural identities of humanity. In his controversial book *The Clash of Civilizations* (1996), American Political Scientist Samuel P. Huntington proposes that while the age of ideology had ended after the Cold War, the world had only reverted to a previous 'normal' state of affairs

characterised by cultural conflict, predicting that the concept of different civilisations, as the highest rank of cultural identity, would become increasingly useful in analysing potential conflicts. He cites examples such as those following the break-up of Yugoslavia, and the partition of India and Pakistan as examples of inter-civilisational conflict.

Colonialism

The term colony comes from the Latin word *colonus*, meaning farmer. Colonialism is a practice of domination, involving the subjugation of one people by another, generally with the aim of economic dominance. In the process of colonisation, colonisers may impose their cultural practices, religion, labour conditions and language on indigenous peoples. The coloniser seeks to benefit from the colonised region's people and resources. Colonialism is strongly associated with the European colonial period beginning in the 15th century. At first, European colonising countries followed policies of mercantilism, aiming to strengthen the home-nation economy, so agreements usually restricted the colonies to trading only with the colonising nation.

However, by the mid-19th century, the British Empire gave up mercantilism and adopted the principle of free trade. Belgium controlled the Belgian Congo (today the Democratic Republic of Congo) from 1908 to 1960, and Ruanda-Urundi (Rwanda and Burundi) from 1922 to 1962. The Belgian Congo originated as the personal property of the king Leopold II, before sovereignty was transferred to the Belgian state in 1908. European slave traders, primarily the Portuguese, Spanish, British, Dutch and French empires brought large numbers of African slaves to the Americas. The European colonial system took between 10 to 12 million Africans to the Caribbean and to North and South America as slaves. Christian missionaries were active in most of the European-controlled colonies. It is estimated that by 1914, colonisers had gained control of 84% of the globe. Following the Second World War, colonial powers were forced to retreat, and between 1945–1975, nearly all colonies gained independence, entering into postcolonial relations.

Conservatism

Conservatism is a political and cultural philosophy that promotes

traditional institutions in the context of a social group. Though historically associated with right-wing politics, the term has been used to describe a wide range of views. In fact, there is no fixed set of policies or principles considered as conservative, as the meaning of conservatism depends on what is considered traditional in a given context. Some central tenets of conservatism might be identified, including tradition, authority, property rights, preservation of heritage, religious institutions, and parliamentary government, with the aim of emphasising social stability and continuity. Social conservatism is based on the belief that society is built upon relationships that need to be upheld through the preservation of morality and social mores, and opposing radical social change. Conservatives in many countries support a traditional definition of family values, of marriage as being a contract between one man and one woman, take views that are anti-abortion, and oppose atheism. Conservatives may also take the view that artistic practices should remain traditional, and thus see contemporary artistic practice as a liberal pursuit.

Counterculture

A counterculture is a culture or community whose values and norms of behaviour differ substantially from, or stand in opposition to, those of mainstream society. Some countercultures even reach such a momentum that they cause wider cultural change. Historical examples of countercultures in the Western world include the Non-conformists of the 1930s, the hippie movement of the 1960s, as well as punk of the 1970s and 1980s, and rave of the 1980s and 1990s. Some consider permaculture as a counterculture, believing in sustainable agriculture systems. Countercultures can emerge across the social and ideological spectrum. More recently, phenomena such as the Alt-Right, Me Too or Black Lives Matter in the US have also been considered as countercultural movements.

Culture

The word culture comes from the Latin meaning to 'cultivate'. Culture is a complex term used to describe social behaviour, norms and activities found in societies, including their shared knowledge, beliefs, arts, laws, customs, traditions and habits.

Groups develop culture through processes of local enculturation and socialisation, as demonstrated by the diversity of cultures across societies. A 'cultural norm' serves as a guideline for behaviour, language, dress and general demeanour in a cultural context. Accepting only a monoculture in a social group can bear risks, just as a single species of crop can wither in the face of environmental change, for lack of ability to deal to the change. One understanding of the term culture is the degree to which an individual or group have cultivated a particular level of sophistication in the arts, sciences, education or manners. This was sometimes used historically to distinguish 'civilisations' from less complex societies. Such hegemonic perspectives on culture are also found in class-based distinctions between a high culture of the social elite and low culture, popular or folk culture of the lower classes.

Culture War

The phrase culture war is a translation from the German *Kulturkampf* and was first used in the second half of the 19th century to refer to the power struggle between the Roman Catholic Church and the German

government under Reich Chancellor Otto von Bismarck. The concept is now used more generally to refer to the struggle between conflicting cultural values within a society. With his theory of cultural hegemony, Italian Marxist journalist, philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci stated in the 1920s how a culturally diverse society is dominated by the group that controls the mass media, education and other major institutions. In the early 1990s, sociologist James Davison Hunter introduced the concept of culture war to the US, to describe the polarisation of society along ideological lines, between 'conservatives' and 'progressives'. The so-called School Wars (*schoolstrijd, guerre scolaire*) in the 19th and 20th centuries, which were crises over the issue of religion in education, and of subsidies from the state, are seen as examples of culture war in Belgium.

Decolonisation

Decolonisation is the process by which a colony becomes independent of its coloniser. The concept has particularly applied to the colonies that gained independence from European colonial powers during the

second half of the 20th century, though many colonies still exist. Based on the fundamental right to self-determination, decolonisation continues to be claimed, also within independent states, as in the case of indigenous peoples who seek autonomy.

Decolonisation is sometimes conflated with decoloniality, however, though not-unrelated, it is a separate concept. Decoloniality is a school of thought that focuses on the process of untangling the production of ideas and knowledge from a Eurocentric or hegemonic core. It critiques the perceived universality of Western knowledge and the superiority of Western culture. Therefore, from a decolonial perspective, Western imperialism is also based on a cultural hegemony.

Ethics

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that involves the critical reflection, defence and development of moral concepts, values and notions of right and wrong in a society. As a way to determine a morality of action, one question at the heart of ethical investigation is: what behaviour is best for sentient beings to live? Ethics covers a wide area of fields, from animal

welfare to human rights, warfare, political and public practices, and even artistic expression. The exact definitions of ethics are typically specified by a single social group. Political ethics is the practice of making moral judgements about political actions and agents. Public sector ethics is a set of principles that guide public officials and institutions in their service to their constituents, based on what best serves the interests of the latter.

Ethnicity

Ethnicity is a category of identification for a group of people based on a belief in descent-based attributes. It is usually an inherited concept, based on a shared history, mythology, homeland, language or religion, as well as common customs and rituals, cuisine, dressing style, arts and crafts. It is possible for individuals to leave one ethnic group and become part of another, through language change, assimilation, and religious conversion. In this sense, ethnicity can be considered as a cultural construction. The term 'ethnic minority' has been used to denote ethnic groups living in a country or region where they are statistically smaller

in number than the majority group. Ethnocentricity has been identified as a key characteristic in authoritarianism and even extremism by ethnographers and psychoanalysts.

Ethnonationalism

The central political idea of ethnonationalism (or ethnic nationalism) is that ethnic groups can be identified unambiguously as the people of a nation. In contrast to the understanding of ethnicity as a cultural construct, ethnonationalism can be an essentialist understanding of the same concept. It is seen in increasingly politicised forms of homogenous identification by members of different ethnic groups and nations, in many countries this is particularly in the context of debates over multiculturalism.

Europe

Europe is the westernmost sub-continent of the supercontinent of Eurasia. A cultural definition of Europe was first used in the 9th century, demarcating the sphere of influence of Latin Christendom, in opposition to the Islamic world and the Eastern Orthodox churches. Europe, specifically

Ancient Greece is considered the "birthplace of Western civilisation". The name Europe is derived from the Europa of Greek Mythology, the Phoenician princess from the modern-day region of Syria and Lebanon who was abducted by Zeus and taken to Crete.

Freedom

Freedom is the notion of being and acting 'free' with regards to such social and political phenomena as civil liberties, free will, freedom of speech, political freedom, and autonomy in life and society. Many governments institute freedom to ensure that it is guaranteed as a right. Freedom has become a politicised and contentious term, with for example libertarian groups in America advocating freedom as the privilege of personal autonomy over state power, whether through such factors as personal wealth and ownership or the right to bear arms.

Gender

The term gender was introduced in order to designate the social construction of masculinity and femininity as distinct from the notion of biological sex. Most

cultures use a gender binary (boy or girl, man or woman), and those who exist outside these groups fall under the umbrella term *non-binary* or *genderqueer*. Some societies have specific genders besides 'man' and 'woman', for example the Hijra people of South Asia, often referred to as *third genders* (or *fourth genders*, etc.). Philosopher Judith Butler describes her theory of 'gender performativity', wherein masculinities and femininities are something continuously created by repeated (speech) actions, and recognisable only as repetitions and patterns. According to Butler there are no core gender identities preceding language and actions – our actions are what make us understand both ourselves and others as gendered bodies and individuals.

Globalisation

Globalisation is the process of integration and interaction among people, economies and governments around the world. Though many analysts see the origins of globalisation in the modern era, others trace its history back several centuries and even millennia. The term itself first appeared in the early 20th century and came into popular

use in the 1990s. Globalisation as a process has accelerated since the 19th century due to a variety of technological advancements, particularly those of communication and travel. It is primarily an economic process of harmonisation that is also associated with migration and the exchange of knowledge. Globalisation has been criticised for several reasons – for the operations and institutions of globalisation which supersede nation-states, for the neo-colonialism of multi-national corporations that exploit natural resources, and for a vastly increasing imbalance of wealth that exacerbates class relations. Environmental concerns such as global warming and water or air pollution have been linked to globalisation, as has the risk of global pandemics.

Homogeneity/Heterogeneity

In societal terms, homogeneity is used to describe the state of uniformity of a constituent body, including its ethnicity, culture and social practices. Heterogeneity, in this context, refers to a society or group that includes those of differing ethnicities, sexes, genders, political partialities and other backgrounds. Homogeneity and heterogeneity are not

necessarily mutually exclusive, as a heterogeneous group can still be behaviourally homogeneous, and vice-versa.

Identitarianism

Identitarianism is the belief in the distinction and protection of different homogeneous cultural identities. It places identity as the central determination of the self within the context of the specific society or national culture one identifies with, which is primarily based on perceived determinations of race and often connecting it intrinsically with such factors as religion, culture and geographic territory. Radicalised forms of identitarianism seek to protect this monocultural understanding of one's society, and therefore seek to counter the presence of, and in extreme cases eradicate, those deemed to be changing or threatening the nature of a national or regional identity. Early usage of the term was used by French sociologists describing a "*repli identitaire*" ("identitarian withdrawal") to describe lack of integration among immigrants due to discrimination, and also among the lower-classes of the 'indigenous' population due to their racism.

Identity Politics

Identity politics is a term that describes cultural or social movements seeking social visibility, justice and equality for particular groups or individuals, based on race, gender, sexuality, social class, religion or any other identifying factor that, through societal injustice, are subject to processes of marginalisation. With the goal of causing social and political change through greater visibility, identity politics is considered a particular means for achieving a progressive and free society. Identity politics is also used to refer to the modes employed by artistic movements from the 1970s and 1980s, such as the Black Artists Movements and Feminist Movement in the US and Great Britain, which have seen a certain resurgence in the current era.

Ideology

Ideology is an action-orientated collection of ideas that expresses the interests, ideals, beliefs, and overarching world-view of particular groups, which either sanction an existing distribution of power in society or demands for its radical transformation. Ideologies can become dominant forces within geopolitics,

and dominant ideologies of the 20th century included National Socialism (Nazism), Communism and Capitalism. Ideologies often compete within a society, manifesting in groups identifying for example as ‘conservatives’ or ‘progressives’, and which often translate into political affiliations. The term is often used in a negative sense to describe a collective illusionary form of social consciousness or indoctrination.

Immigrant

An immigrant is a person who moves to a new country or destination where they do not immediately possess citizenship, in order to reside and settle. People migrate internationally for different social and economic reasons, often to become a permanent resident or naturalised citizen, or to take up employment as a migrant worker. People also migrate to seek asylum due to such factors as persecution, genocide, war and social marginalisation. Immigration has taken place throughout human history and has been fundamental in the formation and development of societies around the world.

Indigeneity

Indigenous people are often identified as the descendants of the First People of a specific region at the time when people of a different culture or ethnic origin arrived there from other parts of the world, overcame them by conquest, and settled. Indigeneity came into use during the 1990s, when many colonised communities fought against erasure, genocide, and forced acculturation. Placed under the state structure of the dominant group alien to their own, indigenous people and communities are often minorities within contemporary populations, and work to preserve their customs, traditions and other aspects of their ethnic identities, as well as their ancestral territories, for future generations.

Individual

An individual is someone that exists as a distinct entity with unique personality. Individuality (or selfhood) is the state or quality of being an individual, separate from others and with one’s own needs, imagination, desires, rights and responsibilities. The concept of the individual features in diverse fields, including biology, law and philosophy.

Individualism is a philosophical position emphasising the moral precedence of the individual over the collective and government. Promoting self-determination and self-reliance, individualism has also been used to denote personality, related to possessing personal artistic interests and lifestyles.

Integration

Integration is a social process based in which newcomers or minorities are incorporated into the social structure of a host society. Assimilation is the process where a minority group adopts the social norms and attitudes of the host. Similarly, it can also be based on the principle of acculturation – cultural change based on the meeting of different cultures. Integration requires adaptation and participation within a population group in order to find a stable society through coexistence and cohesive social relations.

Internationalism

Internationalism is a cultural or political principle that advocates greater cooperation among nations and peoples. It is sometimes associated with political and ideological movements,

but internationalism can also be strived for in a non-political context. It follows the belief that people should unite across national, political, cultural, racial, or class boundaries for the common good. Internationalism is sometimes characterised by its opposition to nationalism or isolationism, and promotes mutual respect of other cultures. Internationalism also describes one of the key characteristics of contemporary art since the 1990s, when the Western art world opened up to artists, practices and scenes from other parts of the globe.

Language

A language is a structured system of communication. Language, in a broader sense, is the method of communication that involves the use of – particularly human – languages. It is estimated by linguists that there are between 5000 and 7000 languages worldwide, however these estimates are imprecise, with arbitrary distinction between dialects and languages. Languages evolve and diversify over time, developing into language families. The Indo-European family is the most widely spoken and includes languages as diverse as Portuguese,

Russian, Urdu, English, Dutch and Farsi. From a sociolinguistic perspective, language can play both a unifying and differentiating role in society. The English language is considered the world's main *lingua franca*. Philosopher Philippe Van Parijs has developed the concept of 'linguistic justice' to address the privilege English has, through various measures including a language tax paid by English-speaking countries, along with other territorial principles to protect weaker languages. Languages traditionally develop as aspects of a culture, however there have also been examples of artificial languages, with the intentions to create new *lingua franca* or universal languages, the most renowned of which being Esperanto.

Liberalism

Cultural liberalism describes progressive ethical and social values on socio-cultural issues ranging from societal equality, minority rights, abortion, sexual freedom, freedom of religion and free expression. 19th Century philosopher Henry David Thoreau understood liberalism as a perspective on society that stresses the freedom of individuals from any pre-prescribed cultural

norms with the rights to "march to the beat of a different drummer". Cultural liberals believe in open tolerant society, but that society should not strictly impose specific codes of behaviour. They see themselves as defending the rights to express individuality as long as they do not harm anyone else. Liberalism can also refer to human perception, and the level of openness when experiencing new things.

Modernity

Modernity, a topic in the humanities and social sciences, is both a historical period (the modern era) and the ensemble of particular socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that form a specific condition of cultural existence that arose in the processes of transitioning from "traditional" communities to modern societies. Often associated with rationality, modernity incorporates a wide scope of historical processes and cultural phenomena, from art to food production to warfare, and can also refer to the existential experience of the conditions they produce, and their ongoing impact on culture, work, institutions and politics. It also encompasses the social relations associated with the life

under capitalism, and the shifts in attitudes associated with secularisation and post-industrial life. In social sciences, modernity is also understood as a historical period and the development of particular socio-cultural norms, attitudes and practices that arose out of the Renaissance and also the 18th century "Enlightenment". In art, it is closely linked to aesthetic modernism and developments such as existentialism. In the late 19th and 20th centuries, modern art became dominant movement in Western Europe and North America. The movement broadly desired for the creation of new forms of art in reflection of the newly emerging industrial world. A particular characteristic of modernism is a self-consciousness of artistic and social traditions, along with experimentation and the use of techniques that rationalise the processes and materials used in the making of artworks. The attempt to explain the relationship between geo-cultural differences presents a foundational challenge to understand the condition of modernity. The belief in its supposed universality has been criticised by postmodernism, while the dominance and export of modernism from Western Europe and America over other continents has been criticised by postcolonial theory.

Monoculture

In societal terms, monoculture can be defined as the homogeneous expression and mode of living of a particular social or ethnic group. As a political practice, monoculturalism seeks to safeguard a national culture by excluding external influences. It can sometimes support the belief of superiority within the dominant group over minorities in any given society. In this context, monoculturalism may involve the process of assimilation whereby minority groups have to adopt to the dominant culture and practices, forming cultural homogeneity. Like 'culture', monoculture comes from agriculture, where it is used to describe the practice of producing or growing a single crop or livestock species in a farming system. This technique has resulted in plants that are in fact clones, however it is taken for granted that they have reached the 'original' or 'pure' form of the plant. Monoculture is widely used in both industrial and organic farming, and has allowed increased efficiency in production and harvesting, while simultaneously increasing the risk of exposure to diseases or pests.

Multiculture

Multiculture can be defined as the diversity of expression and modes of living in a particular social group. As a socio-political ideology, multiculturalism advocates the practice of equal respect to various cultures in a society, promoting and embracing cultural and ethnic diversity. In reference to politics, multiculturalism can be defined as a state's capacity to effectively and efficiently deal with cultural plurality within its sovereign borders. It is considered the aim of either a natural or artificial process within the community of a nation or geopolitical entity. On a large scale, it can occur as a result of either legal or illegal migration. Groups associated with aboriginal, indigenous or 'autochthonous' (literally "native to the soil") ethnic groups and settler-descended ethnic groups are often given focus under multiculturalism

Nation State

A nation state is a political entity regulated under a system of government which holds power within its defined territory, and conducts international relations with other states. It was the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, ending the European wars of religion, which

created the blueprint for a new political order based upon the principle of co-existing sovereign states and national self-determination. A nation may also include a diaspora or refugees who live outside its area. Some states are sovereign states, whilst others are subject to external sovereignty or hegemony, such as in the case of a colony, where supreme authority lies in another state. A state where no one ethnic group dominates can also be considered a multicultural state.

Nationalism

Nationalism is an idea and movement that promotes the interests of a particular group of people who identify themselves with a particular nation. Nationalism demands each nation should govern itself with self-determination as the core. It typically aims to build and maintain a single national identity based on shared social characteristics of culture, ethnicity, geographic location, language, politics, religion, traditions, and belief in a shared singular history. Nationalism, therefore, seeks to preserve and foster a nation's traditional cultures, and cultural revivals have been associated with nationalist movements. Nationalism is often

combined with other ideologies, such as national conservatism or left-wing socialism. Ethnic nationalism defines the nation in terms of shared ethnicity, heritage and culture, and civic nationalism defines a nation in terms of shared citizenship, values and institutions, and is linked to constitutional patriotism. In his book *Imagined Communities* (1983) analysing nationalism, historian Benedict Anderson posits 'nation' as a socially constructed community, in which people imagine they are part of a group, influenced by stereotypes and images perpetuated through print media. He stated nationalism: "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion". Nationalism can also be seen in opposition to internationalism, thus against greater political or economic cooperation between nations.

Other

The notion of the Other is one of the central philosophical and sociocultural categories. The definition and interpretation of the term varies, but in its most

general sense, it refers to the relationship between a subject and another person or group defined as the non-self. The condition of Otherness is deeply related with processes of marginalisation and subordination of those 'alien' to mainstream social identity. In philosophy, for example in phenomenology and existentialism, the encounter with the Other is understood as a key factor in the formation of the Self, even though the relationship with the Other is often seen as antagonistic. Art critic and historian Thomas McEvilley has stated: "Each, in its sameness, knows itself and is unknown to the other. Each in its difference, is known to the other and unknown to itself. [...] It is not merely that the other is a mystery to the self; it is that the other is a mystery of the self. [...] The self can never reach the other and can never do without it. [...] The self reached for the veil of the other trembling to see itself. The other slips beneath the skin of the self and becomes its desire and its terror". The concept, often understood in the context of a binary dominator-dominated relationship, has also been important historically for postcolonial and gender studies.

‘Outsider art’

The contentious term ‘outsider art’ is the English equivalent of ‘*art brut*’, referring to idiosyncratic art practices existing outside of the boundaries of the conventional art world, often by self-taught or ‘naïve’ makers. First associated mainly with art of psychiatric patients, the term has extended to include a range of other marginalised practices. The relations of outsider art to the mainstream art world is ambivalent. While praised by some modern artists especially Surrealist artists who were not only inspired by outsider art, but also exhibited it alongside their own artworks, ‘outsider art’ is typically displayed in separate contexts and within its own reference frames. The term ‘outsider art’ is contentious as creativity and psychiatric vulnerability are considered by psychoanalysts and being closely connected. And thus the ‘outsider’ aspect is considered a false category.

Populism

Populism could be defined as a political stance and strategy which proposes that citizens, or ‘the people’ are exploited by the dominant political ‘elite’, who does not serve the interests of the many. Populism is neither

defined by, nor typical of the left, right or centre of the political ideological spectrum. Its ambition is guided by the belief that political and social change should be achieved by the opinion and direct action of the masses. When in office in liberal democracies, right-wing populists have often been responsible for democratic backsliding, as they undermine independent institutions such as the media or judiciary which they consider hostile to the “will of the people”.

Race

The term ‘race’ has historically referred to shared physical traits, including but not limited to skin colour, of a group of people. However, race has no inherent physical or biological meaning, although one sometimes speaks of ‘the human race’, which means the species *homo sapiens*, or the subspecies *homo-sapiens sapiens* – modern man. There is a broad scientific agreement that essentialist or typological conceptualisation of race is untenable, and in contemporary discourse race is now increasingly used to refer to a social construct. The association of race with the discredited theories of Eugenics and scientific racism

has contributed to race becoming increasingly seen as a largely pseudoscientific system of classification. In 1795, German doctor Johann Friedrich Blumenbach described five human types: Caucasians, Mongolians, Ethiopians, Americans and Malays, with Caucasians the most attractive of them all. ‘Caucasian’ normally refers to people who live in the mountainous region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea, but under Blumenbach’s sweeping definition, encompassed everyone from Europe to India and North Africa. His vague human taxonomy would have lasting consequences – ‘Caucasian’ is the polite word still used today to describe white people of European descent.

Religion

Religion is a set of cultural systems which designate practices, world-views, rituals and ethics, that position the human as the receiver of teachings from transcendental or spiritual orders of existence, gods or the divine. Religion and the observance of faith has diverse practices globally, including rituals, sermons, initiations, commemoration ceremonies, meditation and prayer.

The Abrahamic Religions are religious communities that claim to originate from the practices of ancient Israelites and specifically the teachings of the Prophet Abraham. They are Semitic religions originating in the present-day Middle East, with the three largest being Christianity, Islam and Judaism. The largest religions globally are Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, however according to some conservative estimates there are approximately 4200 religions in the world, with new religions and denominations continuing to emerge. Atheism is the rejection of the existence of gods or deities. Some modern societies possess a plurality of both non-belief and belief.

Sexuality

Sexuality is the capacity express oneself, as well as to others, as a sexual being. This involves individuals having erotic experiences and exploring sexual orientations, which manifest themselves in biological, emotional or social sustenance. Opinions differ along ideological lines on the origins of an individual’s sexual orientation, based typically around a debate of “nature versus nurture” – whether sexuality is defined by socio-cultural factors or through

biological instinct. Homosexuality is considered sinful in the mainstream of many major religions such as Christianity, Judaism and Islam, however gay liberation movements of the 20th century have worked to provide homosexuals, and others who do not identify as heterosexual, with legal rights and protections in numerous countries.

Syncretism

In a broad sense, syncretism refers to the amalgamation of diverse phenomena or opposing principles. The term is widely used in theology and philosophy to describe a fusion of different beliefs, practices, and schools of thought. Syncretic movements are often met with resistance and denunciation from prevailing systems of belief. In such context, the term might be employed with pejorative overtones. In relation to politics, syncretism refers to the idea of the 'Third Way', which combines the approaches of conflicting political positions with the aim of their reconciliation.

Society

A society is a large group in persistent social relations and interactions, typically sharing the

same spatial or social territory, with same cultural expectations and subject to the same political authority. Societies share a distinctive economic, social, industrial or cultural infrastructure. A society may be described as the sum total of such relationships among its constituents. Societies construct patterns of behaviour by deeming certain actions or speech as acceptable or unacceptable, known as societal norms. Societies, and their norms, undergo gradual and perpetual change. Former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher rejected the notion of society in favour of neo-liberalism, privileging individualism. She famously stated: "They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours".

Third World

The term Third World, a literal translation of the French *tiers monde*, was coined during the Cold War to define states that

remained non-aligned with any of the two leading powers and economic systems of the time – the Western and Soviet blocks. Mostly, these were also economically 'developing' countries, including many with colonial pasts in Africa, Latin America, Oceania and Asia. It is the latter meaning in particular that has prevailed. The Third World also fitted into the world-systemic economic division for 'periphery' countries dominated by the First World countries who comprise the economic core. Since the fall of the Soviet Union, it became largely considered to be outdated and pejorative, with other terms, not themselves without contention, such as 'developing countries' and 'global south' replacing it increasingly.

Tolerance

Tolerance is the ability, attitude and willingness to refute bigotry and accept other beliefs, opinions, ideas, practices and behaviour which differ from one's own. The term has a progressive connotation. In the West, the term has come to be used frequently in relation to migrant communities. In this instance, there can be a distinct power relation – the dominant community enacts tolerance towards minorities,

but minorities have to accept, rather than tolerate, the dominant culture.

Totalitarianism

Totalitarianism is a political system or form of government that prohibits opposition parties, suppresses opposition to the state, and exercises an extremely high degree of control over a society. Totalitarianism attempts to control virtually all aspects of the social life, economy, education, art, science, private life and morality of citizens. It is regarded as the most extreme form of authoritarianism. Totalitarian regimes are often characterised by political repression, lack of democratic institutions, cult of personality, economic control, censorship, limited freedom of movement and wide use of state terrorism. Other aspects of a totalitarian regime include the use of concentration camps, persecution of religious and other minorities, and potentially state-sponsored mass murder or genocide. In *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), political theorist Hannah Arendt states: "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction

between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist”.

Universality

In philosophy, universality is the idea that universal facts exist and can be discovered, as opposed to relativism, which asserts that all facts are merely relative to one’s perspective. It posits that it is possible to apply generalised norms, values and ethics to all people and cultures, regardless of the contexts in which they are located. These norms may include a focus on human needs, rights, or biological and psychological processes, and are based on the perspective that all people are essentially equivalent. Universalism has been critiqued by post-modern and post-colonial thinkers, who find lack of evidence for any ideas or values that can be applied truly universally. In his book *European Universalism: The Rhetoric of Power* (2006), sociologist and economic historian Immanuel Wallerstein considers universalism as a successor to colonialism as a means of speaking on behalf of the developing world and interfering in the business of

other countries. He charts how the Western world has attempted repeatedly to create universals since the Enlightenment, from such things as modernism as an attempted universal language or condition, though to such things as human rights. In his understanding, universalism can be seen as the shift from the Western stereotypical perspective of the East (historically described as ‘orientalism’ by Edward Said), to a Western sense of something shared, to which the Non-Western might not always conform. As universalism is ascribed the status of being natural law by the West, non-conformity permits the right to intervention, whether through aid, cultural intervention or even warfare.

Agriculture

N. S. Harsha

Sensual, 2007

Head, 2008

Reflecting the rural-urban divide, the installation *Sensual*, like many of N. S. Harsha's works, takes from the pictorial language of traditional miniature painting in South Asia, and develops it into a spatial practice. We see firstly a painting of a person resembling a businessman, laid flat on the floor, on top of which are traditional wooden tools for working the land. On the wall is a painting of a falling head. Harsha has created several artworks relating to the issue of the liberalisation of the agricultural sector in India, and the difficulties farmers and rural farming communities have had to face as a consequence. In particular, the adoption of monocultural agricultural techniques along with the sale of genetically modified seeds by multinational corporations, which in contrast to the so-called green revolution's boasts, have, in fact, led to spiralling debt and mass suicides among farmers. It has also led to the destruction of traditional community life and to the erasure of local agricultural knowledge.



N. S. Harsha

Sensual, 2007

Paper, wood, rope

Variable dimensions

Collection M HKA / Collection Flemish Community

Photo: M HKA

Åsa Sonjasdotter

Cultivated Stories, 2019

Åsa Sonjasdotter work *Cultivated Stories* considers the implementation of monocultural techniques in farming and their roots in ideology. The first part of this work is a set of photographic reproductions documenting early attempts to breed plants into monocultures. So-called 'pure line' breeding was implemented by the Swedish Seed Association (Sveriges utsädesförening), founded in 1886. The technique had been invented by the Danish botanist Wilhelm Johannsen (1857–1927), while he was working at the chemical laboratory of the Carlsberg Breweries in Copenhagen. This laboratory had developed single strain yeast, which enabled a controlled fermentation process without the risk of beer turning sour. Following the profitability of this technique, Johannsen began experimenting on the equivalent to 'single strains' in plants. By inbreeding peas for several generations, it was possible to empty them from almost any genetic variation. This resulted in plants that were clones, however it was understood that they had reached the 'original' or 'pure' form of the plant. During several decades, the Swedish Seed Association bred uniform grains following Johannsen's technique, establishing what today is called 'modern plant breeding', and which is protected by legislation. Since the UPOV convention for the legislation of restrictions on intellectual property for new plants of 1962, only uniform cultivars are allowed for commercial cultivation within the countries that have signed the convention, of which all member states of the EU belong.



Åsa Sonjasdotter

Cultivated Abundance, 2019

Video

34 min

Courtesy of the artist

Image: the artist

Ambiguity

The film documents the work of the Swedish plant scientist Hans Larsson, restoring remaining varieties of genetically diverse heritage grain. With the implementation of modern plant breeding on a global scale, the diversity in grains – cultivated by farmers breeding them for more than ten thousand years ago – was nearly lost. The genetic variation in plants is crucial for their capacity to adapt to new climates and cultivation conditions. Beginning in the 1990s, Larsson has systematically test-grown all remaining varieties in Scandinavia. Selected strains have been further bred and propagated to larger volumes for farmers to cultivate. The propagation and distribution of the seeds is organised within the association Allkorn. Heritage grains are genetically too diverse to be permitted for commercial circulation among farmers according to the UPOV convention. Therefore, only as a member of Allkorn or similar associations is it legal to cultivate and exchange heritage grains.



Courtesy Lantmannens Svalöf, Sweden.

Carol Rama

Appassionata, 1941

Proibito, 1944

Dorina, 1944

Teatrino N. 2, 1937

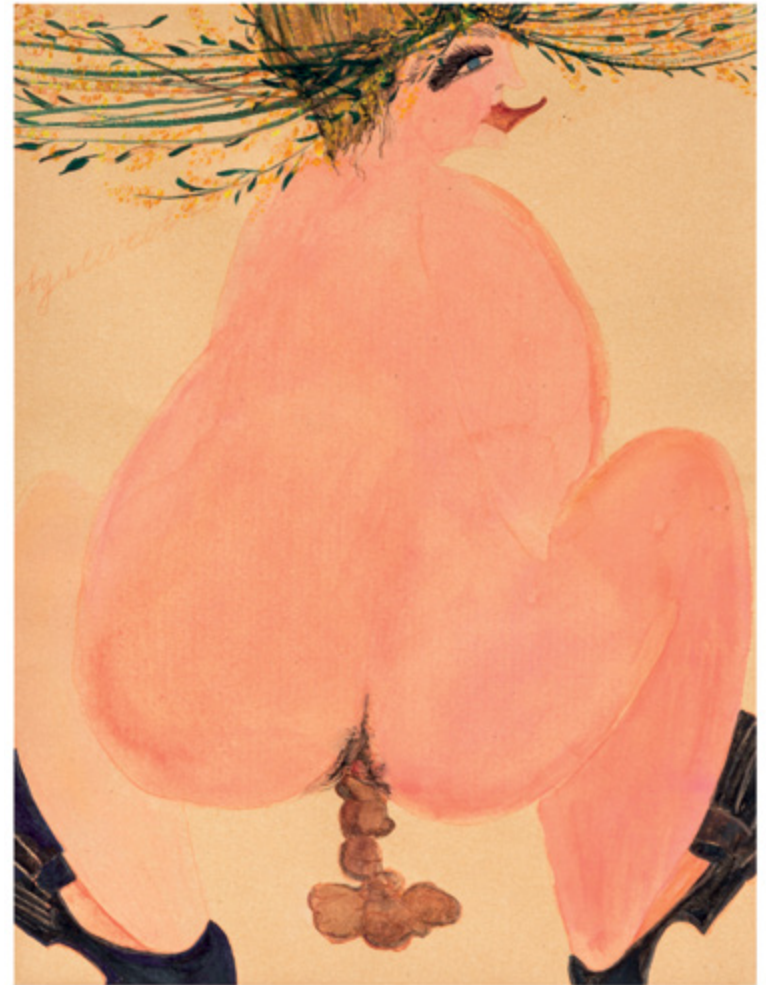
Marta La Cagona, 1940

Le Palette, 1940

Appassionata, 1939

Appassionata (I due pini), 1940

Making art for several decades from the 1930s, Carol Rama (1918–2015) was a deeply idiosyncratic artist who was unrestrained by faith or ideology. Her early works in watercolour, made during the era of fascism in Italy, explore the human condition, and demonstrate fundamental expressions and desires of the individual, and the self-determination of one's body. Her watercolours are vivid, sensual and uncompromising. Rama understood insanity, absurdity, abnormality, abjection, and the breaking of taboos as being in fact signs of a healthy life, mentally, physically and artistically. Many of the characters have their tongues hanging out. As a 12-year old, she visited her mother in a psychiatric clinic, where she found patients behaving 'abnormally', and with their tongues sticking out. Rama saw them as liberated, and took inspiration from them as those emancipated from the pressures, normality and repressive political atmosphere of daily life. Rama once stated about her practice: "Rage has always been my life condition. Fury and violence are what drive me to paint".



Carol Rama

Marta La Cagona, 1940

Watercolour on paper

24×18 cm

Private Collection, Turin

© Archivio Carol Rama, Turin

Photo: Beppe Giardino

Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin

Global Digestion, c. 1980–2007

The cloud-formation work *Global Digestion* by Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin (1957–2007) depicts hundreds of photographs of toilets and bathrooms the artist visited during his travels. Some even date back to 1979–80 when he was working for the photographic press agency Sipa in Paris, for whom he travelled to different African nations. Additional to his paid work, he began photographing toilets as well as hotel and restaurant signs for the first time. The eventual work, created using non-professional photographic printing, was influenced by critical theorist Slavoj Žižek's book *The Plague of Fantasies* in which he discusses, amongst other things, the specificities of visiting the toilet for people of different cultures. As an artist who travelled the globe during the rapid period of internationalisation for contemporary art, Alptekin wanted to observe the extent to which the effects of globalisation would bring homogeneity to different societies. Yet, even the most basic functions of the human body, it seems, are not a universal experience.



Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin

Global Digestion (detail), c. 1980–2007

Digital prints

145×395 cm

Collection M HKA

Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek



Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin
Global Digestion, c. 1980–2007
Digital prints
145×395 cm
Collection M HKA
Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960

Untitled, c. 1960

Untitled, c. 1960

Untitled, c. 1960

Untitled, c. 1960

Untitled, c. 1960

Nicole trained as an artist and later ended up in psychiatry. Despite this, or perhaps thanks to her illness, along with the availability of creative workshops, she developed her own style and became a prolific artist. The context of the practice she established was the pioneering 'creative therapy' that started in 1963 at the psychiatric hospital in Kortenberg (located between Brussels and Leuven). At the time, a hospital for women, Sint-Jozef in Kortenberg, now Universitair Psychiatrisch Centrum, retains a large collection of art by psychiatric patients. Characterised by their vivid, surreal and intense imagery, Nicole's work was exhibited many times, although always in a psychiatric context and with texts describing the 'symptoms' in the work. A drawing by Nicole was also chosen by renowned curators Jan Hoet and Bart De Baere for the exhibition *Open Minds: Closed Circuits* in 1989. Only her first name is used to protect her identity as a patient.



Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960

Engraving

29.7×42 cm

Collection Kortenberg

Else Frenkel-Brunswik

Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, R. Nevitt Sanford
The Authoritarian Personality, 1950
Published by Harper & Brothers
First edition

In 1950, a group of scientists from the University of California, Berkeley – a philosopher/sociologist and three psychologists: Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson and R. Nevitt Sanford – published the third part of a five-part series, *Studies in Prejudice*, compiled by Max Horkheimer and sponsored by the American Jewish Committee. They sought an answer to the question of how the destructive ideologies responsible for the atrocities of the Second World War had managed to attract such a huge mass of followers. The result is a detailed and academic publication of nearly 1000 pages, combining text and research results (graphs and tables). The study is based on both quantitative and qualitative studies, with structured questionnaires and in-depth interviews. The study became famous for its F-scale or Fascist Scale, which ranks people according to the intensity of certain characteristics that take root in their childhood

experiences. These include conventionalism, authoritarian submission and aggression, superstition, stereotyped thinking, cynicism and sexual frustration. As a first attempt to analyse the authoritarian personality (hitherto mainly approached from a philosophical perspective) in a more scientific way, by collecting material and applying innovative research techniques, the importance of this book can hardly be overstated.

“The idea that groups are homogeneous units which more or less totally determine the nature of their numbers. This places the responsibility for intergroup tensions entirely on outgroups as independent entities. The only question asked is how outgroups can change in order to make themselves acceptable to the ingroup; there is no suggestion that the ingroup might need to modify its behaviour and attitudes.” – R. Nevitt Sanford, ‘The Contrasting Ideologies of Two College Men: A Preliminary View’

Else Frenkel-Brunswik
‘Personality Theory and Perception’, in Robert R. Blake, Glenn V. Ramsey ed.
Perception: An Approach to Personality, 1951
Published by The Ronald Press
First edition

In 1949 and 1950, the University of Texas organised a clinical psychology symposium on the influence of perception on personality formation. Highlights were research into physical and chemical aspects of perception; social and developmental factors influencing perception; and the role of perception in the subconscious mind. The aim was to bring together various studies about how individuals, starting from their perception, construct – and give meaning to – their environment. The thirteen contributions to the symposium were compiled in *Perception: An Approach to Personality*. Instead of taking perception as a starting point, in her article ‘Personality theory and Perception’, Else Frenkel-Brunswik reverses the order and starts with discussing developments within personality theory. Among other things, the concept of ‘ambiguity tolerance’, which she first used in *The Authoritarian Personality*, is further elaborated. With this complex and versatile theory, Frenkel-Brunswik

examines the connection between the ability to deal with an ambiguous visual language and tolerance for ambiguity in the world, the other and oneself.

“A certain inability, in the perceptual and cognitive approach of an individual to tolerate more complex, conflicting, or open structures might, it seemed, occur also to a certain extent in the emotional and social area”.

Else Frenkel-Brunswik
‘Environmental Controls and the Impoverishment of Thought’, in Carl J. Friedrich, ed.,
Totalitarianism (Proceedings of a Conference Held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, March 1953), 1954
Published by Harvard University Press

In March 1953, an important conference on totalitarianism was held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in Boston. Forty thinkers from different countries participated, including Hannah Arendt and Else Frenkel-Brunswik. The conference aimed to investigate the nature, origin, strengths and weaknesses of modern totalitarian dictatorships. The participants communicated different – sometimes completely diametrical – opinions, and controversy was not shunned.

An important discussion, in which also the editor of the conference proceedings, Carl J. Friedrich, participated, was the question of whether modern totalitarianism could be equated with older forms of tyranny – or should rather be treated as historically unique. In ‘Environmental Controls and the Impoverishment of Thought’, Frenkel-Brunswik takes a closer look at anti-intellectual tendencies and the attitude towards science in Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union.

Philosophical Thought

Simone de Beauvoir
Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté
(The Ethics of Ambiguity), 1947
Published by Librairie Gallimard
First edition

In *Pour une morale de l'ambiguïté*, philosopher Simone de Beauvoir (1908-1986) describes a human being's life as a constant tension between object and subject, body and mind, death and life, uselessness and meaning. She talks about this as the basic ambiguity of the human condition. Throughout history, philosophers have always attempted to deny, hide or eliminate this ambiguity. In their search for truth, they ignore important features of life

such as chance, contradiction and plurality. According to de Beauvoir, it is precisely the recognition and acceptance of our ambiguity that forms the basis for a credible, progressive and humane ethics. This ethics originates in the freedom that enables a human being to realise her/himself, as well as the world he or she wants. Although according to de Beauvoir there are no predetermined universal laws on which an ethics can be based, including spiritual or ideological, this does not lead to arbitrariness. Out of ambiguity and freedom, people develop a moral existence that develops its own coherence over time. According to de Beauvoir, what matters is what we do with our freedom and how we can focus it, not only on ourselves, but also on the world – by taking up commitments and responsibilities. In this way, a person actively positions her/himself in the world. At the same time, the realisation of one's own freedom is linked to solidarity with others. De Beauvoir reasons that if we accept our ambiguity, our relation with the Other can never be one of dominance, oppression or assimilation. A moral engagement with fellow human beings allows us to share the world with one another and

can subsequently lead to political and social connections.

