15 INVITATIONS 15 YEARS RASHID RA NA MAR 17
PRESENT

ELSEWHERE

RASHID

RANA
Pakistan-based artist Rashid Rana inquired into the possibilities of fiction to construct multiple pasts through notes, images, and schematic representations of his collaborative work-in-progress *Present Elsewhere*. 
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ALTERNATIVE PASTS POSSIBLE FUTURES

Hammad Nasar
“Is this an artistic project, or a curatorial one?”

This was a frequent question asked of Rashid Rana by the artists, architects, curators, and writers he invited to participate in Present Elsewhere—his proposal for Asia Art Archive’s 15 Invitations.

The obvious answer, as stated in Rana’s invitation text (pp 14-15), was to reiterate his position as ‘curator’ for this ‘hypothetical exhibition’. But there are, perhaps, no obvious answers for an artist who sees no boundaries between his multiple selves as artist, educator, and curator; who is interested in the ‘machinery of truth’—capable of producing numerous meanings—rather than ‘truth’ itself.¹

This idea of parallel or multiple realities is key to understanding Rana’s art practice. It epitomises what the influential Indian painter, Gulam Mohammed Sheikh, referred to as ‘living simultaneously in several times and cultures’.² Rana trained as a painter but found colour pigment to be a ‘passive tool’.³ His search for a more ‘active’ medium led to his fashioning a new mode of working. He began collecting, filtering, and programming complex data banks comprising thousands of images to produce large-scale composite prints. In these works, he arranges thousands of individual images, like pixels, to form meta-images that carry a different narrative from that transmitted by the smaller images: photographs of billboards from Lahore’s roads compose a portrait of a Mughal emperor; scenes of flesh and blood from an abattoir morph into Persianate carpet designs.

These were the works with which Rana first came to international prominence.⁴ Through them, he was directly engaging with the influential idea proposed by Lev Manovich, the theorist of digital culture, that the database was the ‘symbolic form’ of our age—a designation in which it succeeded the novel and the cinema.⁵ The database—a collection of individual items that tell their own stories—disrupts the idea of narrative flow; allowing viewers to construct their own structures of meaning.

Rana has used this database-driven mode of working to address ever new challenges: moving from two to three dimensions; embracing moving image; and, alongside Shilpa Gupta, in a memorable series
of projects staged as a collateral event at the 56th Venice Biennale, putting time and place ‘out of joint’. In the latter, he choreographed the movement of an audience distributed across Venice and Lahore through a series of virtual and temporal displacements; compelling them to reflect on how ‘perceptions are formed, and histories and communities forged’.

Rana’s persistent interest in time and place, stems not from a search for the historically specific, but from the structural possibilities to constitute both. Fiction is an obvious method of composing here, elsewhere, now, and then. But the conceptual premise at the heart of Present Elsewhere is perhaps best approached through the cosmological concept of the ‘multiverse’: the possibility that our present could have evolved from any number of possible pasts. Present Elsewhere offers a collection of invited fictions from creative practitioners as a database of such possibilities for us to respond to. It is also an extended work-in-progress; for Rana to mine, and morph into different forms.

Is it an artistic project, or a curatorial one?

It is, of course, both—at the same time.

1 Interview with Quddus Mirza, Art India, No. III and IV, 2008-9, p 65.
2 Gulam Mohammed Sheikh in catalogue for the exhibition Place for People (Bombay & New Delhi, 1981).
4 These works prompted Kuroda Raiji, Chief Curator of the Fukuoka Asian Art Museum, to propose ‘Parallel Realities’ as the curatorial framework for the 3rd Fukuoka Asian Art Triennale (2005).
7 Ibid, p 133.
8 The discussions that have nurtured Present Elsewhere have also fuelled Multiverse–Rana’s collaboration with choreographer Wayne McGregor for a new production for the Royal Opera House, London.
Celebrating its 15-year anniversary, Asia Art Archive’s 15 Invitations programme series is a special project inviting 15 artists for participation. As one of the invitees, Rashid Rana responded with his project Present Elsewhere that further extends an invitation to 15 creative practitioners to participate and propose projects for a hypothetical exhibition that questions the notion of location and time. The following pages of the dossier segment the invitation and curatorial note shared with the participants alongside their creative responses.
Dear Participant,

I trust this email finds you well.

I am writing to invite you to participate in a hypothetical exhibition that I’m curating. Participation entails developing a proposal for a work that need not be physically realised, thus the format for submission is flexible and open to interpretation. Imagine yourself in a time and space other than the one you currently occupy and respond to this constructed context; you may locate yourself in another era and geographical location with a partially or fully fictional backdrop of social, political and historical events (not to say that all versions of historical accounts are not fiction) and without having to explain the imagined context directly you envision a work/project; an imaginary physical-manifestation in response to the imagined context that you may choose to express in text, sketches or any other format of your choice.

The aforementioned exhibition is a part of Present Elsewhere, a long-term collaborative project that seeks to examine the limitations of occupying a present that is assumed to be singular by imagining the intersection of history and fiction. The first manifestation of the project takes place as part of Asia Art Archive’s programme series, 15 Invitations. The curatorial note for Present Elsewhere, with further details, is attached.
In this project I am responding to Asia Art Archive’s 15 invitations by extending my invitation to 15 other potential collaborators – mostly but not exclusively artists. Confirmed participants at this stage include Santiago Sierra, Tim Lee and Amar Kanwar among others.

The intellectual copyright of the proposed work will remain with you. The proposal will be published in an e-catalogue format for the hypothetical exhibition. The publication or distribution of these will, however, be carried out on a non-commercial basis. In fact, the e-catalogue is envisaged to be freely downloadable under a Creative Commons license.

On confirmation of your interest, a contract with further details of your participation, including a modest honorarium, will follow shortly.

The deadline for submitting your final version of your proposal is 2nd December. I would be happy to speak with you by Skype or exchange further emails to clarify any questions you may have.

Warmly
Rashid Rana
Present Elsewhere is a long-term collaborative project in the making to explore the possibilities of fiction for constructing multiple possible pasts—for art and beyond.

Our experience of reality is a negotiation between the actual and the remote. The actual is close at hand—something one can experience directly with the body as the site of knowing. The remote is knowledge amassed indirectly, from diverse sources scattered across time and space. The project examines whether the remote can exist autonomously. It is an attempt to subvert linear ideas of time and space progressions to offer fractured views of chronology and geography.

Echoing cosmological concepts of the multiverse and multiple histories, it explores ideas of a present that could have evolved from any number of possible pasts: possibilities that fiction can make visible.

Essentially the project echoes the following questions:

Why are we slave to a present or a reality that’s dependent upon the body as the site of knowledge?

How can one liberate oneself from the present? Can the present be totally autonomous, irrespective of the time and location in which one’s body is located? Can it be partially, if not fully, independent? To what extent is this independence possible? Is that extent quantifiable?
Unbuilt Roads

Imagined Time
2026

Imagined Location
Earth
Since the beginning of the 1990s, I have gathered information on an unusual species of art: unrealised projects. Unlike unrealised models and projects submitted for architectural competitions, which are frequently published, such endeavours in the visual arts—that are planned but not carried out—ordinarily remain little known or completely unnoticed. But these roads not taken are a reservoir of artistic ideas for projects: forgotten, directly or indirectly censored, misunderstood, oppressed, lost, or unrealisable.

There are many reasons why the projects about which I gathered information have not been executed. Public commissions are the most common type, and they usually entail postponement, censorship, or rejection by the government agency in charge of it. There are also desk drawer projects developed by artists without reference to a particular commission, many planned but then forgotten or even rejected by the artists themselves. As the philosopher Gilles Deleuze argued, each process of actualisation
is surrounded by a constantly thickening fog of virtual possibilities. Missed opportunities and failed projects also fall into this category. As a rule, unsuccessful works remain totally unknown, as success is a more popular topic of discussion than failure.

Some examples include Louise Bourgeois wanted to build a small amphitheatre. Nancy Spero created billboards for display in New York City but they were censored and went unrealised. Pierre Huyghe wanted to execute a project to be called ‘The Family Film Series’. He planned to reprogramme an abandoned small-town cinema to show the residents’ home movies continuously. As he explained, he was ‘doing that in a small city, so that everybody would show up in each other’s films, the neighbour in the background, a co-presence and collective auto-portrait of a town’.

It is my great unrealised project to curate a big exhibition of all the unrealised projects that I have archived since 1991.
7 November
1975 - XX XX
XXXX

Imagined Time
The 21st century

Imagined Location
In situ
7 NOVEMBER 1975 - XXX XXX

AFTER MY DEATH THE SKELETAL REMAINS OF MY BODY WILL BE PRESERVED AND PLACED IN THE COLLECTION OF A MUSEUM WHERE IT WOULD BE PERIODICALLY BROUGHT OUT AND INSTALLED IN THE SPACE OF A PUBLIC GALLERY WITH MY LEFT ARM EXTENDED OUTWARDS AND LEFT HAND PRESSED AGAINST THE WALL AND MY RIGHT ARM ANGLED OUTWARDS AND RIGHT HAND RESTING ON MY HIP AND THE BALANCE OF MY BODY LEANING ON MY LEFT LEG.
Conceptual Monument

Imagined Time
Any time
The monument is an imagined social reality, a Utopian system based on a real and specific context

Imagined Location
City of Leipzig
A Monument to the Peaceful Revolution of 1989
LEIPZIGER FREIHEITS- UND EINHEITSDENKMAL
CONCEPTUAL MONUMENT

1. Das Denkmal ist immateriell.


4. Das Geld für die Realisierung des Denkmals steht den Leipzigrern zur freien Verfügung.

The budget for the competition and construction was 6 million euros. In preparation of his project Santiago Sierra met key representatives of the Leipzig revolution from 1989. His proposal was excluded from the competition due to its immaterial character.

Translation from German to English:

MONUMENT IN LEIPZIG TO LIBERTY AND UNITY

1. The monument will be immaterial.
2. The wilhelm leuschner square will be declared an extraterritorial area. No authority will be valid there.
3. The people of leipzig will use and administer the square in a communal way.
4. The people of leipzig will have free use of the money for the execution of the monument.
APPENDIX

zu 1.
Der Wilhelm-Leuschner-Platz bleibt baulich unverändert. Das Denkmal ist kein Objekt und kein gestalteter Platz. Es ist ein konzeptionelles Werk, das eine soziale Realität schafft.

zu 2.

zu 3.

zu 4.
Die zur Verfügung stehende Summe wird von den Auslobern nach Ende des Wettbewerbsverfahrens veröffentlicht und kann für jedes Vorhaben verwendet werden, zu dem sich die Leipziger künftig entschlossen.

APPENDIX

To point 1.
The wilhem leuschner square will not be modified architecturally. The monument will not be any object nor will it mean the remodeling of the square. It will be a conceptual work that will create a social reality.

To point 2.
All legal systems must be permanently suspended in the vicinity of the square. The leipzig city council, the regional parliament of saxony and the german parliament will renounce, via judicial statements and irrevocably, the exercise of all of their territorial powers. The wilhelm leuschner square will belong to the people of leipzig.

To point 3.
In the future, the people of leipzig will decide jointly on all matters concerning the square. They will decide how this will be done.

To point 4.
The amount available will be published by the bidders after a competition and can be used for any project on which the people of leipzig may decide in the future.
Homo Fabricatus
series

Imagined Time
1917

Imagined Location
Hyderabad, Sindh
Creativity and technē, the crafting of the world, as well as the exploration of scientific, technological, and industrial realms, are too often viewed solely from the perspective of hard divides: between the past and the present, the developed and the developing world, access to formal knowledge and locally acquired expertise, and capital-intensive ventures and those without access to such plentitude. But creativity in the fashioning and world-building of a habitat is neither limited to the present nor confined to a specific location, as evidenced in Ismail al-Jazari’s *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices* (1206 CE) and other studies of science and technology from diverse historical and geographic locales.

Creativity in the technological manipulation of materiality unfolds today in many unexpected places, such as in the informal realms of South Asia, sometimes notated by terms like *jugaar*. The term connotes the sense of finding imaginative ways around poor infrastructures and capital-starved blockages to contribute towards the persistence of life. It foregrounds creativity in a site where the public sphere is not fully constituted along Western norms, citizenship, and belonging, the socius is persistently riven with hierarchy and informality of labour and living, and the relations between aesthetics and materiality are demarcated along other trajectories of material, ethical, and social value.

The *Homo Fabricatus* series cognises how each era and location is freighted with the potential for change, creating movements and ruptures away from stasis and towards an anticipatory future. The *Homo Fabricatus* works layer scientific and technological documents of the near and distant past with evidence of medium-scale industrial production from the global South that is often unrecognised and rendered invisible under the high noon of transnational globalisation.
Lines of Force and Equipotential Surfaces in a diametral section of a spherical surface in which the superficial density is a harmonic of the first degree.
Spherical Harmonic of the third degree.

i = 3, s = 1.
Untitled

Imagined Time
1980s–present

Imagined Location
Cyberspace/Globally
Here I conceptualise an alternative to the World Wide Web, in which information is cited and hyperlinked—offering clear paths for understanding sources and lineage of thought. Responding to the term ‘post-truth’, which highlights the lack of primacy placed on objective facts, the project posits a reality where it is more difficult to disseminate falsehood and opinion as fact. Drawing inspiration from such models as Ted Nelson’s Project Xanadu and Transcopyright, within this model, information cannot be taken out of context and is immediately hyperlinked to its source. All data is stored and does not allow for deletions. As a result, clear time frames can be established for shared information and cannot be altered after publication, merely elaborated upon. For all the utopic aspiration offered by this model, it removes much of the freedom, anonymity, and creativity offered in our current framework of the Internet. Taking advantage of the transdimensional proposition of *Present Elsewhere*, this project will map two timelines: the one we live in and another that implements this alternative navigational framework. This will establish how the redrafting of digital space comes to affect physical space and the manner in which information is shared and understood.
Artist
Berlin, Germany
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

Untitled

Imagined Time
1970

Imagined Location
Cowra, New South Wales, Australia
In and Out of Dhola

Imagined Time
Moving from present into past (through eons) and vice versa

Imagined Location
Multiple locations
In and Out of ‘Dhola’

I propose to work with dholas of war (partly because I’m interested in song and music) set during the colonial times (as contrary to war histories and songs written by authorities that evoke gallantry) because these dholas evoke peoples’ history where the subaltern speak. I choose this form that is sung and that recalls various times and histories in the same space. From a mythical character Kali (that itself stands for time, destruction and renewal simultaneously) to a Muslim Lohar Nizam, from the ancient deserts to the jungles of the riverside, from rebels to ‘Barkalli’ (Captain Berkley). Now within this song narration of lamentation, the audience experiences these layers of characters and histories through a series of virtually interactive projections. Hence dholas form the content and also provide the context of the work.

The multichannel all-encompassing video projections show footages of masses from various sources (that would mean the varying nature of footages spanning over vast times and spaces from past to present, from documentation to feature film sources) like processions, protests, weddings, political rallies or speeches, audiences (with their own sound) intercepted by absolute vacant spaces like deserts, empty halls, barren landscapes (when dhola, the song, would play). The audience (or individuals experiencing this) becomes part of these moments of vacant spaces through Augmented Reality (that would come through collaboration).