Julia Kristeva
Pouvoirs de l'horreur. Essai sur l'abjection (*Powers of Horror. Essay on Abjection*), 1980
Published by Éditions du Seuil
First Edition

In *Pouvoirs de l'horreur. Essai sur l'abjection*, Franco-Bulgarian philosopher and psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva explores the notion of the abject. Neither subject nor object, the abject – examples of which include faeces, a corpse, or extreme crimes – usually evokes discomfort or even disgust. Kristeva situates the abject before the ‘symbolic order’, or before the emergence of meaning. In the abject, modernist oppositions like nature and culture, intuition and rationality seem to be neutralised, removed. Paradoxically, people are constantly drawn to the abject. Kristeva intertwines Freudian, Lacanian and poststructuralist perspectives, shifting the emphasis to gender, motherhood and the problems women face in patriarchal society. She connects the abject with religion as well as with art and literature, which she approaches as attempts to purify the abject through catharsis. For Kristeva, religious

rituals are attempts to contain the abject and to protect us from the depravity and chaos it embodies. The abject is the psychological basis for the religious concepts of sin and uncleanness. In this context, Kristeva links the fantasy of the ‘Jewish threat’ and twentieth-century anti-Semitism to fear of the abject.

“It is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite.”

Sigmund Freud
Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse (*Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*), 1921
Published by Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag
First edition

With his 1921 *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse*, Sigmund Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, wrote his major work on collective psychology. In the introduction, he elucidates that the psychology of the individual is inextricably linked – through the relationships we always establish with others – to social and group psychology. To investigate the dynamics that hold the individuals of a group together

and ensure its stability, Freud first discusses *La Psychologie des foules (The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind, 1895)* by French sociologist, psychologist and anthropologist Gustave Le Bon. Le Bon's theories also inspired fascist leaders like Benito Mussolini and Adolf Hitler.

“Le Bon thinks that the particular acquisitions of individuals become obliterated in a group, and that in this way their distinctiveness vanishes. The racial unconscious emerges; what is heterogeneous is submerged in what is homogeneous. We may say that the mental superstructure, the development of which in individuals shows such dissimilarities, is removed, and that the unconscious foundations, which are similar in everyone, stand exposed to view”.

Following Le Bon, Freud argues that, as part of a mass, individuals experience a sense of power that incites them to extreme acts they would never perform in personal contact. Later in the book he examines two specific situations of mass psychology: one within the Church and one within the military. For Freud, the figure of the leader is crucial. The latter ensures coherence and

identification within the group by creating the illusion that all group members are equally loved and appreciated. To further strengthen cohesion within the group, an image of the enemy existing outside the group is created. Freud states that, due to a crowd's impulsive and intolerant nature, it only listens to extreme opinions.

Hannah Arendt
The Origins of Totalitarianism,
1951

Published by Harcourt, Brace and Company
First edition

During her philosophy and theology studies, Hannah Arendt (1906–1975) attended lectures by Martin Heidegger and Nicolai Hartmann, among others. Her admiration for Heidegger was severely tested as a result of his National Socialist views. In 1933 Arendt, being Jewish, was forced to leave Germany for Paris. In 1941, she fled to the United States. Already during the war years, and out of personal involvement, she wrote articles about ‘the Jewish question’. The problem of refugees and stateless persons and of imperialism and racism, which, in adapted form, were included in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.

The Origins of Totalitarianism, the first major post-war study into the dynamics of totalitarian systems, consists of three parts. The first part tells the story of the emergence of a modern, secular anti-Semitism (which Arendt distinguishes from what she calls ‘religious Jew-hatred’). In part two, Arendt gives an overview of the imperialist and predatory policies of the European powers at the end of the 19th- and the beginning of the 20th centuries. In the last part, she discusses totalitarianism itself. According to Arendt, totalitarianism is a completely new political system that goes far beyond dictatorship. We only find it, to the same extent, in the regimes of Joseph Stalin and Adolf Hitler. According to Arendt, this totalitarianism is made possible because on the one hand a political system is dysfunctional, and, on the other, more and more people live in isolation, becoming alienated from society. These people, the so-called ‘atomised and individualised mass’, are open to the propaganda of totalitarian movements, which present their struggle against the backdrop of a fictional conspiracy (e.g. Jews or Trotskyists) as scientific predictions. Once the totalitarian regime comes to power, the secret police – and

ultimately concentration camps – cause people to lose their legal, moral and finally even individual identities. Arendt's thinking is still relevant today because she warns us how any ideology can move towards totalitarianism by substituting the plurality, complexity and ambiguity of reality for the clarity, general validity and consistency of a fiction.

Karl R. Popper
The Open Society and Its Enemies,
1950

Published by Princeton University Press
First US edition

“[This book] attempts to show that this civilisation has not yet fully recovered from the shock of its birth—the transition from the tribal or ‘closed society’, with its submission to magical forces, to the ‘open society’ which sets free the critical powers of man. It attempts to show that the shock of this transition is one of the factors that have made possible the rise of those reactionary movements which have tried, and still try, to overthrow civilisation and to return to tribalism.”

Karl Popper (1902–1994), the Austrian-British philosopher of science and politics, wrote *The Open Society and its Enemies*

in New Zealand, the country he emigrated to in 1937 for fear of the emerging Nazism. The book is a head-on attack on historicism – the idea that history develops towards an end point according to fixed laws – in the thinking of philosophers Plato, Hegel and Marx. According to Popper, what he sees as their belief in a static society – the future of which can be predicted, which must be guided by a central political system, and in which the state is more important than the individual – makes them the defenders of the closed society and the spiritual fathers of communism, fascism and other ‘isms’ with an absolute truth claim.

Although Popper pays much more attention to combating what he sees as the foundations of totalitarian thinking than to clarifying his own alternative, he contrasts a closed society with an open society, in which every individual can freely participate in public debate and political decision making. Here, the rulers do not insist on a blueprint for an ideal society, but look for solutions to urgent problems and test these solutions continuously. The rulers can also be unseated and replaced in a peaceful manner. In this critical-rationalist view of politics, Popper draws

striking parallels with his ideas as a philosopher of science. Some critics point out that in this way Popper ignores the emotional aspect of politics and fails to make his open society concrete and realisable, as a result of which his struggle against utopian thinking becomes itself a utopia.

The Open Society and Its Enemies still has significant influence on political philosophy and politics today. Hungarian-American businessman George Soros for example literally referred to the book when he founded the Open Society Institute in 1993, initially to support countries in Central and Eastern Europe to make the transition from communism to democratic governance, and later to promote human rights and economic, legal and social reforms worldwide. The most recent Dutch-language translation of *The Open Society and Its Enemies* is accompanied by an introduction by Guy Verhofstadt, former Prime Minister of Belgium and Member of the European Parliament for Flemish liberal party Open VLD.

Karl Popper
The Poverty of Historicism, 1957
Published by Routledge and Kegan Paul
First edition

Although the text only appeared in book form in 1957, *The Poverty of Historicism* is actually Karl Popper’s original attack on historicism. The three-volume essay with the same title already appeared in 1944 and 1945, in the international journal *Economica*. Popper criticises the ‘historicist doctrine’ of the social sciences, which states that we can only understand a social group by knowing the internal principles that determine the development of the group. He links this to holism, the belief that the individual is mainly determined by the group to which she/he belongs. Popper contrasts this with an individualism that considers social groups as the sum of their members, and social developments as a result of actions by individuals, usually unplanned and therefore also unpredictable. He strongly opposes all systems that only use people and people’s lives as a means to achieve a certain goal. Popper rejects large-scale planning of economic-social structures by regimes that base their action on historicism and the predictions

of the future linked to it. As an alternative, he introduces the concept of ‘piecemeal social engineering’, in which small and reversible changes are made in the structures of society. In contrast to major adjustments, the effect of which becomes invisible due to the future’s unpredictability, small social actions are verifiable and falsifiable, and we can learn from them.

Friedrich Nietzsche
Die Geburt der Tragödie aus dem Geiste der Musik (The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music), c. 1930
Published by Verlag von Philipp Reclam jun

Friedrich Nietzsche
Jenseits von Gut und Böse. Zur Genealogie der Moral (Beyond Good and Evil. On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic), 1896
Published by C. G. Naumann

One of the most ambiguous and influential figures of modern thought, philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900) is invoked in different and often ambivalent ways. The early association of his writing was with Nazism, promoted by his sister Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche who posthumously edited his unpublished works to fit her nationalistic ideas, and contradicted Nietzsche’s own stance against nationalism

and antisemitism. Nietzsche's complex philosophical thought and writing, which is commonly divided into three periods, questions the values and motives behind traditional Western thinking, religion and morality by demonstrating their inconsistencies. His early work *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) is a study of the origin and development of Greek tragedy that considers the prevailing idealistic perception of Greek culture as a reflection of order and optimism, by introducing an intellectual dichotomy between what he termed the Apollonian and Dionysian elements. The former element is associated with individualisation, restraint, harmony and order, while the latter, as its opposite, operates as a chaotic force and an ecstatic dissolution of individuality. According to Nietzsche, these two principles are inseparable from each other, and it is their fusion that makes a great work of art. A classic in the history of aesthetics, the book had a lasting influence over the art of subsequent periods, and German expressionism in particular.

In *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886), Nietzsche expands the ideas of his famous work *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (1885) in which he

introduced the ideas of the “death of God” and the prophecy of the Übermensch, and attempts to summarise his philosophy. Aphorist in its style, the book is a powerful critique of religion, ethics, philosophical thought, science and politics. Providing a genealogical account of the development of modern moral systems, Nietzsche bases his argument on the idea of a fundamental shift in the history of morality, from thinking in terms of “good and bad” toward “good and evil”. Accusing philosophers of the past of dogmatism in their consideration of morality, he identifies the qualities of the philosophers of the future – what he calls “free spirits”, unbiased critical thinkers who see “beyond good and evil”. The Nietzschean philosophical stance against the resentful “slave morality of Christianity” was further developed in his subsequent book, *On the Genealogy of Morality: A Polemic* (1887). *Beyond Good and Evil* was listed in the ‘Most Harmful Books’ by American weekly conservative newspaper *Human Events*.

Wilhelm Worringer
Abstraktion und Einfühlung.
Ein Beitrag zur Stilpsychologie
(Abstraction and Empathy. A
Contribution to the Psychology of
Style), 1921

Published by R. Piper & Co. Verlag

Wilhelm Worringer (1881-1965) was a German art historian known for his theory of abstract art, which questioned what he described as “the one-sidedness and European-Classical prejudice of our customary historical conception and valuation of art”. First presented as a dissertation in 1907, *Abstraktion und Einfühlung* was published as a book in 1908. In the book, Worringer makes a distinction between two kinds of artistic expressions – the art of abstraction and the art of empathy, while providing a comprehensive psychological explanatory of both. If the art of empathy deals with organic representation, which provides a recognisable spatial illusion of reality, abstraction is associated with inorganic geometric stylisation. Worringer argues that the former is presupposed by the fact that “aesthetic enjoyment is objectified self-enjoyment. To enjoy aesthetically means to enjoy myself in a sensuous object diverse from myself, to empathise myself into

it”. Abstract art in its turn suggests another kind of aesthetic enjoyment – that one of alienation from an “anxious relationship” with the world. Regular abstract forms, suggests Worringer, are: “therefore, the only ones and the highest, in which man can rest in the face of the vast confusion of the world-picture”. Having analysed diverse cultures and historical periods, Worringer was one of the first to introduce the idea that the fundamental difference between figurative and abstract artistic expressions lie in their opposite approaches to existential experience. The “urge to abstraction” has nothing to do with inferiority or incompetence in his eyes. Worringer’s theory of abstraction contributed to the interest of non-European cultures among avant-garde artists, and was particularly influential for German expressionists.

Hans Prinzhorn
Bildnerei der Geisteskranken:
ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und
Psychopathologie der Gestaltung
(Artistry of the Mentally Ill: A
Contribution to The Psychology
and Psychopathology of
Configuration), 1923

Published by Verlag von Julius
Springer
First edition, second printing
Courtesy of Erik Thys

Bildnerei der Geisteskranken:
ein Beitrag zur Psychologie und
Psychopathologie der Gestaltung
was first published in 1922 by
German art historian and psychi-
atrist Hans Prinzhorn (1886–1933).
The first in-depth analysis of
works of the mentally ill from both
psychological and aesthetical
points, the book is based on the
core of the original collection
at the University Hospital of
Heidelberg where Prinzhorn
worked as assistant physician.
The collection ranges from draw-
ings, watercolours, paintings and
sculptures to textile works and
texts. Concerned with the border
between the art and self-ex-
pression of psychiatric patients,
Prinzhorn's richly illustrated study
was received enthusiastically
by the art scene of his time,
especially the Surrealists. More
reserved were the reactions
of his colleagues. In 1938, five
years after Prinzhorn's death,
Carl Schneider, then Head of the

University Hospital of Heidelberg
and a prominent member of the
Nazi party, sent the works from
the collections to be displayed
in the touring *Entartete Kunst*
exhibition as a reference for the
'degenerate' nature of Modern
art. The interest in Prinzhorn's
Bildnerei der Geisteskranken was
rekindled after the end of the
Second World War. Inspired by
the publication, renowned French
artist Jean Dubuffet started his
own collection of such art, which
he described as *art brut* (known in
English as 'outsider art').

Eugenics

Hannah Höch

Mischling (Mixed Race), 1924

One of the most striking historical examples of ideological monoculture in the cultural field was of 'entartete kunst' ('degenerate art') in Nazi Germany. Holding up the modernist avant-garde, or in fact anything that didn't fit the narrow ethno-centric definition of German art and culture, was considered as an aberration. In contrast to the 'Aryan' conception of the German 'race', Hannah Höch's collage *Mischling* (*Mixed Race*) constructs an image of a person with a racial identification that sits more ambiguously within the ethnographic perceptions of culture and otherness. Nazi eugenics considered blood mixture between races as undesirable. This was demonstrated by both studies of, and attitudes towards, for example Rother Bastards (the children of male European colonialists and Black African women of the Khoisan people – or 'Hottentots' as Dutch colonialists referred to them) in German South West Africa (Namibia), or the 'Rheinlandbastard' Afro-Germans (children of German women and French soldiers of African, mostly Senegalese descent, who occupied the Rheinland after the First World War). Many of the latter were rounded up as part of a programme of forced sterilisation. Höch, an artist who was considered as 'degenerate', developed art that was a playful critique of the ethnographic gaze. *Mischling*, a delicate portrait made using magazine cuttings of different people to make a 'mixed race' person, holds a surreal mirror to the dark absurdity of race pseudo-science.



Hannah Höch

Mischling (Mixed Race), 1924

Collage, photomontage

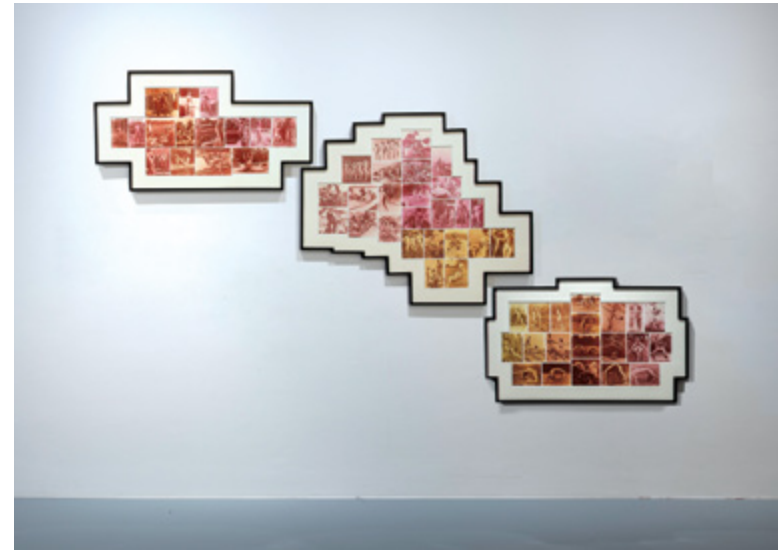
11×8.2 cm

Courtesy of Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V., Stuttgart

Photo: Liedtke & Michel

Danny Matthys

Vivre d'Abord, 1979



Danny Matthys is an artist who looks to collate, analyse and systematise images, to see what knowledge can be gained. The compositions of *Vivre d'Abord*, are comprised of old black and white photos which originate from the 1930s, but also from the 1950s. We see a particular focus here on the nude human body. The photos evoke the dogged pursuit of physical and genetic perfection in the pre-Second World War era with the aim of linking physical purity with societal purity. Matthys identifies the German *Freikörper-Kultur* as a leisure activity appropriated as part of Nazi culture. The sets of photos possess a certain tension, attracting and repelling in the same instance, as we absorb the visual languages and desired self-images promoted as a nationalist, ethnocentric and biological movement for Germany.

Danny Matthys

Vivre d'Abord, 1979

Photo, paper

Three parts: 71×129, 115×135 and 74.5×122.5 cm

Collection M HKA

Photo: M HKA

Eugenics is the set of theories and practices aimed at improving the inheritable qualities of the human race, and engineer a better society. Greek in its origin, the term, which literally means 'well-born', was introduced by British geneticist Francis Galton in 1883, in his book *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development*. Soon afterwards, the first national eugenics organisation was established in the United States, where eugenics rapidly gained popularity and considerable weight in scientific society. As a result, during the first decades of the 20th century the US states passed numerous eugenic legislations, including sexual sterilisation of persons with inferior hereditary potentialities varying from criminals to the 'feeble-minded'. Eugenic ideas laid the foundation for the development of the Nazi ideology of 'racial hygiene' in the 1930s. Nazi eugenic legislation led to forced sterilisation and murder of hundreds of thousands of individuals deemed 'unfavourable'. In the decades following World War II, with the adoption of a number of laws protecting human rights, many countries began to abandon eugenics policies.

Francis Galton

Essays in Eugenics, 1909

Published by The Eugenics Education Society
First edition

Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) was an English psychometrist, geneticist, and the father of the eugenics movement. He introduced the very term eugenics and laid the foundations for a movement that would develop in the following decades. Inspired by the theory of evolution by natural selection introduced by his half-cousin, Charles Darwin, he dedicated his studies to the improvement of the human race. Galton was convinced that eugenics studies could replace Darwinian 'natural selection' with more effective processes. The book is one of the early publications by The Eugenics Education Society founded in Great Britain in 1907, where Galton would serve as the society's first president. *Essays in Eugenics* is a chronological collection of lectures and texts (written between 1901 and 1908) in which Galton sets out his views on the methods and objectives of eugenics. The book testifies to Galton's strong belief in heredity of social and mental traits. He also promoted further

exploration of the inherited differences between social classes, advocated marriage restrictions and potential segregation of 'the unfit' as a means to prevent 'the degeneration of genetic potential', and paid much attention to the popularisation of eugenics and its potential to take over the role of religion.

"The practice of Eugenics has already obtained a considerable hold on popular estimation, and is steadily acquiring the status of a practical question, and not that of a mere vision of Utopia."

G.K. Chesterton

Eugenics and Other Evils, 1922

Published by Cassell and Company
First edition

Chesterton was an English writer, a Christian apologist, and staunch opponent of eugenics, engaged in both political debate and public action. His book is a significant, but rare example of anti-eugenic essays circulating at that time in Britain. Chesterton attacked eugenics just as Britain was moving towards passing eugenics legislation against the 'feeble-minded'. He predicted the abuse of eugenics and believed that it would be used as means of suppression of the

poor. Even though Chesterton was accused of irrationality because of his ideas, the book had a considerable influence on British parliament. The Mental Deficiency Act, which considered the institutional treatment of people deemed to be 'feeble-minded' was passed in 1913, but the subsequent calls to amend the bill with legislation to sterilise such persons, never gained popularity. Despite the fact that the movement of eugenics was founded in Britain, the eugenics legislation as it was introduced in the United States and later in Germany was never passed in Britain.

Madison Grant

The Passing of the Great Race: or, the Racial Basis of European History, 1916

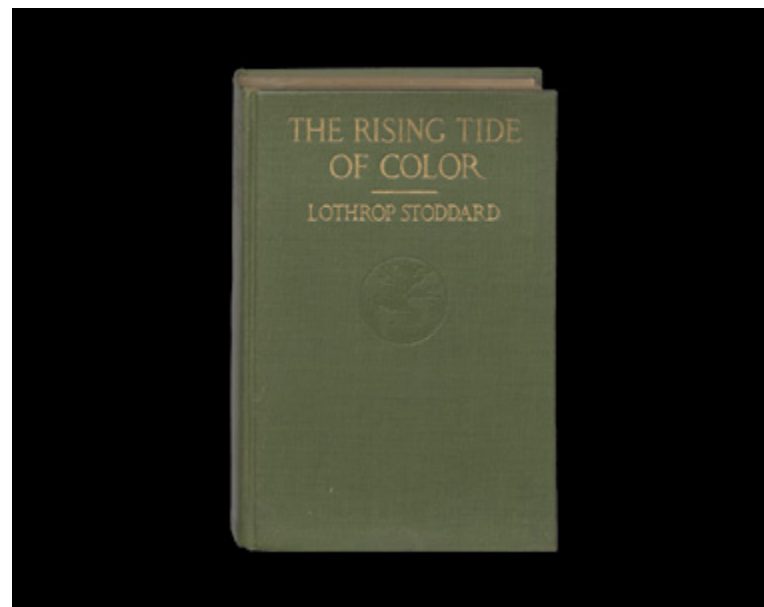
Published by Charles Scribner's Sons
First edition

Madison Grant (1865-1937) was an American writer and zoologist known primarily for his work as a eugenicist. His elaborate work on 'racial hygiene' *The Passing of the Great Race: or, the Racial Basis of European History* is considered one of the most influential books in the 20th-century tradition

of scientific racism. The subtitle of the book refers to the key theory promoted by Grant – the superiority of ‘Nordic race’ and its responsibility for human development. In the first part of the book Grant argues for the preservation of America as a ‘Nordic race’ territory, consisting of ‘Nordic’ immigrants from the founding stock of Anglo-Saxons and other Nordics from north-western Europe. The second part provides an extensive categorisation of the three European ‘races’: ‘Nordic’, ‘Alpine’ and ‘Mediterranean’ through the analysis of their history, and physical and mental characteristics. A strong advocate of racial inequality and rankings, Grant assumes that the achievements of Mediterranean civilisation of Antiquity were only possible due to admixture with ‘Nordics’. In Grant’s theory, the lowest position is assigned to the ‘Alpines’. Other ideas in this work include segregation of lower/unfavourable ‘races’ in ghettos. He also warns that the expansion of ‘non-Nordic race’ types into the ‘Nordic’ system of freedom would lead to the subjection of the ‘Nordic’ community.

Lothrop Stoddard
The Rising Tide of Color Against White-World Supremacy, 1920 (->)
Published by Charles Scribner’s Sons
First edition

Theodore Lothrop Stoddard (1883–1950) was an American historian, a member of the Ku Klux Klan, and author of several books which advocated eugenics and scientific racism. It is believed that it was one of his books, titled *Untermensch* (Eng: Sub-human), 1922, which introduced this term into Nazi conceptions of ‘race’. Opening with an introduction by another noted white supremacist, Madison Grant, the book describes the World of colour formed by Yellow, Brown, Black and Red Man’s lands and claims the absorption and elimination of the ‘white race’ and the destruction of Western civilisation. Stoddard, who was highly concerned with rising nationalism in colonised nations, sees the emergence of Pan-Islamism and Pan-Africanism as the main threats. Another great peril was represented by Bolshevism and its main tenets – the dictatorship of the proletariat and the destruction of the classes. According to Grant, bolshevism, being both anti-racial and anti-social, reveals itself as “the arch-enemy of civilisation and the race”.



Like, many works on eugenics, the book advocates restricting non-white migration into white nations and separation of the “primary races” of the world. However, it’s the fear of the fall of colonialism, rising popularisation of Islam, concerns about fast industrialisation in China and Japan, and the strong anti-communist spirit that make the book particularly influential. The book is referenced in F. Scott Fitzgerald’s novel *The Great Gatsby* (1925), in which antagonist Tom Buchanan praises a book titled *The Rise of the Colored Empires* written by an author

named Goddard. His strategy to frighten readers with the spectre of a race war, by presenting the enemies of the ‘white race’ as being strong enough to pose an existential threat, but weak enough to defeat, is still being practiced, some hundred years later, by white supremacists. And a map showing the ‘Distribution of the White Races’, featured in the book, can be purchased as a decorative item at US hypermarket chain Walmart.

“The grim truth of the matter is this: The whole white race is exposed, immediately or

ultimately, to the possibility of social sterilisation and final replacement or absorption by the teeming colored races”.

James S. Woodsworth
***Strangers Within Our Gates:
Or Coming Canadians, 1909***

Published by Missionary Society of
the Methodist Church
First edition

James Shaver Woodsworth (1874–1942) is famous as a pioneer in the Canada social democratic movement and minister of the Methodist church. As a part of his duties he preached the social gospel to poor immigrants in Winnipeg. This experience made him question classical Methodist approaches and the Church’s belief in the possibility of individual salvation. As a minister, he advocated for the importance of consideration towards the social context in which an individual lived and the introduction of tests for those entering the Church. An outcome of his continued work with immigrant families in Canada, *Strangers Within Our Gates: Or Coming Canadians* served as a blueprint for Canada’s Immigration Act enacted soon after the publication of the book. In this book, Woodsworth provides a hierarchy of ‘races’ and ethnicities based on their

ability to assimilate into Canadian society. Those belonging to ‘prohibited classes’ were deported and denied entry to Canada.

Eugenics in Nazi Germany

Wilhelm Schallmayer
***Vererbung und Auslese im
Lebenslauf der Völker. Eine
Staatswissenschaftliche Studie
auf Grund der Neueren Biologie
(Heredity and Selection in the
Life-Process of Nations: A Social
Scientific Study on the Basis of
the Newest Biology), 1903***

Published by Verlag von Gustav
Fischer
First edition

Wilhelm Schallmayer (1857–1919) was a psychiatrist and Germany’s first advocate of eugenics. According to Schallmayer, ‘racial hygiene’ (eugenics) was supposed to become a common philosophy, unifying all kinds of political parties for the purpose of improving heredity within the population. In *Vererbung und Auslese im Lebenslauf der Völker* he sought to demonstrate that a shift in ethical values away from the traditional family model and excepted gender roles eventually had resulted in a rapid increase in homosexuality and subsequent decline of Greco-Roman civilisation. Highly inspired by Darwinian evolution theory and the idea of

the preservation of the species through biological development, Schallmayer believed that the preservation of the state must become the main goal of politics in order to survive in the competitive struggle among nations. In contrast to other eugenicists of his time, who asserted and promoted cultural and intellectual superiority of the ‘Nordic race’ above others, Schallmayer’s approach was not racist. He was the first to address the subject from a managerial logic of efficiency. Thus among his suggestions was the introduction of a system of bonuses and fees in order to encourage high-level civil servants and representatives of educated middle classes to have larger families.

Eugen Fischer
***Die Rehobother Bastards und
das Bastardierungsproblem beim
Menschen. Anthropologische
und ethnographische Studien
am Rehobother Bastardvolk in
Deutsch-Sudwest-Afrika (The
Rehoboth Bastards (Bastards) and
the Problem of Miscegenation
Among Humans: Anthropological
and Ethnographic Studies on
Rehoboth Bastards in German
Southwest Africa), 1913***

Published by Verlag von Gustav
Fischer
First edition

The Rehoboth Bastards (Bastards) and the Problem of Miscegenation Among Humans: Anthropological and Ethnographic Studies on Rehoboth Bastards in German Southwest Africa is a field study by a notorious anthropologist and eugenicist, Eugen Fisher. In 1906, Fischer conducted field research in German South West Africa (now Namibia) that aimed to determine whether human heredity followed Gregor Mendel’s ‘laws of inheritance’ by studying the interbreeding of two different human ‘races’. The small community of Rehoboth Bastards, the offspring of German men and indigenous women, was very specific – the group did not form any officially recognised ethnicity and was considered to be different from the rest of the native population. In this context, Fischer conducted the

first medical experiments on people in concentration camps, the harbinger of Nazi practice that would follow a few decades later. In doing so, he collected anthropometric data from 300 people, the photos of which are included as an appendix in his book. Following the Mendelian theory, he demonstrated that such interbreeding did not result in a new intermediate 'race' that was reproductively stable. In the last part of the book he describes the Rehoboth Bastards as an illustration of "the clash of advanced European (*Boer*) culture" and "lower positioned Hottentot culture", a "miscegenation" that led to racial and cultural decline. Despite the dubious methodology and substantiation, and sometimes even total lack thereof, the book influenced Germany's colonial policies (including a prohibition of mixed marriages) and formed the 'scientific' basis for the Nuremberg anti-Semitic and racial laws (1935) in Nazi Germany. Shocking too is Fischer's plea for genocide:

"So accord them just the measure of protection they may require as a race which is inferior to us, in order to continue their existence: nothing more, and only as long as they are of use

to us. Otherwise survival of the fittest, i.e., to my mind, in this case, extinction. This point of view sounds almost brutally egotistic, but whoever thinks through thoroughly the notion of race, cannot arrive at a different conclusion".

Hans F. K. Günther
Rassenkunde Europas (The Racial Elements of European History), 1926
Published by J. F. Lehmanns Verlag
First edition

Hans Friedrich Karl Günther (1891-1968) was a linguist by training. Although he did not have any background in anthropology or eugenics, publisher J.F. Lehmann commissioned him in the 1920s to write popular science books on the theme of 'race'. His books were intended for the general public, yet dismissed as unscientific by several scientists. Nevertheless, they had an important influence on Adolf Hitler's racist theories. In the early 1930s, Günther was appointed professor of anthropology at the University of Jena by the local Nazi administration, and both Hitler and Hermann Göring attended his inaugural address. He was the only racial theorist to join the party before the Nazis came to power in 1933,

and was nicknamed 'Rassen-Günther' and 'Rassenpapst' (race pope) in those circles. Driven by the idea that "a race shows itself in a human group which is marked off from every other human group through its own proper combination of bodily and mental characteristics, and in turn produces only its like", Günther provides an overview of five different European 'races', describes their physical and mental characteristics, and emphasises a crucial role played by the 'Nordic' subgroup. He comes up with a conclusion that North Western Europe is the original cradle of the 'Nordic race'. Extensive visual material highlights racial types and historical events. After World War II, Günther was imprisoned for three years. He was released without charge and even continued to publish on eugenics and 'race'. *The Racial Elements of European History* was suppressed after the War, but has become available again today, listed as Ethnological study.

Eugen Fischer. Hans F.K. Günther
Deutsche Köpfe nordischer Rasse (German heads of the Nordic type), 1927

Published by J. F. Lehmanns Verlag
First edition

In 1926, German readers of racial magazines were challenged to submit portraits of the ideal 'Nordic' man or woman. Participants were advised to delve into eugenics by reading books such as *Menschliche Erheitlehre und Rassenhygiene* by Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer and Fritz Lenz. In this way, publisher J. F. Lehmann, who sponsored the competition, and Eugen Fischer and Hans Günther, the competition's jury, wanted to popularise 'race' theory by not only getting people to read about it, but by directly involving them as well. In addition to an introduction by both jury members, *Deutsche Köpfe nordischer Rasse* also features 50 photos of the winners and laureates. It is striking that, although the judges described the winning photo in the category 'men' as 'fully in line with the Nordic racial ideal', they could not identify any submission in the category 'women' that could capture 'the essence of the Nordic race'. And so the first prize in this category wasn't awarded. This points to the focus on masculinity in

'race' theories and, by extension, in the entire Nazi ideology.

Erwin Baur, Eugen Fischer, Fritz Lenz
Menschliche Erblchkeitslehre und Rassenhygiene (Human heredity and Racial Hygiene), 1927
Published by J. F. Lehmanns Verlag
First edition

Human heredity and Racial Hygiene was considered to be the "standard textbook on racial hygiene" in Germany and the blueprint for Nazism's attitude toward other 'races'. The book was commissioned by J. F. Lehmann, an important publisher of medical and nationalist books who became a member of the NSDAP in 1931. Divided into three sections it covers the topic from different perspectives: biological (Outline of the General Theory of Variation and Heredity by German botanist and geneticist E. Baur), anthropological (The Racial Differences of Humans by E. Fischer), and medical (The Pathological Inheritance by F. Lenz). The book served as an inspiration for biological support towards the racial theories of Adolf Hitler, and provided the foundation of scientific legitimacy for eugenics programmes against hereditary diseases, including mental illness.

Das Wunder des Lebens

Das Wunder des Lebens (The Miracle of Life) exhibition, 1935

Das Wunder des Lebens was a propaganda exhibition organised to promote the racial ideology of the Nazis. It was shown in Berlin at the Kaiserdamm and the Deutsches Hygiene-Museum, Dresden, in 1935, and later travelled to other locations. Organised by Bruno Gebhard (1901-1985), a professional physician who was known as a curator of several renowned propaganda exhibitions, including *Die Frau in Familie, Haus und Beruf* (1933) and *Deutsches Volk - Deutsche Arbeit* (1934), the exhibition *Das Wunder des Lebens* introduced new representations on the theme of 'Der Mensch' ('The Human'). The major aspects of this extensive show were 'Die Lehre vom Leben' ('The Teachings of Life') with its highlight being the transparent sculpture of man, 'Der Träger des Lebens' ('The Bearer of Life') featuring the German family, and 'Die Erhaltung des Lebens' ('The Preservation of Life'), dedicated to the health system in Germany. Pictorial material presented in the exhibition included healthy 'Aryan' types, different images of Jewish

people, images of physically or mentally disabled people, and representations of other 'undesirable' categories who, according to Nazi ideology, were considered to be a threat to German public health. The elaborate avant-garde design of the catalogue of the exhibition was created by renowned designer Herbert Bayer (1900-1985). Neither Gebhard nor Bayer, despite being involved in the organisation of the most significant and popular Nazi propaganda exhibitions, belonged to the Nazi party themselves and had to flee to the US in the following years.

Der gläserne Mensch (The Transparent Man), postcard, 1935 (↓)

This rare postcard shows *The Transparent Man* also known as 'Der Träger des Lebens' ('The Bearer of Life'), which was the main attraction of the lavishly designed *Das Wunder des Lebens* – a propaganda exhibition that took place in Berlin in 1935. The main idea of the exhibition was purely eugenicist – on both the protection of the physical body from diseases through the latest achievements of modern hygiene, and the maintenance of



the so-called 'body' of German folk clean with the help of 'racial hygiene'. Within a few years, *The Transparent Man* became the symbol of German-specific understanding of man and health. It also served as a centrepiece to the traveling version of *The Miracle of Life* exhibition presented in Antwerp in 1936.

Nazism

The Grand Hotel Auction, organised by Theodor Fischer, took place 1939 in Lucerne, Switzerland. Titled *Gemälde und Plastiken Moderner Meister aus Deutschen Museen*, (*Paintings and Sculptures of Modern Masters from German Museums*), the auction was to sell off 126 of the paintings, many of which had been exhibited in the infamous Entartete Kunst exhibition first organised by the Nazis two years previously in Munich, and which subsequently toured Germany. Joseph Goebbels, Minister of Propaganda in Nazi Germany, proposed to sell some of the more valuable paintings to gather foreign currency for supporting the war effort. Though the auction was met with protest from institutions around the world, Fischer insisted that the proceeds would be distributed among German museums to acquire new items. The auction was widely publicised, and included works by modern masters including Pablo Picasso, Paul Klee and Oskar Kokoschka. In Belgium, three institutions decided to send delegates – the Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Liege, Brussels and Antwerp. The delegation saw the auction, not only as an opportunity to make key purchases of modernist art, but also to save examples of Entartete Kunst from destruction. These three paintings by Lovis Corinth, George Grosz and Karl Hofer were acquired by the Royal Museums of Fine Arts Antwerp (KMSKA).

Lovis Corinth

Georg Brandes, 1925

Lovis Corinth (1858–1925) was a German artist and writer, whose paintings were a bridge between the styles of impressionism and expressionism, creating portraits and landscapes of great vitality. It was after suffering a stroke in 1911, becoming partially paralysed on his left side, that his work took on a looser, more expressionist quality. An influential painter and thinker, he was President of the Berlin Secession from 1915 to 1925. During the Third Reich, Corinth's work was condemned by the regime as 'degenerate', and in 1937, the Nazis removed almost 300 of his works from public collections, and exhibited seven of them in the infamous *Entartete Kunst* exhibition of 1937. This portrait is of his friend, the Danish critic Georg Brandes, who was born into a non-observant Jewish family in Copenhagen. Brandes was not fond of his portrait however, and upon learning of Corinth's death, he wrote in a letter to his secretary that it was Corinth's "punishment for such a wretched portrait of myself".



Lovis Corinth

Georg Brandes, 1925

Oil on canvas

111×91.5×6.5 cm (framed)

Courtesy of Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

Photo credit: inv.no. 2452, KMSKA (CCO)

George Grosz

Der Schriftsteller Walter Mehring (The Writer Walter Mehring), 1926

George Grosz (1893–1959) was a German artist known for his vibrant and satirical caricatures of Berlin life in the 1920s, in the difficult interbellum period in German and European history. A prominent member of the Berlin Dada and New Objectivity group during the era of the Weimar Republic, Grosz was anti-Nazi, and left Germany shortly before Hitler came to power. His portrait is of his friend and writer Walter Mehring, who was one of the most renowned authors in the Weimar Republic. His writing was banned during the Third Reich, and his books were also burnt during the Nazi book burnings of 1933. Persecuted, he fled Germany. In his portrait, Mehring sits in a chair smoking, staring wistfully into the distance, and behind him we see a scene of war and ruination.



George Grosz

Der Schriftsteller Walter Mehring (The Writer Walter Mehring), 1926

Oil on canvas

110×79.5 cm (unframed)

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

© SABAM Belgium, 2020, George Grosz, De schrijver

Walter Mehring, inv.no. 2454, KMSKA

Karl Hofer

Men Round a Table, date unknown

Karl Hofer (1878–1955) was a German expressionist painter, and former Director of the Berlin Academy of Fine Arts. His practice as an artist was distinguished by the belief that there was no meaningful distinction to be made between abstract and figurative painting, and that the two were entirely compatible with each other. Hofer stood against Nazism, and even published articles, such as 'Wie kämpfen wir gegen ein Drittes Reich?' ('How do we fight against a Third Reich?'), published in the communist newspaper *Welt am Abend*. Despite rejecting Nazism, Hofer looked to find ways for art to find acceptance by the regime. He, for example, also wrote the article 'Der Kampf um die Kunst' ('The Struggle for Art') in a series of articles on German art in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*, arguing that German art was largely "free of Jews", like no other area of society other than the military. Ultimately though, his work was deemed as 'degenerate art' by the Nazis, who presented eight of his paintings in the 1937 *Entartete Kunst* exhibition.



Karl Hofer

Men Round a Table, date unknown

Oil on canvas

117×140.5 cm (unframed)

Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

© SABAM Belgium, 2020, Karl Hofer, Mannen aan tafel, inv.no. 2453, KMSKA

Werner Peiner

Der Thronhimmel, Gobelintapestry design for Carinhall, 1939–1940



Werner Peiner (1897–1984) was one of the most renowned painters of Nazi Germany. This is the original design by Peiner for a huge Gobelintapestry for the library of Carinhall, the country residence of Nazi military leader Hermann Göring, northeast of Berlin. The Gobelintapestry was created based on this design measuring 10.2×7.1 metres, and went into production at the Manufacture des Gobelins in Paris, renowned for making tapestries for Louis XIV and Napoleon. *Der Thronhimmel* had not been completed when the Americans liberated Paris in 1944, and the unfinished Gobelintapestry found its way into the possession of the Louvre Museum in Paris. Along with three female figures representing Gerechtigkeit (justice), Tapferkeit (bravery) and Weisheit (wisdom), we see figures such as Siegfried, hero of Germanic mythology, and Roman god Hercules in the design. We see from Peiner's design, intended for a residence filled with looted art from across Europe, that German culture under Nazism was conceptualised within Germanic and Greco-Roman mythology.

Werner Peiner

Der Thronhimmel, Gobelintapestry design for Carinhall, 1939–1940

Watercolour

128×91×10 cm

Courtesy of www.germanartgallery.eu

Photo: www.germanartgallery.eu

Adolf Hitler

Mein Kampf (My Struggle), 1940

Published by Zentralverlag der NSDAP

Tornister-Ausgabe (Knapsack Edition)

Mein Kampf is an autobiographical manifesto by Nazi Party leader Adolf Hitler (1889–1945). Originally published in two volumes in 1925 and 1927, it was then abridged and became a best seller with more than five million copies sold by 1939. The book provides the outlines of Hitler's racist ideology. It describes the origins and developments of Hitler's anti-Semitism, and his sentiments against Marxism and communism, which he believed to be weapons of Jewish descent. Identifying Germans as representatives of the superior 'Aryan race', Hitler argues for the extermination of the "international poisoners", and also declaring the need for German future expansion towards the East and the creation of a *Lebensraum* (living space) at the expense of inferior nations. Thus, the book provided the blueprint for the Nazi's military campaign and genocidal actions during the Second World War. In 1940, a special compact version in a red cover, the Tornister-Ausgabe, or Knapsack Edition, was released for German soldiers fighting on the front line.

Blut und Boden (Blood and Soil)

'Blut und Boden' was a key slogan of Nazi ideology. This included the organisation of agriculture, referring to the nationalistic ideal of an intrinsic bond between the 'racially pure' national body (*Blut*) and settlement land (*Boden*). The nationalist ideology was based on the imaginary idea of traditionally sedentary German peasantry in opposition to rootless Jewish nomadism. The programme was famous for its wide ideological and propaganda support. The government encouraged the return of youth in cities back to villages, because cities were primarily seen as places of decadent modernity and overall 'un-German' life. With the help of the 'Blut und Boden' policy, German society was meant to be restructured into a farming society. It also provided ideological justification for the German military expansion into Central and Eastern European territory.

Nazi propaganda exhibitions

Wolfgang Willrich

Säuberung des Kunsttempels. Eine kunstpolitische Kampfschrift zur Gesundung deutscher Kunst im Geiste nordischer Art (Purge of the Temple of Art. An Art-Political Campaign for the Recovery of German Art in the Spirit of Nordic Art), 1937

Published by J. F. Lehmanns Verlag
First edition

Wolfgang Willrich (1897–1948) was a German artist, writer and one of the organisers of the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition. In the 1930s, he worked briefly at the Ministry of Culture under Nazi rule. His portraits of Aryan men, women and children were distributed by the Nazi party in the form of posters and postcards, he also contributed his paintings to *the Great German Art Exhibitions*. In his book, which was a major inspiration for Nazi Minister of Propaganda Joseph Goebbels, Willrich gives a negative overview of modern art in Germany, viciously attacking such prominent modernist artists as Barlach, Dix, Grosz, Heckel, Nolde, Schmidt-Rottluff and others whose work fell victim to subsequent confiscation and elimination. The book opens with a quote from Hitler's *Mein Kampf* and a foreword in which Willrich proclaims the cleansing of the art temple to

be an important duty which not only concerns aesthetic preferences, but rather, the issues of mental health. According to the author, the 'Temple of Art' should be reserved for art promoting the wellbeing of the Nazi 'Volksgemeinschaft' (People's Community). Even in Nazi circles, Willrich's views were perceived as (too) radical.

Dr. Adolf Dresler, ed., *Deutsche Kunst und entartete "Kunst": Kunstwerk und Zerrbild als Spiegel der Weltanschauung (German Art and Degenerate "Art": Work of Art and Caricature as Mirror of the Worldview), 1938*
Published by Deutsche Volksverlag
First edition

Published in 1938, a year after the opening of the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition, this book is a typical example of Nazi criticism of modernist art, with expressionist and abstract works being juxtaposed with politically favourable ('Deutsche') German works. The artworks condemned by the author were selected from the list of 'degenerate artworks' presented at the infamous exhibition. The pairings of illustrations in the book are arranged by subject and aimed to show the reader the difference between ambiguous modernist creations which always require additional comments,

and true German artworks, which according to the author, have no need for any explanation and “immediately provide German people with the experience of real art”.

Entartete Musik, poster, 1938 (↓)

The exhibition entitled *Entartete Musik* was organised in Düsseldorf in 1938 by Hans Severus Ziegler, a leading cultural manager under the Nazis. This Nazi propaganda poster is a crude exaggeration of the original poster for the opera *Jonny spielt auf* that was popular in 1920s, the

times of the ‘golden era’ in the Weimar Republic. The exhibition was a part of a larger and more well-known Nazi campaign against ‘degenerate art’. Similar to the policy in fine arts, the Nazi government attempted to discredit and ban any kind of music that was believed to be harmful for German society. It considered several types of music to be degenerate, basing its judgement on ‘racial’ prejudice (such as music by Jewish- and African- origin composers), or related to political confrontation (Marxist or Bolsheviks composers) and modernist music, which



was considered to be inferior to German classical music of the past and offended the Nazi sense of civilisation and evolution. Composers whose music was perceived as degenerate were disparaged, ostracised and politically persecuted.

Grosse Deutsche Kunstausstellung (The Great German Art Exhibition), 1937
Published by Verlag Knorr & Hirth
First edition

The Great German Art Exhibition took place eight times from 1937 to 1944 at the Haus der Deutschen Kunst (House of German Art) in Munich, a monumental neoclassical building which had been constructed especially for this purpose. The exhibition was propagated as the most important cultural event in Nazi Germany and the main representative of art under National Socialism. The first exhibition opened just a day before the *Entartete kunst* exhibition, so that ‘degenerate art’ and the art promoted by the regime, the so-called ‘German art’, would be intentionally juxtaposed. In his opening speech on July 18, 1937, Hitler gave a comprehensive presentation of the National Socialist understanding of

‘German art’, defining the new German art stylistically and ideologically with the words: *Deutsch sein, heißt klar sein* (To be German means to be clear), which was implied to be “logical” and above all true.

Der Ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew), 1938
Published by Verlag Franz Eher Nachfolger
First edition

The propagandistic exhibition, conceived to travel, first opened at the Bibliotheksbau des Deutschen Museums (Library of the German Museum) in Munich in 1937. It is regarded as one of the key examples in the series of ‘shaming exhibitions’, which began in 1937 with *Antibolschewistische Ausstellung* (*Anti-Bolshevik Exhibition*), followed by the *Entartete Kunst* exhibition and continued with the exhibition *Der Ewige Jude* (*The Eternal Jew*). It was also the largest pre-war anti-Semitic exhibition, which was intended to represent a supposed Jewish attempt at bolshevizing Nazi Germany. The cover of the catalogue features the exhibition poster that presented an ‘Eastern’ Jew wearing a kaftan, holding gold coins in one hand

and a whip in the other, with a map with the communist symbol – the hammer and sickle – under his arm. The exhibition was shown later in Vienna, Berlin, Dresden and other cities, and reportedly provoked the rise of anti-Semitism in the cities where the exhibition was held.

Eugen Fischer, Gerhard Kittel, *Das Antike Weltjudentum: Tatsachen, Texte, Bilder (World Judaism of Antiquity: Facts, Texts, Pictures)*, 1943

Published by Hanseatische Verlagsanstalt
First edition

Eugen Fischer and Gerhard Kittel's book *World Judaism of Antiquity: Facts, Texts, Pictures* was considered so important it was printed despite the strict limits of publications due to the rationing of paper and budget cuts during the War. While Fischer is infamous as an ardent advocate of eugenics, Kittel is a more paradoxical figure, a prominent lexicographer of biblical languages and one of the most competent New Testament experts, he was also known as an open anti-Semite and an enthusiastic supporter of the Nazis. A striking example of theological anti-Semitism, this richly illustrated study consists of a historical overview of 'World

Judaism' provided by Kittel and Fisher's analysis of the visual content from a racial perspective. According to the authors, 'World Judaism' which has world domination as its ultimate goal, has been present from the ancient times. Kittel presents an anthology of anti-Semitic clichés with racist interpretations, disguised as a historical analysis of classical texts, images and archaeological discoveries, with the aim of portraying 'the Jew' as an unchanging character because:

"Always, in any period, whether in the first or the twentieth century, the dream of World Judaism is absolute world dominion, then and now".

Anti-Semitism in Flanders

Jan Stoutenburg, *De Protocollen van de wijzen van Sion (The Protocols of the Elders of Zion)*, Antwerp, Volksverwering, 1938
ALAVA – TU Berlin

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion is probably the most famous hoax in history. The text is a fictional account of an alleged secret meeting of Jewish leaders. In 24 short chapters (protocols) it describes how Jews could realise world domination and

what the Jewish world state to be established would look like. Anti-Semitic groups use this conspiracy theory over and over again to legitimise actions and violence against Jews. The document first surfaced at the beginning of the 20th century in Russia. During the Russian Revolution, the text was used to justify the pogroms that killed more than 100,000 Jews. From 1917 onwards, the text was spread across Europe and the United States.

Although as early as 1903, the *Protocols* were dismissed as spurious by Tsar Nicholas II, in 1921, a journalist from The Times presented evidence that it was a forgery, and in 1935 a Swiss court ruled it to be 'ridiculous nonsense' (a verdict that was overruled on appeal in 1937 because the court stated it had no jurisdiction to adjudicate a political text). They were cited and republished time and again. Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf* that protests against the *Protocols*, stating they were forgeries, only proved them to be real. Several passages in his book were taken verbatim from it. *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* played an important role in state ideology of Nazi Germany and in justifying the Shoah.
De Protocollen van de wijzen van

Sion was published as a brochure in 1937 by Volksverwering (People's Defence), an anti-Semitic, extreme right-wing group operating around René Lambrichts, in Antwerp. Most of this brochure is devoted to a Dutch translation of the *Protocols* by Jan Stoutenburg. In the introduction, Pieter Molenbroek writes about the origin and 'authenticity' of the text. With this edition, Volksverwering tried to convince the public in Flanders and the Netherlands that Jews were seeking to overthrow the existing social order and take over power. Under German rule, the organisation increasingly turned to intimidation and violence against Jews. Volksverwering was involved in the Antwerp pogrom of 1941, and disclosed addresses of Jews in order to have them deported.

De SS-Man. Kampblad voor de Algemeene Schuttscharen Vlaanderen (SS-Man. Campaign newsletter for the General SS of Flanders)
ALAVA – TU Berlin

On the initiative of the German SS leadership, the General SS Flanders was founded in November 1940 under the leadership of Antwerp lawyer René Lagrou. Ward Hermans became

Colonialism

editor-in-chief of propaganda magazine *De SS-Man. Kampblad voor de Algemeene Schuttscharen Vlaanderen*. In addition to propagating National Socialism, stirring up radicalism, promoting the integration of Flanders into the Greater German Reich and recruiting Flemish youth for the Waffen-SS, each week *De SS-Man* opened the attack on Het Vlaamsch Nationaal Verbond or VNV, a radical Flemish nationalist party that strived for an independent Flanders (and who also collaborated with the Nazi occupiers). The weekly magazine received a relatively large readership, with editions of up to 15,000 copies circulated.

Vincent Meessen

The Intruder, 2005

In Vincent Meessen's video *The Intruder*, we witness an action by the artist across different neighbourhoods in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso. We see the artist dressed from top to bottom in an outfit made from the white blossom of cotton plants, with his hands the only visible part of his body. We see the artist strolling around, holding a stick or staff, while observers in the street can be heard commenting on this strange alien presence: "Hey, what's that damned thing?". There is a play with whiteness – the white of the cotton, as writer T. J. Demos has noted on the work: "*the figure presented a spectre of white skin under a white mask (ambiguously inverting Franz Fanon's famous book title)*". And there is whiteness as well in the sense of the white oppressor. Though the outfit, made by a cooperative of women for the artist, is a largely ambiguous mass of white, the head seems to have a large beard, for some observers looking like Father Christmas, but also possessing a certain resemblance to that of King Leopold II, Belgian coloniser of the Congo. The use of cotton, gifted to the artist by one of the main local producers in Burkina Faso, is highly symbolic. Cotton, or 'white gold' as it is sometimes referred to, was one of the resources deeply associated with the enterprise of European colonisers in different regions of Africa. Meessen's ghostly apparition is simultaneously vulnerable and threatening, known and unknown, reflecting historically loaded tensions when exploring the Western experience of colonisation as that of Otherness.



Vincent Meessen
The Intruder, 2005
Video
7:26 min
Courtesy of the artist
Image: the artist

Ibrahim Mahama

On Monumental Silences, 2018

Ibrahim Mahama's work *On Monumental Silences* considers the controversial statue of Constant De Deken located in the Wilrijk suburb of Antwerp. De Deken was a Christian missionary who travelled to China and the Congo. In 1904, the statue depicting De Deken standing over a kneeling black man was erected in Wilrijk, where it still stands today. The sculpture is an outcome of a workshop organised by Extra City Kunsthal and led by the artist, reflecting on the statue. The sculpture is cast in black rubber, a material which is symbolic, as it was one of the main exports from the Congo under the brutal slave colonisation of Leopold II, as a private enterprise. *On Monumental Silences* reminds us that once people have been exploited once, they can be exploited again and again – freedom was taken away by slavery, valuable natural resources stripped by colonial enterprise, and even belief systems replaced by foreign missionaries. In relation to the subjects addressed in this work, Mahama has stated: "In my opinion, we have to focus on considering the new choices we could make under the present circumstances more carefully, rather than blaming things on specific historical circumstances. After all, we share the same history".



Ibrahim Mahama

On Monumental Silences, 2018

Rubber

210×60×80 cm

Collection M HKA / Collection Flemish Community

Photo: M HKA

Belgian Institute for World Affairs

Declaration of Dependence, 1989

Jef Lambrecht was a journalist renowned as one of Belgium's foremost experts in the current affairs of the Middle-East. Together with Karel Schoetens, Lambrecht founded the artistic project the Belgian Institute for World Affairs (B.I.W.A.) in 1982, as a way to reflect on the peculiarity of Belgium, including its relations to the rest of the world. In 1989, during the ongoing crisis between Belgium and its former colony Zaire (its former colony Congo and now Democratic Republic of Congo) concerning the waiving of debt, B.I.W.A. organised the action *Declaration of Dependence*, which declared unilaterally that Belgium was a dependent of its former colony Zaire. Beginning as a ritualistic action on the Linkeroever (Left Bank) of Antwerp, the artists made their declaration in the pouring rain in front of a minimal crowd. They then visited the consulate of Zaire to deliver the declaration, but who ultimately declined it. The story nonetheless caused a small media storm, and questions were even raised in parliament. The event elevated to the level of a minor diplomatic incident, with Zaire's president Mobutu stating press freedom in Belgium was out of control.



Belgian Institute for World Affairs

Declaration of Dependence, 1989

BIWA (Jef Lambrecht and Karel Schoetens) together with secretary at the consulate of Zaire.

Gifted to M HKA/CKV by vzw Samarkand

Photo: Ariane Tierssonne

Colonial Exhibitions and the Human Zoo

Facilitated by the two emerging scientific disciplines of ethnology and anthropology, 'ethnological exhibitions', also referred to as 'human zoos', emerged in the late 19th century, operating as the most significant events for propagating imperialism. Introduced in Europe by Carl Hagenbeck, a German merchant of wild animals, they were a spectacle of 'exotic' indigenous peoples from the distant territories of Africa, the Arctic, India, Ceylon and Southeast Asia, typically

housed within the constructed setting of a native village. Hagenbeck's exhibitions in the Tierpark, Hamburg-Stellingen, were chosen as the reference for subsequent 'human zoos' within the framework of colonial exhibitions. Organised to boost trade, they also displayed a range of ethnographical material accompanied by individuals originating from colonies. Perhaps the most visited and notable colonial exhibitions were those held in Paris in the tropical garden of the Bois de Vincennes and the Jardin d'Acclimatation. Despite enormous interest from the general

public and the millions of visitors attending the exhibitions, there was a certain rise in social consciousness – thus, there was a call to boycott the 1931 Paris Colonial Exhibition supported by famous Surrealist artists and members of the French communist party.

'Human zoos' were also part of the colonial sections of Belgian International Exhibitions from the end of the 19th- until the mid-20th centuries. One of the most remarkable events was the 1897 Tervuren Exhibition, which displayed the products and people of the Congo Independent State, which was in the personal possession of King Leopold II until 1908. A lavishly illustrated guide book in the style of Art Nouveau provided an insight into the grandeur of the exposition that took place in the newly built Palais des Colonies and its gardens, where scenes of everyday African life attracted thousands of visitors. Besides being major propaganda for the economic potential of Belgian presence in the Congo, it also emphasised the 'civilising' work of Belgian missions. Colonial exhibitions contributed the most to the creation of the image of the inferior savage Other, and the legitimatisation of colonialism.

International Exhibition: Colonial, Maritime and Flemish Art, Antwerp, 1930 (←)

“Antwerp, with its powerful and ever expanding port. Antwerp, whose population was the first to understand and support all of Leopold II's bold colonial plans. Antwerp, whose shipping lines connect our colony to the Motherland...”
– Opening speech on 28 April 1930 by Alfred Martougin, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the *International Exhibition: Colonial, Maritime and Flemish Art*.

In 1930, after 1885 and 1894, Antwerp organised a world exhibition. It would be the third and last time. As 1930 coincided with the celebration of Belgium's centenary, several cities had applied. The government decided to hold the exhibition at two locations simultaneously: Liege and Antwerp. Thematically, a division was made between industry and science in Liege; and trade and colonies in Antwerp. However, the Bureau of International Expositions didn't recognise the double exhibition as a world exposition. For Antwerp, the *International Exhibition: Colonial, Maritime and*



Flemish Art was very important. In addition to city marketing, urban expansion – a fully new city section was created between Berchem and the Scheldt, today called the Tentoonstellingswijk (Exhibition District) – as well as major infrastructure works (including the construction of the Waasland Tunnel), the exhibition looked to turn Antwerp into a metropolis for the future.

The city itself built two bridges over the Kielsevest and two exhibition buildings, which were subsequently converted into the Christ the King Church on the one hand, and a school (in the Pestalozzi Street) on the other. In these buildings a retrospective of old Flemish art took place – probably the largest ever held. Unlike in 1885 and 1894, the 1930 exhibition did not feature a Congolese village. However, there was another attraction: visitors were able to view a commercially operated ‘negro village’. The colonial government wanted to focus on Belgian achievements in mining and agriculture in Congo; on an extensive collection of sculptures, masks and utensils; and on Catholic missions. The monumental ‘Congo Palace’, especially built for this purpose, acquired an oriental, ‘Eastern’

character, because the designers believed that black Africa had no architecture of its own.

Apartheid

South Africa was already experiencing racial segregation during British colonial rule. ‘Apartheid’ refers to the government policy of segregation and white supremacy that was inflicted on the country during the second half of the 20th century. In many languages, ‘apartheid’ – a loanword from Afrikaans – has become synonymous with all forms of racial segregation. After the 1948 elections, all South Africans were divided into three categories: ‘white’, ‘coloured’, and ‘Bantu’ (all Black Africans). The aim of the system was to allow the white minority to rule over the other groups. The main instrument for achieving apartheid was the Group Areas Act, which classified people according to ‘race’ in different residential areas, also introducing a legally established system of separate schools, universities, hospitals, buses and beaches. In the 1990s, after decades of violence and bloody repression, the apartheid regime gave way under international pressure. In 1994, with the first free general elections, the



system officially collapsed and Nelson Mandela, figurehead of black liberation movement ANC (African National Congress), came to power.

Op die Horison: kwartaalblad van die Nederduitse Gereformeerde Kerk in Suid-Afrika (Quarterly newsletter of the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa), 1940-60s

The Dutch Reformed Church, the oldest church community in South Africa, openly supported the apartheid policy. In 1997, at the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission, it pleaded guilty for its part in apartheid.

“The Bible teaches that God wanted racial apartheid and that we, as Christians, must not ignore this regulation of God. Hence also our right to keep our own race and spiritual heritage pure.” – Prof. Dr. J.H. Kritzinger, ‘Rasse-apartheid in die Lig van die Skrif’ (‘Racial Apartheid in the Light of Scripture’) in *Op die Horizon*, March 1947, p. 31

Non aux Oranges Outspan d’Afrique du Sud poster, c. 1980 (←)

In the 1970s, South African citrus brand Outspan became a symbol of the exploitation of the black population under the apartheid regime. A boycott campaign by

several NGOs against Outspan aimed to put pressure on the South African government and to raise awareness of apartheid in the European public.

Négritude

Papa Ibra Tall

La semeuse d'étoiles, c. 1970s

In the era of President Léopold Senghor, Papa Ibra Tall was not only active as an artist, but also influential in the cultural dimension of Senegalese politics. He helped implement the Dakar School, a movement conceived after decolonisation to fulfil the philosophy of *Négritude*. Senghor conceived of *Négritude*: "To assume the values of civilisation of the Black world [...] thus bringing the contribution of the new Negroes to the civilisation of the universal". Papa Ibra Tall learnt of black power militants and the American black jazz movement in Paris after studying at the Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture et les Beaux-Arts de Paris in 1955. In 1960, the year of independence, he returned to Senegal and became head of the Section for Research in Black Plastic Arts. It was at the Sèvres School of Craft that in 1962–1963 that he became familiar with ceramics, screen-printing and, above all, tapestry, in which he then excelled at the National Tapestry Manufactory created by Senghor in 1966. A large tapestry depicting a celestial figure creating a galaxy, *Semeuse d'étoiles* (*The Sower of Stars*) is a key example of Papa Ibra Tall's work as an artist. Tall cited two factors to explain his interest in tapestry. Firstly, he and Senghor believed that easel painting in the European tradition would take time to mature, and other artistic media, including tapestry, as well as aesthetic characteristics such as abstraction and decorative approaches, were considered more 'African'. And despite importing the materials, technology and techniques from tapestry manufacturers in France, weaving was considered inherently in fitting with the *Négritude* philosophy.



Papa Ibra Tall

Semeuse d'étoiles, c. 1970s

Tapestry in textile

298×291 cm

Courtesy of the artist, KADIST collection

Photo: M HKA

Matti Braun

Pierre Pierre, 2010

Matti Braun's installation explores the complex figure of Léopold Sédar Senghor, the poet who was Senegal's first elected president after decolonisation from 1960 to 1980. Two sets of 10 prints, titled *Pierre Pierre* and *Pierre* respectively, bring together different references, from Senghor to Surrealism, to Arno Breker and his proposal for a monument for African liberation in Dakar, to a mask motif from the poster for the 1er Festival Mondial des Arts Negres in Dakar in 1966, and another with an image of a sculpture exhibited at the festival. Others are more elliptical – coloured light reflecting on a marble floor, or a sandy beach. We are left to make sense of this web of associations the artist collected during his research into the life of Senghor and the *Négritude* cultural movement that he was one of the main proponents of. The installation also includes a set of abstract paintings made with paint on raw silk. The colours have been allowed to run and mingle freely, alluding to the development and transformation of personalities, whilst taking influence from other thinkers or outside forces.



Matti Braun

Pierre Pierre, 2010

Installation view

Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Photo: M HKA

Négritude

Négritude was conceived as an emancipatory cultural movement, initiated in the Interwar period by francophone intellectuals of the African diaspora who sought to reclaim the value of African culture. Based upon an appropriation of the French word *nègre*, which like its English counterpart is considered to be derogatory, the term itself is a neologism which gives a positive sense to a pejorative word. It was coined by Martinican poet Aimé Césaire, who along with French Guyanese poet Léon Damas, and Léopold Sédar Senghor (a poet and first President of Senegal after decolonisation) was considered to be the founder of *Négritude*. The key proponent of *Négritude*, Senghor would further develop the poetry movement into a philosophy based on a ‘strategically essentialist’ (term by G. Spivak) notion of black identity. The *Négritude* conception of culture remained the impetus and guiding principle of Senghor’s thinking.

L.G. Damas, ed.
Latitudes françaises volume I: Poètes d’expression française [d’Afrique Noire, Madagascar, Réunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Indochine, Guyane] 1900-1945 (French Latitudes volume I: French-Speaking Poets [from Black Africa, Madagascar, Reunion, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Indochina, Guyana]), 1947
Published by Éditions du Seuil
First edition

Léon-Gontran Damas (1912–1978) was a French poet, politician, and one of the founders of the *Négritude* movement together with Aimé Césaire and Léopold Senghor. This anthology was published in 1947 a year before Senghor’s pivotal work *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française (Anthology of New Negro and Malagasy Poetry in French)* and served as a manifesto for the movement. It contains poems by French-speaking authors from six regions: Sub-Saharan Africa, The Antilles (Guadeloupe and Martinique), Guyana, Indochina, Madagascar and Réunion island, with many of the poems published for the first time. The publication is significant in a political sense as it represents an attempt by colonial-era writers to deconstruct and transform French language and culture, in order to create a new

and authentic poetic language and culture, “equal and fraternal to the French one”. In the introduction, Damas pays tribute to Étienne Léro (1910-1939), who is considered to be the first French poet of African descent to publicly identify himself as a Surrealist. Surrealism, with its ideas of refusal of bourgeois society and its privilege of the unconscious in its quest for freedom and self-fulfilment, was adopted by some *Négritude* theoreticians. Moreover, it provided them with an emancipatory approach to the language. Forging nouns, inventing names (like the term *Négritude* itself), breaking with orthodoxies and introducing new rhythms and styles of typography, they sought to find the ways to transform the coloniser’s language into a language of their own.

L. S. Senghor, ed.
Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française, précédée de Orphée Noir par Jean-Paul Sartre (Anthology of the New Negro and Malagasy Poetry, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre), 1948
Published by Presses universitaires de France
First edition

This anthology of African and West Indian poets, edited

by Léopold Senghor is a key document in the history of the concept of *Négritude*. The volume provides an overview of francophone poetry divided by regions, thus following the logic of Damas’ anthology. However, it received much more recognition for its introductory essay *Orphée Noir (Black Orpheus)* written by Jean-Paul Sartre. Sartre characterises *Négritude* as an ‘*racisme antiraciste*’ (*anti-racist racism*). Emerging as an opposition to colonial racism, the revolutionary poetry movement then transformed into a strategy, with the final goal of racial unity. Through his analysis of black poetry, Sartre argues that black consciousness is primarily based on the black soul, or on “a certain quality common to the thoughts and conduct of negroes, which is called *Négritude*”. According to Sartre, it is this sort of subjectivity, the need to reveal the black soul (just as Orpheus went to claim Eurydice from Pluto, a black poet tirelessly “descends into himself”), that is the source and the main idea of *Négritude* poetry, which unlike any other kind of poetry, is functional.

“Une dangereuse mystification: la théorie de la négritude” (Dangerous Mystification: the Theory of Négritude)

Article by Gabriel d'Arboussier from *La Nouvelle Critique: revue du marxisme militant*, June 1949

The article by Gabriel d'Arboussier, a French–Senegalese politician, is a critical response to *the Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de langue française* (1948), edited by Senghor and prefaced by Sartre. It reveals the discrepancy between the understanding of black people's struggle for emancipation by the theorists of *Négritude* and that of communists. D'Arboussier aims his criticism both at Sartre's existentialism and at Senghor's 'mysticism', arguing that the “myth of *Black Orpheus* detaches negro poetry from social reality” and would “lead to instil in people of colour, by an odious demagogic flattery a harmful isolationist feeling”. And whilst it is the universality of class struggle, the fight against imperialism and building of socialist society which is considered to be the most important, *Négritude* is denounced as a reactionary movement for its 'particularism'. The arguments of d'Arboussier created the basis of all the following criticism of the movement.

Sources of Inspiration for Léopold Senghor

**Henri Bergson
L'Évolution créatrice (Creative Evolution), 1907**

Published by Librairies Félix Alcan et Guillaumin réunies

Henri Bergson (1859–1941) was a French philosopher who opposed the prevailing Western rationalism. Bergson was particularly influential for the rehabilitation of intuition in philosophical thought, as well as for his distinction between 'open society' and 'closed society' (*The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, 1932), the ideas which were further developed by Karl Popper. In *L'Évolution créatrice* Bergson proceeds from evolution as a scientifically established fact, but rejects finalism and introduces the theory of evolution not as mechanistic, but as a creative process, driven by an 'élan vital' (vital impulse). The latter is characterised as an immanent creative impetus found in all organisms and also accounts for the creative nature of mankind. Bergson believed that intuition, as the opposite to practical and rationalised intelligence, allows us to grasp the essence of life and to return to our core creative impulse. These ideas were of

particular influence to Léopold Senghor who would later put the primacy of intuition and art at the heart of his philosophy of *Négritude*.

**Leo Frobenius
Kulturgeschichte Afrikas (African cultural history), 1933**

Published by Phaidon Verlag
First edition

**Leo Frobenius
Une Anthologie (Leo Frobenius 1873/1973. An Anthology), 1973**

Published by Franz Steiner Verlag
First edition

Leo Frobenius (1873–1938) was a German ethnologist, archaeologist, and proponent of a culture–historical approach to ethnology. He is also considered to be one of the key figures that influenced the *Négritude* movement. In the introduction to *An Anthology* published on the occasion of Frobenius' hundred years anniversary, Léopold Senghor claimed that the latter had not only “revealed Africa for the rest of the world”, but also “Africans to themselves”. Indeed, in his *Kulturgeschichte Afrikas*, the German ethnologist not only points out that the “barbarian negro was a European invention”, but also elaborates on such concepts as 'emotion', 'intuition', 'art', 'myth', and 'Eurafrica',

which would become crucial for Senghor's understanding of black subjectivity. Frobenius defined several 'Kulturkreisen' (culture circles), cultural entities that have a particular centre of origin that were later spread around the world. By 'Eurafrica' he understood a civilisation that developed around the Mediterranean Sea, and which flourished in the Upper Palaeolithic and late Stone age. Further developed by Senghor, the concept of 'Eurafrica' was closely connected with his concept of *Civilisation de l'Universel (Universal Civilisation)* that re-evaluated African cultural achievements, putting them on the same level as European ones, and considering them as part of the same cultural continuum.

**Leo Frobenius
Paideuma. Umriss einer Kultur- und Seelenlehre (Paideuma. Outlines of a Soul and Culture Theory), 1921**

Published by Beck
First edition

Considered as Frobenius' most significant contribution to ethnography, this book describes two 'paideumas' as the two main forces of cultural development, which also represent two opposite worldviews.

The 'Hohlengedühl' (cave mentality) which is described as common for peoples of Hamitic origin, the Semites of the Middle East, French and Anglo-Saxons, and the 'Weitengefühl' (open space mentality) which unites Ethiopians and Germans. 'Paideuma' can be described as a unique faculty or manifestation of an attitude to life formed by a specific environment and upbringing. Therefore, man is understood as a product of culture, not the contrary. Every single cultural phenomenon is always an expression of its 'paideuma', thus art is considered an epiphany, a key to understanding the essence of life and the Other.

And since it is a matter that lies beyond individuality and rationality, it should be approached by intuition. Senghor was captivated by Frobenius' concept, including the unity between German and African souls, between *Négritude* and *Germanité*.

Senghor's Theory of *Négritude*

L. S. Senghor
Liberté 1: Négritude et humanisme (Freedom 1: Negritude and Humanism), 1964 (↓)
 Published by Éditions du Seuil
 First edition

This book is the first volume of the series of books titled *Liberté*



(*Freedom*). As it states in the introduction, the title expresses the general theme of the texts as the "conquest of freedom as affirmation and illustration of the collective personality of black peoples: of *Négritude*". Bringing together essays, speeches from conferences and articles dating from 1937 to 1964 – from Léopold Senghor's first major public lecture in Dakar to the years of his rise to political eminence – the volume bears witness to the development of the *Négritude* philosophy. Similar to Senghor's poetry, his short theoretical pieces are rather lyrical than narrative, and refer to the key concepts of *Négritude* such as surrealism, symbolism, sensitivity vs rationality, rhythm, 'integral humanism', and black African civilisation. Senghor argues for a special role for black African culture to play in the building of universal civilisation. This did not stop him from seeing the features of *Négritude* in the artworks of Pierre Soulages and Emile Lahner, and writings of diverse Western writers such as Victor Hugo, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Albert Camus to name a few. However, his idea of cultural 'métissage', or hybridisation has often become a target for criticism. Senghor's speech

Les Belges au Congo (Belgians in Congo), which is included in the volume, is particularly controversial. His admiration of Belgium as a crossroads of civilisations, where the "Latin spirit" put "everything in its order", as well as, his understanding of the Belgian mission as key in the creation of 'afro-latine' civilisation, might be interpreted as an apology for the colonisation of the Congo.

L. S. Senghor
Liberté 5: Le Dialogue des cultures (Freedom 5: The Dialogue of Cultures), 1993
 Published by Éditions du Seuil
 First edition

In the article titled 'Ce que l'homme noir apporte' (What the Black Man Contributes), published in *Liberté 1*, Senghor famously stated: "emotion is negro, like the reason is Hellenic". The final volume of the series reveals a much more complex understanding of this dichotomy, as well as relations between Mediterranean culture and *Négritude*. In his text 'Grèce antique et Négritude' (Ancient Greece and Négritude) Senghor asserts that there is up to 20 percent of black blood amongst Mediterranean people. Referring to prehistoric times,

and in particular to numerous archaeological and ethnological discoveries made in the twentieth century, he argues that Greek civilisation, and the so-called 'Greek miracle', was a result of biological-, and more importantly, cultural 'métissage'. Thus, Senghor's understanding of the dichotomy of emotion and reason follows that of Nietzsche and his concepts of the Dionysian and the Apollonian as two opposing, but equally important, creative forces. The direct reference to the Nietzschean claim to the return of the symbiosis between the Apollonian and Dionysian spirits can also be found in the central text of this volume that gave name to the whole volume – 'Le Dialogue des cultures' (The Dialogue of Cultures). Senghor understood the values of *Négritude* as a cornerstone in attaining the balance needed for building a Universal Civilisation, which would be the common goal for all races.

The First World Festival of Negro Arts

The First World Festival of Negro Arts was held in Dakar, Senegal, 1–24 April 1966, initiated by Léopold Senghor under the auspices of UNESCO. Visitors

from around the world, as well as Dakar residents, were able to attend a vast programme of events, including exhibitions presenting tribal and modern art, conferences and street performances. According to Senghor, the festival was supposed to be an illustration of *Négritude*, a major showcase uniting the work of African and African diaspora artists. A colloquium that took place two days before the opening, which was considered the intellectual fulcrum of the event, gathered artists and intellectuals to reflect on the role of art in the emerging post-imperial world as well as the meaning of *Négritude*.

Besides the colloquium, one of the main events of the festival was the exhibition of Africa's 'classical' art at the newly constructed Musée Dynamique (*L'art nègre, sources, évolution, expansion*) which, alongside being a major representation of traditional tribal arts, was designed to juxtapose African art with European modernist artworks. The exhibition was later shown at Grand Palais in Paris. While the exhibition of 'classical' African art was praised by Senghor as the perfect illustration of the essential uniqueness of

black civilisation, the exhibition of artworks by young African painters held simultaneously at the Palais de Justice went almost unnoticed. The festival in Dakar led to the beginning of the international black arts movement, with other pan-African cultural festivals taking place over the following decade: the *First Pan-African Cultural Festival* (Algiers, 1969), *Zaire 74* (Kinshasa, 1974) and *FESTAC* (Second World Festival of Negro Arts, Lagos, 1977).

1^{er} Festival Mondial des Arts Nègres (The First World Festival of Black Arts), 1966 (↓)
12" vinyl LP
Published by Philips

This LP consists of recordings of music performed during the special event organised in the framework of the festival on Gorée island, lying in the Atlantic Ocean near Dakar, and known for its role in the 15th- to 19th-century trans-Atlantic slave trade. The first side of this record consists of texts, music and slave songs, and the second side presents two different aspects of black music – short instrumental improvisations



inspired by Senegalese traditional music and ‘the Songs of New Nations’ – Ghana, Nigeria, Congo – performed by a choir with native drums and percussion.

Authenticité

Authenticité (Authenticity) was a radical version of Afrocentrism introduced in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Mobutu Sese Seko as an official state ideology of the Republic of Congo-Léopoldville, later renamed Zaire. The *Authenticité* policy implied numerous changes to state and to private life, and aimed to eliminate the influences of Western colonial culture in order to create a more centralised and singular national identity. This included the renaming of the country and its cities, as well as an eventual abolition of Christian names for more ‘authentic’ ones. In addition, the campaign banned Western-style clothing in favour of a tunic labelled the ‘abacost’ and its female equivalent. The policy had mostly been abandoned by the end of 1990s with the death of Mobutu, who had served as President of Congo/Zaire from 1965 to 1997.

Luambo Makiadi et le T.P.O.K. Jazz
Candidat Na Biso Mobutu
(*Our Candidate is Mobutu*), 1984
12" vinyl
Published by Edipop

Leading up to the 1984 presidential elections, the Congolese government sponsored a propaganda record that was meant to raise support for Mobutu, who at that moment had been in office for almost twenty years. Both sides of the LP contain the same 26 minutes-long song *Candidat na biso Mobutu (Our Candidate is Mobutu)*. The cover of the LP presents a characteristic picture of Mobutu in his iconic outfit: the abacost, a leopard-skin toque and carved wooden stick. It demonstrates how music was used by the Zairean government to ‘unite’ the country and, in a somewhat subtler way, to warn critics not to openly criticise Mobutu.

Soviet Union

Makhmut Usmanovich Usmanov

Oilfields in Kazakhstan, 1950

Makhmut Usmanovich Usmanov (1918–2006) was an artist living in Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia, who received many honours during the era of the USSR. A member of the USSR Union of Artists, Usmanov worked with the Socialist Realist method, and was commissioned by the Soviet regime to produce paintings of the Soviet socialist utopia. Usmanov was also amongst the first to use the subject of oil as a theme in the early 1950s. After the Second World War, Usmanov mainly worked in the so-called ‘industrial landscape’ genre, that was firstly less strictly defined within the Socialist Realist method, and was also relevant following the discovery of a gigantic oilfield in Tatarstan. By the 1950s in fact, the republic was the leading place for oil production. *Oilfields in Kazakhstan* reflects the ethos across the Soviet Union of labour relations, investment in national resources, and their contribution to the building of a better collective future. It depicts ‘the morning’ – literally and symbolically – of oil production in the region. Both heroic and romantic in its expression, the painting is intended to show ‘reality in its revolutionary development’. Also, compositionally speaking, the painting presents a glorious future for the exploration of the industrial field in Tatarstan – the men in the centre are positioned on the wild, ‘untouched’ land, while their eyes are directed to the left where we see explored land with a construction zone and oil pipes. *Oilfields in Kazakhstan* also demonstrates how the method of Socialist Realism was adopted across the different Soviet republics, and which despite its strict and obligatory conception under Soviet ideology, remained open to a diversity of methods and approaches.



Makhmut Usmanovich Usmanov

Oilfields in Kazakhstan, 1950

Oil on canvas

91.2×133.2 cm

Collection Museum Helmond

Photo: M HKA

“Новый Тюркский алфавит”
(“New Turkic alphabet”)
Article from Красная Нива
(Krasnaya Niva) magazine,
no.16, 14 April 1929

Krasnaya Niva was an illustrated Soviet-era magazine, published weekly from 1923 until 1931 as a supplement to the *Izvestia* newspaper. The title literally translates as *Red Crop Field*, but the word ‘niva’ can also refer to fertile land. The subject of this particular issue is ‘cultural revolution’ in Soviet Central Asia – a policy that was aimed at radical transformation of national culture and social life. In Central Asia, North Caucasus and Azerbaijan, it implied some major language reforms, one of which was the so-called Latinisation Campaign. In the frameworks of this campaign, held during the 1920s–1930s, national alphabets and traditional writing systems were replaced with a Latin-script based uniform Turkic alphabet. The reason for such standardisation of languages across the Soviet republics was not only the urgent need to “educate the masses”. This new alphabet was also supposed to eliminate the lingering prejudices and religious superstitions, which were regarded as the

consequences of the influence of traditional Islamic culture. The Latinisation campaign was deeply connected with the process of liberation of women in the East, as well as with the Bolshevik fight against religions.

Революция и Национальности
(*Revolution and Nationalities*),
no. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 8-9, 1933

Revolution and Nationalities was the leading magazine dedicated to Soviet national politics from 1930 to 1937. It covered a wide range of topics, from international agreements to the everyday life, customs and culture of the Soviet republics. The culture of nationalities, which was developing in the USSR under the concept of “national in form and socialist in content”, was considered as the main weapon in the struggle against antagonism among the individual Soviet nations. The vagueness of the concept allowed the Soviet government to concurrently implement such policies as the Latinisation of Islam-based cultures, in parallel with campaigns against ‘Great-Russian chauvinism’ aimed to support minorities and promote local languages at work and in schools. In the arts, the policy took even more peculiar

forms. For instance, editors and contributors to *Revolution and Nationalities* consistently emphasised the importance of comprehensive assimilation between the national literature in the different republics. In order to create a united Soviet culture, writers were urged to overcome “national narrow-mindedness”, which included any form of idealisation of their native land, nature and peasant life. Following the Great Purge, Soviet national politics had shifted dramatically by the end of the 1930s, and the policy of indigenisation was abandoned in favour of a reversal to Russification.

Цирк (Circus), postcard, 1936

This advertising postcard features a scene from the popular Soviet melodramatic musical film *Цирк (Circus)* released in 1936. The film tells the story of an American circus actress who flees from racism in the US after giving birth to a black child. Embraced by the friendliness of multi-ethnic Soviet society, she and her son eventually find their happiness in the USSR. The reverse side of the postcard has the lyrics and music score of the most famous song in the film *Song of the Motherland*,

which became extremely popular in the USSR. The melody of the song appears throughout the film, including the final scene of a grandiose parade on Red Square. The lyrics on the reverse read:

*Wide is my Motherland,
Of her many forests, fields,
and rivers!
I know of no other such country
Where a man can breathe so
freely.*

Socialist Realism

Socialist Realism was an artistic phenomenon and ‘creative method’ of the Soviet Union. Introduced as a doctrine of the single creative method in 1934 during the First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, it was applied to all spheres of artistic endeavour. Often characterised simply as a style, it hardly fits into such a category due to the obvious lack of a clearly articulated artistic language, or rather, the consistent erasure of any formal stylistic features. The relation of Soviet Realism to previous realistic traditions in art and to reality itself is also complicated. Aimed to present an analysis of “reality in its revolutionary development” and establish “a culture

of the masses that had yet to be created”, it was primarily oriented not toward the Soviet reality of the time, but the bright Socialist future. This utopian aspiration and the belief in the transformative potential of art and strong collective spirit, makes Socialist Realism a total and totalitarian aesthetical-political project, or, as put by theorist Boris Groys – Stalin’s ‘gesamtkunstwerk’ (total work of art). Deeply rooted in communist ideology, Socialist Realism was not simply its product, but the very means of production. This makes it an example of a unique propagandist strategy.

Художники РСФСР за 15 лет (1917-1932) (15 years of Artists of the RSFSR (1917-1932)), 1933 (↓)
Published by Vsekhudozhnik

The exhibition titled *15 years of Artists of the RSFSR* (Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic) was first conceived in January 1932 in Leningrad at the State Russian Museum to coincide with the 15th anniversary of the revolution. A year later it travelled to the halls of the Historical Museum in Moscow. While the Leningrad exhibition looked like a major survey of the wide range of artistic practices of the past years, presenting the new realist art



alongside Russian avant-garde art, the Moscow exhibition could be considered as a milestone in the history of the homogenisation of Soviet artistic culture. The list of participants of the exhibition in Moscow underwent considerable changes, with ‘formalist’ movements being omitted or limited to a few examples. The role of those few examples of avant-garde art was to illustrate the degenerative line in arts. As stated in the introduction to the catalogue, the main positive conclusions derived from the artistic survey were “the gradual, but determined elimination of any formalistic tendencies” in art and its replacement with Socialist Realism. The unambiguous effect of such representation was evident. Soon after the closure of the exhibition, the avant-garde artworks were hidden in storage, whilst Socialist Realism became the single ‘creative mode’ visible to artists for the following decades.