This is juxtaposing or alternating moments of experiences of the power of the system with moments of the subaltern’s lament through dhola, at which point the individual experiencing the work becomes part of the visuals—that is, the work itself.

The dholas are history bypassed by official history—or do they form a part of unconscious history? I propose to explore ways to experience history as witnesses, spectators or distracting intruders through fiction and to walk into this space of song(s), moving between histories, as various times are evoked in this lament of love.
1 Dhola is an old form of folk poetry from the Southern Punjab. It originated in a cattle-rearing tribal society (they were listed as criminals by the British colonial administration). Dhola is named after a popular mythical lover Dhola. Dhola was originally a love ballad and love still is the theme of dhola. But in colonial times, the love narrative diverted itself into an account of resistance to and subversion of oppressive colonial rule and its supportive local propertied classes. Dhola is composed in rhymed prose and is sung as a lament. The lament form is perhaps meant to record the pain experienced in moulding a love song into a war song, which was the demand of history. Resistance to oppression was perhaps experienced as an act of love or as a desperate effort to save the freedom which made love possible.

2 Kaal originally signifies time. But here as an inaugurator of dhola, Kaal is a female bent on violent destruction of the present world. Her urge is instinctive hunger for annihilating the present order and its creations. Some interpretations of dholas see in Kaal the undying defiance of patriarchal civilisation deeply entrenched in the female subconscious. The husband of Kaal is a former Rishi eliminated by the Devtas from their staff because of his intractable instinct for intrigue and conspiracy. Naarad thus embodies the formally disowned but historically entrenched mechanisms of the existing socioeconomic order. Kaal skilfully manipulates her husband to initiate the process of destruction. The invocation, apparently a mere formal connection, is deeply connected in a multidimensional way with what the dhola delineates.

3 Nizam was a village ironsmith who organised a group of village menial workers who engaged themselves in a chain of disruptive actions against the rich classes, from looting money from the rich to organising a long-term guerrilla resistance against the swiftly spreading colonial rule in the Punjab in the middle of the 19th century. The riches snatched from the rich were also distributed among the very poor in order to encourage them to join the battle for freedom.

4 Captain Berkley was the commander of the British Army unit that was sent to suppress the rebellion of Ahmed Khan Kharal, the famous peasant leader of Southern Punjab in the 19th century.
London

Imagined Time
Two periods; 1793/4 & 1993/4

Imagined Location
Cyberspace/ Globally
“Everything profound loves the mask.”
–Friedrich Nietzsche

“What constitutes pretense is that, in the end, you don’t know whether it’s pretense or not.”
–Jacques Lacan

“We were the first that ever burst into that silent sea”
–Samuel Taylor Coleridge
That Silent Sea
Introduction

In the winter of 1793, the English poets Samuel Coleridge Taylor and Robert Southey devised a plan to establish an ‘egalitarian community’ of a new kind.

The utopian scheme involved setting up of a ‘vital materialist’ community ‘elsewhere’, ‘outside’ of Britain, in which there would be ‘equal and level government for all’, for human and non-human alike.

In this elsewhere, ‘a final reckoning’ was to be unfurled and subsequently dramatised into becoming, at the core of which would be a re-interrogating of the hierarchy of beings and things.

Synopsis: A project on a secret, inter-dimensional history of the object, using the found diaries of John Akomfrah, inhabitant of the Parallel Utopia Pantisocracy (Number Seventeen).
To that end, and—as the writings of Samuel Coleridge spelt out—this community of becoming would be structured along the lines of two key principles: ‘Pantisocracy’ (government by all) and ‘Aspheterism’ (general ownership of property).

In the autumn of 1794, the two friends set sail with a community of followers and friends for this new place. They were never heard from again.

The surviving correspondence between the two men suggests that the journey in question may have been of the more astral than physical variety. Or perhaps a combination of them both.

Two centuries after that fateful journey, a diary is found in the forests of Suriname, which suggests that the combination was closer to the truth. Part science fiction allegory, part imagined social history, part creation myth, The Diaries Of Pantisocracy is a project based on entries from those diaries.
The diary began with this entry:

“All great things must first wear terrifying and monstrous masks,” Friedrich Nietzsche once said, “in order to inscribe themselves on the hearts of humanity. My task in these entries is to unearth some of these masks in these lands.”

**Objects, Ontology, and Causality**

Diary Entry No 59:
‘We called it ‘The Beast’ on most days. It has been there for as long as I can remember, hanging upside down over the edge of the mountains, forever engaged in what the elders called the war of signs.’
Diary Entry No 62:
‘There was a time, the elders said, on days of ‘the Special Moments’ when The Beast-along with, The Others—would come down to spend time with them in ‘the place of bliss’. The Beast rarely spoke, they said, but its favourite words when it did were ‘ontology’ and ‘causality’. No one knew what those words meant for a very long time.

“Nature loves to hide”
–Heraclitus

MAGIC BIRTH

Diary Entry No 79:
I saw her in the dreaming room yesterday. She was standing on a porch, holding onto one of The Others as it administered what my mother once called ‘the disenchantment of daily discouragement’. Her favourite word was ‘uncanny’, she also once told me.

Diary Entry No 95:
Her younger self came to the dreaming room last night and I am beginning to understand why. Every time she comes to me, I think I see the moment of all our shame, that ‘terrible family stain’. She was standing in front of the old learning room.
I discovered ‘our shame’ in that same learning room decades later, in front of the whole learning group. On the way home that day, one word reverberated over and over in my head: entelechy.

Diary Entry No 105:
I saw her in the dreaming room last night. An old man is standing next to her, taunting her with one of The Others.

It’s the moment just after her disgrace, the moment when she confessed to a friend that she had, as she said, ‘eloped with time’ to visit ‘The Forbidden Place’; she had used Porthole Fifty Nine to visit The Old Place. She seemed to lose her spirit when she returned, as if what she saw in The Old Place ate something inside her, something precious and innocent.
Diary Entry No 105:
Many of The Others were present, sitting on the edge of the porthole when she returned from The Old Place. As they sat there, watching her stand on the edge, they knew she had returned with ‘unspeakable news’. So they began to interrogate her.

Diary Entry No 106:
They sat with her over many seasons, daring and willing her to speak. She resisted for many seasons, but on the Eighth Winter, just as the waters came, they finally broke her spirit and she spoke to them.
Diary Entry No 110:

The Others were alarmed by what she claimed she saw in The Old Place. She met their elders in a large place and they spoke to her solemnly. The Others were not free, they said, not one of us. They were free to hang on ceilings, to be next to walls, to be a gateway to a world she didn’t understand: ‘outside’. But they were not free, she was told.

They had no ‘ontology’, The Elders said to her. Their ‘task’ was to service. That’s when our shame came. For eight seasons she spoke only to The Others.
Borges & I

Imagined Time

Imagined Location
Buenos Aires, Tokyo, Austin, New Orleans, Brownsville, London, New York
In 1960, Jorge Luis Borges wrote the story, ‘Borges y Yo’, an essay about the disconcerting separation of the public author from himself. My fictional essay, ‘Borges & I’—a salute and narrative parody of Borges’s original—contemplates the intersection of three seminal writers of the same period whose creative work and thinking helped to shape the imagination of that era: Jorge Luis Borges, Américo Paredes, and John Lennon. The ‘I’ of my essay is the floating figure of the women of Japanese descent who married each of these men: Maria Kodama, Amelia Nagamine, and Yoko Ono. Utilising the metaphors of space, time, and history associated with Borges, Paredes, and Lennon, this narrative explores the historic and literary associations that connect these cultural producers to Japan and the post-war.