“Соцреализм” (“Socialist Realism”) Article by Anatoly Lunacharsky from Советский театр (Soviet Theatre) magazine, no.2-3, February–March, 1933

Anatoly Lunacharsky was a prominent revolutionary, critic and essayist appointed as the first

head of the Bolshevik People’s Commissariat for Education (Narkompros). In his speech titled ‘Socialist Realism’, given on the Second Plenary Session of the Organising Committee of the Union of Soviet Writers on 12 February 1933, and published in *Soviet Theatre Magazine*, Lunacharsky considers art as a significant force for socialist struggle and socialist construction. Lunacharsky emphasises the social role of art and provides a definition of the Socialist Realist method, while contrasting it against other forms of realistic art, such as ‘bourgeois’, or static realism, naturalism and romantic realism. He concludes that one of the main differences between Socialist Realism and other artistic styles is the definition of ‘truth’ in art. A Socialist Realist perceives truth not as given fact, but as changing and evolving matter. Thus a reliable depiction of truth in arts requires an “analysis of reality in its revolutionary development”. The term Socialist Realism emerged in the spring of 1932 in connection with the creation of the Union of Soviet Writers. This volume of Soviet Theatre magazine was the last published issue before the closure of the magazine after the 1932 decree named On the

Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organisations came into force, which caused the dissolution of the existing literature and art groups, restrictions in journalistic activity and the formation of state controlled creative unions. Membership in the unions was compulsory for anyone willing to continue their artistic activity.

“Формализм в живописи”
(“Formalism in Painting”)
Article by Osip Beskin from
Искусство (Iskusstvo) magazine,
no.3, 1933

Iskusstvo (literally: ‘Art’) was a bi-monthly art magazine and the main publication of the Union of Soviet Artists founded in 1933 after the abolition of all non-official periodical press as a consequence of the April 1932 decree. The volume opens up with an extensive article titled ‘Formalism in Painting’ by the editor-in-chief and one of the most notorious soviet art critics, Osip Beskin. The most pejorative, but extremely vague term ‘formalist’ was applied to any artist whose creativity was marked by an aesthetic practice outside of the ‘realist’ method and devoid of ideological content. Through an analysis of artistic methods of avant-garde artists such as

Kazimir Malevich, Ivan Klyun, Nikolai Suetin, Pavel Filonov, David Shterenberg and others, Beskin concluded that formalist art was in conflict with Soviet socialist reality. According to the critic, it is the different mind-set and the individual language of formalist artists that make them dangerous, as their art may influence the workers’ minds and thus distort their perception of reality. The article is an early example of the stigmatisation of any artistic practices that differed from the Socialist Realism doctrine.

Mass-Produced Reproductions of Soviet Paintings

Artistic production in the Soviet Union operated as a great advertising machine. The obliteration of creative individuality and the triumph of totality is represented par excellence by the so-called ‘бригадный метод’ (collective artistic method) which reached its peak in the mid-1940s to 1950s. The work of such brigades was based on the principle of division of labour. Often monumental in their scale, socialist realist artworks were created not primarily for museums, but for mass dissemination. The artworks, reproduced in huge

quantities as lithographs and postcards, were thus available in the most remote corners of the USSR. Such reproductions often became part of the traditional ‘красный уголок’ (which can be literally translated from Russian as ‘red corner’). Initially derived from the orthodox tradition of icon corners for worship, in Soviet times such spaces, allocated for ideological work, were decorated with red cloth and communist paraphernalia.

Стенографический отчёт:
Первый всесоюзный съезд
советских писателей (Verbatim
Record of the Speeches at The
First All-Union Congress of Soviet
Writers), 1934

Published by Goslitizdat

The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers, held in Moscow from August 17 to September 1, 1934, was a turning point in Soviet history. It was during this congress that the doctrine of the single creative method – Socialist Realism – was introduced. The congress was the next step in the Soviet policy of restricting artistic freedom, after the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had adopted the decree titled On the Restructuring of Literary and Artistic Organisations in 1932. All

modernistic experiments would be systematically condemned as ‘bourgeois formalism’, whilst the Socialist Realist method was defined as a “truthful and historically specific depiction of reality in its revolutionary development”, and was considered universal for all kinds of arts. However, it is significant that in a historically literature-centric society, the establishment of the Socialist Realist monoculture was entrusted to writers who were proclaimed “the engineers of the human soul”. According to the given definition, Socialist Realist literature was supposed not simply to depict reality, but construct one. More than 500 delegates attended the Congress, half of them became victims of Stalinist purges in the following years.

Portrait of Maxim Gorky (from
Krasnaya Niva magazine), c. 1930s

Maxim Gorky (1868–1936) was a Russian and Soviet writer regarded as the father of Socialist Realism, and was the head of The First All-Union Congress of Soviet Writers. His speech for the congress was full of strong criticism against modernist literature and art. The period from 1907 to 1917, (the period of flourishing

avant-garde art and literature in Russia), was condemned by Gorky “as the most shameful and shameless decade in the history of the Russian intelligentsia”, the time of “irresponsible ideas” and complete “freedom of creation”. Such liberty, according to Gorky, “found its expression in propaganda of all the conservative ideas of the Western bourgeoisie”. For a significant part of his life, the writer was exiled from Russia and later the Soviet Union. He returned to the USSR in 1932 on Joseph Stalin’s personal invitation. Shortly after his death, the complexities in Gorky’s writing, his political and artistic views were reduced to an unambiguous iconic image: Gorky as a great Soviet writer of common descent and the founder and fierce supporter of the increasingly canonical Socialist Realism.

Nikolai Ostrovsky

Как закалялась сталь (How the Steel was Tempered), 1935

Published by Molodaya Gvardiya
First edition

How the Steel Was Tempered, or *the Making of a Hero* is a Socialist Realist novel written by Nikolai Ostrovsky (1904–1936). The central character of the novel, Pavel Korchagin, represents the

quintessential hero of Socialist Realism as the defender of the Soviet state in the fight against interventionists during the Russian Civil War (1917-1922). The novel was published at a turning point of ideological consolidation in the USSR, and as a consequence, the text of the novel underwent significant changes and was repeatedly re-edited to fulfil Socialist Realist requirements. Thus, those parts of the initial manuscript that included any ambiguous aspects of Soviet politics, discussions with Trotskyists, or descriptions of the complex personal emotional experiences and suffering of the protagonist (which were in fact partly autobiographical) disappeared in later editions of the novel.

Mikhail Sholokhov

***Virgin Soil Upturned*, 1935**

Published by Putnam & Co.
First English edition

Virgin Soil Upturned, first published in Russian (as *Поднятая целина*) in 1932, is the first celebrated Socialist Realist novel by Mikhail Sholokhov (1905-1984), a Soviet novelist and the winner of the 1965 Nobel Prize for Literature. The plot unfolds through the story of the massive collectivisation of agriculture and

the establishment of collective farming in the villages and in the minds of peasants. Through the lives of his characters, Sholokhov tells the story of one of the most arduous periods and controversial policies in the history of the Soviet regime. Shortly after the publication of the book, the major famine of Winter 1932-1933 took place as a result of forced collectivisation, and caused millions of deaths. In 1959, Sholokhov would publish a sequel to the novel, describing the dramatic consequences and the terror of the past. ‘Collectivisation’ was the policy of abolishing individual peasant landholdings through their integration into collective and state-controlled farms, carried out in the USSR from 1928 to 1937. The aim was to transform small private farms into large public cooperative production to simplify the system of harvesting agricultural products. It was expected that such measures would immediately increase the food supply for the growing urban population and provide the means for processing industrial and agricultural exports.

The Corn Campaign

***LIFE Magazine*, October 5, 1959**

***Corn – the Queen of the fields*, postcard, c.1960**

Published by ИЗОГИЗ (IZOGIZ)

***За велику кукурудзу! (For Great Corn!)*, poster, 1962 (→)**

Published by Міністерство культури УРСР (Ministry of Culture of The Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

V. Lalayants and G. Arkadiev *Set of postcards based on the animated film titled Чудесница (Chudesnitsa)*, 1959

Published by ИЗОГИЗ (IZOGIZ)

The Corn Campaign was the mass introduction of corn into the agriculture of the USSR in the 1950s and 1960s as a solution to the problem of feeding livestock. The idea of introducing the foreign crop came to Nikita Khrushchev, then the head of the USSR, in 1955 when he met the American farmer Roswell Garst, who told him about the role of corn in US agriculture and its advantages. Shortly after Khrushchev’s trip to the United States, American seed corn was imported to the USSR. The Ministry of Agriculture established a corn research institute in the Ukraine, issued a new scientific journal dedicated to the crop, and launched one of the largest propaganda campaigns in

Cold War

the history of the USSR. Endless slogans in newspapers praised “the queen of the fields”, and through poems, songs, posters, souvenirs, and even a full length animated film titled *Чудесница* (*Chudesnitsa*), the government sought every opportunity to popularise the fodder crop. Mass propagation of corn did not take into account the climate of the

country, nor the agricultural traditions. In the early 1960s, a quarter of arable land was occupied by corn, which led to a shortage of wheat by autumn 1962. The inevitable failure of monocultural corn farming led to agricultural crisis and the subsequent failure of Khrushchev’s political career.



Sven Augustijnen

Imbéciles de tous les pays unissez-vous!,
2018

Sven Augustijnen's installation *Imbéciles de tous les pays unissez-vous!* (*Fools of All Countries Unite!*), is based on research the artist undertook into the conservative right-wing *Europe Magazine*. First published in 1944 (originally as *Grande-Bretagne*, then *Europe-Amérique* from 1945, and finally *Europe Magazine* from 1953 to 1969), the magazine was funded by the British armed forces and secret service as cold-war propaganda. In Augustijnen's analysis of the magazine, he has been able to elucidate how propaganda such as *Europe Magazine* can be seen today as, not only a reflection of how the context of decolonisation turned into a cold-war battleground, but also how former imperial powers conspired to portray their former colonial subjects as incapable and inferior. The artist's alternative archive, focusing in this display, among others, on the situation of the former Belgian Congo, sits in contrast to the official narrative of colonisation and processes of decolonisation, providing insights into the continuing struggle for self-determination of the newly independent people within the hostile media landscape. Propaganda and information war, as Augustijnen shows us, becomes the new space of subjugation for the 'free' people caught in its sights.



Sven Augustijnen

Imbéciles de tous les pays unissez-vous! (detail), 2018
160 copies of the magazine "Europe", vitrine, wall text
Various dimensions
Courtesy of the artist and Jan Mot, Brussels
Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Soviet Propaganda

Cold War-era propaganda material by Foreign Languages Publishing House and The Novosti Press Agency, Moscow. 1960s–1970s

V. Rimalov

Economic Cooperation between the USSR and Underdeveloped countries
The Deceived Testify
In a Close-knit of Family Nations
European Security - Problem No. 1
National Liberation Movement - current problems

The Novosti Press Agency was founded in 1961 with the aim “to contribute to mutual understanding, trust and friendship among peoples in every possible way by broadly publishing accurate information about the USSR abroad, and familiarising the Soviet public with the life of the peoples of foreign countries”. The Agency operated as an impressive propaganda machine with numerous branches all around the world and a total annual publication circulation of 20 million copies. Their range of books covered such topics as the Soviet contribution to the economic development of ‘Third World’ countries, the Soviet policy of support for National Liberation Movements, criticism of ‘contemporary colonialism’ and the imperialist policy of the West.

As stated in one of the books titled *European Security – Problem No.1*, the publications propagated the Soviet policy of international friendship and cooperation, as opposed to the Western policy of political exclusion. Alongside propagandising on significant concerns of the Cold War-era, some publications by Novosti Press were also aimed at Jewish people living outside of the USSR who were considering moving to the newly established state of Israel. In the booklet *The Deceived Testify* for example, the propaganda takes the peculiar form of presenting emotional confessions of those who deeply regretted the decision to try their luck in ‘capitalist’ Israel.

First Time in Moscow, 1975

Published by Novosti Press Agency Publishing House

Published in 1975, and presumably aimed at children across Africa, the book tells the story of a fictional African child called Dudu, who was given a free trip to Moscow as the winner of the contest ‘Who Knows the Soviet Union Better?’, sponsored by the Novosti Press Agency. Through impressive photographs of views of the Soviet capital along with drawings and short



commentaries, the subsequent pages describe the Soviet contribution to Africa, the grandeur of historical and Socialist architecture, Moscow’s main attractions filled with crowds of

tourist, the role of Soviet forces in the Second World War and the respect towards the founder of the Soviet State, Vladimir Lenin. The story of this young African in Moscow ends with Dudu

going to meet his elder brother who is a student at the Patrice Lumumba Friendship University in Moscow. The patronising and romanticised tone of the book makes it a striking example of propaganda material created in the USSR under the 'International Friendship' policy introduced by Khrushchev and which continued through the later Brezhnev era.

Two Universities. An Account of the Life and Work of Lumumba Friendship University and Moscow State University, 1963 (↑)

Published by Novosti Press Agency

This booklet provides an account of two Moscow universities. While the history of the Moscow State University traces back to the eighteenth century, the Peoples' Friendship University was founded in 1960 and later renamed after Patrice Lumumba following the assassination of the Congolese independence leader in 1961. The history and the success of one of the most significant ventures in international higher education during the Cold War remains controversial. The University was praised for its educational accomplishments and was considered as an epitome of solidarity and internationalism by its proponents, and denounced

as a communist institution for spy recruitment by its opponents, despite the fact that courses in Marxism-Leninism were optional. The very concept of a university established especially to provide education for students from 'Third World' countries was also questioned by the very governments of the countries it was aimed at. The reactions either condemned the concept for its segregationist approach (no Soviet students attended), or to the contrary, commended for the mixture of its student body, revealing some cultural and racial hierarchies which existed between the so-called 'Third World' countries.

**Osip Beskin
*The Place of Art in the Soviet Union, 1936***

Published by The American Russian Institute for Cultural Relations

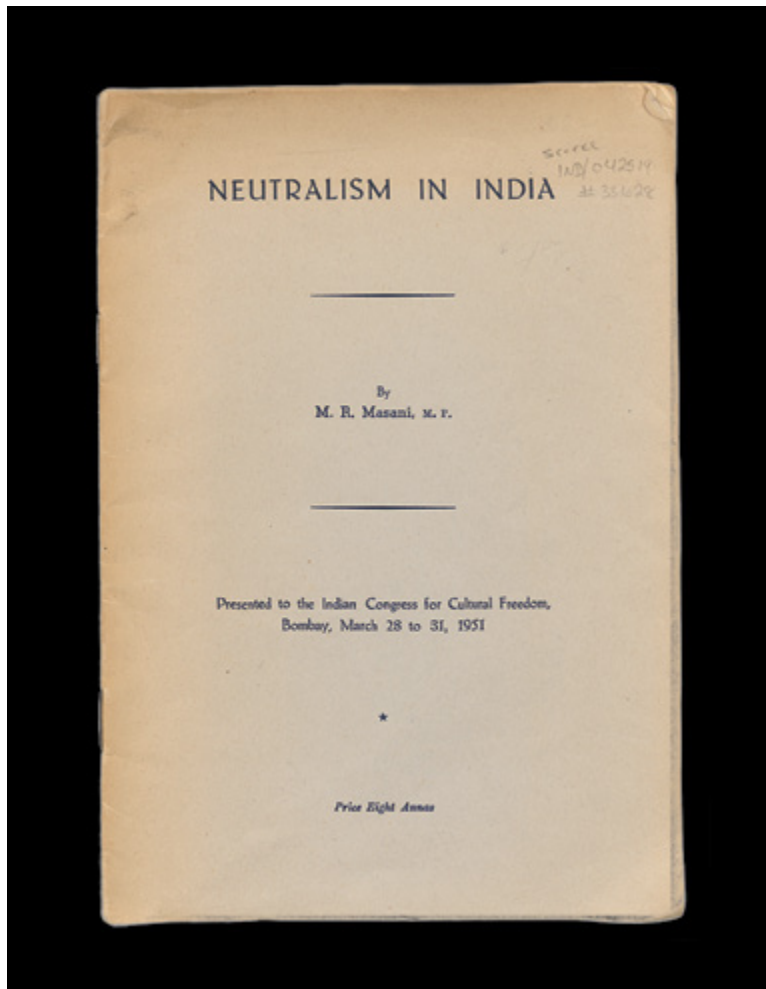
The American Russian Institute for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union, previously known as the American Society for Cultural Relations with the Soviet Union was established 1926 and was identified as a 'subversive' organisation by the US government in 1947. The foreword to this 1936 brochure was written by Christian Brinton, American art critic, curator and proponent of

'national' modernisms. Rejecting pure experimentation with forms and medium in art that broke with previous tradition, he valued Russian art for its non-Western, "unspoiled aesthetic patrimony". In the foreword, he describes Soviet art as Socialist Humanism. The main author of the brochure, Osip Beskin, was a Soviet art critic and a notorious opponent of 'formalist' experiments in art. However, unlike his writings in Russian, this propaganda piece is idealistic in its tone rather than belligerent. Describing the art system in the USSR, he refers to the central idea of Soviet art – "Art belongs to the people. It must be understood and loved by them. It must be rooted in and grow with their feelings, thoughts, and desires. It must arouse and develop the artists in them" (Lenin). Thus, the dominant factor determining the quality of art is its integration with society. When it comes to the question of creative freedom, Beskin states that artists are always "subjectively free and objectively not free". And since the objective non-freedom of the artist is related to the issue of class, the ultimate goal (in which artists should take active part) is the creation of a classless society, and "a new type of human being who will be free from

economic pressure and from the distinction between mental and physical labour – the integrated human being of the future".

**'Aspects of Two Cultures',
article by V. Kemenov,
VOKS Bulletin, no.52, 1947**

VOKS Bulletin was an English-language cultural magazine published in Moscow by the USSR Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries, an international organisation with parallel national branches around the world. This issue of the magazine includes an article by the magazine's chief editor, Soviet art critic and prominent party member Vladimir Kemenev. The article titled 'Aspects of Two Cultures' is primarily a typical example of art criticism in the USSR. Opening with several quotations and references to Karl Marx's writings, he argues that the hostility and anti-democratic nature of the capitalist system will lead to the inevitable decline of modern bourgeois culture. Underlining the close ties between anti-humanism and anti-realism, Kemenev sets the art of Socialist Realism against decadent Western art. Although he also provides an analysis of European modernism to support his ideas, it



is obvious that the main criticism was aimed at Americans as the main promoters of 'dehumanised' art. The article received the attention of Clement Greenberg, the renowned proponent of

Abstract Expressionism, who in turn sharply criticised it in his text for *Partisan Review* (Greenberg C. 'Irrelevance versus Irresponsibility'. *Partisan Review*. 1948.Vol. 15. no. 5. Pp. 573–579).

This polemic between two critics is an early example of controversies over figurative and abstract art which would become the main subject of the Cold War in the cultural field. The onset of the Cold war also shifted the policy of *Partisan Review*. Known as the main publisher of Greenberg's writings, this magazine (along with many other cultural institutions) received funding from CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) during the 1950s–60s.

Congress for Cultural Freedom

The Congress for Cultural Freedom (CCF) was an organisation, founded in 1950 at a conference that gathered a group of anti-communist intellectuals in West Berlin. Organised in response to the formation of The World Peace Council by the Soviet Union, the CCF aimed to withstand post-war sympathies towards the USSR. Covertly funded by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), it was established to oppose global Communism, counter Cold War neutralism, and to promote Western cultural and liberal values. The organisation was active in thirty-five countries, organising cultural events and

conferences, publishing books and numerous periodicals. Another important vector of the campaign was aimed to alter the perception of the U.S. in Europe through the promotion of American modernist art. The covert enterprise dissolved in 1967, after the disclosure of the CIA's active involvement.

M.R. Masani
Neutralism in India, 1951 (←)

Laeq and Zafar Futehally,
Achievements and Objectives of Free Societies, 1951

Brochures presented to the Indian Congress for Cultural Freedom, Bombay, March 28 to 31, 1951

The founding conference of the CCF in Berlin was followed by the First Asian Conference on Cultural Freedom, held in Bombay in 1951. The propaganda brochures from the conference focus on two subjects: Indian 'neutralism' and advocacy of the American economic model and 'laissez-faire' capitalism. The fight against neutralism was one the key ideas of the CCF, expressed in the Manifesto issued in Berlin:

"We hold that the history and practice of totalitarianism are the greatest threat which humanity has faced in all its

recorded history. We believe that apathy and neutrality toward this threat constitute treason to the essential values of mankind, an abdication of the free spirit. Our answer to this challenge will determine whether mankind shall follow the path to totalitarianism or to freedom”.

Neutralism in India, here, is considered a “marked phenomenon” of two aspects: an official governmental position of non-alignment in the Cold war and “the neutralist sentiment”. The first is claimed to be “a subject of statecraft and therefore beyond the scope of the CCF, except insofar as foreign policy inevitably plays its part in the moulding of public sentiment”, which is, in its turn, denoted as a primary concern of the CCF.

Encounter, Vol. 1, no. 1,
October 1953
Encounter, Vol. 1, no. 2,
November 1953

Extracts from the “Soviet Philosophical Dictionary”
Published by Congress for Cultural Freedom

Censorship: a Quarterly Report on Censorship of Ideas and the Arts
no. 1, Autumn 1964
no. 2, Spring 1965
no. 3, Summer 1965

Encounter was the most successful magazine, published by the Congress of Cultural Freedom. It was founded in the United Kingdom in 1953 by English poet Stephen Spender and American journalist Irving Kristol, who is often described as the ‘godfather of neo-conservatism’. A monthly journal of literature, arts and politics, *Encounter* published the works of a wide range of international writers, poets, critics, philosophers and journalists from both sides of the Iron curtain. The column on politics, however, had a distinctive anti-communist and anti-neutralist sentiment, as well as general support of American foreign policy and the U.S geopolitical interests.

The publications distributed by the CCF were mainly aimed at Western intellectuals and,

unlike other kinds of propaganda material, they are generally distinguished by nice design and witticism in their mockery of totalitarian ideology. Such is the introduction to the *Extracts from the Soviet Philosophical Dictionary*. This tiny brochure, which was probably published as a supplement to French magazine *Preuves*, includes English translation of the thirteen ludicrous articles from the Short Philosophical Dictionary of the USSR. Similar is the rhetoric of *Censorship* magazine that was published in London. The first three issues reveal the precedents of censorship and prudish restrictions against the arts in a wide range of European countries, as well as Australia, the USA and Japan. Although publications by the Congress for Cultural Freedom had a distinct anti-communist advocacy, the revelation of CIA funding led to disillusionment and resignations among supporters of the organisation.

II. documenta. Kunst nach 1945. Internationale Ausstellung (Art after 1945. International Exhibition), 1959
Three- volume exhibition catalogue
Published by Verlag M. DuMont Schauberg
First edition

By the time of its second edition, *documenta* had become a brand with ambitions to stage the international exhibition of contemporary art quadriennially (and later every five years). While Arnold Bode, with his background in trade fairs, was mainly in charge of the scenography of the exhibition, the concept and slogan ‘abstraction as a world language’ of the second edition was a brainchild of Werner Haftmann. At that time, a leading German art historian and ideologist of abstract art, he was actively involved in the preparation of several editions of *documenta*. Published as a direct outcome of this involvement, his major treatise – *Malerei im 20. Jahrhundert/ Painting in the Twentieth Century* (1954), became a guidebook on modern art for a generation of art historians. Aiming to present art since 1945, *documenta II* further emphasised a focus on painting and abstract art, displaying abstract artworks from the United States. It included the abstract expressionist paintings

Capitalism

exhibited in the *New American Painting* exhibitions organised by MoMA, and presented in eight European countries between 1958 and '59. *Documenta II* can be regarded as a striking example of the production of the history of Modern art, as well as its Americanisation during the Cold War era. Yet, *documenta II* is often considered as a major step in the creation of a common post-war European cultural identity based on abstract art. This identity, resonating with the idea of the free West, was further joined in by other European institutions. For instance, an exhibition with works from *documenta II (Værker fra documenta, 1959)* was presented at Denmark's Louisiana Museum of Modern Art.

Andy Warhol

Dollar Bill, 1981

Dollar Sign, 1982 (reprint 2013)

With their qualities of surface and repetition, Warhol's works offer profound critical reflection on the dominance of the American capitalist system of the post-war period. As Warhol once said: "*Being good in business is the most fascinating kind of art. Making money is art and working is art and good business is the best art*". It is because of this embrace in Warhol's art towards capitalism – its vast potential, its global reach, and its great capacity to perpetuate both prosaic pop culture and global icons – that makes him a key American artist of the post-war period. Often described as a Pop Artist, Warhol has also been described as a protagonist of Capitalist Realism, a term mimicking the Socialist Realism of the USSR. Capitalist Realism is used to describe practices that embody liberal capitalism. The dollar bill and dollar sign were recurring motifs in Warhol's art since the 1960s, and he would regularly sign dollar bills.

Dollar Sign was a series of prints Warhol originally produced in 1982. After Warhol published his renowned Factory Editions prints, he began collaborating with two anonymous acquaintances from Belgium in 1970 on a second series of prints, including portraits of Marilyn Monroe, with their company Sunday B. Morning. The original idea behind this partnership was to play on the concept of mass production and originality, and the prints would have a black ink stamp on the back saying "fill in your own signature". The new prints were identical to the

Factory Editions and so Warhol was deliberately undermining the strict 'authenticity' of Factory Edition prints. At a certain moment, conversations between Warhol and the Belgians faltered, and he started to have second thoughts. However, by this time, he had already handed over the photo negatives, colour codes and other tools used to produce the prints. Printing in Belgium went ahead, retaining the rights to do so. Warhol decided not to pursue the matter. To add to this quirk in Belgian art history, Warhol would even sign some of the Sunday B. Monday prints with: "This is not by me. Andy Warhol", which served to increase their value.



Andy Warhol
Dollar Bill, 1981
Paper, marker
6.6×15.6 cm
Collection M HKA
Photo: M HKA

Renzo Martens and CATPC

White Cube, 2020

This video documents the collaboration between Renzo Martens and the art league CATPC (Cercle d'Art des Travailleurs de Plantation Congolaise). Plantations have created great wealth for a few Western families since colonial times, including some that created or supported museums in their own names, such as Tate in England and The Ludwig in Cologne. CATPC create their works at the White Cube in Lusanga, Democratic Republic of Congo. This arts and research centre in the middle of the Congolese plantation zones was designed by OMA, and comprises a quintessential white cube museum space. The location is symbolic. Lusanga, formerly Leverville, was established as Unilever's first palm oil plantation. Here, Unilever has confiscated land and violently imposed monocultural agricultural practices and labour conditions. Unilever has also established itself a major art patron.

In this on-going project, CATPC's fifteen members make self-portraits out of mud, which are 3D scanned and reproduced in chocolate in Amsterdam, the biggest cocoa port in the world. The sales of their chocolate sculptures have thus far generated profits which they have bought back 85 hectares of land around the White Cube, where they develop ecological and inclusive gardens, in opposition to monoculture. The monoculture of the homogenous, modernist white cube of art provides the capital to reclaim land, overcoming the other monoculture of corporate agriculture.

Martens' full length film *White Cube* will be released at the end of 2020.



Renzo Martens

White Cube, 2020

Video trailer

5 min

Courtesy of the artist

Image: the artist

Felix Gonzalez-Torres

“Untitled”, 1994

Felix Gonzalez-Torres was active as an artist in the United States during the 1980s and 1990s until his untimely death of AIDS related complications in 1996. Making art during the era of the so-called ‘culture wars’ in America, which polarised society on key subjects of socio-political relevance along ideological lines, Gonzalez-Torres created artworks through a distinct political consciousness. Issues such as abortion rights, the place of religion, sexual freedom, censorship, guns, property and privacy were (and still remain) battleground between ‘progressives’ and ‘conservatives’ in the determination of individual rights and freedoms. The work *“Untitled”* was commissioned by fashion designer agnès b. as a limited-edition T-shirt in 1994. The back of each T-shirt bears the legend “NOBODY OWNS ME” in green text. The subject of ownership was a recurring theme in Gonzalez-Torres’ work, in terms of both its conceptual characteristics, but also its consideration of politics. The influence of Ronald Reagan on modern conservatism had a profound effect on American society, with the introduction of neo-liberal economics as well as legislation intended to define the limits of individual liberalisms affecting women, homosexuals and other minorities in particular. The artist stated: “At this point in history, how can we talk about private events? Or private moments? When we have television and phones inside our homes, when our bodies have been legislated by the state? We can perhaps only talk about private property”. *“Untitled”* can be interpreted as a statement of defiance against the ideological control of bodies and subjectivities.



Felix Gonzalez-Torres
“Untitled”, 1994
Silkscreen on cotton T-shirt
Size L, edition of 500
Published by agnès b., New York
Private Collection, Antwerp
Photo: M HKA
© Felix Gonzalez-Torres, courtesy of
The Felix Gonzalez-Torres Foundation

Karl Marx
Das Kapital. Kritik der politischen Oekonomie (Capital. A Critique of Political Economy), 1914
Published by Otto Meissners Verlag

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher, political economist, historian and political theorist. Having introduced his ideas on class struggle in *The Communist Manifesto* (1848) and some other writings, he dedicated more than twenty years to the scientific analysis of capitalism to create a grounding for his ideas. Taking as a starting point the political economy elaborated by British writers Adam Smith, David Ricardo and socialist Thomas Hodgskin, he developed and transformed their ideas into an incisive critical analysis of the capitalist mode of production in *Das Kapital* (1867-1894). Marx's major treatise, *Das Kapital* is composed of three volumes, two of which were compiled and published after his death by his lifelong collaborator Friedrich Engels. In the first volume, Marx centres on the analysis of capital's mechanisms of exploitation of labour. Having outlined the concept of 'surplus value' (value created by workers in excess of the cost of their own labour-cost and appropriated by the capitalist), he argued that the surplus

value forms the basis of capitalist production and had its ultimate source in the unpaid work of the wage-earning proletariat. Thus, in a capitalist economy, with its constant need to extract surplus value, workers continually reproduce the economic conditions by which they labour. Or, as Marx put it: "[The capitalist mode of production is] a mode of production in which the labourer exists to satisfy the need of the existing values for valorisation, as opposed to the inverse situation, in which objective wealth is there to satisfy the worker's own need for development. Just as man is governed, in religion, by the products of his own brain, so in capitalist production, he is governed by the products of his own hand". Marx argued that, based on private profit, enriching the capitalist and dragging the workers deeper into poverty, the capitalist system will eventually destroy itself. Extremely influential, Marx's ideas based on the opposition of social classes, has formed a philosophical school that inspires workers' movements and intellectuals around the world.

Ronald Reagan

Ronald Reagan
Rendezvous with Destiny, 1964
12" vinyl LP
Published by Key Records

Ronald Wilson Reagan (1911-2004) was a Hollywood actor and an American politician who served as the 40th President of the United States from 1981 to 1989. His political stance is characterised by the devotion to the ideals of modern conservatism in its neo-liberal form, in particular, a strong favour for capitalist economics. The economic policies promoted by Reagan in the 1980s went down in history as 'Reaganomics'. *Rendezvous with Destiny* is the key passage of the famous *A Time for Choosing* speech that was presented by Reagan during the 1964 U.S. presidential election campaign on behalf of Republican party candidate Barry Goldwater. Speaking in support of the Republican programme, he harshly criticises welfare state socialist policies and the growing bureaucratic apparatus. Reagan encourages the people of the USA to meet their destiny – to make a choice "not between right and left", but between "up and down" – "the maximum of individual freedom

consistent with order, or down to the ant heap of totalitarianism". The speech earned him prominence as a leading conservative spokesman.

Ronald Reagan
A Record from Ronald Reagan To All Californians, 1966
Flexi-disc
Published by Skyline Productions

The declamatory style of Reagan's *A Time for Choosing* speech ensured his success among California Republicans. Similar in rhetoric, but much shorter and fairly light on ideological content, this record was part of Reagan's campaign for governor in the 1966 election. Appealing to reduce government regulation, he calls out for Californians to vote for him if they "believe in their destiny" and their own decisions. Another distinctive feature of Reagan's speeches is the emphasis on his non-political, unprofessional background. Reagan served as the 33rd governor of California from 1967 to 1975, prior to becoming the president of the United States.

Ronald Reagan
***Freedom's Finest Hour*, 1967**
12" vinyl LP
Published by Thomas Productions

Freedom's Finest Hour was originally presented in December 1966 as a documentary film that featured on national television. An adaptation of the film's soundtrack narrated by Ronald Reagan was soon released on LP. Speaking in the persona of a colonist from Boston, Reagan tells the story of the American War of Independence and the ratification of the Constitution with his famous eloquence. The passionate narration is accompanied by

a stirring backing track providing dramatic impact. All this is intended to create a feeling of pride for America and the Constitution – “something every man is entitled to against every government on Earth”. This is the message that Reagan in the persona of “this ordinary citizen from Boston, this common man” delivers to “all the common men of his time”.



Ronald Reagan
***Ronald Reagan Speaks to YAF Members and Supporters*, 1982**
Flexi-disc
Published by Eva-Tone Soundsheets

Young America's Foundation (YAF) is a conservative youth organisation established in 1960 to ensure that “increasing numbers of young Americans understand and are inspired by the ideas of individual freedom, a strong national defence, free enterprise and traditional values”. In his speech, addressed to YAF in 1975, Ronald Reagan expressed his support to the organisation and its activity. Reagan's endorsement of the YAF was considered as having greatly helped his presidential campaign.

Objectivism

Ayn Rand, originally Alisa Rosenbaum (1905–1982), was a Russian-American writer. Famous primarily for her novels that gained worldwide and enduring success, she is also renowned for her philosophical framework called Objectivism, which maintains a lasting influence on popular thought. Her ideas were partially predetermined by her own biography – her father's business was seized by Bolsheviks in 1917, which

dramatically changed her family's way of life. She left communist Russia for the United States in early 1926. Rand was driven by the idea of men's need for rational morality, a morality code which would oppose any collective, religious, mystical or emotion based moral concepts. A person's life was understood by Rand as a standard of value, with reason as the only guide to action, and thus the highest moral purpose was the achievement of one's own happiness. The fundamentals of Rand's philosophy: reality as “an objective absolute”, primacy of reason, the ethics of selfishness and the moral defence of ‘laissez-faire’ capitalism, were developed through her public lectures, books and newsletters.

Ayn Rand
***The Fountainhead*, 1943**
Published by The Bobbs-Merrill company
First edition

Ayn Rand's first major literary success and a powerful praise of individualism, *The Fountainhead* tells the story of Howard Roark, a modernist architect. A perfect symbol of Rand's vision, Roark stands against authority, rejects the compromise of collective opinion, and places nothing



above his own creative vision and independent rationality. Acting according to his convictions, he destroys one of the projects he was involved in to prevent the distortion of his original vision.

In the end, his powerful speech about the value of individuality and integrity release him from arrest and any charges. The story unfolds through, as Rand's puts it, "a demonstration of how

the principles of egoism and altruism work out in people and in the events of their lives". Other characters serve to distinguish independent and creative individuals and those described by Rand as "second-handers". The novel and its core idea of man's ego as the 'fountainhead' of human progress laid the foundation for her philosophy of Objectivism. The book still attracts many new admirers and enjoys lasting influence, especially among entrepreneurs, American conservatives and right-wing libertarians.

**The Objectivist Newsletter (←)
The Objectivist
The Ayn Rand Letter**

In the 1960s, Ayn Rand turned to writing non-fiction and elaborated on the ideas set forth in her novels, united under the concept of Objectivism. From 1962 until 1976, she wrote for three successive periodicals. An extremely prolific writer, Rand commented on significant cultural events and outlined some negative trends from her Objectivist perspective. Considering the philosophy as an indispensable guide to the world, she addressed all kinds of topics. These also included a number of book reviews, a Q&A section,

occasional editorial reports on the spread of Objectivism, a calendar of upcoming events such as lectures, and TV and radio programmes that featured Rand and her associates. Rand also compiled a list of books which she considered to be of special interest to the adherents of Objectivism. The periodicals were supposed to help her readers "acquire relevant knowledge".

**Ayn Rand
The Virtue of Selfishness, 1964
Published by The New American Library
First edition**

The provocative title of this book embodies the core concept of Objectivist philosophy – the "ethics of rational self-interest". In this collection of articles, Rand argues for a new code of morality, based on rational concern with one's own interests. According to Rand, morality is a matter of principle, a "code of black and white", good or evil. Convinced in the perniciousness of any ambiguity, she sees, what she calls; "the cult of moral greyness" as the main symptom of moral decay. Evaluating egoism as the only reasonable ethics, she confronts it with the idea of self-sacrifice, or altruism, which she finds not

only immoral, but absolutely incompatible with freedom, individual rights, and last but not least, capitalism. She also introduces “the trader principle”, an ideal form for any kind of voluntary human relationship based on a free exchange, beneficial for both parties.

Ayn Rand
***Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal*, 1967**

Published by The New American Library
First edition

Rand argues that capitalism is “a social system based on the recognition of individual rights, including property rights, in which all property is privately owned”. The only function of the government in capitalist society is the protection of individual rights, by banning “physical force from human relationships”. Rand regarded capitalism as the only moral social system, and the only one that enables each individual to fully realise their potential. However, according to Rand, it was still an ‘unknown’ ideal, something to be achieved. The book, which consists of essays from different years, offers a justification of capitalism, and attempts to depict capitalism’s true meaning, history, economic

function and morality. An ardent critic of socialism and the welfare state, she argues that a political and economic system which provides the government with the power to plan the whole economy does not guarantee financial security, but only “the descent of the entire nation to a level of miserable poverty”. Rand concludes that capitalism can only be achieved by rejecting altruism and defending man’s right to exist for one’s own sake.

Ayn Rand
***Our Cultural Value-Deprivation*, 1966**

12" vinyl LP
Published by NBI Communications, Inc.

By the 1960s, Rand’s novels and ideas had won her enough devoted aficionados for her to form an official Objectivist philosophical movement, complete with periodicals and lecture courses, many of which were then disseminated in the form of LPs.

Ayn Rand’s 1966 lecture *Our Cultural Value-Deprivation* begins with a description of how recent experiments have demonstrated the destructive effects of sensory deprivation. Rand argues that the deprivation of values in culture can be even more subversive. Giving examples of what she sees as symptoms of decay in various facets of

modern culture — philosophy, politics, literature and arts — Rand characterises the visual arts of her time as nothing but distortion (of human figure, space, colour, etc.). She also distinguishes a “Rorschach school of art”, or the nonrepresentational, comparing nonfigurative art with the abstract inkblots of the Rorschach psychological test. She concludes that modern culture is not only experiencing a lack of values, but makes a reasonable person “doubt the evidence of one’s senses and the sanity of one’s mind”. As a consequence, she argues, cultural value-deprivation in the arts leads to a rise in drug addiction and teen suicide.

Ayn Rand
***Ethics In Education*, 1966**

12" vinyl LP
Published by NBI Communications, Inc.

The lecture *Ethics in Education* of the same year was based on Rand’s 1965 essay *Art and Moral Treason (The Romantic Manifesto)*. Rand believed that art plays an indispensable role in education and moral development. As an ardent adherent of what she called Romantic art, Ayn Rand strongly criticised modern art for its distortion of

reality and abolition of heroic spirit. Romantic art, according to her, represents things not as they are, but as they might and ought to be. In her lectures and writing, Rand sets out to develop her own theory of aesthetics, based on the moral principles of Objectivism. According to Rand, the evaluation of art, or aesthetic judgements, lies beyond the sphere of emotions. She defines art as “a selective re-creation of reality according to an artist’s metaphysical value judgements”. According to Rand, the purpose of art is to transform the metaphysical abstraction of knowledge into concrete perceptual awareness. Thus, a work of art should be representational, and its subject intelligible. Art guides one’s consciousness and provides a certain vision of existence. Hence Rand’s favour for the ‘heroic’ art of ancient Greece, and Romanticism, and her strong dislike of ‘deformed medieval monstrosity’ as well as modern art.

Ayn Rand
The New Fascism: Rule By Consensus, 1965

12" vinyl LP
Published by NBI Communications, Inc.

Ayn Rand
The Wreckage of the Consensus, 1967

12" vinyl LP
Published by NBI Communications, Inc.

In these lectures, Ayn Rand criticises American interference in Vietnam as unreasonable as well as violating the rights of Americans, as it did not serve any national interest. She also argues that the intervention would lead to the inevitable breakdown of the supposed ideal of “government by consensus”, or the unlimited rule of the majority. Rand warns that such approach to politics will inevitably result in “a plain, brutal, predatory, power-grabbing, de facto fascism”. According to Rand, the conflict between the individual and the state was a central issue throughout mankind’s history, “whether it is the individual against feudalism, or against absolute monarchy, or against communism or fascism or Nazism or socialism or the welfare state”.

Joseph Beuys
Unternehmensverband. Aufruf zur Alternative A3W FIU (Call for an Alternative), 1980 (→)

Published by Achberger Verlag

From the mid-1960s onwards, Joseph Beuys’ artistic and political activities became increasingly intertwined. He expressed political ideas in his works, yet at the same time he also regarded his own commitment as a work of art in itself. In *Aufruf zur Alternative (Call for an Alternative)*, Beuys sketches elements of the crisis in which he feels post-war Europe has ended up: nuclear threat, environmental problems, unrestrained consumption and inequality created by money and state. Because the two dominant Western ideologies, capitalism and communism, caused this crisis, he proposes a ‘Dritte Weg’ (Third Way): through direct democracy, all creative initiatives that have a positive impact on society can shape the ‘social sculpture’. When dissatisfied by communism and capitalism, there can be a Third Way, for finding individual emancipation, but with a sense of responsibility to society. In this way, Beuys opposes modernism’s homogeneous grand narratives, shifting the emphasis on human creativity, direct action and nature.



“[The total alternative movement] consists of a multitude of movements, initiatives, organisations, institutions, etc. They all have a chance if they act jointly.

However, a common election initiative does not mean: party organisation, party programme, old-style party debate. The unity needed can only be UNITY IN DIVERSITY.

Culture Wars

The movement of action groups, the ecological movement, the peace and women movement, the movement for democratic socialism, for humanist liberalism, for a Third Way, the anthroposophical movement and the Christian-confessional oriented movements, the civil rights movement and the movement for the developing world have to recognise that they are an indispensable part of the total alternative movement; parts that are not mutually exclusive or contradictory but are complementary.”

Andy Warhol

The American Indian (Russell Means), 1976

The American Indian (Russell Means) is a silk-screen painting by Andy Warhol from a series of eighteen he produced in 1976 depicting the American Indian, or native American, activist and actor Russell Means. Means, who was from the Oglala Lakota people, became widely known for his leadership during the occupation of the South Dakota town of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement in 1973. The occupation was in protest against the alleged corruption of the local government as well as their mistreatment of American Indians. The site was symbolic, as Wounded Knee was at the centre of the 1890 massacre of the Sioux by the U.S. Army. The siege between the activists and federal law enforcement lasted 71 days, and was covered widely in the media. In the 1970s, Warhol made many portraits of celebrities and people that he admired across the political and cultural spectrum. Means appealed to Warhol as a figure who sat at the intersection of activism, celebrity and popular culture. The representation of American Indians was a common, and also controversial, subject in Hollywood movies. Warhol's 'Pop' treatment of Means, in traditional dress, reflects how American Indians are part of the distinct American cultural iconography. Ace Gallery in Los Angeles, who first exhibited this series of paintings in 1977, contributed \$5,000 to the American Indian Movement in exchange for Means' participation. Means found fame once again decades later for his role as Chingachgook in the Oscar-winning movie, *The Last of the Mohicans*.



Andy Warhol

The American Indian (Russell Means), 1976

Silkscreen ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas

127×106,7 cm

The König Family Collection

Photo: Adam Reich

Jimmie Durham

Tlunh Datsi, 1984

Jimmie Durham's sculpture *Tlunh Datsi* was made by the artist in a period he intentionally used ethnically coded references in his materials and vocabulary. *Tlunh Datsi*, meaning 'puma' in the Cherokee language, is made of a puma skull with shells, feathers and fur, resting on a wooden stand that says "POLICE DEPT". Often asked about the question of identity in his work, Durham has said: "I'm accused, constantly, of making art about my own identity. I never have. I make art about the settler's identity when I make political art. It's not about my identity, it's about the Americans' identity". Playing with identity, or more specifically, with the expectation to deal with such questions in one's work, has become itself a dilemma for many artists.



Jimmie Durham

Tlunh Datsi, 1984

Skull, feathers, turquoise, acrylic paint, shells, wood

103×91×81 cm

The "M" Art Foundation

Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Joseph Beuys

COYOTE – I Like America and America Likes Me, 1974

Joseph Beuys had a troubled relationship with American culture. His performance *COYOTE – I Like America and America Likes Me* took place in May 1974 at René Block Gallery in New York, where he spent three days locked in a room with a live coyote. Beuys flew to New York and was taken by ambulance to the gallery. Throughout the performance, he interacted with the coyote, sometimes he was wrapped in grey felt, holding a large staff, sometime they circled each other, and the coyote would eventually rip the felt to shreds. At the end of the performance, Beuys hugged the coyote as a symbol of its tolerance towards him, and was returned to the airport once again in an ambulance, arriving and then leaving America without touching its soil. Beuys stated: “I wanted to isolate myself, insulate myself, see nothing of America other than the coyote”. His ritualistic action was an act of solidarity with Indigenous Americans, some tribes of which saw the coyote as a sacred animal able to move between the physical and spiritual worlds. Beuys saw the decimation of the coyote population by European settlers as symbolic of the violence of white men on indigenous cultures. “You could say that a reckoning has to be made with the coyote, and only then can this trauma be lifted” he stated.



Joseph Beuys

COYOTE – I Like America and America Likes Me (installation view), 1974

Performance at René Block gallery, New York

31 black and white photos under glass

50×80 cm

VERDEC Collection

Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Kerry James Marshall

Untitled, 1998–1999

Untitled by Kerry James Marshall is a large-scale twelve-panel woodcut print in which a domestic interior is depicted. Marshall introduces here a cinematic approach to the static medium of print – the work is more than 15 metres long, almost too large to take-in at a single glance. We see six men, sitting, talking and eating. Marshall addresses the question of black representation as the core principle of his practice, looking to address the historical ‘lack in the image bank’. For the people that he depicts, which are often created from imagination, he uses what he refers to as a ‘rhetorical blackness’, to develop new imagery of the black subject. The scene depicted in *Untitled* challenges stereotypes of the black male found in the media, through their participation in a mundane, uneventful, ‘normal’ activity.



Kerry James Marshall

Untitled, 1998–1999
Woodcut on paper
250×1545.6 cm
Collection M HKA
Photo: M HKA

Kerry James Marshall

Untitled (detail), 1998–1999
Woodcut on paper
250×1545.6 cm
Collection M HKA
Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Andy Warhol

Birmingham Race Riot, 1964

Warhol's print edition *Birmingham Race Riot* appropriates images of the Birmingham Race Riots of 1963 as documented by Charles Moore for a photo-essay in *Life* magazine. The riots gained notoriety across America, and is considered one of the key events of the Civil Rights Movement in the USA. Supporters of Martin Luther King protesting racial segregation were attacked by the police. King himself was arrested. Americans were shocked by images of protesters being attacked by police dogs and water hoses. President John F. Kennedy even said the events they depicted were "so much more eloquently reported by the news camera than by any number of explanatory words". Warhol contributed this print to a portfolio of work by ten artists, published by the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford, Connecticut, the year after the riot. Warhol considered *Birmingham Race Riot* as part of his wider *Death and Disaster* series, along with his *Car Crash* and *Electric Chair* series. The work today becomes topical once again in light of police killings of African-Americans, and additionally raises questions today around debates on artistic freedom in relation to 'cultural appropriation'.



Andy Warhol

Birmingham Race Riot, 1964
Screenprint on paper
50.8×61 cm
Collection M HKA
Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Andy Warhol

Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn) from the *Reversal Series*, c. 1978

In the late 1970s, Warhol began his *Reversal* and *Retrospectives* series, which recycled some of his best-known images. Using, and reusing images at will, Warhol was post-modern in his approach, toying with notions of 'high' and 'low' culture, and imbuing existing images with new ideas and perspectives. The work *Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn)* from the *Reversal Series*, uses one of his iconic images, that of Marilyn Monroe. Warhol would look to reflect the optics of fame and celebrity, making portraits of some of the world's most renowned people, from Monroe to Mao. The 'surface' of his images were a part of this critical reflection on the superficiality of the phenomenon and the visual culture that sustains it. Here, as the image is in negative, Marilyn appears black, evoking the dark underbelly of fame.



Andy Warhol

Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn) from the *Reversal Series*, c. 1978

Screenprint on HMP paper

79x59 cm

Collection of Samuel Vanhoegaerden, Belgium

Photo: M HKA

Philip Guston

Law, 1969

Philip Guston (1913–1980) was a Canadian-American painter who was part of the New York School of artists together with other abstract expressionist painters such as Willem de Kooning and Jackson Pollock. In the 1960s, he transitioned into making neo-expressionist paintings, which were figurative and cartoonish, using a personal lexicon of symbols and objects, which became his best-known paintings. From 1968, he developed his lexicon of symbols, which included Ku Klux Klansmen, shoes, cigarettes and lightbulbs, amongst other things. Many of the symbols were biographical, giving his paintings an existential character. His parents were Ukrainian Jews who fled persecution in Odessa, Ukraine, and moved first to Canada where he was born, and then to Los Angeles. He and his family knew of the activities of the Ku Klux Klan against Jewish and black people in California, and in 1923, the young Guston found his father had hanged himself in the shed, possibly due to persecution. The painting *Law* depicts a Klansman looking at an open red book. On the one hand lugubrious and outlandish, the painting can also be seen to reflect on injustice in the face of white supremacy.



Philip Guston

Law, 1969

Acrylic on panel

76×81 cm

Private Collection, Waalre, The Netherlands

Photo: Peter Cox

Catherine Opie

Chloe, 1993

James, 1993

Pig Pen, 1993

Catherine Opie's photography from the 1990s can be seen in the art historical traditions of Renaissance and Baroque imagery in Europe, often placing her subjects centrally, with vivid lighting and luminescent backgrounds. Her series *Portraits* (1993–1997) are amongst her best-known works, which portray members of queer communities, including drag kings, cross dressers, and transsexuals, in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The works were produced during the era of the 'culture wars' of the late 1990s in the U.S., which polarised society on key subjects of socio-political relevance – including abortion rights, religion, sexual freedom, censorship, guns, property and privacy – along ideological lines between 'progressives' and 'conservatives'. Opie's portraits have provided visibility to individuals and communities that have historically been marginalised in society. The politics of identity have brought aesthetics and politics into civil discourse, of which the visual arts have played a leading role, demonstrating that visual culture can be significant in debates on society and equality.



Catherine Opie

Chloe, 1993

Chromogenic print

50.8×40.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Regen Projects,
Los Angeles, and Thomas Dane Gallery

© Catherine Opie

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye

Nourish the Talented, 2003

A Head for Poison, 2011

At once, enigmatic and vivid, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's paintings are portraits of fictitious subjects. At the heart of her painting practice is invention, breathing life into the people that emerge on her canvases. The nature of Yiadom-Boakye's work, also offers the viewer the generous opportunity to find the familiar or the idiosyncratic in these characters. With this interpretative quality to Yiadom-Boakye's work, it has also meant that it can be drawn into discourses or representational lenses that might be considered reductive in relation to the artist's own ideas and intentions. For the artist, her paintings have never been specifically about foregrounding race. However, it can typically be the case that Yiadom-Boakye's works are understood as being about black representation and identity. This common reading, though not necessarily incorrect, ultimately provides a one-dimensional understanding of her work, foregrounding a racialised gaze over the artist's exploration of figuration and free invention. With these two paintings, we see the evolution and variety in Yiadom-Boakye's practice. *Nourish the Talented* is an example of the work the artist made in her formative period, whereas *A Head for Poison* offers a very different, and more refined style of portraiture. It is works like these that demonstrate the significant contribution Yiadom-Boakye is making to the genre of portrait painting.



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye

Nourish the Talented, 2003

Oil and acrylic on canvas

86×71 cm

Courtesy of the artist, Corvi-Mora, London and
Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Photo: Marcus Leith, © the artist

David Blandy

From the Underground, 2001

David Blandy's video *From the Underground* is a formative work by the artist exploring notions of self and otherness, particularly with regards to our relationship with popular culture. How much of our selfhood has defined by the cultural specificity of mass media, and are there limits imposed on the formation of our identities? In the video, the artist descends into the London underground and steps onto a tube train, the whole while animatedly lip-synching the lyrics to the rap song *Bring Da Ruckus* by the Wu-Tang Clan in all their profanity. Blandy's lank middle-class white British appearance sits awkwardly with the stereotype of a fan of underground hip-hop. Yet, he uses his genuine fandom to foreground his relationship to the cultures of other communities and contexts, particularly the realities of race. Blandy acknowledges his debt to the hip-hop music that has formed him, that inspired him to use appropriation as a way to circumvent the modernist myth of the originality of the avant-garde, whilst aware of his alienation from the form, due to his class, privilege, location and ethnicity. The sincerity and intensity of the performance is evident, but it is not quite enough to transcend these boundaries, and from the final minute of the work it is evident the artist is aware of the pathos of this failure. Made in 2001, *From the Underground* is an artwork that might be framed today within debates on 'cultural appropriation', which considers the ethics of adopting elements of one culture by another, and whether, due to levels of social dominance that might enable this, be inappropriate.

Within contemporary art specifically, the debate revolves around whether there should be limits to artistic freedom depending on the levels of privilege of the author, or whether appropriation and inspiration should be a natural part of the artistic process. This idea is further complicated in *From the Underground* if we note that the Wu-Tang Clan, as their name suggests, adopt samples and aesthetics of classic Kung Fu movies from Asia in their music.



David Blandy

From the Underground, 2002

Video file

4:22 min

Courtesy of the artist and Seventeen Gallery

Image: the artist

Cultural Relativism

Jean-François Lyotard
La Condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir (The Postmodern Condition. A Report on Knowledge), 1979
Published by Les Éditions de Minuit
First edition

In 1979, the Ministry of Higher Education of Québec commissioned French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard (1924–1998) to write a report on the influence of technology on science. The result, *La Condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir* is a short analysis of how stories and knowledge have been traditionally passed on. The term ‘postmodern’ rarely features in this influential book. Lyotard did not want to introduce a new paradigm within philosophy, yet uses the concept to refer to the state of culture after the changes that science, literature and art went through since the middle of the 20th century. Lyotard departs from Ludwig Wittgenstein’s language theory to argue that political, social or scientific knowledge and stories come into being when people enter a fluid and complex web of linguistic moves and countermoves. Divergent and heterogeneous language games all obey their own rules. There is no umbrella

meta-language. Lyotard bases his radical rejection of the great stories and ideologies on this heterogeneity: they suppress diversity and strive for conformist, consensus-oriented monocultures. According to Lyotard, anything that can increase heterogeneity – a multitude of small stories, the introduction of new rules or even the creation of completely new language games – can contribute to the end of monocultural modernity, based on universal, exclusive and authoritarian systems.

“Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward meta-narratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it.”

Kenneth Clark
Civilisation: A Personal View, 1969
Published by Harper & Row
First edition

Civilisation: A Personal View is the book version of the renowned eponymous television series written and presented by British art historian Kenneth Clark. First broadcast in 1969 in Britain, the series consisted of thirteen programmes, each fifty minutes

long, outlining the history of Western civilisation from the Early Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. Opening with the collapse of Roman Empire and the image of wild barbarians at the gates – the invasion the civilisation survived “by the skin of our teeth” – the series presents a classical Western-orientated approach to art history with the traditional focus on great male artists over the centuries. The overview excluded non-European civilisations. Although *Civilisation* was widely praised at the time, the cultural canon presented by Clark was soon questioned by another BBC series – John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing* (1972).

John Berger
Ways of Seeing, 1972
Published by the British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books Ltd

Ways of Seeing is a four-part television series written by British art critic John Berger. After being broadcast in 1972, the series became a book of the same name. The television series was intended as a response to *Civilisation*, a documentary series that represents a traditional vision of the Western artistic and cultural canon. In *Ways of Seeing*, Berger argues that our

perception is always influenced by assumptions about beauty, truth, civilisation, shape, taste, class and gender. What we see has to do with knowledge, belief and the relationship between ourselves and our environment, elements that are constantly changing. For him, looking at an image objectively seems impossible, because we always try to read the image’s ‘language’.

Edward W. Said
Orientalism, 1978
Published by Pantheon Books
First edition

Edward Said (1935–2003) was not only a literary scholar, but also an outspoken activist for the Palestinian cause. The central argument in *Orientalism*, his most important book, is that ‘orientalism’ present in disciplines such as history, anthropology and linguistics enables ‘the West’ to steer and dominate ‘the East’ politically, sociologically, scientifically and culturally. Western writers and academics create the representation of the Orient, starting from a series of contradictions: Western rationality vs. Eastern irrationality, Western productivity vs. Eastern laziness, Western self-control vs. Eastern impulsivity. Said characterises

this representation of ‘the orient- tal’ as extremely racist. According to Said, orientalism is in no way objective or scientific, but is part and parcel of the might, imperialism and colonial rule of the great European powers, and later the United States of America. Based on Michel Foucault’s concept of ‘discourse’ and Antonio Gramsci’s ‘cultural hegemony’, Said emphasises the intimate and often problematic relationship between the producer of culture and their object of research. The tension between ruler and ruled, the self and ‘the Other’ and the fallacy that Said detects in approaching any culture as a homogeneous, unchanging monoculture, still play an influential role in postcolonial thinking today.

“Perhaps the most important task of all would be to undertake studies in contemporary alternatives to Orientalism, to ask how one can study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian, or a nonrepressive and nonmanipulative, perspective. But then one would have to rethink the whole complex problem of knowledge and power.”

Unipolarity

Francis Fukuyama
The End of History and the Last Man, 1992
Published by The Free Press
First edition

“[In this article], I argued that a remarkable consensus concerning the legitimacy of liberal democracy as a system of government had emerged throughout the world over the past few years, as it conquered rival ideologies like hereditary monarchy, fascism, and most recently communism. More than that, however, I argued that liberal democracy may constitute the ‘end point of mankind’s ideological evolution’ and the ‘final form of human government,’ and as such constituted the ‘end of history’.”

This quote from political scientist and philosopher Francis Fukuyama (1952-) refers to his 1989 article that formed the basis for the book he wrote three years later, which introduces the central thesis of *The End of History and the Last Man*. Shortly after the fall of the Berlin Wall, Fukuyama proclaims the victory of Western democracy over communism and all other ideologies. Since the 1990s, Fukuyama’s triumphalist

image has often been adopted by politicians from centrist parties in the West. Fukuyama looks back at the history of the past centuries and sees a continuous clash of ideologies, driven by the logic of modern science on the one hand and the struggle for human recognition on the other. To underpin his reasoning, Fukuyama starts from Immanuel Kant’s idea of a universal history; Georg Wilhelm Hegel’s notion of the end of history (as interpreted by Alexandre Kojève); and Karl Marx’s concept of a history driven by class struggle. On the last pages of the book, Fukuyama uses the metaphor of ‘a long wagon train out along a road’ to clarify his vision of history. Every wagon is on its way to the same destination, but some are already further than others; some have completely given up on the journey; and the wagons trying out alternative routes discover that they all have to go through the same mountain pass to reach the final goal. Thus, according to Fukuyama, human history is universal, progressive, and going in one direction. He sees an evolution that started under the impulse of the European Enlightenment, and that evolves towards a global monoculture of liberal capitalism.

Samuel P. Huntington
The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order, 1996
Published by Simon & Schuster
First edition

The article by American political scientist Samuel P. Huntington (1927–2008) entitled ‘The Clash of Civilisations?’ first appeared in *Foreign Affairs* journal in 1993. When extended to book length, which was published three years later, his initial hypothesis of conflicts between civilisations in post-Cold War politics turned from question into statement. An alternative view to the influential ‘End of History’ thesis advocated by Francis Fukuyama, Huntington argues that the end of Cold War ideological bipolarity will lead to inevitable instability, but on the cultural axis. Describing civilisations as the highest rank of cultural identity, Huntington distinguishes eight of the world’s major civilisations: Western, Latin American, Islamic, Sinic (Chinese), Hindu, Orthodox, Japanese and African. According to the author, the population explosion in Muslim countries and the economic rise of China would challenge Western dominance. Although he sees Islam as a major threat, as “Islam, [is] a different civilisation whose people are convinced of the superiority

of their culture”, Huntington also criticises Western belief in the universality of culture, which: “suffers three problems: it is false; it is immoral; and it is dangerous”. Instead of the false universalism of Western culture, he suggests a strategy that, whilst abandoning the idea of universalism, would reaffirm Western identity in order to “renew and preserve it against challenges from non-Western societies.” An example of extreme cultural determinism, which omits any interdependency of cultures, the book has been criticised by various academic writers and is often regarded as a theoretical legitimisation of the aggressive side of US foreign policy.

Identity Politics

Segregation

Following the abolition of slavery by President Abraham Lincoln in 1863, the United States experienced a century of legally regulated racial segregation. In the Southern States, the Jim Crow laws (named after a racist caricature from a popular song) pursued a strict separation between the white and black populations at local and state level: from separate schools, hospitals,

and restaurants to separate trains, public toilets, parks and cemeteries. The Supreme Court approved these segregation laws, basing its decision on the concept of ‘separate but equal’. Since the individual states were themselves responsible for ensuring that the infrastructure was equal for all, this concept was of course never reality. In this way, a racist policy was pursued in the South that closely resembled the apartheid that came later in South Africa. Only in 1964, and under the pressure of civil rights activists such as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, and organisations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Civil Rights Act prohibited all segregation by law. Although ‘equality before the law’ has existed since then, discrimination remains a reality in many areas of the United States until today.

Theodora Kroeber ***Ishi in Two Worlds. A Biography of the Last Wild Indian in North America, 1961***

Published by University of California Press
First edition

Clifton and Karl Kroeber, ed. ***Ishi in Three Centuries, 2003***

University of Nebraska Press
First edition

Ishi (c. 1860–1916) was known as the last survivor of Yahi people, largely massacred by white settlers during California’s genocides. Having spent most of his life in concealment from genocidal attacks on his people, desperate and starving, he came out of hiding in 1911 near the valley town Oroville, California. He was taken away for safety to the University of California’s Museum of Anthropology where he lived the rest of his life under the care of the University staff. Theodora Kroeber (1897–1979) was an American writer and anthropologist famous for her translations of Native American narratives and her accounts of the life and culture of the Yahi. She has received first-hand knowledge about the ‘discovery’ of Ishi and his life in the white man’s world from her husband, cultural anthropologist Alfred Kroeber (1876–1960), known as Ishi’s trusted friend. The book

tells Ishi’s story in two parts: the first one, titled ‘Ishi the Yahi’, is a reconstruction of the culture and life of the Yahi people, while the second, ‘Mister Ishi’, describes how he has come to be called Ishi (which means ‘man’ in Yana language) as well as his encounter with modern American culture during his life at the museum.

Theodora Kroeber’s book was published forty-five years after the death of “the last of the Yahi”. Unlike the late 19th–early 20th century dispassionate and purely documentary anthropological writings, her book pays attention to the tragic events of genocide of Indigenous Americans and Ishi’s complex inner world and psychological struggles. The postcolonial critiques of anthropological ways of seeing evoked controversies and complex moral questioning about Ishi’s story. In 2003, the sons of Theodora Kroeber, Clifton and Karl Kroeber co-edited and published an anthology of essays on Ishi’s story. While *Ishi in Two Worlds* remained the first and the primary source of information on his life, the volume gathers Ishi’s story and its perception by numerous professionals, including contributions by Indigenous American writers and artists. The raising of

attention to the destiny of the last known member of the Yahis was triggered by repatriation claims and much media speculation.

While Maidu Indians accused anthropologists and claimed that it would have been better for him to live among related 'native' people, other Indigenous Americans rejected his legacy for his decision to stay with white people. As the last chapter of the anthology demonstrates, in the contemporary world, "more multiprofitteering than multicultural", the story of Ishi goes on to both inspire and produce paradoxes.

Ursula K. Le Guin
***The Left Hand of Darkness*, 1969**
Published by Ace Publishing Corporation
First edition

Ursula K. Le Guin
***The Lathe of Heaven*, 1971**
Published by Charles Scribner's Sons
First edition

Ursula K. Le Guin
***The Dispossessed*, 1974**
Published by Avon Printing
First paperback edition

Ursula K. Le Guin
***The Word for World is Forest*, 1976**
Published by Berkley Publishing Corporation
First edition

Ursula K. Le Guin
'Is Gender Necessary?'
in *Aurora: Beyond Equality*, ed.,
by Vonda N. McIntyre and Susan
Janice Anderson, 1976
Published by Fawcett Gold Medal
Book
First edition

American author and daughter of Theodora Kroeber Ursula Le Guin (1929–2018) is best known for her science fiction books from the late 1960s onwards, in which she questions the conventions of the genre, by creating characters and societies that challenge our understanding of gender, race and political organisation. *The Left Hand of Darkness* from 1969 is the starting point of a thought process that runs through Le Guin's oeuvre: rethinking and redefining gender and sex. At the

novel's centre, we find an androgynous group of people who are both female and male, and who can simultaneously be biological mother and father. Although the book has been described as feminist science fiction and has often been discussed in gender studies, it has also been criticised for the use of the pronoun 'he' to refer to its androgynous characters.

In response to this criticism, Le Guin wrote the essay 'Is Gender Necessary?' in 1976, in which she reflects on her experiment with portraying gender in the book, and examines her own evolving thinking on this subject.

"If we were socially ambisexual, if men and women were completely and genuinely equal in their social roles, equal legally and economically, equal in freedom, in responsibility, and in self-esteem, then society would be a very different thing. What our problems might be, God knows; I only know we would have them. But it seems likely that our central problem would not be the one it is now: the problem of exploitation – exploitation of the woman, of the weak, of the earth."

The Lathe of Heaven, whose title is a quote from the Chinese poet and Taoist philosopher Zhuangzi (4th century BC), is about a character whose dreams change the past and the present. This anti-utopia is Le Guin's critique of behaviourism, utilitarianism and eugenics. In addition to being an escape from bitter, inhuman democracies and fascist regimes, the book *The Dispossessed*, *An Ambiguous Utopia* is an investigation into the dilemmas of an anarcho-socialist utopia. Finally, in *The Word for World is Forest*, Le Guin links an anti-colonial and anti-militaristic message to environmental issues and the question of the relationship between language and culture.

Judith Butler
***Gender Trouble*, 1990**
Published by Routledge
First edition

American philosopher Judith Butler wrote *Gender Trouble*, her first book, in 1990 out of a critical commitment to feminism, and in recognition of the struggles of people that fall outside of prevailing gender norms. The book opens with Simone de Beauvoir's famous line from *The Second Sex* (1949), "One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." Butler starts

from a look at gender as a social construction resulting from biological sex – a common approach in feminism from the 1970s onwards. She reverses this line of reasoning by advancing gender as a regulating factor of identity that determines the way in which sex is constructed as a natural, binary division into women and men. A second reversal in *Gender Trouble* relates to what Butler describes as the ‘heterosexual matrix’ we live in. Heterosexuality is not a natural given arising from the existence of two sexes, but an ordering framework that maintains the normative notions of masculinity and femininity. Butler introduces the notion of ‘performativity’, borrowed from linguistics to explain how our view of the world is guided by the way we speak about it. She applies this to the construction of gender, proposing that gender comes into being through repeated speaking and acting as a woman or a man. In ‘performing’ a gender, we constantly reshape the norms of that gender that are passed down. For Butler, working in language presents an opportunity to deviate from current standards and, in doing so, to gradually shift meanings and realise social change.

Camille Paglia
Sexual Personae: Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson, 1990
Published by Yale University Press
First edition

Camille Paglia is an American cultural critic known for her polemical ideas on feminism and sexuality. A controversial figure – identifying herself as transgender – but rejecting contemporary gender studies, she is often described as an ‘antifeminist-feminist’. Her most famous and lengthy publication *Sexual Personae* seeks to demonstrate “the unity and continuity of Western culture” through the study of sexual personae from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson. Deriving her ideas from the theories of various writers including the Marquis de Sade, Oswald Spengler, Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, as well as taking the Nietzschean idea of dichotomy between Dionysian and Apollonian forces in cultural activity, Paglia builds her theory of Western culture upon sexual stereotypes, fixed sexual archetypes and a biological basis of sex. According to Paglia, culture and civilisation was created by men to oppose and contain the chaotic (or ‘chthonic’ to use Paglia’s term) and self-destructive

nature of women. The aggressive nature of male sexuality is seen as a driving force in culture – Paglia argues that “amorality, aggression, sadism, voyeurism, and pornography in great art have been ignored or glossed over by most academic critics”. Paglia’s comparisons of select examples of art and literature from high and low cultures, and controversial enthusiasm for pornography and male paedophilia are, as argued by some critics, merely gimmicks, which mask her glorification of male dominance and the unquestionable conservative trajectory of Western culture.

Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin
Sexual Behavior in the Human Male, 1948
Published by W. B. Saunders Company
First edition

Alfred C. Kinsey, Wardell B. Pomeroy, Clyde E. Martin, Paul H. Gebhard
Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, 1953
Published by W. B. Saunders Company
First edition

These two books, widely known as the Kinsey Reports, became best-sellers soon after their publishing and are still considered as some of the most influential

and controversial scientific books of the 20th century. The reports were listed in the ‘Most Harmful Books’ list by American weekly conservative *Human Events*. Considered pioneering for its time, the research initiated by Alfred Kinsey, professor of zoology at Indiana University and the founder of Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction, was primarily based on data collected from more than 5300 males and nearly 6000 females. Besides the information acquired from the reports of the participants, it also references material derived from various fields of medicine, animal behaviour, social studies, penology, marriage counselling, literature, the fine arts amongst many others. Published before the sexual revolution of the 1960-70s, the Kinsey Reports challenged conventional beliefs about sexuality among both specialists and the general public. Although considering a range of factors and sources of sexual outlet, such as decade of birth, age, religious adherence, etc., the Kinsey Reports have been criticised for their pretension to universality and objectivity, while at the same time omitting African-Americans from the research.

Desmond Morris
***The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's Study of the Human Animal*, 1967**
Published by Jonathan Cape
First edition

Desmond Morris
***The Human Zoo*, 1969**
Published by Jonathan Cape
First edition

In October 1967, British zoologist and behavioural scientist Desmond Morris (1928) published his infamous book *The Naked Ape: A Zoologist's study of the human animal*, a study of human behaviour, in which he approached man as one of the 193 monkey species. According to Morris, human behaviour and its evolution can best be understood as animal behaviour. Man does have some specific peculiarities. He does not only have the biggest brain and the largest penis, but is also the only monkey species whose body isn't covered with hair. This evolution toward a 'naked monkey' helped couples live monogamously, so that male specimens could hunt with confidence, while the females waited faithfully for them at home. In his theory, only the hunting men are the driving force behind the evolution of human intelligence. Ever since the publication of the book, Morris has received strong criticism from feminists

and (especially female) scientists. In the sequel *The Human Zoo*, Morris examines urban societies. He compares life in a city with life in a zoo: both provide the inhabitants with all the necessities of life, but with withdrawal from a natural environment. Isolation, boredom and life in a restricted space make the development of healthy social relationships difficult, and which can lead to all kinds of violence.

Key Exhibitions in New York

The Decade Show: Frameworks of Identity in the 1980s, 1990
Exhibition catalogue
Published by The Museum of Contemporary Hispanic Art; New Museum of Contemporary Art; Studio Museum in Harlem
First edition

1993 Whitney Biennial Exhibition, 1993
Exhibition catalogue
Published by Whitney Museum of American Art
First edition

These two exhibitions, which took place in New York three years apart, are often regarded together, as both were heavily orientated towards the tendency described as 'identity politics'. Organised in the midst of the so-called 'cultural wars', *The Decade Show* and the 1993 Whitney Biennial in particular, are considered as the

first major art exhibitions in the US to give visibility to artists from marginalised groups, whilst also presenting to the wider public such issues as the AIDS crisis, race, class, gender, imperialism and poverty, among others. In the case of *The Decade Show*, its representational strategy based on the contrasting of artworks of each minoritised group with that of mainstream (Anglo-Saxon/Western) artists promoted the tendency for the exaltation of differences as a mode of practice, since well-established in the US. The exhibitions received a maelstrom of criticism. Some critics felt there was a reductionist approach by the curators of the Whitney Biennial, with the complexity of some artworks reduced to the representation of marginality in essentialist terms. Perceived by some as vehemently political, the displays were described as overly-didactic, and the organisers were accused of pandering to political correctness and sacrificing artistic quality in favour of multiculturalism and identity politics. Although controversial, these exhibitions – and the Whitney Biennial to the greater extent – have had considerable influence on the politics of representation within the artistic sphere.

American context

***Human Events*, Vol. XXVI, no. 47, November 19, 1966**
***Human Events*, Vol. XXXVIII, no.1-52, 1978**

Human Events is a weekly conservative American newspaper founded in 1944 in Washington DC. Its title derives from the first sentence of the United States Declaration of Independence: "When in the course of human events...". The introduction reads: "*Human Events* is objective, but it looks at events through eyes that are biased in favour of limited constitutional government, local self-government, private enterprise and individual freedom. These principles represented the bias of the Founding Fathers. We think the same bias will preserve freedom in America". *Human Events* is known as the favourite newspaper of Ronald Reagan, who was a loyal subscriber from 1961. Reagan praised the newspaper for shifting his political views from liberal to conservative, and contributed several articles himself in the 1970s. Besides having run the Conservative book club, the newspaper is notorious for publishing the so-called 'Most Harmful Books' list. The list included *The*

Communist Manifesto, by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels; *Das Kapital* by Karl Marx; *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behaviour in the Human Female* by Alfred Kinsey; and *Beyond Good and Evil* by Friedrich Nietzsche.

James Davison Hunter
Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America, 1991 (↓)
Published by Basic Books
First edition

With his book *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*, American sociologist James

Davison Hunter reintroduced the historical concept of 'culture war', in response to what he considered to be a far-reaching polarisation within American politics and culture. According to his analysis, the latter was driven by the sexual revolution and by identity politics. Starting from an analysis of urgent contemporary social issues such as abortion, arms legislation, separation of church and state, privacy, recreational drug use and homosexuality, Hunter argues that the dichotomy of society is no longer primarily defined by a religious, ethnic, socio-economic

or political fault line. Rather, he identifies two morally opposite world views: a progressive and an orthodox one. Hunter defines the orthodox worldview as a static, universal and externally imposed view of morality. The progressive attitude assumes that ethics are contextual and evolving, tending towards a tolerant and inclusive society. According to Hunter, these two groups are constantly fighting for moral authority and are trying to gain control over cultural and political institutions. For this reason, a cordial and constructive debate between the 'progressives' and the 'orthodox' does not seem to be possible.

"The fundamental reason why each side characterizes their rivals as extremists outside the mainstream is because each ardently believes that the other embodies and expresses an aggressive program of social, political, and religious intolerance".

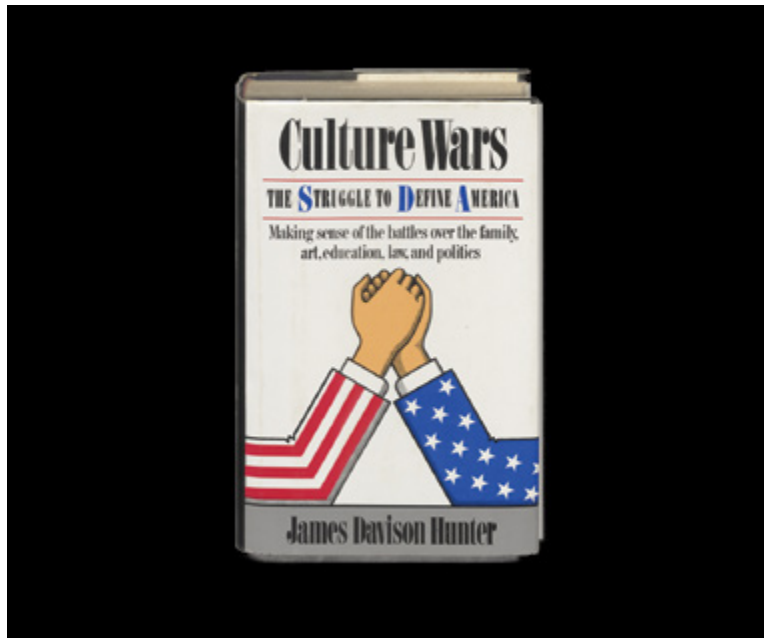
Belgian Context

De schoolstrijd (The School Struggle)

Article 17 of the Belgian 1831 constitution deals with freedom of education. The article stipulates

on the one hand that everyone is free to set up a school on the basis of their own philosophy of life and own pedagogical project and on the other, that parents have the right to enrol their children in a school of their choice. This freedom contributed to the so-called 'verzuijing' (polarisation or compartmentalisation) of the new Belgian state. The totality of life – from education and youth movement, to politics and care – was organised within one's own philosophy of life, e.g. liberal, Catholic or socialist. People grew up in largely separate, monocultural 'pillars'. At various moments in the history of Belgium, battles erupted between these 'pillars', in which the grip on youth, through education, was an important point of contention.

In the 19th century, the first School Struggle between Catholics who dominated so-called 'free' education ('vrij onderwijs') and liberals, who favoured a stronger state education ('officieel onderwijs'), was mainly about primary education. As more and more young people received secondary education after WWII, in the 1950s, the latter became the focus of the second school struggle. The main protagonists were Catholic Minister of Public



The Non-Aligned Movement

Education Pierre Harmel, who ensured that, for the first time, 'free' secondary education could receive subsidies from the state, and his successor, the socialist Leo Collard, who scaled down these subsidies, among other things. At the height of the struggle, in the mid-1950s, massive demonstrations were organised, some 'liberal' products like Tiense Suikerraffinaderij sugar were boycotted, and in the – 'pillarised' – media especially Collard was portrayed as a devil. The 1958 School pact was a compromise between the various parties and it democratised Belgian education. Since then, there has been a relative School peace in Belgium.

‘Pour me mettre à leur disposition’

Writing in Revolt as Significant Living with
Richard Wright and Jean Genet

Philippe Pirotte

The Echo of racial consciousness assumes a truly agonizing ring when it is sounded by sensitive whites who try to penetrate the color curtain.

– Richard Wright¹

The Spectre of Comparisons is the title of a book by Benedict Anderson that traces the puzzling doubling of complex histories, which in fact are separated by space and time. In the present text, it frames an – at first sight slightly odd – compulsion to draw parallels between African American author Richard Wright and French novelist and playwright Jean Genet, when it comes to their reflections on colonialism and colourism.² Both authors undertook specific and seminal travels that fundamentally informed their ‘comparable’ yet different quests for a space in which subjectivity might be reimagined and reconfigured in new, more egalitarian ways. This text is intended as an assemblage of researched material with a future exhibition in mind. It has no academic ambitions or pretences. Towards the end, it evolves more and more towards a conversation between Wright and Genet.

Highly acclaimed for his novel *Native Son* (1940) and his memoir *Black Boy* (1945), in 1947 Richard Wright fled America’s ongoing and intolerable racial discrimination for Paris, then known as a beacon of freedom and tolerance. He became an early contributor to *Présence Africaine*, at that time the most important pan-African journal in the world, founded by Senegalese writer and editor Alioune Diop, and he participated in the first ‘Congrès

des Écrivains et Artistes Noirs', organized by the magazine in 1956.³ During those years in Paris, he met and befriended the poet and future Senegalese president Léopold Sédar Senghor, the West Indian poet Aimé Césaire, and the Jamaican ex-Comintern member George Padmore. From June to August 1953 – the same year he began corresponding with French West Indian psychiatrist and political philosopher Frantz Fanon – Richard Wright travelled to the Gold Coast (now Ghana), where he witnessed Kwame Nkrumah's *Convention People's Party*, West Africa's first mass socialist party, as it campaigned for independence from British rule. In 1954, Wright published the travelogue *Black Power: A Record of Reactions in a Land of Pathos*.⁴ His subsequent book, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, is based on his impressions and analysis of the Asia-Africa Conference, the epoch-making gathering of representatives from 29 independent Asian and African countries, held in the city of Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955.⁵ Wright stayed a couple of weeks in Indonesia, and apart from attending the conference, he met extensively with the Indonesian intelligentsia. Later, in 1957, he re-evaluated both important journeys in *White Man, Listen!*, a gathering of essays in support of anti-colonial struggles in Africa, Asia, and the West Indies.⁶

For his part, following a prolific career as a novelist and playwright, and after a severe bout of depression and a suicide attempt, Jean Genet resurrected as a political activist in 1970. On 25 February of that year, his support was solicited by a representative of the Black Panther Party, the American organisation for the self-determination of black people. Genet offered to campaign at first hand in the United States, and from the 1st of March he stayed with the Black Panthers, sharing their lives. In their company, he crisscrossed America, participating in countless conferences at universities or in front of the press, until 1 May 1970, when he delivered his famous *May Day Speech* at Yale University.⁷ The day before, he was summoned by the Immigration Office in Connecticut to show his identification papers and visa. On 2 May 1970, Genet left the country, crossing the Canadian border clandestinely. On 20 October of the same year, through the intermediary of Black Panther friend and feminist film director Carole

Roussopoulos, Genet was invited by Mahmoud El Hamchari, the delegate of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) in Paris, to travel to Jordan. He stayed for half a year, and after meeting Yasser Arafat at the Al-Wahdat refugee camp he obtained a permit to visit the Fedayeen.⁸ Following three more trips to the Middle East, Genet was arrested by the Jordanian authorities and expelled from the country on 23 November 1972.