I propose an installation that replicates Borges’s idea of the labyrinthine oriental garden as imagined in his story, ‘Garden of the Forking Paths’, while also playing with Paredes’s idea of the ‘borderlands’ and Lennon’s fascination with Lewis Carroll’s *Wonderland* (1865) and *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). This labyrinthine garden may utilise holographic projections, video, audio, and photographic media as well as sculptural work. Media may variously replicate and merge images and sound materials associated with Borges, Paredes, and Lennon, but also with Japan, the Pacific war, the post-war, and the turbulent 1960s–1970s as played out in the Americas. Actors and dancers may also occupy the garden, wandering as characters, dancers, singers, and interlocutors. Visitors to the garden may be equipped with earphones and controllers shaped in the form of plastic guns with laser pointers that can activate media and sculptural movement. My fictional essay, ‘Borges & I’, follows:
Borges & I

The other one, the one called María Kodama, is the one things happen to. Over the years, I have watched her through our looking glass, her dark straight hair—cut precisely at shoulder length—turns white, her youthful features mature. And yet I believe her to contain the same dewy innocence and singularity of elegant strangeness in a sea of sameness as on the day she first met, in Buenos Aires, Jorge Luis Borges in the musty confines of the university. For María, perhaps that was a moment of complete clarity, the centre of the infinite garden, at which she made a choice or the beginning of a choice. I am not sure how one at the young age of sixteen, as sure of ourselves as we felt, can make such choices. For myself, I cannot say it was the attraction of youth to age, but rather youth to knowledge, a hunger planted and fed by the same garden. How I wanted to remain with María in that garden dedicated and extending to our deepest ancestors, but she managed to escape down another path, or at least she thought she had left me behind. Perhaps she had paused to notice my bewilderment, I cannot say. I saw her confident resolve, the flounce of her skirt and hair toss away from me.

From that moment, I might catch glimpses of María, always with Borges, in newssprint, her image recalled on the stage of some international honourary degree or prestigious award or in a photograph. Though invisible, I was at times not far away. As I have said, the garden was infinite, mapped across the atlas, and so we traveled. In Venice, I saw the swoop of pigeons swirl around her passage across the vast piazza of San Marco. I watched her rise in a hot air balloon over California vineyards. In the Louvre, I too shed tears on the Daru steps at the sight of the Winged Victory of Samothrace. I saw her pet the tremendous bodies of striped tigers. Of course, these events were meant for Borges, and the meaning of being there at his side must be personal to María. She was to know the shape of constant companionship, the day-to-day routine and needs of a blind man, the acute precision of his aural memory.
along with the gaffes of eating and hygiene that annoy the sighted and plague the sightless. This was companionship that must fully anticipate the needs of Borges. The work of any companionship cannot be known fully by others. Amanuensis, scribe, secretary, nurse, cook, guide, mother, daughter, caretaker, muse, wife, lover, but principally, gardener. Gardener in the labyrinthine landscape belonging only to Borges. Thus was my invisibility transposed upon a mirror, reluctantly watchful, envious though safely at the wavering distance of the interpreting eye to its story.

But one day our forking paths would meet at the divine birthplace of Nihon, our feet crunching in unison over the pebbled gravel before the great temples of Izumo. Borges marked this mythic centre calling upon the gods in a swirl of cherry blossoms, their petals falling about him in Basho’s seventeen syllables. What is the garden’s atlas to the blind? A geography without vistas, perspective determined by time travel, a folded and reversible map. Yet even the colourblind crave to see the colour of a body’s journey, to divine meaning from fascination, even if translated again and again over centuries and multiple languages, becoming if only a whisper, an ideogram splashed across skin. The skin may be accusatory, but like paper, it receives and reflects its text, memory, and knowing to be interpreted by the reader. So Sei Shōnagon’s deft brush thrusts from a silken sleeve through eight centuries to lick the ear of Borges. Thus he would pronounce the name of María, how many mornings and seas, how many oriental and occidental gardens, his Shōnagon, her Genji, his Beatrice, her Virgil, his little stone on a board of chess.

Sei Shōnagon lifted her head from her pillow and spoke in perfect Spanish: A la otra, a Amelia Nagamine, es a quien le ocurren las cosas. In the book of things that occur to young women, there might have been, had Amelia kept such a notebook, a notation about a mexicano in the uniform of the American Army, a journalist for the Stars and Stripes, who covered the Tokyo war crimes trials. Instead it was the journalist and writer, Américo Paredes, who kept his notebook, musing over the beautiful features of a japonesa born in Uruguay who also spoke the educated Spanish of a diplomat. Who
among the Puerto Rican GIs treated by the Red Cross, in those years of Japan’s occupation, followed by a war in Korea, had not fallen in love with Amelia? But it was to Américo, an older though still young man of charm and resolve, to whom Amelia tied her future. And from that moment, I might catch glimpses of Amelia, for the next 50 years always at the side of Américo.

The world of Américo was not a forking garden but a contested borderland experienced in wide swaths: the Tex-Mex border, the American occupation of a war-torn Japan, a Greater Mexico, later perhaps the mythic atlas named Aztlán. The world known to Américo was a rebellious world of men in endless war, crimes committed by enemy and ally, survival by cunning and happenstance. It would seem that Amelia remained fixed at the center of Américo’s borderland in Austin, Texas, where she raised her children and kept a modest household and supported her husband’s scholarly ambitions. No doubt her gracious ways domesticated this Chicano, compressing Américo’s passionate anger beneath a genteel veneer. But by the time Américo Paredes was discovered to be the godfather of Chicano Studies, Amelia had discovered a borderland of her own.

Perhaps her borderland began in the four walking blocks between the university and the Lone Star State capitol, its dome looming over the Austin landscape, where Amelia beat a mother’s fury at the doors of political power. Over time, Amelia occupied the borderland radiating around the Austin State School for the disabled and handicapped, the difficult and nearly impossible terrain of access to independent living and quality of life. I followed but could never fully imagine Amelia’s meticulous caretaking, her persistent and obsessive advocacy, the meaning of her life becoming the body and the brains of a child who could not do or act for herself. But if not the mother, then who? And what of the continuing post-wars that Amelia had also witnessed, the amputated and disfigured lives of veterans and civilians, and if Americans, joined to plead the justice of the 14th Amendment: the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Education of All Handicapped Children’s Act of 1975, the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act of 1980, the Americans with
Disabilities Act of 1990. I saw her there at every turn, whether as
commissioned community member or spokesperson or letter-writer
or petitioner at the grassroots. But I guess that Amelia was too busy
to keep any lists.

So Amelia and Américo shared lives across separate though
overlapping borderlands, and perhaps over the long years, each
chafed at the obsession of the other, the understood refusal of
either to become completely converted to the concerns of the other.
I knew this sentiment of pride of partnership, public standing side-
by-side, private guilt and jealousy, but finally death silences the
frailties of illness, blesses loyalty, forgets.

Some believe that Américo Paredes, desperately lonely in the
borderlands of death, called his beloved wife Amelia from his grave
and that she obediently followed him only two months later. But
the border’s paths are mysterious, and Amelia and I took the bus
out of Austin, headed down the obligatory border, and tossed cherry
blossoms into the Rio Grande all the way to Brownsville, pursued
by corridos, haunted by Américo’s serenade, fierce and tender.
Japonesa, japonesa, the song crooned after us. Que sonriéis tu
dolor, en tus brazos orientales mitigaré mi destierro. Then from
Brownsville, we caught a boat to New Orleans. On a dappled spring
morning several Wednesdays after the turmoil of Mardi Gras, we met
María with Borges at the Café du Monde, sipping café and chicory,
teeth tearing the doughy skin of sweet beignets, lips and chins
dusted in powdered sugar. Not until that moment was Américo’s
Tokio guitar replaced by the insistent sax interlude of King Curtis,
John Lennon driving his lyrics, you gotta live, you gotta love, you
gotta be somebody, you gotta shove, it’s really hard.

Amelia’s tender eyes then turned to me, smiled old pain. A la otra,
she began, la otra called Yoko Ono, is the one things happen to. Our
minds wander back to Tokyo, precisely firebombed; we emerged
from shelter and rural escape and remember the bewildered face
of a young girl, yet a child of 12 years, following her belongings in
a wheelbarrow, the precarious future to be forged out of rubble.
and defeat. Twenty years—prestigious schooling, two marriages, and an artistic career attached variously to John Cage and Andy Warhol—later, I stood with her at the foot of a ladder in a gallery in London, watching a wealthy Beatle from Liverpool climb its rungs, awkwardly balanced at the top to decipher a message through our magnifying glass: YES. I suppose that privilege comes back from war with fierce defiance, grabs a fistful of burnt earth, an act of reclamation, but in Yoko’s fist, a declaration of freedom. Still, that earth could be churned back eight centuries; thus a *Grapefruit* could have the acidic taste and shape of a pillow book of instructions. The conceptual MAP PIECE read, *Draw a map to get lost*. And so we did. Then, WALK PIECE: *Stir inside your brains with a penis until things are mixed well*. *Take a walk*. And so we did.

I followed Yoko into her world made famous by John Lennon, their conceptual country of peace: Nutopia, without land, boundaries, or passports, and if laws, only cosmic. I hung around like one more groupie in their New York embassy in the Dakota, claiming diplomatic immunity. I lived inside the looking glass ballad of John and Yoko for there was nothing about the intimacy of their lives that was not made public. Two virgins displayed in full frontal nudity. Honeymoon bed-in in a sea of white sheets to give peace a chance. Among the guests: Timothy Leary, Tommy Smothers, Hari Krishnas, a delegation of the blind. West met East in the Plastic Ono Band, the oriental riff chasing the revelatory experience of first sight: *oh my love, everything is clearer in our world*. Thus John Lennon would call her name, *Oh Yoko, oh Yoko, my love will turn you on*.

In the public’s mania recycling their every movement, Lennon’s attachment to Yoko would seem an obsessive submission to his oriental soul mate, his continuing pursuit of answers, fascinations eventually abandoned at the foot of Sergeant Pepper, Maharishi, and primal screaming. So perhaps it was true that he had met his match, the knowledge of fatherhood and feminism in which he recreated himself as house husband, bread maker, caretaker. This was his enlightenment, his peaceful revolution. Who then had submitted to whom? Meanwhile, I accompanied Yoko daily from
the Dakota to work, to run the business of being John Lennon and Yoko Ono, unknowingly preparing for the burden of legacy, money, and memory.

And in opposing seasons in Buenos Aires, María finally opened Borges’s library to Las Madres de Plaza de Mayo, but having embraced order for so many years, perhaps it was too late.

With his pistol in my hand, I pulled the trigger. I do not know if the man who fell was an elderly man in his eighties or a younger man half that age. I do not know if he was a learned Sinologist or a Mexican folklorist or a lyricist of Jabberwocky. I do not know if he could finally see me through his blindness, through the borders, the utopia of his mind. It was his pistol and his pop. The myopic splinter of spectacles. My primal scream caged and yellowed by a judgmental media.

I do not know which of us has written this page.
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Bibliography:

Special thanks:
Frank Gravier
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Earl Jackson
Future Past
Perfect

Imagined Time
Now

Imagined Location
In transit
sononda is the first part of the short film series future past perfect and was originally recorded in 2006. The series, whose single fragments are supposed to be parts of a larger scale film project, is designed as a row of conceptually independent movies that document Nicolai’s focus of interest on the respective year of origin and also builds up on the results of the movie(s) before.

Although sononda’s visual quality seems artificial at times, it was shot in a natural environment. The focus is directed on the sculptural quality of light. The correspondence of both music—with its low frequency modulations and merging soundscapes—and light play on the curved surfaces of the sculptural stone formations to create an ever-changing atmosphere of concrete and abstract appearances.
**wolken**

2013

Pigment print on paper
(series of 8)
38 x 55.4 cm each
Edition of 3

Physically, clouds consist of an accumulation of extremely fine drops of water or ice crystals. Within a complex interaction of various climatic factors they can take on a great variety of forms, which appear unstable and diffuse. Such non-linear dynamic systems are the research subject of the chaos theory that has emerged from weather research and the mathematical analysis of price developments. In the *wolken* photographs, taken from a height of 9000m, the entities disengage from their subject. The object can no longer be clearly discerned, the appearance of the surface is reminiscent of skin or water surfaces. The photographs reveal resemblances to both micro and macro structures.
vortex
2017

Pigment print on paper
(series of 16)
38 x 55.4 cm each
Edition of 3
I... am from Africa

Imagined Time
1100, 1375, 1828, 1986

Imagined Location
Janjira, Timbuctoo
St. Petersburg, Alicante
"I... am from Africa, of the highest nobility there, was born in the town of Logon in the domain of my father, who besides had under him two other towns"
am from Africa, of the highest nobility there, was born in the town of Logon in the
aim of my father, who besides had under him two other towns”

len from the shores of Africa...

1-117, Leonora, I tear myself away from this letter as if from your embraces; good-bye, be
y.... and think sometimes of a poor negro, of your faithful Ibrahim.

Other times, I, tired slave, have dreamed of secret flight to a distant shrine of love and pure delight.

At that moment we realized, they were 

We heard a noise coming from somewhere, like barking

We all started crying. One told us to

deep into our village the people of Fez, of Numidia, of the land of the

cks, merchants, notables, students or ulama; they each bring us a piece of gold, or a

ent, a book to read or copy, or perhaps only a story, an anecdote, a word; thus, with

passing of the caravans we accumulate riches and knowledge, in the shelter of these

cessible mountains which we share with the eagles, the crows and the lions, our

companions in dignity.”

over my mind when I think of my sisters

“I am not afraid of them. Why can’t the

idah

Slave raiding

Jukun

Slave raiding

Tropical

Fernando

Slave raiding

Princeps

0 200 400 600 km

0 400 miles

87

One who comes to question himself has cared for mankind.
Stand, Sit, Fall
Three movements in space and time

Imagined Time
1966, 2015, 2016

Imagined Location
Junction City, Wisconsin
Michigan City, Indiana
Ann Arbor, Michigan
Three recent moments in my life experiences within specific intervals and spaces upset my everyday notions of time passage. I am not ‘at peace’ with these episodes or the people present.

One man stands, another sits, a third man falls. In these settings—both everyday and extreme—I conceive each man as the author of that instant even as he is at the mercy of the moment, his memories, and his imaginings. Actors in space and time, they have agency even as they simultaneously have none.

It is proposed that the author-artist revisit the sites of these struggles, conduct a 24-hour reading of related texts at each location, and create a culminating daylong event for the show’s opening.

The returns and engagements—including one to my childhood home of 50 years ago—bring with them responsibilities to remember and reconsider the persons living in the moments (then and now), the author-artist’s connections to the people, place, and time, and the relevance of location displacements and time distortions in our lives. I wonder, is it possible to only be ‘here’? Are we always both ‘present’ and ‘elsewhere’?

* * *

**SCENE 1: A country road, two miles west of Junction City, Wisconsin (400 kilometres north-northwest of Chicago); 1966 and August 2016.**

Thinking of this place where I was born in 1953, I remember with clarity, and proceed with confidence. Re-situating myself on the farm 50 years ago, circa 1966, I see my parents—neither of whom attended school beyond ninth grade—living lives with their ‘heads down’, concerned with now, working hard today, somewhat optimistic but absolutely realistic about the moment directly in front of them. Mom and Dad did not glorify farm life; there was no romance here. More hard work was the answer to most, if not all, questions.