Tellingly, Genet invoked Wright in one of his addresses at a Panthers gathering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT): 'I am with the Black Panthers. The way Richard Wright was with me when, for the last time, I left prison.'⁹ The tribute Genet paid to Wright should probably be taken symbolically, as the first French translation of Wright's first book, *Uncle Tom's Children*, dates from 1946, two years after Genet's release from prison.¹⁰ But it is argued that in this way Genet drew authority from Wright and links himself to the racial power struggle in the US.¹¹ Wright in turn wrote a blurb for Genet's provocative debut novel *Our Lady of the Flowers*: 'Genet has taken a tabooed subject and created a world that is out of this world. He is a magician, an enchanter of the first order'.¹² In 1951, it was Wright who convinced *New Story Magazine* to publish excerpts from *Our Lady of the Flowers*. Whilst exiled in France throughout the 1950s, Wright befriended Genet and the latter modelled his play *Les Nègres* after Wright's *Native Son*, the story of 20-year-old Bigger Thomas, a black youth living in utter poverty in a poor area on Chicago's South Side in the 1930s.¹³ Clément Village, a character from *Notre-Dame des Fleurs*, reappears in *Les Nègres*, once again as a murderer (and echoes Bigger Thomas by killing a white woman). In this later piece, Genet commits himself to examining the question of black-white relations.¹⁴

Travelogues

Since its publication in 1956, *The Color Curtain* has been considered a prominent first-hand account of the Bandung Conference. Wright's awareness of his own displacement from a racist and capitalist empire at home, led him in the search of global affiliations and models for 'decolonizing' the mind.¹⁵ Wright became more and more convinced that the liberation struggles in the American South

during the Jim Crow era, against excruciating racism, had become ‘the problem of freedom in the Western world, the problem of Africa and Asia’.¹⁶ In other words, as an African-American, Wright connects the anti-imperialist, anti-colonial and anti-racist resolutions of the Conference, with the nascent civil rights movement in the US. Already in a 1947 interview, Wright – who after a short period of membership became disillusioned with the communist party¹⁷ – declared the African-American to be ‘intrinsicly a colonial subject, but one who lives not in China, India, or Africa, but next door to his conquerors, attending their schools, fighting their wars, and labouring in their factories. ... the world’s fate is symbolically prefigured in the race relations of America’.¹⁸ In his *Letter to American intellectuals*, Jean Genet reiterates Wright’s ideas on the complex reality of the African-American community being colonized within the US: ‘The reality of the Black colony within the United States is very complex. Disseminated in the midst of an arrogant nation which claims to be master of the world, the blacks, scattered amongst the white population, oppressed by racism, by the indifference of the whites, threatened by the oppressive police and judiciary, were forced to develop a very new form of struggle in this unique situation. It was then that the Black Panther Party was formed, first to defend the rights of the black colonized within the U.S.A., then to undertake an original political reflection’.¹⁹ In the same text, Genet explains how he became a public intellectual supporting the Black Panther movement: ‘When the Black Panther Party contacted me in France, I came immediately to the United States to put myself at their disposal’ (*pour me mettre à leur disposition*).²⁰ Though both authors consider the African-American as a colonized subject, living *in* the country of their oppressor, Genet’s intimates that the African American’s fight is a very singular one, based on a unique situation in the world – since it is a people without claim to a country and a people without a government, except that which enslaved them. This contrasts with Wright’s confidence to find a commonality between the African-Americans – and their experiences – and the decolonizing nations, with their understanding of colonialism and empire. Wright’s *Black Power* is considered a pioneering work, and a good example of what Stephen Howe sees as a ‘subgenre of travel literature by

Black Americans telling of their experiences – sometimes deeply painful and disillusioning – of estrangement and incomprehension when exposed first-hand to modern Africa; of finding themselves seen by locals – and, indeed, coming as never quite before to see themselves – as first and foremost Americans’.²¹ And according to writer and artist Kodwo Eshun from the Otolith Group, *Black Power*, is ‘a text whose conceptual restlessness registered [Wright’s] existential alienation from the Gold Coast and challenged readers expecting a comforting ode to the consolations of racial belonging. Generations of intellectuals have journeyed from the United States to the new nation state of Ghana ever since; each of them compelled to confront the discomforting questions Wright asked of himself’.²²

When in December 1954, Wright reads the announcement of a conference in Bandung, Indonesia, poised to address international ‘racialism and colonialism’, he decides to attend. As it was later revealed and (debatably) unbeknownst to Wright at the time, the CIA had helped to fund his trip via the Paris office of the Congress for Cultural Freedom. All the while, the US revoked the passports of certain Black radicals – most notably of W. E. B. Du Bois and Paul Robeson – and was in the process of deporting Trinidadian-born Black communist journalist Claudia Jones. Again, Wright’s belief in finding a commonality between the experiences of African Americans and people going through decolonisation would be put to the test by his observations in and around the conference. Though advertised differently, the conference focused more on sovereignty-struggles and modernist nation-building than on racism and colonialism. Moreover, Wright was interpellated by his Indonesian hosts, members of the nationalist *Konfrontasi* journal (connected to the PSI, the Indonesian Socialist Party) – authors like Mochtar Lubis, Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana and Beb Vuyk. Lubis was also member of *Gelanggang Seniman Merdeka*, a group of writers and artists who had stated immediately after independence: ‘We are the legitimate heirs to world culture, and we are furthering this culture in our own way’.²³ From the outset, the authors of *Gelanggang* and *Konfrontasi* think that Indonesia’s national culture project is internationalist: Indonesia places itself in the world, as the ‘declaration oozes self-confidence about the

place of Indonesian culture in the world – its artists and thinkers, indeed all Indonesians [the ‘we’ just cited] are legitimate heirs to world culture – not some bastard progeny who must fight for their rights’.²⁴ Konfrontasi’s stance that ‘Indonesian national culture [is] evolving through interaction with, and response to, international sources and developments’,²⁵ made the group sympathetic to the West, though in the late 1950s it also generated a conflict with president Sukarno, whose international politics evolved towards an anti-Western stance. Wright passed a weekend with the *Konfrontasi Study Club*, hosted in Mochtar Lubis’ villa in the mountain town of Tugu, where he famously stated ‘I always feel immediately at home among coloured people [sic]’.²⁶ Dutch-Indonesian writer Beb Vuyk, who was about to review critically the premise of *Black Power*, and Wright’s headstrong desire to find connections between African-Americans and Africans, reacted sceptically.²⁷ Although Wright felt an emotional attraction based on ‘skin colour’, and had ‘special feelings for Africa’, blood and ethnicity provide him with ‘absolutely no connections’ to the Gold Coast ‘whose culture and spirit are foreign to him’.²⁸ According to Vuyk, the way Wright ‘reacts to these things [in Africa] is no different from the way a white American would react’, suggesting that Wright ‘is wearing glasses that frame the way he sees things’.²⁹ Her use of the ‘framing glasses’ metaphor pre-empts Mochtar Lubis’ later criticism of Wright’s Bandung account for wearing ‘coloured glasses’ in Indonesia, having ‘sought behind every attitude he met coloured and racial feelings’.³⁰ Lubis and his fellow *Konfrontasi* colleagues were astonished by the publication of *The Color Curtain*, as the Indonesian novelists and others belonging to the ‘new generation’ who Wright met, ‘were the least racial and colour conscious of the various groups in Indonesia’.³¹ This made Lubis cynically remark: ‘The fellow is colour crazy’.³²

Maybe Indonesia’s president Sukarno was way more colour conscious than the *Konfrontasi* group, as he echoes Wright in his 1963 Independence Day speech, linking anti-colonialism and anti-racism, and invoking African American anti-racist activism as emblematic of the planet wide revolution of which the Indonesian Revolution was a constituent part.³³ Already in 1955,

in a politically strategic masterpiece, Sukarno refashioned the Bandung conference as a theatrical performance ‘staging’ coloured leaders of the world on the so-called Merdeka walk. The famous ‘freedom walk’ – *merdeka* means freedom in Indonesian – made by the delegates to the Merdeka building along the Jalan Asia Afrika or Asia-Africa Street, turned out to be the ‘impromptu creation of a ritual that contributed to an iconic “performative act”’ during the conference. Leaders like Sukarno (Indonesia), Nehru (India), Zhou Enlai (China) and Nasser (Egypt) all took part in the collective inauguration ceremony of postcolonial Asia-Africa – a kind of historical canonisation. The politicians ‘all understood the importance as performers in their role as new international statesmen, representing the *esprit de corps* of the newly emergent post-colonial world’.³⁴ Strangely, Wright doesn’t describe the Merdeka Walk in *The Color Curtain*, probably because he was already in the conference building at the moment it happened. He does though indicate the diverse clothing and attire of delegates filing into the congress hall, for example of the Gold Coast and Burma: ‘Three Gold Coast delegates entered, adding a blaze of brightness with their colourful togas. The Burmese entered wearing their soft white caps which had knots dangling at the sides of their heads’.³⁵ And he mentions the crowd standing outside eagerly looking at the ‘approach of some august representative of some coloured Asian or African Country ...; it was the first time in their downtrodden lives that they’d seen so many men of their colour, race and nationality arrayed in such aspects of power, their men keeping order, their Asia and Africa in control of their destinies’.³⁶ Here, Wright suggests a sense of pride but also an image of self-determination, elucidated by the parade of Asian and African leaders. Jean Genet on his turn considers that the performative, theatrical, extravagant and emblematic self-staging of the Black Panthers is to a great extent constituent of their success. It was a way of ‘making-visible’ and being perceived as self-determined. Perceived, because there was no land: the American territory ‘belonged’ to whites. That’s why the Panthers undertook subversive action in collective consciousness. As they were always on the territory of the masters, they would terrorize the masters ‘but with the only means they have: the parade’.³⁷ The Black Panthers ‘wanted this – if you want,

theatrical and dramatic – image ... by provoking its representation in the press and on the screen, they wanted this image to haunt whites, and by this threat they succeeded ...³⁸

Writing in revolt as significant living

Looking back at his novel *Native Son*, Wright notes the following about the main character:

[The] civilization which had given birth to Bigger contained no spiritual sustenance, had created no culture which could hold and claim his allegiance and faith, had sensitized him and had left him stranded, a free agent to roam the streets of our cities, a hot and whirling vortex of undisciplined and undisciplined and unchannelized impulses impulses. The results of these observations made me feel more than ever estranged from the civilization in which I lived ...³⁹

As Kowdo Eshun suggests, Richard Wright sought to ‘find a vocabulary for those who were born into the “de-civilizing” void produced by the twin forces of colonization and slavery’.⁴⁰

A similar estrangement is sensed by Genet:

‘What people call American civilization will disappear. It is already dead because it is founded on contempt – for example, the contempt of the rich for the poor, the contempt of whites for blacks, and so on. Every civilization founded on contempt must necessarily disappear. And I am not speaking of contempt in terms of morality, but in terms of function: I mean that contempt, as an institution, contains its own dissolving agent’.⁴¹

Reviewing *Black Power*, Beb Vuyk had already noted: ‘They [the slaves] spoke in hundreds of different ethnic languages and belonged to different African cultures. To understand each other they had to use the language of the overseer’.⁴² For Genet, the difficulty of not being able to speak outside of the language of the coloniser, is due to the fact that for an African American ‘history’ is short: ‘He cannot trace his history beyond the period of slavery’.⁴³ They, the African Americans, have to use the same language, the words,

the syntax, the grammar of the enemy, though they feel the need of a separated language that would belong to their ‘nation’. The hatred for the white man can only be expressed in the language that belongs to both the white and the black, but over which the white man holds the grammatical and spelling ‘jurisdiction’.⁴⁴ So if the African-American author writes a masterpiece – as in the case of Richard Wright’s *Native Son* for example – it is the language of the enemy, the treasure of the enemy that is enriched, be it with hatred and love at the same time: ‘So there is only one resource: to accept this language but to corrupt it so skilfully that white people will get caught up in it. Accept it in its wealth, further increase its wealth, and bring within it all the hauntings and all the hatred of the White. It’s work’.⁴⁵ But Genet also calls for the creation of *another* language: ‘I think time has come to use a new vocabulary and a syntax capable of making everybody aware of the double fight: poetic and revolutionary, of the movements which are amongst the whites similar to that of the Black Panthers’.⁴⁶ Richard Wright, in turn, reflecting on his most famous novel *Native Son*, is self-assured, and convinced he *is* inventing a new – more embodied – language:

‘And then, while writing, a new and thrilling relationship would spring up under the drive of emotion, coalescing and telescoping alien facts into a known and felt truth. That was the deep fun of the job: to feel within my body that I was pushing out to new areas of feeling, strange landmarks of emotion, cramping upon foreign soil, compounding new relationships of perceptions, making new and – until that very split second of time! – unheard-of and unfelt effects with words. It had a buoying and tonic impact upon me; my senses would strain and seek for more and more of such relationships; my temperature would rise as I worked. That is writing as I feel it, a kind of *significant living*’.⁴⁷

Wright argues in *The Color Curtain* that ‘a language is useless unless it can be used for the vital purposes of life, and to use a language in new situations is, inevitably, to change it’.⁴⁸ Maybe this premise is fulfilled by *Prisoner of Love*, Genet’s last manuscript.⁴⁹ According to Doreen Mende, it is neither a book ‘about’ the Palestinian revolution nor the Black Panthers but, instead, it

continuously writes through the experience of being constrained – ‘both in support of people in struggle from the “outside” and within the means of writing itself’.⁵⁰ The book brilliantly recounts Genet’s ‘deracination’ of memory through writing: it is a memoir, a travelogue, a historical account of the Black Panther party and of the Palestinian revolution, but also, as Mende elaborates, ‘a journal, at the same time a declaration of love and a political pamphlet in 430 pages, a writing in search of a loved one, *a writing in revolt*, but also a writing at pains with the medium of writing itself, in a performance of complicity – indicating an arrival of a people’s struggle *within* the means of writing itself’.⁵¹

Postcolonial entanglements

In Richard Wright’s aforementioned book *White Man, Listen!*, written after his experiences in Ghana and Indonesia, he summarises: ‘Asia and Africa thus became a neurotic habit that Europeans could forgo only at the cost of a powerful psychic wound, for this emotionally crippled Europe had, through centuries grown used to leaning upon this black crutch’.⁵² In the same book, we read that the language-problem described above is now paired with another entanglement, namely the problem of responsibility, which Wright completely locates in the West: ‘In a sense, this is a fight of the West with itself, a fight that the West blunderingly began, and the West does not to this day realize that it is the sole responsible agent, the sole instigator. For the West to disclaim responsibility for what it so clearly did is to make every white man alive today a criminal’.⁵³

But Wright also sees a possibility of redemption: ‘For the West to accept its responsibility is to create the means by which white men can liberate themselves from their fears, panic and terror while they confront the world’s coloured majority of men who are also striving for liberation from the irrational ties which the West prompted them to disown – ties of which the West has partially robbed them’.⁵⁴ Jean Genet completes:

‘[It] seems to me that the Whites must bring a new dimension in politics, which is the delicateness of the Heart. Let’s be very careful, it’s not a matter of sentimentality, but a delicateness in dealing with men who do not have the same

rights as us. ... It is obvious that white radicals must behave in a way that would tend to erase their privileges. As for the other whites, it is understood that, if they value their white colour so much, it is in death that they will find it. The whitest white man is, for a moment, a dead white man’.⁵⁵

Genet, as a white person, wanted to annihilate the white man at the centre of his own being: ‘I knew from a very young age that I was not French, that I did not belong to the village’. He continues: ‘I may be a black with white or pink colours, but a black. I don’t know my family’.⁵⁶ Artist Bouchra Khalili’s project *The Radical Ally* explores the position of the radical ally to the cause of coloured people as the reverse of the ‘declared enemy’, as Genet defined himself vis-à-vis white Western society. Khalili: ‘To become the radical ally ... Genet had to destroy the white man in him’.⁵⁷ Wright, an African-American exiled in Europe, was perceived as American before being seen as a black person in both Ghana and Indonesia. Both authors were acutely aware of what Wright described as ‘the agony [...] induced in the native heart’.⁵⁸ This heart was rotting and being pulverized ‘as it tried to live under white domination that mocked it. The more Westernized that native heart became, the more anti-Western it had to be, for that heart was now weighing itself in terms of white Western values that made it feel degraded. Vainly attempting to embrace the world of white faces that rejected it, it recoiled and sought refuge in the ruins of moldering tradition. But it was too late; it was trapped; it found haven in neither’.⁵⁹ Wright continues: ‘this is the profound revolution that the white man cast into the world; this is the revolution (a large part of which has been successfully captured by the Communists) that the white man confronts today with fear and paralysis’.⁶⁰ Indeed, Genet, when asked by Bertrand Poirot-Delpech whether ‘being white makes one guilty? As in a sort of original sin?’, retorted: ‘I don’t think of it as original sin; in any case not the one the Bible talks about. No, it’s a sin that is completely deliberate’.⁶¹ Genet’s matter-of-factness makes it all the more clear: the white race was ‘invented’, as also Houria Bouteldja surmises, to fulfil the needs of a capitalist bourgeois class. It was invented to avoid the threat of a complicity in the making between former slaves and the

proletariat. In a searing rant Bouteldja accuses the proletariat of complicity: it has accepted the ‘deal’ offered by the bourgeoisie, that is to say ‘to give you a stake in the trafficking of black people and make you ally yourselves with the exploitation of slaves. This is how the bourgeoisie invented common interests between itself and you, or your ancestors, if you prefer. This is how, progressively, by institutionalizing itself, the white race was invented’.⁶²

The Spectre of Comparisons: spirits coalesce

When reading of Wright’s Gold Coast and Bandung experiences, together with the texts Jean Genet wrote for the Black Panthers, as through the inverted telescope suggested by Benedict Anderson in *The Specter of Comparisons*, strange shifts take place. Complex histories of colonial domination, independence movements, and a fraught relation towards the ‘white’ seem to strand what could be the revolution towards an inclusive and more egalitarian culture. Still, though the rehabilitation of the whites would be an unsustainable stance for both Wright and Genet, they saw the shedding of privileges as a possibility. Genet talks about ‘the delicateness of the heart’, and Wright penned *White Man Listen!* with a reason. Both recognized revolutionary potential in writing, in literature, in poetry. Genet, in his *Letter to American Intellectuals* is confident that the political thinking of the Black Panthers ‘... originates in the poetic vision of black Americans. We are realizing more and more that a poetic emotion lies at the origin of revolutionary thought’.⁶³ And in his introduction to the prison letters by Georges Jackson he makes a case for poetry as revolution: ‘If we accept this idea that the revolutionary enterprise of a man or of a people originates in their poetic genius, or, more precisely, that this enterprise is the inevitable conclusion of poetic genius, we must reject nothing of what makes poetic exaltation possible’.⁶⁴ For Wright, we witness, at the end of the 1950s, the rise of a new genre of academic literature dealing with colonial and postcolonial facts from a wider angle of vision than was ever possible before. In this new literature ‘one enters a universe of menacing shadows where disparate images coalesce – white turning into black, the dead coming to life, the top becoming the bottom – until you think you are seeing Biblical beasts with seven heads and ten horns rizing out of the sea.

Imperialism turns out to have been much more morally foul than even Marx and Lenin imagined!’.⁶⁵

Notes

- 1 Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain*, World Publishing, New York, 1956, p.194.
- 2 Benedict Anderson, *The Specter of Comparisons*, Verso, London-New York, 1998.
- 3 *Présence Africaine* was a pan-African quarterly cultural, political, and literary magazine, published in Paris, and founded by Alioune Diop in 1947. In 1949, *Présence Africaine* expanded to include a publishing house and a bookstore on the rue des Écoles in the Quartier Latin. The journal was highly influential in the Pan-Africanist movement, the decolonisation struggle of former French colonies, and the birth of the *Négritude* movement.
- 4 Harper & Brothers, New York, 1954.
- 5 World Publishing, New York, 1956. The term ‘colour curtain’ is an invention of Wright himself that, as fellow black American writer James Baldwin would state explicitly four years later, refers to the iron curtain: ‘No curtain under heaven is heavier than that curtain of guilt and lies behind which white Americans hide. That curtain may prove to be yet more deadly to the lives of human beings than that Iron Curtain of which we speak so much, and know so little. The American curtain is colour.’ (James Baldwin, *The White Man’s Guilt*, in James Baldwin, *Collected essays*, Toni Morrison, ed., Library of America, Boone, 1998 [1962], p.725.
- 6 Doubleday & Co, New York, 1957.
- 7 The ‘May Day Speech’ is probably the most important statement Genet made while in the United States. Given at Yale University, outdoors, before an enormous crowd of more than twenty-five thousand people, Elbert “Big Man” Howard, co-founder of the Black Panthers, read Genets speech in English translation. Genet addressed the relatively diverse group of protesters who, in response to a call put out by the Panthers, had come together for the large demonstration that took place from 1-3 May, 1970. The speakers included leaders from every current of the revolutionary left: Jerry Rubin, Abbie Hoffman, Dave Dellinger, Ralph Abernathy, David Hilliard and others.
- 8 *Fedayeen* (فدائيين) is an Arabic term, used to refer to various military groups willing to sacrifice themselves for a larger campaign, in this case the liberation of Palestine.
- 9 Jean Genet, ‘It Seems Indecent for Me to Speak of Myself’, in *The Declared Enemy. Texts and Interviews*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2004, p. 29. Originally published as *L’ennemi déclaré. Textes et entretiens choisis 1970-1983*, Gallimard, Paris, 1991.
- 10 Richard Wright, *Uncle Tom’s Children*, Harper & Brothers, NYC, 1938.
- 11 Pamela A. Pears, ‘Linking the Political and the Aesthetic in Jean Genet. From *Notre-Dame-Des-Fleurs* to *Les Nègres* to the *Black Panther Party*’, in: Rajeshwari S. Vallury, *Theory, Aesthetics, and Politics in the Francophone World: Filiations Past and Future*, Lexington Books, Lanham, Boulder, New York, London, 2019, p.95-107.
- 12 Richard Wright, dust jacket blurb for Jean Genet, *Our Lady of the Flowers*, Grove Press, New York, 1963. The free-flowing, poetic novel is a largely autobiographical, and highly erotic account of a man’s journey through the Parisian underworld, in which characters are drawn on their real-life counterparts – mostly homosexuals and transvestites living on the fringes of society. Originally published in French as *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs, aux dépens d’un amateur* [Robert Denoël and Paul Moribien], Monte-Carlo, 1944.

- 13 English edition: Jean Genet, *The Blacks: A Clown Show*, NYC, Grove Press, 1994 [1960] (translation Bernard Frechtman).
- 14 *Les nègres* is a complex play in which Village performs, rather than commits, the murder on a mannequin(!) – to tease the white audience – just as the stage adaptation of *Native Son* was attended by a predominantly white audience, which was foreseen by Wright. Both Bigger Thomas and Clément Village fall into the roles ascribed to them by white society.
- 15 Bill Mullen, 'Discovering Postcolonialism', in *American Quarterly*, vol 54, n. 4 (December 2002), p.702.
- 16 From an unpublished interview with *Time* reporter Curtis Prendergast, March 1953. See: Toru Kiuchi and Yoshinobu Hakutani, *Richard Wright: A Documented Chronology, 1908-1960*, McFarland & Company, Jefferson, 2014, p.282
- 17 This echoes Aimé Césaire's fraught relationship with the French Communist Party. See Souleymane Bachir Diagne, 'In Praise of the Post-Racial: Negritude Beyond Negritude', *Third Text*, Volume 24, n. 2 (March 2010), p.241-248.
- 18 Keneth Kinnamon and Michel Fabre, eds., *Conversations with Richard Wright*, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, 1993, p.125.
- 19 Jean Genet, 'Letter to American Intellectuals', a text based on a speech given at the University of Connecticut, March 1970, in *The Declared Enemy*, p.30.
- 20 Idem, p.33 (translation slightly adapted).
- 21 Stephen Howe, *Afrocentrism. Mythical Past and Imagined Homes*, Verso, London-New York, p.110.
- 22 Kodwo Eshun, in a text on the Otolith Group's video installation *Nucleus of the Great Nation*, <http://otolithgroup.org/index.php?m=project&id=198> (last accessed 24/8/2020).
- 23 Jennifer Lindsey (introduction) in *Heirs to World Culture - Being Indonesian 1950-1965*, Jennifer Lindsey and Maya H. T. Liem, eds., KITLV Press, Leiden, 2012, p.10.
- 24 Ibidem.
- 25 Keith Foulcher, 'Bringing the World Back Home. Cultural Traffic in *Konfrontasi*, 1954-1960' in Jennifer Lindsey & Maya H. T. Liem, *Heirs to World Culture*, 2012, p. 33.
- 26 Beb Vuyk, 'Weekeinde met Richard Wright' (two parts) in *Vrij Nederland*, 19 and 26 November 1960. Republished, with an introduction, as 'Beb Vuyk's "A Weekend with Richard Wright" (1960)', in: Brian Russel Roberts and Keith Foulcher (editors), *Indonesian Notebook. A Sourcebook on Richard Wright and the Bandung Conference*, Durham, Duke University Press, 2016, p. 192-203.
- 27 Vuyk's review appeared in the literary and cultural column of the newspaper *Indonesian Raya*, on 1 June 1955, less than a month after Wright left Indonesia. It is republished in Brian Russel Roberts and Keith Foulcher, *Indonesian Notebook*, p.147-150.
- 28 Idem, p.148.
- 29 Ibidem.
- 30 Mochtar Lubis, 'Through Colored Glasses?', *Encounter*, March 1956, p. 73. It concerns a letter Lubis wrote in reaction to the pre-publication of *The Color Curtain* in the pro-American journal *Encounter*, published in London.
- 31 Ibidem
- 32 *Indonesian Notebook*, p. 203.
- 33 *Indonesian Notebook*, p. 191.
- 34 Naoko Shimazu, 'Diplomacy as Theatre: Staging the Bandung Conference of 1955', in *Modern Asian Studies* 48, no. 1, 2014, p. 225–252.
- 35 Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain*, p.135
- 36 Idem, p.133-134.
- 37 *Un Captif amoureux*, Gallimard, Paris, 1986, p. 142-143 (my translation).
- 38 Idem, p. 139 (my translation).
- 39 Richard Wright, 'How "Bigger" Was Born', in *Native Son*, Harper Collins, New York, 1998 [1940], p. 445. The text first appeared in the *The Saturday Review of Literature* issue of 1 June 1940.
- 40 Kowdo Eshun, 'Ana Teixeira Pinto on Parapolitics at HKW', in: *Texte Zur Kunst*, 29 January, 2018. <https://www.textezurkunst.de/articles/ana-teixeira-pinto-parapolitics> (last accessed 24/8/2020).
- 41 *The Declared Enemy*, p.39.
- 42 Beb Vuyk, 'Black Power', first published in *Indonesia Raya*, 1955, reprinted in *Indonesian Notebook*, p. 148.
- 43 *The Declared Enemy*, p. 30.
- 44 *The Declared Enemy*, p. 49-50.
- 45 Ibidem (translation slightly adapted).
- 46 Idem, p. 31. This last sentence suggests that Genet is speaking for a predominantly white audience.
- 47 Richard Wright, 'How "Bigger" Was Born', in *Native Son*, p. 457 (italics mine).
- 48 Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain*, p. 200.
- 49 Jean Genet, *Prisoner of Love*, Picador, London, 1989 (translation Barbara Bray).
- 50 Doreen Mende, *THE ITINERANT. On the Delayed Arrival of Images of Socialist Internationalism that Confound Contemporary Exhibiting Processes*, 'a practice-based thesis submitted for the degree of Ph.D. in Curatorial/Knowledge', Department of Visual Cultures, Goldsmiths, University of London, 2015, p. 231. https://research.gold.ac.uk/11395/1/VIS_thesis_MendeD_2015.pdf (italics mine; last consulted 24/8/2020).
- 51 Doreen Mende, *THE ITINERANT*, p. 18 (italics mine). The wording 'a writing in revolt' is inspired by the title of Hadrien Laroche's book *The Last Genet. A Writer in Revolt*, Arsenal Pulp Press, Vancouver 2010.
- 52 Richard Wright, 'The Psychological Reaction of Oppressed People', in *White Man Listen!*, p. 4-5.
- 53 Idem, p. 5.
- 54 Idem, p.3.
- 55 Jean Genet, 'May Day Speech', *The Declared Enemy*, p. 35.
- 56 'Interview with Hubert Fichte', in *The Declared Enemy*, p. 125-126 (translation adapted).
- 57 'The Radical Ally', Bouchra Khalili (ed.), in *News: 3*, Gato Negro Ediciones, Acapulco, 2019, p. 2.
- 58 *White Man Listen!*, p. 5.
- 59 Ibidem.
- 60 Ibidem.
- 61 Jean Genet, 'Interview with Bertrand Poirot-Delpech', in *The Declared Enemy*, p. 204.
- 62 Houria Bouteldja, *Whites, Jews, and Us*, semi-text(e) intervention series, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2016, p. 45.
- 63 Jean Genet, 'Letter to American Intellectuals', in *The Declared Enemy*, p. 30.
- 64 Jean Genet, 'Introduction to *Soledad Brother*', in *The Declared Enemy*, p. 54.
- 65 Richard Wright, *White Man Listen!*, p. 5.

The Non-Aligned Movement

The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) was formally established during the meeting held on the Brijuni islands, Yugoslavia in 1956 by the signing of the Declaration of Brijuni by five world leaders including Josip Tito of Yugoslavia, Sukarno of Indonesia, Jawaharlal Nehru of India, Gamal Abdel Nasser of Egypt, and Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana. The first Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries was held in 1961 in Belgrade, Yugoslavia. The aims of the movement were derived from the ideas expressed during the Afro-Asian conference in Bandung (1955). Having appeared in the bipolar political climate of the Cold War, the NAM represented the 'third way' in international relations. Based on the principles of peaceful co-existence and mutual support, the movement advocated for respect of sovereignty and non-interference in domestic affairs. The NAM, Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) and The Organization of Solidarity with the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) all collaborated, however, the members of the latter were distinguished by a more radical and

less conciliatory attitude towards Western imperialism. The NAM is currently formed by 120 world states.

OSPAAAL

Tricontinental: First Solidarity Conference of the Peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America, 1966 (→)

Edited by the General Secretariat of OSPAAAL

The Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa and Latin America (OSPAAAL) was founded in Havana, Cuba, in January 1966 as the outcome of the first Tricontinental conference. OSPAAAL was intended to unite the revolutionary national liberation movements of the three 'Third World' continents (Africa, Asia, and Latin America), together in the spirit of international anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist solidarity. In the general declaration of the first conference, which took place during the active US intervention in Vietnam, the organisation explicitly criticised 'Yankee imperialism'. Delegates at the Tricontinental Conference not only condemned racial discrimination and the South African apartheid regime, but also expressed their support for Civil Rights movements everywhere and advocated for global military



resistance. Other topics included new models of economic development with the Global South as one entity. The distinct socialist stance of the Tricontinental movement, which emerged just four years after The Cuban Missile Crisis, was opposed by the United States through the extensive counter-revolutionary activities carried out in the region by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The spirit of Tricontinental prevailed throughout the 1970s, but began to fade in the 1980s.

Tricontinental magazine

Tricontinental magazine was launched soon after the Tricontinental conference as the theoretical organ of the Executive Secretariat of OSPAAAL. It was published in Cuba and a few other countries in Spanish, English, French and other languages. The French edition of *Tricontinental* was published in Paris by leftist publisher Éditions Maspéro despite multiple seizures and bans by the French government. The magazine provided updates and commentary on ongoing

independence movements worldwide, as well as speeches and essays written by leading revolutionaries and theorists. The Cuban version of Tricontinental, thoughtfully designed and illustrated, often had a special endsheet mocking American advertisements and revealing the other side of capitalism. The Tricontinental Publishing House also produced films, recordings and propaganda posters. The posters could be found folded and inserted in each issue of the magazine. Although often more radical, the OSPAAAL propaganda material was similar

to that of the official Non-Aligned Movement, and shared the same visual language.

Himnos de Lucha / Fighting Hymns / Hymnes de Luttes
12" vinyl LP
Published by OSPAAAL

This vinyl record contains revolutionary hymns and songs from North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, Algeria, Guinea and Cape Verde, Guatemala, Palestine and the Dominican Republic, as well as the anthem of Tricontinental and the anthem of the 26th of July movement – which is a Cuban



vanguard revolutionary organization. The name refers to the date of the attack on the army barracks in Santiago de Cuba led by the young Fidel Castro in a coup attempt against the dictator Fulgencio Batista.

Tricontinental Suplemento especial. Comandante Che Guevara: mensaje a la Tricontinental (Tricontinental Special Supplement. Comandante Che Guevara: Message to the Tricontinental), 16 April 1967 (←)
Published by OSPAAAL

Ernesto Guevara de la Serna (1928 – 1967), known as ‘Che’ Guevara, was an Argentine-born Marxist revolutionary, guerrilla leader, and military theorist. In his address to Tricontinental, Guevara reflects on the complicated political situation across the world more than twenty years after the end of the Second World War, being far from a state of peace. Naming the contexts of struggles against imperialist and neo-colonial oppression, such as Vietnam, Venezuela, Guatemala, Laos, Guinea, Colombia and Bolivia amongst many others, he bitterly decries the “tragic inefficiency” of the United Nations, and the impossibility of any dialogue and reconciliation with

hostile parties. His message to Tricontinental is a call for the total and uncompromised destruction of imperialism by armed struggle. Summing up his passionate speech, Guevara stresses once again: “when approaching the destruction of imperialism, it is necessary to identify its head, which is no other than the United States of America”. Guevara was captured and assassinated by CIA-assisted Bolivian forces in 1967.

Bandung Conference, 1955

Richard Wright
The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference, 1956
Published by The World Publishing Company
First edition

On April 18-24, 1955, leaders from twenty-nine Asian and African countries, most of which were newly independent, gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, for the first large-scale Asian–African Conference, also known as the Bandung Conference. The key organisers of the meeting included Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Burma, and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). The participants of the conference aimed to promote Afro-Asian solidarity against any form of colonialism and

neo-colonialism, as well as to foster economic and cultural cooperation in the regions. The book by African-American writer Richard Wright (1908-1960) is a first-hand account of the conference. *The Color Curtain* contains five chapters: 'Bandung: Beyond Left and Right', 'Race and Religion at Bandung', 'Communism at Bandung', 'Racial Shame at Bandung', and 'The Western World at Bandung'. The focus on two particular issues – 'race' and 'religion' – runs through the book. In the second chapter Wright states: "As I sat listening, I began to sense a deep and organic relation here in Bandung between race and religion, two of the most powerful and irrational forces in human nature". Other chapters tackle the complicated relationships between the communist atheism of some participating countries and strong dedication to Islam of others, and the feeling of inferiority experienced by some black participants. He also notes the presence of Western influence on the event, although he describes it as rather limited. Meanwhile, Wright's travel expenses to Indonesia were, it seems, covered by the Congress for Cultural Freedom. The main press organs of the CCF published Wright's

reports in *Encounter*, *Preuve* and some other magazines, before they were published as part of this book.

Scene of Afro-Asian Talks, 1955
Press photo

Text on back reads: "*Bandung, Indonesia: Who's going to get whose goat first is one of the questions in the air as delegates assemble for Asian-African Conference at Bandung, Indonesia. The problem doesn't seem to concern this Billy goat nonchalantly nibbling the posies in front of the flag-arrayed committee conference building, where the Communist and pro-Western delegates get down to talks April 18th*".

Further Non-Aligned Movement Conferences

Rewi Alley
3 Conferences: Cairo, New Delhi, Bandung, 1961
Published by Caxton Press
First edition, signed

Rewi Alley (1897-1987) was a New Zealand-born writer and political activist, known for his contributions as an educator and internationalist in China. Unlike most 'friends' of the Communist

Party of China, Alley had little trouble travelling around the world. He was not only able to keep his New Zealand passport, but was offered honours for his community service in the 1985 New Year Honours. The book is a brief and poetic account of Alley's journeys to Cairo, followed by New Delhi to attend the World Peace Council Meeting in 1961, and then later to attend the Afro-Asian Conference at Bandung in April 1961 (not to be confused with the first Bandung conference of 1955). Besides information on the meetings and his keen observations on the way of life in the countries that had recently thrown off the yoke of colonisation, it includes the speeches delivered by Alley on behalf of the New Zealand and Asian and Pacific Liaison Committee for Peace, as well as the poems by the author, inspired by these events.

Documents of the IXth Council of the Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation, Tripoli-Libya, 9-11 November 1970
Published by Permanent Secretariat of AAPSO
First edition

The Afro-Asian People's Solidarity Organisation (AAPSO) is an international organisation dedicated to the ideals of solidarity

for the peoples of Africa and Asia, the defence of sovereignty against racist and neo-colonial policies, and the promotion of national culture and economic independence. It was founded at a conference held in Cairo held from December 1957 to January 1958. The IX Council Session in Tripoli was one of the largest meetings with 55 Afro-Asian member organisations participating and Observer delegations from socialist countries and other friendly international organisations being present. The session formed a militant line on intensifying 'people's struggle against imperialism'. The session was inaugurated by Abdel Salam Jalloud, Deputy Chairman of the Revolutionary Command Council of Libya and the closing session was addressed by Muammar Gaddafi (its Chairman), followed by the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Yasser Arafat.

**The Fourth Meeting of the AAPSO
Presidium: Brazzaville, People's
Republic of Congo, July 27-30,
1976**

Published by Permanent Secretariat
of AAPSO
First edition

The Agenda of the AAPSO Presidium meeting in Brazzaville, organised by the Congolese Party of Labour, included the promotion of “solidarity with the struggle of the people of Southern Africa against colonialism, apartheid and racist regimes in Zimbabwe, Namibia and South Africa, as well as with the peoples of Angola, Mozambique and Guinea Bissau, Somali Coast, Chile, Japan and East Timor”. AAPSO also denounced the U.S. army intervention in South Korea. The Presidium also examined the reinforcement of the cooperation between AAPSO and the wider Non-Aligned Movement, and its role in the consolidation of the unity of developing countries.

**Kim Il-Sung
On the Non-Aligned Movement,
1982**

Published by Foreign Languages
Publishing House, Korea
First edition

The Democratic People's
Republic of Korea was admitted

into the Non-Aligned Movement as a fully-fledged member in 1976. In his book, Kim Il-Sung (1912–1994), the founder and first Supreme Leader of North Korea, reflects on the movement's role in the light of the Juche ideology that focused on Korean nationalism. In his essay *The Non-Aligned Movement is a mighty anti-imperialist revolutionary force of our times* included in the book, Kim Il-Sung proclaims that “The non-aligned countries should secure the independent development of their peoples and remain loyal to the ideas of the Non-Aligned Movement by upholding Chajusong”. ‘Chajusong’ is a central idea of Kim Il-Sung's Juche ideology that is based on independence (particularly economic) and creativity, which is understood as a mental attitude of man required to transform nature and society in accordance to one's will and wishes. This creativity, however, is not considered to be a feature people are born with, but something that should be fostered in man by the state. According to Kim Il-Sung, the non-aligned countries “should respect the Chajusong of other countries” and neither interfere in other's internal affairs nor take issue with others on their matters.

Nation

Sille Storihle

The Stonewall Nation, 2014

Sille Storihle makes experimental videos and documentaries that consider ideologically loaded historical narratives in relation to questions of citizenship, gender and sexuality. The video *The Stonewall Nation* is a re-enactment of an interview with gay activist Don Jackson, as performed by actor Michael Kearns. After reading Carl Wittman's gay manifesto, Jackson aimed to establish a separatist gay community in Alpine County, California, in 1970. As the county only had 367 registered voters, Jackson imagined that if he could get 368 members of the gay community to move there then they would have a political majority, and hope the existing residents would move out. Jackson envisioned a "a gay government, a gay civil service... the world's first gay university, partially paid for by the state... the world's first museum of gay arts, sciences and history... [and a] free county health service and hospital...". Yet, it ultimately never came to fruition due to local opposition as well as support from the LGBT community not gain enough traction. Storihle questions the ideological reasoning behind this movement, on the one hand unpacking the desire for a communitarian promised-land allowing sexual freedom, yet on the other seeing it as an identitarian and settler-colonialist vision for forcing through an exclusively gay colony. *The Stonewall Nation* is part of Storihle's wider project *ONE MAN SHOW*, which draws from archival material from the ONE National Gay & Lesbian Archives in California. The artist examines the politics of archival documents, attempting to exhaust the focus on the gay white male as the central figure of queer history.



Sille Storihle,
The Stonewall Nation, 2014
HD Video
16 min
Courtesy of the artist
Image: the artist

Maryam Najd

Grand Bouquet II from the *Botanical National Amalgamation Project*, 2020

Najd's recent project *Botanical National Amalgamation Project*, considers the aesthetics of officialdom for nation states globally. In particular, the project looks at the phenomenon of national flowers – when a nation state selects a botanical species as a symbol or nationality and pride. Typically, the flower is one that is known from nature in the locality. But like much of the nature we experience, many species have migrated or been introduced from elsewhere. Yet the flower becomes an emblem considered as being rooted to a place, and also a mark of its inner beauty. *Grand Bouquet II* (2020) takes its inspiration from historical Flemish master Jan Bruegel the Elder, specifically referencing his painting *Flowers in a Wooden Vessel* (1606–1607) depicting a large bouquet of flowers. In fact, Najd's paintings adopt the same dimensions as Bruegel's. Najd used Photoshop to incorporate every current national flower into Bruegel's image, of which there are one hundred and twenty-eight in total (not quite every nation has an official flower). The flowers are painted in a photorealist style, which is an approach the artist has developed in her practice over several years. Each individual flower is meticulously rendered in bloom, capturing their natural beauty. Rather than seen in isolation, they form a distinct unity, together perhaps even forming more than the sum of their parts. This unity can be seen as a meditation on a sense of co-dependency of cultures and nations, not just historically, but also under the conditions of globalisation.



Maryam Najd

Grand Bouquet II from the *Botanical National Amalgamation Project*, 2020

Acrylic and oil on canvas

98x73x4 cm

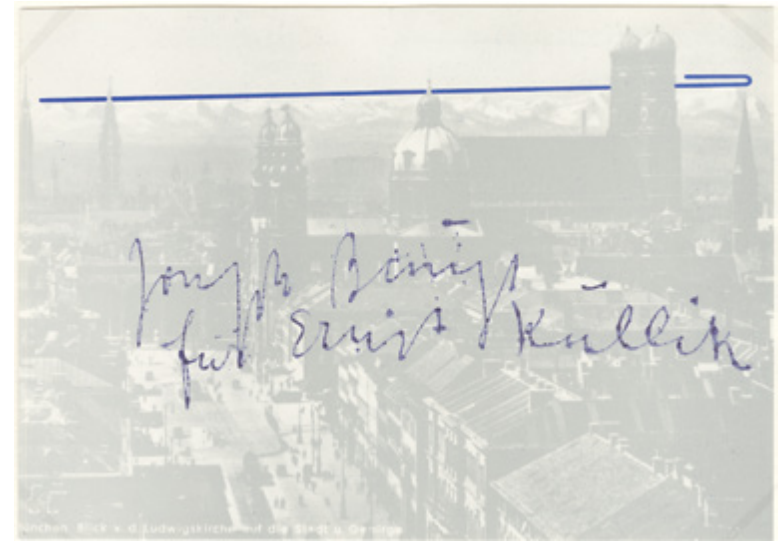
Courtesy of the artist

Photo: M HKA

Joseph Beuys

Eurasienstab über den Alpen, 1971

The term Eurasia refers to the landmass, or super-continent, that includes the sub-continents of Europe and Asia. Eurasia held an important place for Beuys as a complex philosophical and cultural concept, which he used to problematise the artificial separation between 'East' and 'West'. Eurasia, in Beuys' conception, was an open space without physical or ideological boundaries, and possessing a great plurality of culture. Sitting in contrast to the modernist construct of nations states, Eurasia is a space of free movement and the exchange of ideas since ancient times. Anyone who lived on the landmass would be a Eurasian, whether a person is a Fleming, Rheinlander, Mongol, Tartar, Desi, or from any other cultural group. The concept was also a way for him to look away from America as a dominant force of modernity and hegemony. The staff we see in the title of this postcard edition, seen here floating above Munich, refers to the one used by Beuys in his performance *Eurasienstab*, made together with Henning Christiansen in Antwerp at Wide White Space on 9 February 1968.