Our homestead was comprised of two main structures (two-storey farmhouse and barn) separated by 50 metres of driveway and lawn.
Multiple small structures were attached to the main buildings (two-stall garage fastened to house, milk house, silo room, two concrete silos, and horse barn alongside the main barn), a nearby two-bay shed for small equipment and oats storage, and additional small autonomous structures (pump house over the well, chicken coop, corn crib, and shed for large machine storage).

The last child by a number of years, with parents and siblings too busy, I was alone with my imaginings and activities. Shooting basketballs in the driveway, playing football in the lawn (picturing teammates and oppositions), trimming trees (at my mom’s insistence), pulling eggs from beneath pecking chickens, harvesting cucumbers for a small income (and savings for college), teasing wild kittens in the barn’s hay loft, playing in the open water tank where cows drank, upstairs in my bedroom with books and radio, driving tractors while pulling wagons, herding cattle in the barnyard, climbing our 15-metre-tall television mast. I remember these moments clearly. They are inscribed not only on my mind, but gave, and give, purpose to my life, then and now.

In 2016, I returned. Decades had passed since I gave these country roads my attention. What I once knew with certainty was now difficult to navigate: untended vegetation obscured views and orientation, buildings alternated unpredictably between abandonment and new occupants, roads and landmarks became confused with each other. I knew that the landscape one-half kilometre south of our farm would be different, where US Highway 10 tracks east-west through the central part of Wisconsin. It was recently upgraded from a two-lane road to a four-lane freeway that bypasses the small towns that punctuate what is now known as ‘old 10’.

I approach from the north, drive past the site of the demolished and disappeared one-room country schoolhouse where I attended first grade, past the neighbours’ farmsteads I recognise by family names—Brown, Tryba, Strzechowski, Bulgrin, Patoka, Plante, and Becker. I stop my pickup truck, get out and take in the new highway to the south, absorb how its construction—this ‘progress’—demanded significant changes in the landscape: a valley where I played now gone; houses, barns, and sheds of former neighbours
demolished; playmates and their parents departed. I look to the right and take in a derelict farmstead: worn house, two garages with collapsed roofs, an abandoned barn, dead trees of a broken orchard, weeds, and overgrown trees overpower what once was a lawn.

Years pass, conflate. Eyes blink. I look away, look back, look away, look back. The thought vision behind me is not, it cannot be, the physical vision before me. Or is it? Or isn’t it? My mind recalibrates as it shifts through memories, images. Through elsewheres.

Ten seconds into the present, I realise: this is our small farm.

Time jump cuts backwards to a then, forward to a now, back to other thens, forward to uncertain nows. The trees that Mom made me trim now unrecognisable with decades of growth. The upstairs bedrooms where I lived still there but empty, or occupied and filled with the stuff of another who has no knowledge of me, our family, and really, no need to know. What I knew challenges the reminders that remain.

The present becomes a moment to be contested, maybe even defeated. It can’t be true. I don’t disagree with the past; my issues are with the present.

For example, as I type this, I remember thinking there were two collapsed roofs, but I cannot believe that the garage attached to the house—as a child I witnessed its solid construction by my Dad, my brother, cousin Elmer, and neighbour Oscar—has a collapsed roof. It doesn’t register with me; I know better. But there were only two garages standing, so, it must be that it has fallen. I think both silos were still there, but remember wondering if one of them had been torn down. It’s likely the TV antenna mast was still there, but I’m not confident in my belief. I’m not sure that the pump house stands by the road; I don’t recall looking for it. Same for the chicken coop. I think the horse barn was gone, maybe I cannot resolve that I did not recognise this place that is the home of all my homes. In not recognising the place, I see that what I do not recognise is my own life.
Two recent scenes, in which others are the central actors, contribute to my uncertainties regarding both past and present, in the here and elsewhere.

**SCENE 2: Indiana Department of Corrections Maximum Security Prison Cellblock, Michigan City, Indiana (100 kilometres east of Chicago); October 2016.**

The site of the state’s death row and execution chamber, 2,200 men are imprisoned here. We are told that one half will never leave; they will die while incarcerated because of their lengthy sentences.

I see a man sitting in a prison cell for the remainder of his life. Big routines imposed by outside forces shape the small moments he maintains, day after day after day in his pen. I watch him for several minutes; it could be a lifetime. On this journey through the decades that await, he is confined to a two-metre by three-metre room, his body stationary, efficient, focused on the smooth and continuous passage of time. He does not move, he will not move, he knows this as absolute certainty. But certainly past and future must engulf him, must pull him into their gravitational fields.

I will see this man for the remainder of my life, sitting in his cage, headphones on, game controller in hand, attention on the small television, passing time. Always in place, always passing time.

**SCENE 3: Huron Towers apartments, Ann Arbor, Michigan (400 kilometres east of Chicago); May 2015.**

Built in 1960, the development is across the street from the north campus of the University of Michigan. This residential complex is comprised of twin towers 12 floors in height and separated by a concrete plaza set atop a three-level parking garage. The buildings feature floor-to-ceiling glass curtain walls to maximise views of the Huron River valley. Balconies are enclosed with high railings made of solid precast panels with exposed aggregate.
On May 1, 2015 a third man—Bob, my 80-year-old mentor—climbs the balcony’s railing and free falls, accelerating at 9.8 metres per second squared, his body (most likely his head, generally speaking people don’t attempt suicide, they commit suicide) implants on the concrete plaza 2.67 seconds later, his lived life over. But gravity is only one force present. Is his final journey one that is calm and uninterrupted, or is it deformed and warped by thoughts, doubts, and new awarenesses? Does time extend, do eight decades of life ‘flash’ before him in less than three seconds? Does his younger brother and best friend Jon (who died suddenly a few months earlier) reappear? The only person mentioned in his suicide note is wife Judy; does she appear as he falls? Is a final breath taken? Is relief felt? Is this an ultimate meditation? Always concerned with aesthetics and performance, does Bob attend to his body’s position? Did a flying bird disrupt his concentration? Was he concentrating?

True story: several days after the suicide, I study the pavement where his body landed. Where he died. Where his corpse lay. Two crows appear, fly above me, land near me, squawk at me. Depending on the myth one believes, crows are often associated with death transitions, doing their work as messengers between the worlds of the living and the dead. They occupy this void; crows have no sense of time, see into the past, present, and future. I sit there taking in the crows: Bob? Jon? I wonder if the two bird-brothers offer to me both ‘hello’ and ‘goodbye’. These days I imagine that my mentor, somewhere or sometime else, continues his timeless fall.

* * *

I need to go back. I need time to rethink these moments, my memories, and the present.

24-hour continuous readings will be conducted by the author-artist on-site of the three episodes: in the light (and dark) on the two-lane country road in central Wisconsin, outside the front gate of the maximum security prison in north Indiana, and at the base of the apartment complex in Michigan. A culminating 24-hour reading (with audience participation) will be held at the exhibition site, complemented by photos and videos from the earlier readings.
In recent years, I organised and participated in two such 24-hour structures. The first, conducted in 2012 at the Herron School of Art and Design in Indianapolis, Indiana was a movie festival featuring films related to social justice themes. The second, a 24-hour ‘Invisible Men and Women’ reading in 2013 with a colleague, hosted by Hanover College in southeastern Indiana, again related to social justice issues. The 24-hour format demands concentration (in every moment), obliterates memory (what was I reading eight hours ago?), and unplugs one from other realities (what happened in the world while I was away?). It’s a journey of slow decline, of stumbles, and of intensities brought about by exhaustion and the powerful words of others. I anticipate being asked to move from several of the locations by local authorities even as I envision standing motionless, maybe a small crowd gathering or maybe alone, a hat with LED light attached for night reading and a hat to block out the sun or rain, being hungry or meals in a cooler, searching for bathrooms, being there, being here, and being elsewhere.