Joseph Beuys

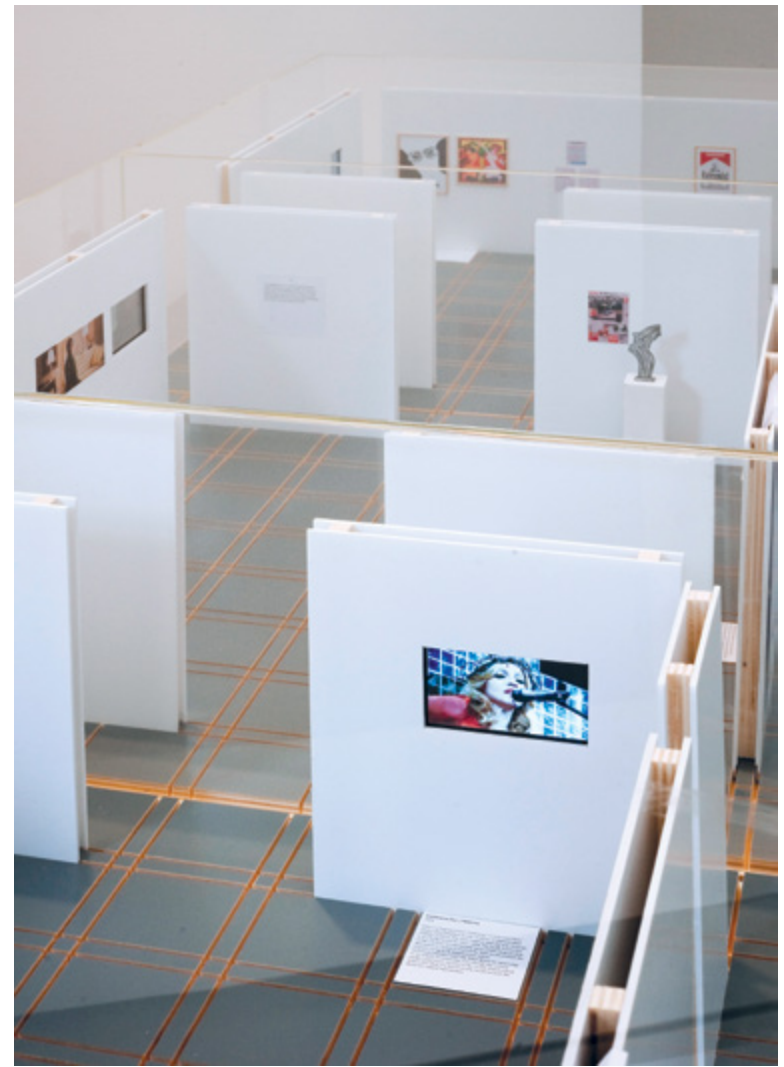
Eurasienstab über den Alpen, 1971

Ink on paper, signed
10×14.5 cm (unframed)
Collection M HKA
Photo: M HKA

Jonas Staal

Vrijdenkersruimte Vervolgd, Model 2012

Jonas Staal is an artist whose practice is located at the intersection of art, democracy and propaganda. The *Freethinkers' Space* was an exhibition space at the national parliament of The Netherlands in The Hague, created in 2008 by the conservative-liberal People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and the ultranationalist Freedom Party (PVV). Their claim was to offer a space for the work of artists who were affected by supposed 'Islamic censorship', as a result of the 'political correctness' of art institutions. Including works by artists such as Theo van Gogh, the *Freethinkers' Space* sought to push politics into the contentious issues of censorship and freedom of expression under the conditions of the War on Terror and migration. The *Freethinkers' Space* closed in 2010 when the VVD formed a government supported by the PVV, stating that freedom of expression could now be protected through their government. Following its closure, the liberal-democratic Democrats 66 and the green party GroenLinks requested to re-open the space, warning of the potential for right-wing censorship. For the project *Freethinkers' Space Continued*, facilitated by Staal, they each curated their own exhibition and presented a Freethinkers' Lecture at the Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven, on the tensions between art and politics with regards to creative expression. GroenLinks and D66 extended the invitation to other political parties to create their own *Freethinkers' Space*, and the Labour party PvdA responded to this call by creating a *Freethinkers' Space* at the De Appel centre for contemporary art in Amsterdam. This maquette by Staal is a scale model documenting the exhibitions by GroenLinks, D66 and the PvdA, as well as the original Freethinkers' Space of the VVD and PVV.



Jonas Staal

Vrijdenkersruimte Vervolgd, 2012

Foam board, media players, print on paper, spruce, poplar, plexiglass
(4x) 120×80×80 cm

Collection Van Abbemuseum, Eindhoven

Photo: Cassander Eeftinck Schattenkerk and De Appel, Amsterdam

Public Movement

Imagine this museum is a country and in this country there is a museum, 2020

Public Movement is a group working with performance who consider the relationship between state power and the sphere of art, exploring structures and ideologies that translate into institutional and cultural policies. Their project *National Collection* took the form of participatory tours. These performances were presented over several weeks at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art in 2015, whose original site was where Israel's 1948 Declaration of Independence ceremony took place. Questioning the relations between national and cultural identity, the central idea was to activate the performativity of the foundational moment of a nation state (kept here ambiguous despite the symbolical location), and the embodiment of nationalistic ideals in newly formed cultural institutions. Their work for the exhibition *Monoculture* offers a continuation of this project, considering the museum as a civic space where the experience of art can act as a reflection of cultural heritage. Resembling foundational plaques at the entrance to the museum, it bears the legend "IMAGINE THIS MUSEUM IS A COUNTRY AND IN THIS COUNTRY THERE IS A MUSEUM". This curious feedback loop evokes the cyclical relations between culture and politics.



Public Movement

Imagine this museum is a country and in this country there is a museum, 2020

2 Corten steel plates

(2x) 20x94 cm

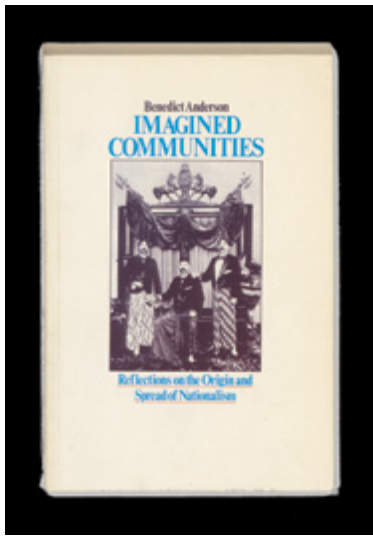
Courtesy of the artists

Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

M HKA



Migration



Benedict Anderson
Imagined Communities.
Reflections on the Origin and
Spread of Nationalism, 1983 (↑)
Published by Verso

With his best-known book, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Irish political scientist Benedict Anderson (1936-2015) went against the grain of the historical research on nationalism of his time. Firstly, by shifting the focus to the American continent in the 18th and 19th centuries, he broke with the Eurocentric approach to nationalism. Secondly, by abandoning a purely socio-economic angle, he made room

for a cultural approach to the origins of modern nationalism. Anderson's premise is that 'print capitalism' – capitalism in the age of commercial printing, which allowed newspapers and novels to be widely distributed – made people feel like they were part of an 'imagined community'. "The idea of a sociological organism moving calendrically through homogeneous, empty time is a precise analogue of the idea of the nation, which also is conceived as a solid community moving steadily down (or up) history". With his idea of an 'imagined nation' – often misunderstood, especially in translation, as an 'imaginary', a 'made-up' nation – Anderson points to the sense of connection that exists between people who never met, giving them the feeling of belonging to a group with common history, beliefs and customs. Unlike many of his colleagues, Anderson saw the potential of nationalism to unite people of all classes and to sacrifice the individual in the service of the collective as a positive force. In 1991, a chapter on maps, censuses and museums was added to the book.

Dimitri Venkov

I Wanted to be Happy in the USSR, 2015

Dimitri Venkov is one of the emerging generation of politically-engaged artists in Moscow. Venkov works across the broad spectrum of film-making approaches, from cinematic to documentary, seeking to reflect the conditions of a society divided by politics, history and social conventions. His documentary *I Wanted to be Happy in the USSR*, follows the struggle of Guinean immigrant George Blemu, together with his Ukrainian wife Elena and their two daughters Anne and Maria in Moscow. Blemu, came to the USSR to be a medical student in 1979 under what was then the official policy of 'friendships among peoples', with the intention to settle. The dissolution of the USSR and the eventual rise of nationalist sentiments in Russia led to an increase of hate speech and violence towards non-Russians. For Blemu and his family, violence and hostility became everyday experiences, even being stabbed by the police, or in the case of their daughter Maria, physically attacked within the care of the school. Under these unliveable circumstances, Blemu and his family have no option but to leave, and following advice, they eventually travel to Norway under a tourist visa, seeking asylum. Blemu's story is testimony to conditions in Russia today, where those who don't fit the image of national monoculture, struggle to survive in the daily presence of violence.



Dimitri Venkov

I Wanted to be Happy in the USSR, 2015

SD Video

40:35 min

Courtesy of the artist

Image: the artist

Candida Höfer

Türken in Deutschland 1979, 1979

Candida Höfer's work *Türken in Deutschland 1979* is one of her earliest series of photographs. These images, presented as a slide show, portray Turkish migrants who came to Germany during the post-war era, to become part of the labour force under the 'Gastarbeiter' (guest worker) scheme. Taken mainly in Höfer's native Cologne, the images are intimate portraits of Turkish people undertaking their daily lives – at work, being together with family, their social habits and their leisure time. Höfer states: "Being in their homes was not even mainly about photographing. They had questions to ask, stories to tell; they had forms that needed to be filled out. I felt their strong wish to be accepted, to become integrated, to belong". *Türken in Deutschland 1979* provides an insight into the migrant experience, and the desire to settle and assimilate. Höfer had actively sought to challenge the perception of this minority population whose presence had divided public opinion. Around this time, Höfer also produced works called *Diaserien (Slide Series)*, which comprised sheets of slides printed together with information texts Höfer had commissioned from sociologists. The intention was to provide educational material for people in schools and community centres about Turkish people, including their history, culture and life in Germany.



Candida Höfer

Türken in Deutschland 1979, 1979

Slide projection with 80 colour slides

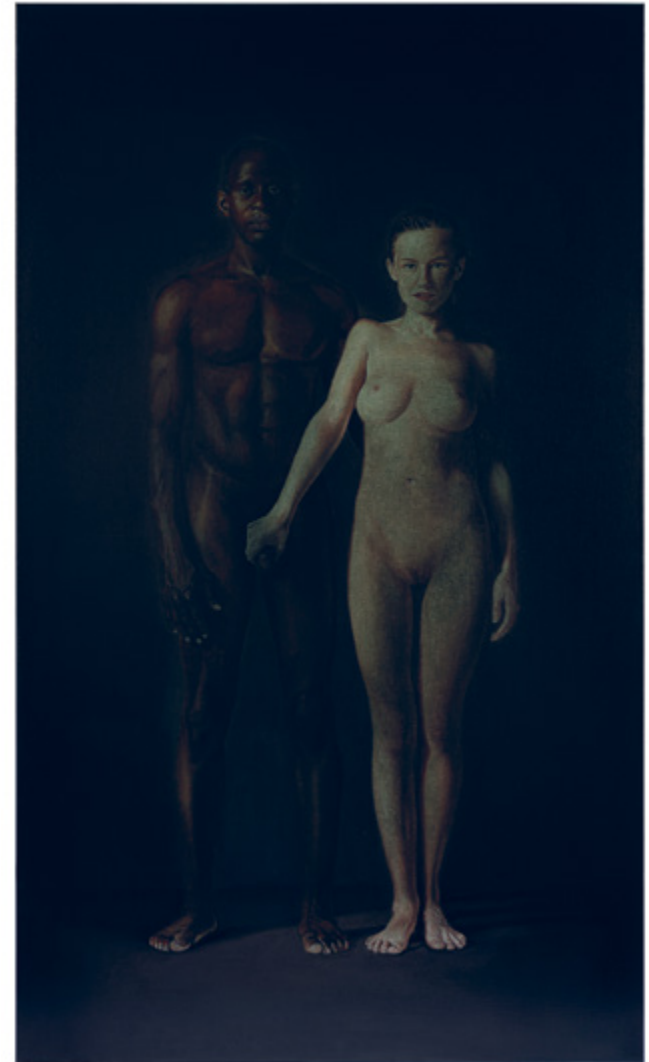
Courtesy of the artist

© Candida Höfer, Köln; VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2020

Maryam Najd

Life of Faith from the series
The Aesthetics of Sin, 2018

Typically working in series, Maryam Najd's new series titled *The Aesthetics of Sin* follows in the longstanding tradition of the human nude. They are images of individuals in good physical health and fitness, studious of the human form, typical of formal Western training. They are however based primarily on images appropriated from the internet, rather than through observing a life model. In many other regions and traditions around the world, including various Islamic cultures, the nude is inhibited due to codes of modesty. In fact, depictions of all sentient beings might be inhibited under laws of Aniconism, in favour of calligraphic text and geometry. It thus follows that artistic training in such a context can follow prohibition of image-making with the nude as its subject, and often regulated by state or religious forces. An artist who had her formative training in the University of Fine Arts (Alzahra) in Tehran before circumstances demanded a relocation to Antwerp, Najd entered a new society and artistic scene with its own modes and traditions of image-making. The artist has used this series as a way to undertake a personal exercise in making the kind of images that existed outside the parameters of her formative experiences. They might be seen to be asking a subjective question about what 'sin' looks like. The paintings place the depicted individuals on a dark ground, and their bodies in low luminosity. They are not eroticised bodies per se, but still perhaps susceptible to a sexualised gaze. There is a tension that holds these images, between sensuality and restraint. With these paintings, personal and political tolerances are taken towards a moral grey area.



Maryam Najd

Life of Faith from the series *The Aesthetics of Sin*, 2018

Oil on canvas

220×130×4.5 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photo: M HKA

Jean Raspail
Le Camp des Saints (The Camp of the Saints), 1973 (↓)
Published by Editions Robert Laffont

With the title of his novel *Le Camp des Saints*, French writer Jean Raspail (1925–2020), recently deceased, referred to the ‘Apocalypse of John’, the last book of the New Testament. The book describes the emigration of a million people on cargo ships from India to France, where they hope for a better life. Due to the blindness of government and population, this ‘invasion’, in itself peaceful, leads to the end of

the French nation and ultimately of European civilisation. The book that introduced the influential idea amongst conspiracy theorists of ‘the great replacement’, *The Camp of the Saints* is ultimately about the fear of losing the racial and cultural purity of the ‘West’. According to Raspail, the danger mainly comes from within because artists, intellectuals and the media impose their tolerant attitude towards migration upon the population. Although the book wasn’t an overwhelming success when it was published in 1973, thanks to the controversy surrounding it due to the

changing political climate and media landscape, *The Camp of the Saints* has become a cult book in nationalist, identitarian and suprematist circles in Europe and the United States. The refugee crisis of 2015 for example was used to attribute a prophetic quality to the book. The same year, in Belgium the first Dutch translation (Uitgeverij Egmont) was associated with extreme right-wing party Vlaams Belang. In the United States too, Steve Bannon, President Trump’s controversial former advisor, recently expressed his admiration for Raspail’s book on the influential far-right news site Breitbart News.

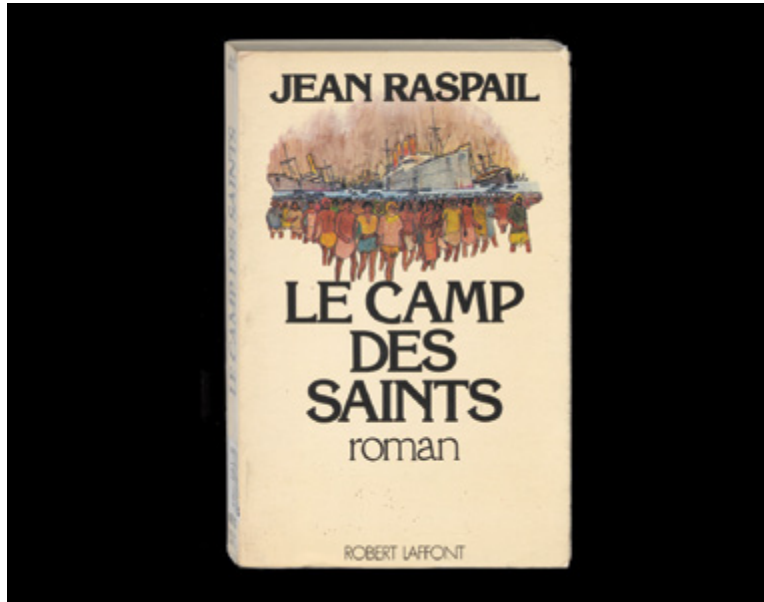
John Berger and Jean Mohr
A Seventh Man: Migrant Workers in Europe, 1975
Published by The Viking Press
First edition

At the time of the book’s publication in 1975, one manual worker in seven in the UK and Germany was of migrant background. Across Western Europe, migrants were invited to undertake some of the most difficult and least desirable jobs. *A Seventh Man* brings together texts by John Berger and photos by Jean Mohr. It paints an empathetic portrait of the migrant worker in Western Europe. Berger

and Mohr examine the material conditions and inner experiences of migrant workers, revealing how they do not live in the margins of modern society but actually right in the middle of it.

Bat Ye’or
Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis, 2005
Published by Fairleigh Dickinson University Press

Bat Ye’or (Hebrew for ‘daughter of the Nile’) is the pseudonym of Giselle Littman, a British author of Jewish-Egyptian descent. She presents herself as a historian but lacks any such official qualification. In *Eurabia: The Euro-Arab Axis*, she introduces the concept of ‘Eurabia’, referring to a Europe that is Islamised and that eventually will be completely absorbed by the Arab world. The starting point of Bat Ye’or’s conspiracy theory is a historical one: she cites a number of agreements that took place between leaders of European and Arab countries in the 1970s and the creation of the Euro-Arab Dialogue. Bat Ye’or claims that during the Copenhagen European Summit of December 1973, where the ‘dialogue’ was supposedly launched, the Arab contingent agreed to ensure the supply of oil to Europe in exchange for



Religion

allowing migration, in order to Islamise Europe. She states: “The three most apparent symptoms of this fundamental change in European policy are officially sponsored anti-Americanism, antisemitism and anti-Zionism and ‘Palestinianism’. These increasingly visible aspects of European policy are merely components of an overall vision for the transformation of Europe into a new geopolitical entity – Eurabia”. In Europe, Bat Ye’or’s conspiracy theory and her concept of Eurabia are mainly adopted by politicians from extreme right-wing parties, who use them in their Islamophobic anti-immigration discourse. In 2007, Bat Ye’or and her husband David Littman, an Israeli lobbyist at the United Nations, were keynote speakers at the CounterJihad event, organised in the buildings of the European Parliament in Brussels by Flemish nationalist and extreme-right party Vlaams Belang. CounterJihad is an international, loose political movement of authors, bloggers, think tanks and pressure groups that do not consider Islam a religion but rather an existential threat to the ‘West’.

Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2015

Untitled, 2015

Untitled, 2016

Untitled, 2016

Untitled, 2016

Oxana Shachko (1987–2018) was an artist and activist from Ukraine, who is renowned as one of the founders of the FEMEN movement together with Anna Hutsol and Alexandra Shevchenko. The group organised public demonstrations and actions in different countries against sexism and gender inequality, as well as the dogma and paternalism of the Church. Shachko was trained from a young age in traditional Orthodox icon painting. She returned to this style of painting later in life during her period of exile in Paris, producing a series of paints collectively titled *Iconoclast*. Each painting appears in the first instance as a traditional scene, yet we see details that have been individually subverted. In a set of two paintings depicting the crucifixion, we see one is a woman. The other is male, and on closer inspection we see his penis is erect (which often happens during the moment men pass away). In a painting of St. George, we see dinosaurs in the image, rather than a dragon. In an image depicting angels, we see that they are gambling at a roulette wheel. Such features, though provocative for some, were not intended as anti-religious, but both a statement against indoctrination and a call for openness.



Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2016

Tempera, egg yolk, gold leaf, wood

40×30.4×3.5 cm

Estate of Oxana Shachko

Photo: Geukens & De Vill

Haseeb Ahmed

Ummah HQ, 2020

Haseeb Ahmed's work *Ummah HQ* considers the concept of the Ummah – the global community of Muslims that supposedly once existed and remains present, but never actually has. The Ummah is, in fact, a modern construction, part of the long history of opportunistic invocation by imperialist forces, such as the former Ottoman and British Empires, to create allies, particularly towards states that emerged after colonisation. It projects the existence of a unified Islam and a collective Muslim people going back through history. Many Muslims across the world take solace in the idea of the Ummah when confronted with poverty and war endemic in the Middle East and other Muslim majority regions. Similar to many theocratic states and fascistic ideologies, this fictional origin is an idealised community, which often exists as a call to recover its lost unity, as evidenced in the rhetoric of the Islamic State. *Ummah HQ* gives place to this imaginary in all its ambivalence.

The dome here, made with modern construction materials like aluminium, foam and 3D prints, is fragmented with blocks missing, providing the sense that it is either under construction or a ruin. This installation is based on the Muqarnas, thought to be one of the most original forms of Islamic Architecture. Also known as Stalactite vaults, Muqarnas are an analogy here, with each block likened to an individual contributing to a community. Muqarnas form as an ideal 2D geometric plan when looking from the top, while creating a 3D space to be occupied at the same time. Some speculate that it is the realisation of the influence of the ancient Greek concept of atomism, where every block is a keystone held together with a unifying force.



Haseeb Ahmed

Ummah HQ, 2020

Aluminum, 3D prints, paper,

styrofoam, plaster, MDF

382×480×480 cm

Courtesy Harlan Levey Projects

Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

The texts is of obscure origin, with Arabic inscriptions written in transliterated English or Dutch. They address the actual state of the Ummah. Most, Muslims around the world are taught how to read the Quran but not to understand or speak Arabic. While these Muslims are seen as aberrations they are in fact the majority. The surprise moment for those able to read Arabic phonetically, is of recognition that one belongs to a 'group' not normally addressed. This group, reluctant to identify as such, is more like the actual contemporary Ummah than that addressed in political discourse historical and present.



Salman Rushdie
***The Satanic Verses*, 1988 (↑)**
Xerox of transcript

The Satanic Verses is perhaps the best known and most controversial book by British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie. In response to Rushdie's story of the prophet Muhammad, who succumbs to earthly pleasures, and to the more general criticism of religious fanaticism in the book,

Iranian leader Ayatollah Khomeini uttered a 'fatwā' (legal decree) in 1989, on both writer and publishers of *The Satanic Verses* declaring the book blasphemous. Rushdie had to go into hiding and was placed under police protection. Over the years, a number of people have been killed as a result of this 'fatwā'. While obviously, religion is addressed, Rushdie has always emphasised that migration is the main theme

of the book. *The Satanic Verses* begins with two Indian actors, Djibriel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, who fall from the sky after a hijacked plane has exploded. They both survive the fall and end up in England. In the course of the story, the main characters transform into, respectively, the Archangel Gabriel and the Devil. The story is written out of the feelings of uprooting, alienation and change that migration entails. Saladin Chamcha tries to give himself and his transformativity a place in a homogeneous country that sees him as a threat to its cherished monoculture. Rushdie presents his hybrid characters – who have split cultural identities, or are trapped between different cultures – as advocates of a diverse, ambiguous and heterogeneous world.

Universalism

Rasheed Araeen

Nine, 1968

Rasheed Araeen is considered one of the pioneers of conceptual and minimalist art in Great Britain. He began making conceptual and abstract art in Karachi, Pakistan, in the late 1950s, before moving to London in 1964 where he made some of the earliest minimalist sculptures to be seen in Britain. *Nine* is a key example of Araeen's sculptural work from the 1960s using geometric principles. Formed of a 3×3 unit structure, it makes use of the concept of 'broken symmetry' central to Araeen's understanding of art. Simultaneously creating and disrupting symmetry in order to avoid perfect symmetry, *Nine* thus forms a tension between universality and difference.

Araeen became disillusioned with the artistic system, which he felt was exclusionary of practitioners of migrant, non-Western backgrounds. Despite making modernist art, artists of black and Asian heritage were typically framed in terms of ethnic identities. Awakened a radical political consciousness, he became an activist, challenging Eurocentric discourse around contemporary art. In the 1970s, Araeen aligned himself with radical black emancipation movements such as the British Black Panthers, as well as Artists for Democracy, and began to produce works in different media reflecting his political views. It also led him to found and edit the magazine *Black Phoenix: Journal of Contemporary Art & Culture in the Third World* in 1978, before establishing the journal *Third Text* in 1987, developing critical discourse on Euro-centricity and new globalised perspectives in art.



Rasheed Araeen
Nine, 1968
Acrylic on wood
(9×) 61×61×61 cm
Courtesy of the artist
Photo: M HKA

Rasheed Araeen

Oui, 1978

Rasheed Araeen's work *Oui* was produced during the period the artist became conscious of systematic discrimination in the artistic scene of Great Britain. Araeen made the work in response to the planned exhibition *Un Certain Art Anglais: Selection d'Artistes Britanniques, 1970-1979* organised by the British Council at the Musee d'Art Moderne in Paris. Despite claims to represent new developments in contemporary art in Britain during the 1970s, the exhibition only presented the work of white artists. Appropriating the slogan of the British Council's exhibition, it reads: "*Existe-t'il un art anglais? OUI!*" (*Is there an English Art? YES!*), we also see within the text of *Oui!* the words "*BLACKS OUT*" repeated. The work questions the ethnocentricity of official representations of the English art scene during this period, and the unwillingness to acknowledge the contributions made by black and Asian artists to the development of modern art. In an open letter to the British Council by Araeen and fellow artist David Medalla, they state: "We now feel concerned because the British Council is adamant in persistently projecting the white image of Britain abroad, as if there are no black people in Britain or they are not part of British reality, and as if black artists have done nothing significant in the field of art reflecting a contemporary reality".



Rasheed Araeen
Oui, 1976
Digital print
42x29.7 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Charlotte Posenenske

Vierkantrohre Serie DW, 1967

Charlotte Posenenske (1930–1985) was a German artist affiliated with minimalist art, and most renowned for creating series of sculptures that explored the systems and structures of mass production and standardisation. Taking inspiration from the aesthetics of Russian Constructivism and the Dutch De Stijl movement, Posenenske wanted to make art that was social, interactive and democratic. She was an early proponent of inviting interactivity in her artwork through audience participation, and her works were often modular, to be combined and rearranged at will. In 1967 and 1968, Posenenske turned to industrially inspired sculptures made of aluminium, steel or cardboard. The *Vierkantrohre Serie DW* (*Square Tubes DW Series*) was made using sections of cardboard tube. With each installation, it can be altered, and each segment can also be reproduced endlessly. The works were also offered for sale at their material cost. Posenenske stopped working as an artist in 1968, no longer believing in the social potential of art. She retrained as a sociologist, and for the remainder of her life became a specialist in employment and industrial working practices, particularly assembly line production.



Charlotte Posenenske

Vierkantrohre Serie DW, 1967

Corrugated cardboard

Transition piece: 35×70×70 cm; Rectangular tube (half square) 35×70×140 cm;

Elbow (change of direction) 70×134×49 cm; Square tube 70×140×70 cm

Collection M HKA / Collection Flemish Community

Photo: M HKA

Joseph Beuys

Intuition, 1968

Joseph Beuys once stated “Modernism is not the answer”. *Intuition* is a multiple by the artist that reflected his belief that Western society, through modernisation, had suffered a deep splitting of rationality and intuition. As an artist who was anti-modern, Beuys felt that society had emphasised rationality in its culture, creativity, lifestyle, governance, economics and relationship to nature. Whereas, intuition, often seen as a (stereotypical) characteristic of the ‘East’, would enrich life, learning and creativity. He felt that this split that had taken place in Western mentality was a violent infliction, and sought to reconcile these two characteristics. His work *Intuition* is a simple wooden box, onto the inside of which Beuys hand-wrote the word ‘Intuition’ in pencil. The edition was intended as unlimited, and available for the price of 8 Deutschmarks. Beuys’ offer of a box emulating a modernist object or sculpture for containing one’s intuition, was a call to reconnect with these latent capacities of human nature.



Joseph Beuys

Intuition, 1968

Multiple of wood with pencil markings

30×21×5.6 cm

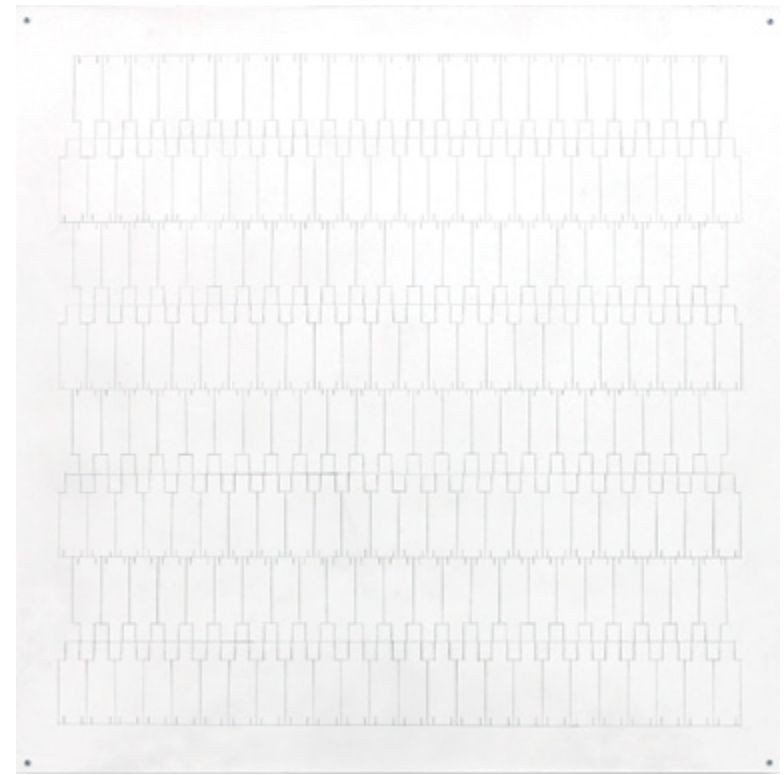
Collection M HKA

Photo: M HKA

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys

White Suprematism, 2016

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys' series of drawings titled *White Suprematism* which refer to the pioneering modernist artistic movement founded in Russia by Kazimir Malevich in the early 20th Century, that rejected figurative representation in order to move towards the sensations of pure colour and abstract forms. Malevich stated: "In the year 1913, trying desperately to free art from the dead weight of the real world, I took refuge in the form of the square". De Gruyter and Thys' drawings also appropriate the square, and populate it with configurations repeating the basic form of their *White Elements* series of sculptures – flat white sheet-metal sculptures in simple humanoid shape. The repetition, in one sense, forms modernist geometric compositions, but also introduces the human figure, rejected by the original practitioners of Suprematism. The simple flatness and repetition of white figures, indicate a homogeneous group, with no deviation. With the title *White Suprematism* curiously rhyming with 'white supremacism', it is suggestive of ideologies built on racial superiority. Modernism, despite its supposed universality, has been considered by some thinkers as an expression of white European identity. De Gruyter and Thys' *White Suprematism* hold a mirror of stark reflection on this expression.



Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys

White Suprematism, 2016

Pencil on cardboard, plexi, wood

147x147 cm

Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin

Photo: Kristien Daem

Luc Deleu

Schaal en Perspectief, 1980

Visionary architect Luc Deleu has produced several installations and architectural propositions under the title *Scale and Perspective*, for which he has laid large-scale structures and buildings down on their side. For Deleu, we can only get a realistic idea of the size and volume of towers if one of them is laid flat alongside the other, and we are able to circulate around them. With this design proposal, Deleu entered a competition for social housing in Barcelona. He designed two identical buildings on the principle of the golden section, with one upright and the other lying horizontal next to it. The buildings resemble minimalist sculptures, with consecutively smaller white cubes stacked on top of each other. He made a model with the lying building overhanging a river and two ships – the Queen Elizabeth I and II – sailing underneath it. An architect who thinks about societal questions, we see the drawing includes the description “AN IDEA DESIGN FOR A GLOBAL CENTER FOR INTERRACIAL COMMUNICATION SHOWING A LESSON IN SCALE WITH TWIN BUILDINGS”. In opposition to the history of modernist architecture as part of the colonial project, this proposition looks to offer an environment for dialogue. In this sense, ‘scale’ and ‘perspective’ are not only about size and space, but also about cultural relations.



Luc Deleu

Schaal en Perspectief, 1980

Bristol cardboard, plastic

76×88 cm

Collection M HKA

Photo: M HKA

Matti Braun

Bunta Garbo, 2002

Matti Braun's installation *Bunta Garbo* considers the work of Belgian lawyer and writer Andres Juste (1918–1998). Juste was one of the main proponents of the artificial 'universal' language Ido. Ido, depending on opinion, is a deviation or refinement of the most renowned universal language, Esperanto. Ido was the result of the findings of a special delegation on auxiliary languages formed at the 1900 World Fair in Paris, who proposed to adopt a refined version of Esperanto. The idea was to create a language to be more transformational, of neutral gender, without accents that obstructed print production, and with Slavic syntax removed. 'Esperanto Reformita', or 'Ido' as it became known – an Esperanto suffix meaning 'descended from' – inevitably caused a rupture in the aspirations of utopian linguists. Juste, the most renowned writer in Ido, was passionate about the language, producing approximately twenty-five self-published novels, translations and collections of poems, as well as many pamphlets. *Bunta Garbo*, named after a book of poems translated to Ido by Juste, is a series of alternative propositions for covers of his published books. The cover designs are presented in relation to a wooden structure using a 'rhizomatic' design, evoking the divergent variations and interconnections in the formation of ideas and cultural practices.

Matti Braun

La Pekuniala Teorio di Silvio Gesell, 2002

Matti Braun's video *La Pekuniala Teorio di Silvio Gesell* is about the German-Belgian radical economist Silvio Gesell. Gesell advocated a currency theory called 'freigeld' ('free-' or 'liquid money') in the early 20th Century, which has no concept of inflation or deflation. Even though the currency had helped lead to a reduction in unemployment in some parts of Europe, including during the Great Depression of 1932, 'freigeld' was often banned as it made capitalist accumulation unprofitable. With narration spoken in the Ido language, Braun's video links documentary photographs from his life, including his writings, portraits and views of his various homes, together with animated diagrams. Braun encountered Gesell for the first time when visiting the main Ido archive, run at that time by an elderly couple in a village near Kassel, Germany, who took it upon themselves to be cultural ambassadors for both Gesell and Ido. Though unconnected, both Ido and Gesell's 'freigeld' can be seen as possessing affinity. Both emerged in a similar moment, and possess a similar 'Third Way' logic, that had attracted reformists and those wishing to participate in alternative social structures.



Matti Braun

Bunta Garbo, 2002

Inkjet prints on paper mounted on foamboard
125×89×12 cm (each)

Courtesy of the artist; BQ, Berlin; and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Photo: Wim Van Eesbeek

Mladen Stilinović

An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist, 1992

This work by Mladen Stilinović (1947–2016) is also a statement. *An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist* describes succinctly the conditions for artists working under the hegemony of the English language. It talks directly to us using this language that the globalised art world uses, making us starkly aware of its linguistic dominance. The words of the statement are sewn onto a banner. However, despite its directness, it remains of ambiguous intention – are the words a request, a protest, or an expression of resignation? An artist who was active in Croatia from the 1960s onwards, Stilinović had been part of an active scene, yet one still marginalised by that of Western Europe. And since contemporary art went through a process of going global post-1989, English has allowed worldwide exchange for practitioners. Stilinović's statement, made during this early phase of internationalisation, asks us: are those who are unable or unwilling to use this language, not contemporary artists?



Mladen Stilinović

An Artist Who Cannot Speak English Is No Artist, 1992

Acrylic on artificial silk

140×246 cm

Courtesy Galerie Martin Janda

Photo: Galerie Martin Janda

Nicoline van Harskamp

PDGN, 2016

Nicoline van Harskamp is an artist that has developed research projects into the English language and its possible future amongst non-native speakers. Her video *PDGN* is a fiction that imagines a future in which a societal collapse has taken place, and nation states and corporations no longer exist. In scenes that are neither utopian nor dystopian, human survivors have constructed a new link language (or 'lingua franca') between people across this world through self-instruction. Van Harskamp developed the script for *PDGN* from the results of actual spoken, non-native English from participants in a series of workshops she organised. Some aspects of language and narrative were also informed by feminist fictions that propose systems of language-transformation, including Marge Piercy's *Woman on the Edge of Time* (1976) and Suzette Haden Elgin's *Native Tongue* (1984). The language of the script was further developed by applying probable factors of language evolution in the areas of syntax, lexicon, and phonetics. Van Harskamp conceptualised these 'text change algorithms' with the help of academics in fields such as creole studies, computational linguistics and language acquisition, as well as with Esperantists, amateur language inventors, and the lead actresses Ariane Barnes, Mouna Albakry and Paula So Man Siu. The resulting language, recently described by Professor of Literary Arts Avishek Ganguly as "not-quite-not-English", sounds familiar to the ear but is in fact an artistic construction. Through Dutch subtitles, the viewers are able to access the women's discussions about the rebuilding of their world and their language.



Nicoline van Harskamp

PDGN, 2016

Video

16:20 min

Courtesy the artist

Photo: Bea De Visser

Nicoline van Harskamp

My Name is Language, 2018-ongoing

Nicoline van Harskamp's performance *My Name is Language* takes place in a bureaucratic looking setting – a place where names are collected, filed, inflicted, withdrawn, and adapted. A storytelling session takes place between several people 'waiting' among the audience members in the room. Their anecdotes are a synthesis of narratives the artist gathered through extended research and (group) interviews about the fate of personal names in multilingual and migratory contexts. The stories are brought together and fictionalised into a script that provides the basis for an immersive performance, in the course of which it becomes clear that names are not always bound to their owners. We learn that names and naming traditions can cross cultural boundaries in ways that most other words cannot, but they can also suffer damage along the way. Mispronounced, garbled and even replaced completely with something more acceptable to the dominant culture, they can start to lead a life of their own. In the performance, names appear in spoken, written and translated forms, and nobody speaks the same language or variety of a language.



Nicoline van Harskamp

My Name is Language (Mijn naam is taal)

at M HKA, 2020

Photo: Bram Goots

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations, Paris, 10 December, 1948

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on December 10, 1948. The 30-article resolution is not legally binding but provides an important basis for international treaties, economic transfers, regional human rights instruments, national constitutions and laws. Of the 58 existing UN members in 1948, 48 countries voted in favour of accepting the statement. The remaining countries, including Poland, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, and the USSR abstained. During the development process, many Asian and African countries were colonies of countries that actively participated in the elaboration of the statement. As a result, many felt the voice of the coloniser is contained in the UDHR, but not that of the colonised. The so-called universal nature of the statement has been questioned since its inception. Even while the UDHR was being developed, the American Anthropological Association warned of a predominantly

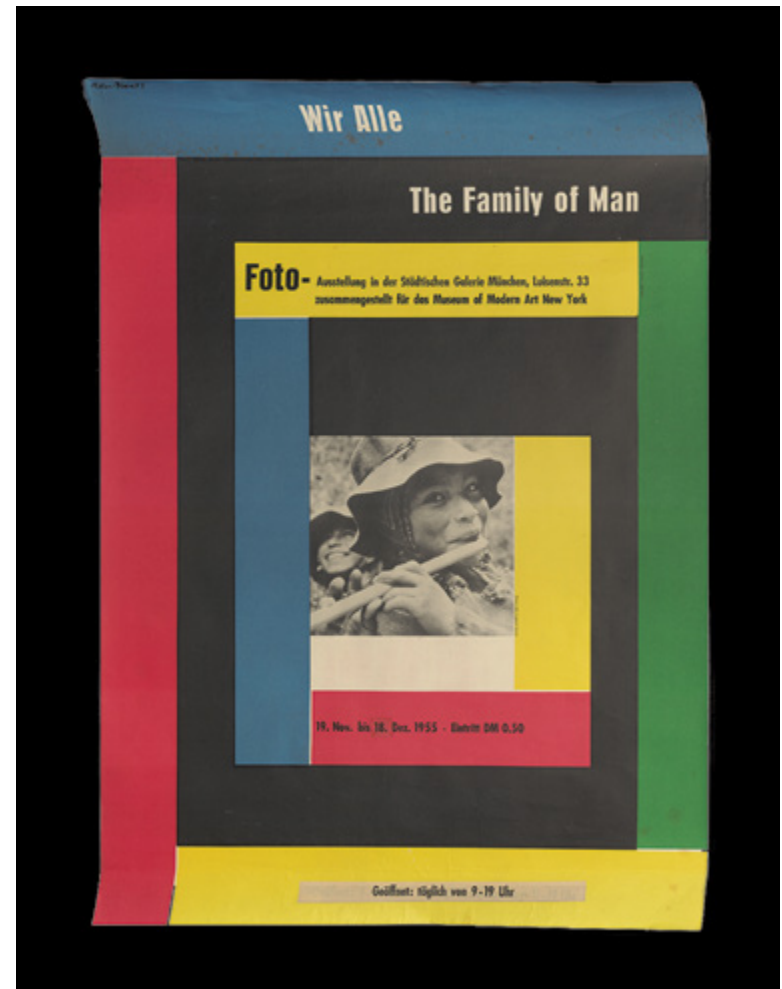
Western and capitalist perspective. Universality is primarily a representation of European, Judeo-Christian and Enlightenment ideas that originated in Western societies, and which other cultures find more difficult to identify with. In addition, the statement was the result of diplomatic and political strategies. The statement emphasises civil and political rights. Economic, social and cultural rights are secondary to the statement, while these rights may for example be more central to socialist or communist systems.

Universalist Exhibitions

The Family of Man, 1955

Exhibition catalogue
Published by Museum of Modern Art,
New York
First edition

The Family of Man was a photography exhibition curated by Edward Steichen, the director of the New York City Museum of Modern Art's (MoMA) Department of Photography. As described in the catalogue, the exhibition included photographs representing "the gamut of life from birth with emphasis on daily relationships of man to himself, to his family, to the community and to the



world we live in – subject matter ranging from babies to philosophers, from the kindergarten to the university, from primitive peoples to the Councils of the United Nations". *The Family of Man* was first shown in 1955 from

January 24 to May 8 at MoMA, and then toured the world in five different versions for the following seven years. An important part of the United States Information Agency's (USIA) propaganda programme, the exhibition, which

was presented as an expression of humanism, played a significant role in promoting the values of the West as universal in the post-War decades. The version of the exhibition in Moscow (1959) was attended by Steichen himself and later considered by him as “the high spot of the project”. The exhibition was received negatively by photographers, as well as theorists, for its universalism and oversimplification. Philosopher Roland Barthes in his book *Mythologies* (1957) describes the exhibition as an example of modern myth – in this case that of the ideological representation of “conventional humanism”. According to Barthes: “Everything here, the content and appeal of the pictures, the discourse which justifies them, aims to suppress the determining weight of History: we are held back at the surface of an identity, prevented precisely by sentimentality from penetrating into this ulterior zone of human behaviour where historical alienation intrudes some ‘differences’ which we shall here quite simply call ‘injustices’”.

Carl Sagan, ed.
Murmurs of Earth: The Voyager Interstellar Record, 1978
 Published by Random House
 First edition

On August 20th and September 5th in 1977, the NASA space probes Voyager I and II were launched into space. Each of the probes carries a gold-plated phonograph record, providing information should either of the probes ever be found by advanced interstellar civilisations. The identical records, which were described by its creators as “the most complex and informative attempts so far to communicate with other intelligences”, contain 118 photographs of the planet Earth and its inhabitants, greetings in fifty-five languages, including one of non-human origin – from the humpback whale. Many of the images, in fact, had been featured previously in the renowned *Family of Man* exhibition. The record also includes a selection of various sounds, musical pieces from different cultures and eras, greetings from the Secretary General of the United Nations and Jimmy Carter (then the President of the United States). The book *Murmurs of Earth*, which was published shortly after the launches, presents an account of

the process of selection for the materials of the Voyager records. In the book, the authors explain that such topics as poverty, war, crime, and disease were intentionally avoided since the aim was to present the best of humanity, “something that would survive us and our time”. Among other omitted topics are any religion related images, as well as artworks. Generally, the selection of pictorial material was based on two contradicting principles: they were supposed to contain as much information as possible, but at the same time to be unambiguous and easy to understand.

Universal Languages

Esperanto

Esperanto is the mostly widely used artificial language in the world. In 1887, Ludwik Zamenhof (1859-1917), the inventor of Esperanto, published a small book in Russian entitled *Международный язык / Lingvo Internacia* (commonly referred to as *Unua Libro*). Declining the principle of authorship, he modestly signed the book as Dr. Esperanto, meaning “one who hopes”. The hope was to create a language that would promote

a peaceful coexistence between people of different cultures. An ophthalmologist of Jewish-Polish origin, Zamenhof was born in Białystok, then part of the Russian Empire. The experience of living in a mixed community of Jews, Orthodox Russians, Protestant Germans and Catholic Poles, where violence between different groups was common, inspired him to construct a language that would make intercultural dialogue possible. Having the idea of a friendly community at its core, Esperanto gained popularity with many Esperantist groups popping up around the world. Despite repression throughout the 20th century by authoritarian regimes, the development of the Esperantist community has continued into the present day.

La Sankta Biblio (The Holy Bible), 1931
 Published by Billing & Sons, Ltd.

The initiator of Esperanto, Ludwik Zamenhof was the first to translate the entire Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh or Old Testament) into Esperanto. The New Testament was translated later by a team of Esperanto speaking British clergy and scholars from the British and Foreign Bible Society, and completed

in 1912. The translations of both Testaments were then harmonised and printed in 1926 as *La Sankta Biblio* (The Holy Bible) often called *La Londona Biblio* (London Bible).

La Nova Epoko

La Nova Epoko (*The New Epoch*) was an international literary and social magazine of general left-wing orientation, founded in 1922 by four Soviet Esperantists. It was one of the press organs of SAT (Sennacieca Asocio Tutmonda/ World Non-National Association), a worldwide association of the workers' Esperanto movement which deliberately rejected national differences. SAT which was an educational and cultural organisation rather than an overtly political one, aimed to "induce its members to be understanding and tolerant of the political and philosophical schools or systems that lie at the base of the various workers' parties". In the Soviet Union and Germany, the countries in which SAT had the greatest number of members, the organisation was already being persecuted by the time of the 1930s. While Hitler condemned Esperanto as a secret language for Jewish

plots, in the Soviet Union one of the founders of *La Nova Epoko*, Nekrasov was arrested in 1938 and accused of being "an organiser and leader of a fascist, espionage, terrorist organisation of Esperantists". Together with other Esperantists he became a victim of Stalinist oppression and was sentenced to death.

Jarlibro de Internacia Esperanto-Ligo (*The Yearbook*)

Jarlibro is the oldest continuous publication of the Universal Esperanto Association. The UEA, the largest international organisation of Esperanto speakers, was founded in 1908 by the Swiss journalist Hector Hodler, and is now headquartered in Rotterdam, the Netherlands. The books contain information on the Esperanto movement worldwide, addresses and contacts of Esperanto organisations in different countries, tourist information, and advice on many related subjects.



Kongreso Parolado ce la malfermo de la Sesia Universala Kongreso de Esperanto en Washington la 15-an de agosto en 1910-a (Congress Speech at the Opening of the 6th World Esperanto Congress in Washington, D.C., August 15, 1910), 1911 (†)

Published by Esperanto-Propaganda Instituto

This small booklet published by the Esperanto Propaganda Institute in Leipzig contains the famous speech "Land of Liberty" delivered by Zamenhof at the 6th Esperanto congress in Washington, 1910. With high expectations for the development of the Esperantist movement in the US, Zamenhof addressed the

attendants of the conference as citizens of "the land of liberty" and "most powerful representatives of the new world". However, the main theme of his speech was the unity of the Esperantist community worldwide. Summing up his ideas, he claims that "the international language cannot be other than Esperanto" and any possible changes to the language can be made only by Esperantists themselves, by common consent. In 1907 a schism took place in the movement when a delegation of prestigious university professors chose to back an anonymously submitted proposal for a revised

version of Esperanto called Ido (meaning 'offspring'). Keeping in mind the failure of an earlier artificial language called Volapük which suffered constant modification, Zamenhof considered any requests for reforms as betrayal.

Ido

Ido, which literally means 'offspring' in Esperanto, is an artificial language derived from Esperanto. It was introduced in 1907 as an initiative of Léopold Leau, who was a French mathematician and linguist. Ido adherents considered the language as an ever-evolving subject of study, requiring a scientific approach, and which opens a space for freedom of opinion and progress. Unlike traditional Esperantists, they did not perceive criticism as a threat to the unity of their community. The Idist movement survived the Second World War and thrived in Belgium thanks to the work of the Belgian Idist poet Andréas Juste who published a significant body of translations and writings into Ido.

Andreas Juste

Andreas Juste (1918–1998) was a lawyer from Charleroi, Belgium, and one of the most prominent proponents of Ido. He joined the Ido movement in the late 1940s and remained a passionate adherent until his death. Ido became his language of creativity, and he is renowned as the author of a significant amount of original poems, translations and essays on linguistics in the Ido language.

Modernism

documenta. Kunst des XX. Jahrhunderts. Internationale Ausstellung (Art of the Twentieth Century. International Exhibition), 1955

Exhibition catalogue
Published by Prestel-Verlag München
First edition

The first *documenta* was held between 15 July and 18 September 1955 in Kassel, Germany. Although close to the Latin word – 'documentum' meaning: a lesson or warning, the title of the exhibition is an invented word that was supposed to embody the intention to be a documentation of modern art. Having revealed artworks which were deprived from public view

during the Nazi regime, it was the first major event to present avant-garde art in Germany since the infamous *Entartete Kunst* exhibition (1937). Held in the newly restored and whitewashed halls of the Museum Fridericianum, a creation of the German Enlightenment which had been almost completely destroyed during the war and then restored, *documenta* sought to symbolise Germany's re-opening to the cultures of the world. Arnold Bode, the founder and curator of the first exhibition, aimed to present a genealogy of modern art and the universality of its language. The exhibition centred on the European abstract painting of the first decades of the 20th century, and the catalogue of the first *documenta* includes a celebratory section of plates with photographs of leading modernist artists. The most international part of the exhibition included a series of photographs of archaic sculptures from all around the world.

Westkunst: Zeitgenössische Kunst seit 1939 (Western Art: Contemporary Art since 1939), 1981

Exhibition catalogue
Published by Museen der Stadt Köln/
DuMont Buchverlag
First edition

This catalogue of an extensive exhibition of modern art, co-curated by Laszlo Glozer and Kasper König in Kölnermessehallen, Cologne (30 May – 16 August 1981). Intentionally provocative, the title *Westkunst* is a pun on the word 'Weltkunst' (World Art). It was intended to refer to the hegemonic Western ideology as well as the existing political and ideological division of Europe into West and East. Having taken as its starting point the year 1939 (the beginning of the Second World War and mass migration of prominent European artists to New York), the curators chose 800 works by 200 artists. Appealing to the formalist methodological tradition in art history, any historical ideological context was scaled down. The exposition thus was organised according to a formal/iconographic principle and the idea of artistic innovation. The "Today" section of the exhibition, which was intended to be a representation of the work of emerging artists, was described by critics as a 'trade show', or

'dealers selection'. *Westkunst* is considered a consolidation of the Trans-Atlantic art world's reluctance to accept artists of non-Western origin.

"Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern, 1985

Exhibition catalogue in two volumes
Published by MoMA
First edition

The exhibition "*Primitivism" in 20th Century Art: Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, was led by William Rubin and Kirk Varnedoe at MoMA in 1984. Having juxtaposed tribal and Modernist artworks according to their formal resemblances, it was extensively criticised for its valorisation of Western art practice at the expense of the so-called 'primitive' one. Having been deliberately denied any anthropological, ethnographical, and even historical contextualisation, the 'primitive' objects were displayed alongside masterpieces of the twentieth century in their innocent aesthetic 'primitiveness'. This compelled some critics to argue that instead of revealing the mechanisms of imitation and appropriation of tribal art by Western modernists, the exhibition represented the idea of an underlying affinity between

Western artists and 'primitives' to demonstrate 'the universality of the Modernist canon' (Thomas McEvilley). The extensive and lavishly illustrated two-volume catalogue, edited by Rubin, further develops the Eurocentric myth of the linearity of art history.

Magiciens de la Terre (The Magicians of the Earth), 1989

Exhibition catalogue
Published by Éditions du Centre Pompidou
First edition

Often regarded as a direct response to MoMA's controversial exhibition "*Primitivism" in 20th Century Art* (1984), *Magiciens de la Terre* was organised by French curator Jean-Hubert Martin five years later, attempting to raise postcolonial debates on art and focus attention on the problems of Western approaches to representation. Conceived as an attempt at cross-cultural dialogue, it included the artworks of fifty contemporary practitioners from Western art metropolises together with contributions from an equal number of artists from the non-Western world, including ritualistic and indigenous practices. Although the curator's approach was based on his 'artistic intuition', Martin worked together with a team of anthropologists,

ethnographers and regional specialists. The selection was made on the basis that the works have 'an aura' of a universal creative impulse. The artworks were generally presented autonomously in spaces dedicated to individual artists at the Centre Georges Pompidou, with the exception of those juxtaposed with each other in the Grand Hall of the Parc de la Villette. Such pairings were not without controversy, the most striking of which was the positioning of English artist Richard Long's *Red Earth Circle* above a rectangular ceremonial floor installation made of earth, ochre and crushed herbs by the Aboriginal Australian Yuendumu community – a purely aesthetical juxtaposition, with the effect of diminishing the ritualistic value and cultural meaning of the aboriginal work. *Magiciens de la Terre* is regarded by some as a precursor of exhibitions of contemporary art with a globalised perspective, and was also described as "the first major exhibition consciously to attempt to discover a postcolonial way to exhibit objects together" (Thomas McEvilley). Though praised by some for its attempt to depart from Eurocentric perspectives, the exhibition was also condemned by others for its formalist

approach, de-contextualisation and de-politicisation of artworks, particularly of those from outside of the West.

Rasheed Araeen, The Other Story: Afro-Asian artists in Post-War Britain, 1989

Exhibition catalogue
Published by Hayward Gallery/
SouthBank Centre
First edition

The Other Story, curated by the artist and theorist Rasheed Araeen at the Hayward Gallery, was the first major survey of the works of artists of Asian, African and Caribbean origin in Britain made in the post-war decades. Having taken place during the era of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government, the exhibition is considered a significant attempt at the 'de-imperialisation' of the 'master narrative' of modern art history. In his introduction to the catalogue, Araeen addresses the issue of the privilege of the Western subject, which was achieved "by arbitrary removal of other cultures from the dynamics of historical continuity". *The Other Story* brought together the artworks of 24 Afro-Asian artists on the principle of their relationship with what is understood as Modernism in visual arts. Despite

some success of the so-called 'Commonwealth' generation of artists in the 1960s, by the end of the 1980s they were still denied their place in the mainstream historical narrative – “they remained the Other, in the sense that their Otherness was constantly evoked as part of the discussion of their work”. Attacked by some art critics at the time, the exhibition came to be considered as a key step towards the revision of Western-orientated history of Modernism.

Modernist Architecture

Inspired by the new technological innovations in construction, modernism in architecture first appeared in various national forms across Europe, recently established Soviet Union, and the US, and became an international movement by 1928 with the establishment of the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM) or International Congresses of Modern Architecture. The organisation arranged a series of congresses across Europe which were attended by the most prominent architects of the time. CIAM's objectives went beyond the questions of style

and formalism of architectural principles, approaching modern architecture and urban planning as a reformatory socio-political tool. Ultimately proposed as a solution for social problems, CIAM's ideas became particularly influential after the Second World War and were widely implemented in practice in territories under colonial rule. However, the global unification of city planning, introduced by CIAM, did not take into account the national architectural features and customs of the peoples of different countries. It was the development of these ideas on colonial soil that eventually caused a schism in the views of CIAM members and the subsequent dissolution of the organisation in 1959.

Le Corbusier
La Charte D'Athènes (The Athens Charter), 1957
Published by Les Éditions de Minuit

Based on the proceedings of the fourth meeting of CIAM dedicated to the principles of the Functional City, *The Athens Charter* (so-called because the Congress in 1933 was held on board the SS Patris en route from Marseille to Athens) is considered the manifesto of CIAM. Edited by Le Corbusier, the charter has

95 points on the planning and construction of cities. Among the topics covered are: the distribution of a population into high-rise housing blocks, strict functional segregation of the city zones, the separation of residential areas and transport routes, and the preservation of pre-existing historic buildings. These principles are often discussed in relation to 'hygienist' discourse – for example, when it comes to historical architecture, it is stressed that the cult of the past must not take precedence over the current housing conditions which have an impact on the well-being and moral health of individuals.

“African experiment – building for an educational programme in the Gold Coast”, article by Maxwell Fry in *The Architectural Review*, No. 677 Vol. CXIII, May 1953

Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry
Village Housing in the Tropics, with special reference to West Africa, 1953
Published by Lund Humphries

Jane Drew, Maxwell Fry
Tropical Architecture in the Humid Zone, 1956
Published by B.T. Batsford limited
First edition

Two principal approaches towards modern architecture of the 1950s can be distinguished. The first can be described as a

regionalist approach that focused on the climate and geography of a region, but paid little attention to cultural analysis or existing vernacular tradition. This can be illustrated by the various 'African experiments' – regionalist modernist projects of the leading British architects Maxwell Fry (1899-1987) and Jane Drew (1911-1996) in West African countries that were then part of the British Empire. In the 1950s the couple joined Le Corbusier to work on the creation of Chandigarh, the new capital of the divided Punjab in India. The modernist architecture of Chandigarh is widely regarded as one of the prominent experiments in urban planning and a symbolic statement of the radical break from tradition and colonial past of the newly independent India. Although the purity of the modernism was initially supposed to be protected “from whims of individuals” by the Edict of Chandigarh (as prescribed by Le Corbusier), the universal functionalism of modernist residential architecture has been challenged by various forms of ad hoc urbanism, inspired by local traditions of urban life.

Text on back reads:

“Chandigarh, India: The waffle-like brick façade of her home in Chandigarh, India, is shown by Mrs. D. P. Bhalla (left) to some American visitors. All houses and buildings in Chandigarh have similar construction to keep out the 110-degree heat which turns the city into an oven in summer. Chandigarh, the new capital of Punjab, was designed entirely by French architect Le Corbusier and contains only modern buildings and homes”.

**L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui -
Maroc, no.35, May 1951**

An alternative to the prevailing understanding of modernist architecture prescribed by the Athens Charter was introduced at the 1953 CIAM meeting by French architect Michel Ecochard. His study of so-called 'bidonvilles', the self-built environment of squatter districts of Casablanca, titled the *Habitat pour le plus grand nombre (Habitat for the Greatest Number)* revealed the importance of the specific conditions of daily life and traditional dwelling patterns. The modernist

projects in Casablanca by Team 10 and GAMMA (Groupe d'Architectes Modernes Marocains), challenged the universalism of modernist architecture, introducing a more profound sociological approach which differed from the one applied in Chandigarh. However, as argued by some critics, this approach was still very much hierarchical in its nature, representing a hybrid of vernacular patterns and ultimately still a colonialist modernisation, in other words: the ethnographic knowledge was applied to subjugate the colonised.

Exhibited works

Exhibited works

Haseeb Ahmed

Ummah HQ, 2020

Aluminum, 3D print, paper,
styrofoam, plaster, MDF
382×480×480 cm

Courtesy Harlan Levey projects

Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin

Global Digestion, c. 1980–2007

Digital prints

145×395 cm

Collection M HKA

Rasheed Araeen

Nine, 1968

Acrylic on wood

(9x) 61×61×61 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Rasheed Araeen

Oui, 1976

Digital print

42×29.7 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Sven Augustijnen

Imbéciles de tous les pays

unissez-vous!, 2018

160 copies of magazine “Europe”,
vitrine, wall text

Various dimensions

Courtesy of the artist and
Jan Mot, Brussels

Belgian Institute for World Affairs

Declaration of Dependence, 1989

Various archive materials

Various dimensions

Gifted to M HKA/CKV by vzw
Samarkand

Detailed list:

1. Declaration De De Pen
Dance
Paper, blue gouache paint,
blue printing (stamp) ink
c. 120×120 cm

2. La- AuAuAuAuAuAu
AuAuAuAuAuAuAuAu-
Belgique Congolaise
Business card
5.5×9 cm

3. De Morgen, Monday 26
december 1988 with stamp:
"Déclaration De Dé" in Van
Gogh frame stamp, as Nr. XII
of the serial publication "Het
Orgaan"
Print on paper, blue and black
printing (stamp) ink
29.7×21 cm

4. Invitation to the
"Déclaration de Dé"
Print on paper
29.7×21 cm

5. Letter to the Mayor of
Antwerp in preparation of the
"Déclaration de Dé"
Print on paper
29.7×21 cm

6. Plan for the performance
"Déclaration de Dé"
Typed paper
21×14.8 cm

7. BIWA at the Zaire
Consulate (Jef Lambrecht &
Karel Schoetens with Wout
Vercammen, on the left)
Photograph
10×15 cm

8. BIWA with Consulate
officer at the Zaire Consulate
Photograph
10×15 cm

9. BIWA talking to Consul's
secretary
Photograph
10×15 cm

10. BIWA prepares for
the presentation of the
"Déclaration de Dé", 16 March
1989
Photograph
10×15 cm

Joseph Beuys

*"COYOTE – I Like America and
America Likes Me"*, 1974
Performance at René Block
gallery, New York
31 black and white photos under
glass
50×80 cm
VERDEC Collection

Joseph Beuys

Intuition, 1968
Multiple of wood with pencil
markings
30×21×5.6 cm
Collection M HKA

Joseph Beuys

Eurasienstab über den Alpen, 1971
Ink on paper
10×14.5 cm (unframed)
Collection M HKA

David Blandy

From the Underground, 2002
Video
4:22 min
Courtesy of the artist and
Seventeen Gallery

Matti Braun

Bunta Garbo, 2002
Book cover designs
Inkjet print on paper mounted on
foamboard
125×89×12 cm (each)
Courtesy of the artist; BQ, Berlin;
and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun

Pierre Pierre, 2010
10 offset prints
35.5×25.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×27.8 cm (unframed)
35.5×29 cm (unframed)
35.5×26.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×29.8 cm (unframed)
35.5×25.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×29 cm (unframed)
35.5×32.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×26.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×29.5 cm (unframed)
Courtesy the of artist and Esther
Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun

Pierre, 2009
10 offset prints
35.5×27.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×24.5 cm (unframed)
30.5×25.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×26 cm (unframed)
35.5×30 cm (unframed)
35.5×25.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×23 cm (unframed)
27×35.5 cm (unframed)
35.5×33.5 cm (unframed)
35×35.5 cm (unframed)
Courtesy of the artist and Esther
Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun

Untitled, 2010
Fabric paint, raw silk, cold rolled
steel
61.5×51.5×3.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Esther
Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun

Untitled, 2010
Fabric paint, raw silk, cold rolled
steel
61.5×51.5×3.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Esther
Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun
Untitled, 2010
Fabric paint, raw silk, cold rolled steel
61.5×51.5×3.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun
Untitled, 2010
Fabric paint, raw silk, cold rolled steel
61.5×51.5×3.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin

Matti Braun
La Pekuniala Teorio di Silvio Gesell, 2002
Video
8:49 min
Courtesy of the artist and BQ, Berlin

Lovis Corinth
Georg Brandes, 1925
Oil on canvas
111×91.5×6.5 cm (framed)
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys
White Suprematism, 2016
Pencil on cardboard, plexiglas, wood
147×147 cm
Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys
White Suprematism, 2016
Pencil on cardboard, plexiglas, wood
147×147 cm
Courtesy of the artists and Galerie Isabella Bortolozzi, Berlin

Jos de Gruyter and Harald Thys
White Suprematism, 2016
Pencil on cardboard, plexiglas, wood
147×147 cm
Courtesy of the artists and Micheline Szwajcer

Luc Deleu
Schaal en Perspectief (Scale and Perspective), 1980
Bristol cardboard, plastic
80×80×80 cm
Collection M HKA

Luc Deleu
Schaal en Perspectief (Scale and Perspective), 1980
Ink on paper
76×88 cm
Collection M HKA

Jimmie Durham
Tlunh Datsi, 1984
Skull, feathers, turquoise, acrylic paint, shells, wood
103×91×81 cm
The "M" Art Foundation

Felix Gonzalez-Torres
"Untitled", 1994
Silkscreen on cotton T-shirt
Size L
Edition of 500
Published by agnès b., New York
Private Collection, Antwerp

George Grosz
De Schrijver Walter Mehring, 1926
Oil on canvas
110×79.5 cm (unframed)
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

Philip Guston
Law, 1969
Acrylic on panel
76×81 cm
Private Collection, Waalre, The Netherlands

N. S. Harsha
Sensual, 2007
Paper, wood, rope
Variable dimensions
Collection M HKA / Collection Flemish Community

N. S. Harsha
Head, 2008
Acrylic on canvas
80×49 cm
Collection M HKA / Collection Flemish Community

Hannah Höch
Mischling (Mixed Race), 1924
Collage, photomontage
11×8.2 cm
Courtesy of Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen e.V., Stuttgart

Karl Hofer
Men Round a Table, date unknown
Oil on canvas
117×140.5 cm (unframed)
Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerpen

Candida Höfer
Türken in Deutschland 1979, 1979
Slide projection with 80 colour slides
Courtesy of the artist

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
Nourish the Talented, 2003
Oil and acrylic on canvas
86×71 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Corvi-Mora, London and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Lynette Yiadom-Boakye
A Head for Poison, 2011
Oil on canvas
50×40 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Corvi-Mora, London and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York

Ibrahim Mahama

On Monumental Silences, 2018
Rubber
210×60×80 cm
Collection M HKA / Collection
Flemish Community

Renzo Martens

White Cube, 2020
Video trailer
5 min
Courtesy of the artist

Kerry James Marshall

Untitled, 1998–1999
Woodcut on paper
250×1545.6 cm
Collection M HKA

Danny Matthys

Vivre d'Abord, 1979
Photos, paper
Three parts: 71×129, 115×135 and
74.5×122.5 cm
Collection M HKA

Vincent Meessen

The Intruder, 2005
Video
7:26 min
Courtesy the artist

Vincent Meessen

Hoe slecht garen spinnen
وييسلنا نطقولنا ليزغ هيفيكيك
Comment filer du mauvais coton
How To Spin A Bad Yarn
2020
Print on cotton fabric, wood
(4x) 305×70 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maryam Najd

Life of Faith from the series *The
Aesthetic of Sin*, 2018
Oil on canvas
220×130×4.5 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Maryam Najd

Grand Bouquet II from the
*Botanical National Amalgamation
Project*, 2020
Acrylic and oil on canvas
98×73×4 cm
Courtesy of the artist

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960
Engraving
21×29.7 cm
Collectie Kortenber

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960
Painting
29.7×42 cm
Collectie Kortenber

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960
Painting
29.7×42 cm
Collectie Kortenber

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960
Painting
29.7×42 cm
Collectie Kortenber

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960
Painting
29.7×42 cm
Collectie Kortenber

Nicole

Untitled, c. 1960
Drawing
21×29.7 cm
Collectie Kortenber

Catherine Opie

Pig Pen, 1993
Chromogenic print
101.6×76.2 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Regen
Projects, Los Angeles, and
Thomas Dane Gallery

Catherine Opie

Chloe, 1993
Chromogenic print
50.8×40.6 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Regen
Projects, Los Angeles, and
Thomas Dane Gallery

Catherine Opie

James, 1993
Chromogenic print
50.8×40.6 cm
Courtesy of the artist, Regen
Projects, Los Angeles, and
Thomas Dane Gallery

Werner Peiner

Der Thronhimmel, Gobelin
tapestry design for Carinhall,
1939–1940
Watercolour
128×91×10 cm
Courtesy of
www.germanartgallery.eu

Charlotte Posenenske

*Vierkantrohre Serie DW (Square
Tubes Series DW)*, 1967
Corrugated cardboard
Transition piece: 35×70×70 cm;
Rectangular tube (half square)
35×70×140 cm;
Elbow (change of direction)
70×134×49 cm; Square tube
70×140×70 cm
Collection M HKA / Collection
Flemish Community

Public Movement

Imagine this museum is a country and in this country there is a museum, 2020

2 Corten steel plates
(2x) 20x94 cm
Courtesy of the artists

Carol Rama

Appassionata, 1941

Watercolour on paper
18.5x23.6 cm
Private collection, Paris

Carol Rama

Proibito, 1944

Watercolour on paper
10.5x14 cm
Private collection, Paris

Carol Rama

Dorina, 1944

Watercolour on paper
9.5x25 cm
European collection

Carol Rama

Teatrino N. 2, 1937

Watercolour on paper
13.8x23 cm
Private collection, Paris

Carol Rama

Marta La Cagona, 1940

Watercolour on paper
24x18 cm
Private Collection, Turin

Carol Rama

Le Palette (brevet n. 7689R),

1940
Watercolour on paper
14x26 cm
Private Collection, Turin

Carol Rama

Appassionata (C/so Francia 179, 1930-1931), 1939

Watercolour on paper
29x23 cm
Private Collection, Turin

Carol Rama

Appassionata (I due pini), 1940

Watercolour on paper
33.5x24 cm
Private Collection, Turin

Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2015

Tempera, egg yolk, gold leaf,
wood
24x19x1.3 cm
Estate of Oxana Shachko

Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2015

Tempera, egg yolk, gold leaf,
wood
31x26.5x2.8 cm
Estate of Oxana Shachko

Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2016

Tempera, egg yolk, gold leaf,
wood
33x24x1 cm
Estate of Oxana Shachko

Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2016

Tempera, egg yolk, gold leaf,
wood
33x24x1 cm
Estate of Oxana Shachko

Oxana Shachko

Untitled, 2016

tempera, egg yolk, gold leaf, wood
40x30.4x3.5 cm
Estate of Oxana Shachko

Åsa Sonjasdotter

Cultivated Stories, 2019

First part: poster prints
of archival photographs
from the Swedish Seed
Association (Sveriges
utsädesförening), early
1900s.
Dimensions variable.
Courtesy the artist
Co-produced with Bergen
Assembly 2019

Second part: video on
organic, participatory grain
breeding of agronomist Hans
Larsson, Sweden.
34 mins, colour, sound;
dimensions variable.
Courtesy the artist
Co-produced with Bergen
Assembly 2019

Jonas Staal

Vrijdenkersruimte Vervolgd

(Freethinkers' Space), 2012
foam board, media players,
print on paper, spruce, poplar,
plexiglass
(4x) 120x80x80 cm
Collection Van Abbemuseum,
Eindhoven

Mladen Stilinović

An Artist Who Cannot Speak

English Is No Artist, 1992
acrylic on artificial silk
140x246 cm
Courtesy Galerie Martin Janda

Sille Storihle

The Stonewall Nation, 2014

HD Video
16 min
Courtesy of the artist

Papa Ibra Tall

Semeuse d'étoiles, c. 1970s

Tapestry in textile
298x291 cm
Courtesy the artist, KADIST
collection

Makhmut Usmanovich**Usmanov**

Oilfields in Kazakhstan, 1950

Oil on canvas

91.2×133.2 cm

Collection Museum Helmond

Nicoline van Harskamp

PDGN, 2016

Video

16:20 min

Courtesy of the artist

Nicoline van Harskamp

My Name is Language,

2018-ongoing

Live performance on location

Courtesy of the artist

Dimitri Venkov

I Wanted to be Happy in the USSR,

2015

SD Video

40:35 min

Courtesy of the artist

Andy Warhol

The American Indian (Russell Means), 1976

Silkscreen ink and synthetic polymer paint on canvas

127×106.7 cm

The König Family Collection

Andy Warhol

Birmingham Race Riot, 1964

Screenprint on paper

(3x) 50.8×61 cm

Courtesy of Galerie Ronny Van de Velde, Knokke – Antwerpen

Andy Warhol

Birmingham Race Riot, 1964

Screenprint on paper

50.8×61 cm

Collection M HKA

Andy Warhol

Marilyn Monroe (Marilyn) –

Reversal Series, ca. 1978

Screenprint on HMP paper

79×59 cm

Collection of Samuel

Vanhoegaerden, Belgium

Andy Warhol

Dollar Sign, 1982 (reprint 2013)

4 Silkscreen prints

39.6×50.5 cm

Published by Sunday B. Morning

Collection M HKA

Andy Warhol

Dollar Bill, 1981

paper, marker

6.6×15.6 cm

Collection M HKA

Nav Haq

Nav Haq is Associate Director at M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp – where he is responsible for the development of the artistic programme. Haq is also an editor for *Afterall Journal*. Haq has organised numerous monographic exhibitions with artists such as Hassan Khan, Cosima von Bonin, Imogen Stidworthy, Otobong Nkanga and Cevdet Ereğ, as well as significant overviews of work by Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, Joseph Beuys and Laure Prouvost. Haq was curator of the *Göteborg International Biennial of Contemporary Art 2017* and *Contour Biennial 2007*, Mechelen, Belgium. At M HKA he co-curated the group exhibition *Don't You Know Who I Am? Art After Identity Politics* in 2014, and curated the interdisciplinary exhibition *Energy Flash: The Rave Movement*. In 2012, he was recipient of the Independent Vision Award for Curatorial Achievement, awarded by Independent Curators International, New York.

Philippe Pirotte

Philippe Pirotte is Adjunct Senior Curator at the University of California Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive. He is also Professor of Art History and Curatorial Studies at Städelschule, Frankfurt am Main. Recently Philippe Pirotte curated the group show *Arus Balik. From Below the Wind to Above the Wind and Back Again* for the Center for Contemporary Art Singapore (2019). He was member of the curatorial team of the Jakarta Biennale in 2017. Currently he is a recipient of an Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts Fellowship, during which he is researching the artistic developments and exchanges that emerged in the wake of the 1955 Asia-Africa Conference in Bandung, Indonesia.

Åsa Sonjasdotter

Åsa Sonjasdotter is an artist, researcher, writer and community organiser, living on the island of Ven in Sweden and in the city of Berlin, Germany. Her work explores knowledge, memory, loss and mourning through shared processes for the recultivation of livelihoods and abundant imagination. Sonjasdotter is a founding member of the Neighbourhood Academy, a bottom up learning site in Prinzessinnengarten, Berlin, Germany. Since 2018, she has been a researcher in Artistic Practice at Valand Academy, the University of Gothenburg, Sweden. Her latest work, *Cultivating Stories*, follows the re-breeding of grains rescued from the deep freezers of the Nordic Gene Bank. It was commissioned by the Bergen Assembly in 2019, and has been shown at the Biennale of Warsaw amongst other venues.
www.archivejournal.org
www.potatoperspective.org

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25.09.2020–24.01.2021

M HKA – Museum of Contemporary Art Antwerp

monoculture.muhka.be

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About the L’Internationale Confederation:

L’Internationale is a confederation of seven modern and contemporary art institutions. L’Internationale proposes a space for art within a non-hierarchical and decentralised internationalism, based on the values of difference and horizontal exchange among a constellation of cultural agents, locally rooted and globally connected. It brings together seven major European art institutions: Moderna galerija (MG+MSUM, Ljubljana, Slovenia); Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía (MNCARS, Madrid, Spain); Museu d’Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA, Barcelona, Spain); Muzeum Sztuki Nowoczesnej w Warszawie, (MSN, Warsaw, Poland); Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (M HKA, Antwerp, Belgium);

SALT (Istanbul and Ankara, Turkey) and Van Abbemuseum (VAM, Eindhoven, the Netherlands), and its partners are HDK-Valand Academy (Gothenburg, Sweden) and the National College of Art and Design (NCAD, Dublin, Ireland).

About “Our Many Europes”

“Our Many Europes” is a four-year programme (2018–22) comprising exhibitions, public programming, heritage exchange and institutional experimentation across the Internationale confederation. The programme takes the 1990s as a starting point when our current Europe was born. It aims to think speculatively about the role of culture as a driving force in showing who and how we are in the world.

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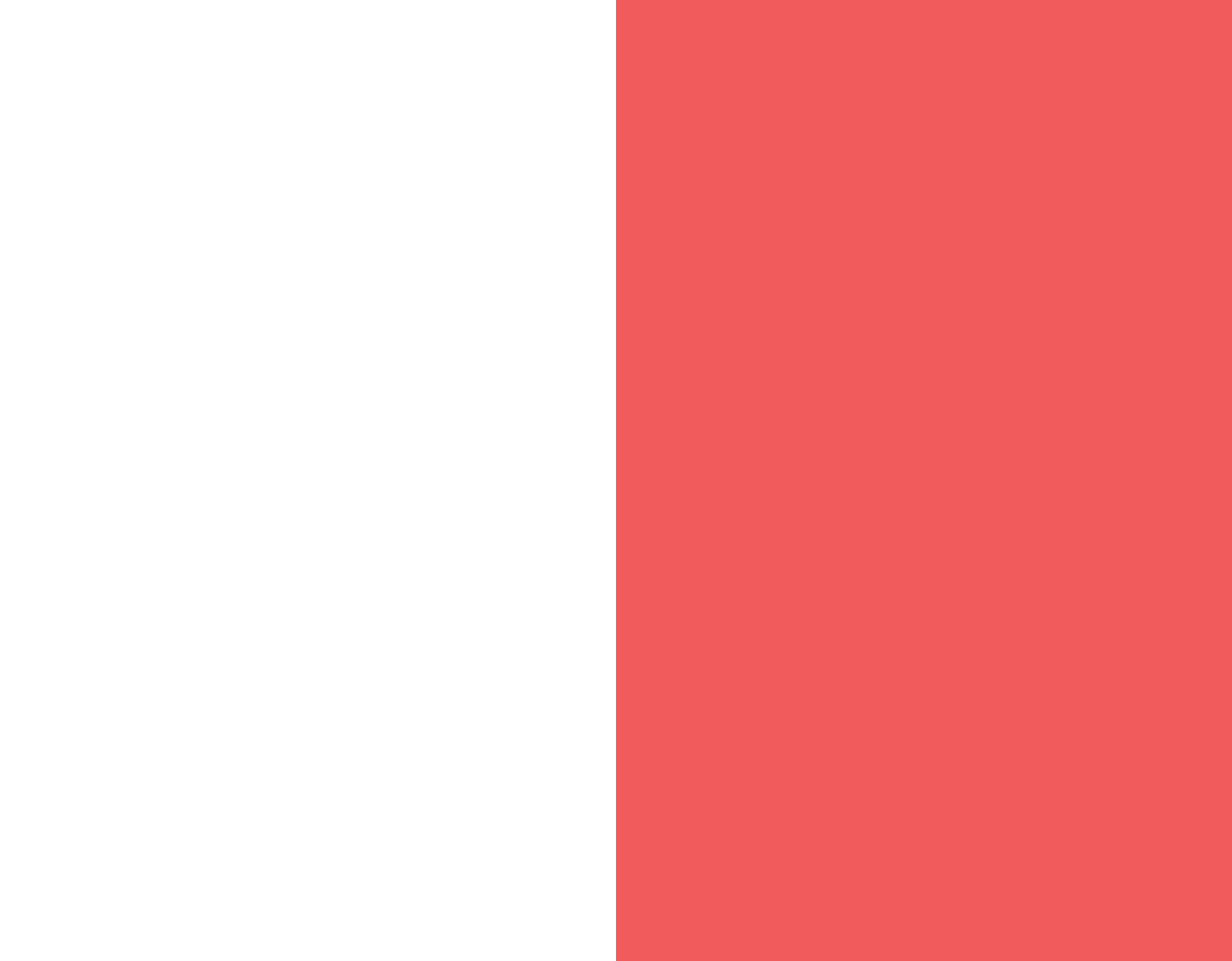
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MACBA Barcelona
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SALT Istanbul & Ankara
Van Abbemuseum Eindhoven
MSN Warsaw
NCAD Dublin
HDK-Valand Gothenburg

**OUR MANY
EUROPE**



The exhibition *Monoculture – A Recent History* approaches monoculture, or ‘cultural homogeneity’, from various historical, social and ideological perspectives, as well as philosophical and linguistic ones. As a museum for art and visual culture, M HKA has looked at many different case studies from approximately the last one hundred years in order to consider the impetus for monoculture or the monocultural self-image, and how this has been reflected in artistic work as well as in propaganda and philosophical thought. Seeking as much as possible to consider monoculture not as something exclusively conservative or right-wing, the exhibition rather considers it as something that can be found across social and ideological partialities. With the inclusion of ambiguity, artistically and philosophically-speaking, this exhibition also wishes to look at what ways of living or perceiving might be excluded by the formation of a monoculture. *Monoculture – A Recent History* asks questions on what kind of society and cultural space we want, taking into account human subjectivity along with its great capacities of creativity and empathy.

An exhibition with Hannah Höch, Lovis Corinth, Karl Hofer, George Grosz, Carol Rama, Werner Peiner, Belgian Institute for World Affairs, Joseph Beuys, Felix Gonzalez-Torres, Åsa Sonjasdotter, Andy Warhol, Nicole, Hüseyin Bahri Alptekin, Haseeb Ahmed, Sven Augustijnen, Candida Höfer, Papa Ibra Tall, Maryam Najd, David Blandy, Oxana Shachko, Matti Braun, Jos de Gruyter & Harald Thys, Luc Deleu, Jimmie Durham, Catherine Opie, Charlotte Posenenske, Public Movement, Philip Guston, Mladen Stilinović, Ibrahim Mahama, N. S. Harsha, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Rasheed Araeen, Kerry James Marshall, Vincent Meessen, Dimitri Venkov, Renzo Martens/CATPC, Danny Matthys, Jonas Staal, Sille Storihle, Makhmut Usmanovich Usmanov, Noline van Harskamp.

Plus artefacts from several cultural archives: the Arthur Langerman Archives for Research into Visual Anti-Semitism (ALAVA), and the cultural archives of Flanders: AMSAB – Institute for Social History; Liberas, Centre for the History of Free Thinking and Acting; and KADOC Documentation and Research Centre on Religion, Culture and Society.

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