In this, the method parallels interpretations of the three experiences.

‘Reading’ is defined here as: a piece of literature read aloud, a particular interpretation, a finding produced by a measuring instrument, an indication of a certain state of affairs, a text or other matter read or performed as a means to test its merits, and decoding.

Books will be the primary sources for the readings, complemented by articles, blog posts, song lyrics, movies, and building reviews (I am an architecture professor and architect). It is anticipated that visitors will hear and maybe listen, conversations will be held, and stories told about the men whose stories inspired the performances. The audience will be encouraged to offer their own readings, to engage the moment directly as to influence its trajectory.

A core group of readings will be shared at the four locations, even as each reading will include topics and texts specific to the sitting, standing, or falling man episodes (This listing should be considered as being in progress).
SHARED texts
- Baldwin, James, ‘A Talk to Teachers’
- Boggs, Grace Lee, The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century
- Lorentz, Hendrik, The Einstein Theory of Relativity: A Concise Statement
- The 14th Dalai Lama, The Art of Happiness: A Handbook for Living
- Hawking, Stephen, A Brief History of Time: From the Big Bang to Black Holes
- Calvino, Italo, Six Memos for the Next Millennium

SITTING MAN texts
- King, Martin Luther, Jr., ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’
- Mandela, Nelson, Long Walk to Freedom
- Mohandas, Gandhi K., The Story of My Experiments with Truth
- Thoreau, Henry David, ‘On Civil Disobedience’
- Thoreau, Henry David, Walden
- Solzhenitsyn, Alexander, One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich
- cummings, e.e., ‘The Enormous Room’
- Cleaver, Eldridge, Soul on Ice
- Mailer, Norman, The Executioner’s Song
- Clark, Wahida, Sleeping with the Enemy
- Abbott, Jack, The Belly of the Beast
- National Commission on the Disappearance of Persons, Nunca Mas
- Feitlowitz, Marguerite, A Lexicon of Terror: Argentina and the Legacies of Torture
- Stevenson, Bryan, Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption
- Alexander, Michelle, The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness
- Willingham, Brian, Soul of a
Consistent with the definitions of ‘reading’, these performances represent energies by the author-artist to better understand the moment and the men—to study them, to explain them, to gather data, to suggest my own state of mind, to determine which readings (and interpretations) make sense, and even to translate for myself what happened and happens.

Of course, this endeavour is autobiographical. It speaks of me, of my questions, of who I am and want to be. What I propose here I do for myself, for my most selfish self. My quest is to better understand myself through the exploration of the three most extreme time-space experiments of which I am aware. At its core are questions related to my advocacy for and my best practices of ‘being present’, ‘being mindful’, and ‘living in the moment’. I ask, fundamentally: how is living (and dying) different than I imagined? Why am I changed by these events and revelations? What should I do now?
I Kejime

Imagined Time
Near future and about a few decades ago

Imagined Location
Somewhere in Asia
Ikejime = Spinal cord spiking
It prevents early rigor development of a live fish for the purpose of maintaining freshness.

He is a victim wandering in the past. A few years ago in this place, he has lost son.
Like a shape-memory alloy, the present turns back to the past when frightened off.

by himself
blind
(sometime)

Past hand?
somebody's hand?
infant?
g-freshness. A wire uses shape-memory alloy for percussive stunning, something valuable, of shadow.

Time

memory
daily life

Memory wire

Pain

Victim

Past

nerve
On Kings, Films & Astral Nomads

Imagined Time & Location

Within the mind of the cosmos throughout different ages
Somewhere, woven within the fabric of the universe at an unmarked location imperceptible to the human race and their peculiar reptilian brains, King Amanullah Khan ponders his earthly reign during the 2nd decade of the 20th century in Afghanistan. He is asked to evaluate himself as an interplanetary being, to determine whether he is ready to join a special plane where Astral Nomads dwell. There he would join the great energetic body, becoming one with the All. However, this self-evaluation process requires that he converse with a crossover of consequential figures across many folds of time so that his spirit as a being and his performance as king are most thoroughly and objectively appraised. The King is further instructed to listen silently without justifying his decisions and actions during these conversations.

Alexander the Great is the first volunteer to offer his introspection for the King. He is particularly keen on discussing Amanullah’s choice to send a dozen artists to study art in a place later known as Germany. The great warrior asks, ‘Why not choose a place outside your own genetic makeup, where the artists could prosper more readily from their common linkages to local narratives?’

‘Japan, for example’, Alexander continues, ‘is a large body of thought that once lay somewhere between Neptune and Pluto. It is well predicted that its inhabitants will invent a refined heating system, a knowledge that is forever lost but first archived as a practice in the annals of Kabul Home Integration and Engineering University, 5th century AD; the system involves family members sitting together on fluffy electromagnetic floor mats and pillows around a large wooden table under which is placed a pot of hot coal. Large quilted comforters, generally colourful, sometimes translucent, are thrown over this table providing up to chest level coverage for the whole family to sit under what’s essentially a warm and cosy communal bliss. The offspring of these families eventually replace the burning
coal with their minds, which later baffle scientists everywhere. They somehow learn to radiate warmth by thinking about an overheated planet in an unknown galaxy called Khurasaan.

“Surely, you see how sending artists to Germany, is a grave mistake on your part? Given the bio-atmo-philoso-spheric make-up of that site, they will merely become farmers harvesting terrible rice that only mimics unreality. Upon their return, they managed to open great schools across what is known as the Global North, now entirely polluted by the production of the Global South for generations to come before, thereafter, and in-between.

“Eating bad rice also led to new waves of tribalism, spreading exotic rituals rightfully known as Minimalism. This of course is partially due to the freezing of Socialist Realist Monumental forests during the Ice Age, which, back then, led to Conceptual Art wildfires. We all know that lines, dots, and colour are the basis for reality, but where is the fantasy in that? Why else would banking strategists subject their analysts to think in Miniature grids, while plastic Surrealism is filling up oceans everywhere?”

King Amanullah is gravely distressed by this unexpected evaluation. At the height of his wisdom, he imagined his policies were exceptionally progressive. Yet here, at the gates of a new door, he is an infant—truly perceiving that for all that his great, short career allowed him to achieve, he did not know much about dancing after all. But why should Alexander, a conquering adventurer himself, a local Pathan, be allowed to lecture the King? He has always criticised Amanullah’s modernist reformations throughout the ages.

Perhaps a foreigner from an altogether different solar system, a woman of historical importance from the future, would be fairer in her evaluations. He tries to conjure Margaret Thatcher, but instead Bibi Khadija, famously known for her heroic role as Prophet Mohammed’s wise and wealthy wife, appears before him in the form of a verse: ‘If you want the opinion of a businesswoman, you might choose someone with a more pious reputation.’ Amanullah is taken
aback, but respectfully submits all his attention, aware that she has always inspired her husband’s followers through her unwavering support for his chosen path. The king wondered if she thought about the quasi-yogic postures in the prescribed daily prayers for Muslims. This had occurred to him on occasion while performing his own Namaaz in the Mughal Courts of India.

To the King’s surprise, Bibi Khadija’s feedback is also more critical than he had hoped. She tells him she is there to warn him about his terribly unavoidable predicament to become the first person to ever hold a film camera. And that his stubborn endeavour to document fiction through the moving image, will likely have him expelled from kingly ranks forever. By introducing film to society, you initiated a new exercise, which is as sacred and as old as the sun, yet as provocative as cave paintings will become one day.

‘Unleashing an army of filmmakers across all known planets marks the beginning of the end of globalisation. It is why we will not recognise folklore in the future and why everything is reduced to food, fashion, and fasting. Yet, the worst of all consequences is that airports everywhere will one day look and smell exactly alike!’

Having said what she came to say, Bibi Khadija quickly departs to make way for planet Uranus’s notorious doctors, Mulla Nasrudin and Joseph Beuys, co-owners of a secret medical practice registered as Sufi Fluxus Production in the city of Ramallah’s municipal library.

‘Bibi Khadija is right’, begins Mulla Nasrudin, ‘I usually cross the other side of the river by scolding someone for being on the wrong side of it, but now suddenly, I am asked to think about and explain everything! For a sensible man like me, brainstorming is always unbearable. Which is why I like to live in just one place. Because when people become accustomed to your charms, they take your wit along with them. That is how I have gained my fame across so many planes, geographies, and languages, proving my genius without much effort.’ ‘What Nasrudin is saying’, interjects Beuys, ‘is that filmmaking and residency programmes became
synonymous with righteous individualism. Constant questioning of one’s condition, as opposed to standing by one’s conviction, exemplifies a bird gone astray, forgetting to fly. It goes against the hidden order of the cosmos. It moves away from spiritual evaluation and is a negation of our animal idealism. But before I go on, my premonition is that you will likely meet Rostam, the champion of *Shahnama* the Book of Kings, soon. He is to reincarnate as a shaman in the Mexican–American frontier. Rostam already has had much experience working with ancient Assyrian psychotherapists to heal one of the gravest illnesses affecting all universal planes. The Mayan Calendar calls this illness stress, the Mohicans called it the disease for overthinkers. I am convinced that Muralists, when one day they learn how to paint emotion, will rid Homo sapiens off of this lurking condition.’ Nasrudin, who was listening intently up to this point abruptly interrupts Beuys’s monologue. ‘Let us get back to our evaluation here. Sending artists for residencies abroad and making films in my opinion are examples of sheer backwardness! Who is stupid enough to give up counting stars at night, a wonderfully relaxing occupation? Who will allow their household donkeys to be replaced by imperfectly reliable apps such as Waze for navigation?’

Here, Beuys interrupts Nasrudin to enter a lengthy discussion about the King’s actual list of merits. They are both particularly impressed by his abilities to raise an air force, build major dams, decree women to wear high-heeled shoes, and expel British Martians out of cyberspace, which initiated the loosening of the colonial grip throughout the whole Siberian and African continents.

Nasrudin and Beuys jointly agree again that Amanullah is overall a visionary, courageous, and just king. However, they dispute the methodology by which they could raise his scores so that he can indeed enter into the planes of Astral Nomads. They have mixed feelings about his readiness. Beuys feels what would be most impactful would be for the King to call on curators from Samarkand, Bukhara, Delhi, and Lisbon to stage an interplanetary Chinese opera. He argues that the emotional charge of this newly emerged self-expression could possibly purge the universe from all left-wing traumatic policies.
Nasrudin disagrees with such a plan. ‘This would be too easy, why bail out a deposed, exiled king? Recall that such a plan does not reverse the planetary shifts that were set in motion by his negligent actions. We must contemplate whether such actions are irreversible. Do you think planet Mars is not affected when we smoke Camels down here? So Amanullah must wake up to the sound of his faithful interference with destiny, resonating disharmony throughout Jahaan, perhaps for eons. For your information, the Queen of Sheba has recently offered a major grant for astrophysicists to study the effects of human action on black holes.

‘So the only way I can see the Heavenly Council of Youth making a case for our King to enter their non-entropic realm is for us to prove that humanity has not abolished selfishness altogether, that it is still a substance in our blood, and that it is, more or less, as essential as light is to speed.’ ‘I do not agree with your strange concepts’, Beuys responds, ‘but for the sake of having a resolution, I propose something you may concur with. Let the King commission a gathering of moons, a very large gathering that will stage a never-ending storytelling event. As we are now running out of food, I will tell you how this experiment actually turns out, since you were asleep throughout the event when it took place. Here is how it went down: Amanullah got up on stage and told a story, which was then retold again by one moon after another on the same stage. After thousands of moons retold the story, the pattern became clear. The story told was the same story, only slightly different; however, each time it was repeated, the story shifted very slightly to essentially become a new story. It is now an ongoing epic that can be told by all and claimed by all, for all. The experiment proved that difference is a real part of our cosmic essence. It is not an illusion, nor is it a myth perpetuated by our addiction to living inside the language of objects, and dreams of objectivity.’

‘I agree wholeheartedly’, replied Mulla Nasrudin. ‘Only I think you are a fool to assume that you can put order into perfectly workable chaos. I think it was wrong of you to cheat. You managed to use your know-how, the mind games you have always played, to tap
into the vast fields of fluid feelings everywhere. Because what are moons if not powerful receptors and reflectors of feelings? You manipulated them to interpret this grand storytelling exercise as one in which the storytellers were not simply invited to repeat the story as they heard it, but—as you suggested—to retell the story differently each time, just to prove your point. You have always despised the principle of Correspondence and now you think you have proven its nonexistence? Unless the King invites a committee of divine presences to restage and monitor the experiment, I will not accept you playing the lute your way! I refuse to participate in an event that is rigged! Here is my shortlist for committee members: Rabia Balkhi, Simón Bolívar, Robert Wilson, Nelson Mandela, and of course, Sergey Maslov, the first and last artist-cosmologist to successfully hack into the Astral Nomads planes in 1994.'

Unfortunately, Amanullah could not submit his self-evaluation documents to the Committee for Entry to the Planes of the Astral Nomads without the digital signatures of his two disputing consultants (you know who they are, so you may want to wipe all traces of their presence in whatever plane you are now roaming in as soon as possible. Thoroughly wipe their names off all books, magazines, catalogues, art works, diaries, albums, web servers, and the like to ensure that they are not assigned to you when you are ready for your self-evaluation some time in the coming past). The fact that King Amanullah could not submit his documents in time indicate that he is now traversing the atmosphere in search for yet another miraculous reincarnation, possibly as a new species and as part of a former planet he loved with many moons. He was delighted that his memory was not reset at the office of the Council for Re-Entry, which means that his spirit was left intact and that his actions—as troublesome as they had been—still ranked high enough on the scale to merit him being able to bring his experiences with him on his new journey.

As the great Sufi sages claim, having a bit of all of yourself is the best way to go into nothingness.

And so it begins...
Visionary Architecture of Hampi

Imagined Time
15th century, Vijayanagar Kingdom

Imagined Location
Hampi, Karnataka, India
**Visionary Architecture of Hampi**

The design is a visualisation of a mixed-use sky tower in Hampi, on the banks of the river Tungabhadra.

The tower is fantasized as a majestic ‘Gopuram’ housing all the various modern facilities which have roots buried in their traditional past. It is an amalgamation of today’s habitat typology with the meticulousness and aesthetics of the old. The conceptualisation is based on a utopian culture where life followed a natural order and trade flourished while also maintaining its balance with social life.

The edifice houses areas of public interface like courts and administrative offices in the lower floors while the higher storeys accommodate the ministers’ and royal residences. The stables and stores are designed in the lowermost podium levels while the apex of the tower is occupied by a temple and an observatory. The latter metaphorically emphasises the importance of science and spirituality in everyday life in ancient India.

The tower is envisaged as a self-sustaining unit drawing water from the river and generating mechanical power through wind energy.
Extras Reloaded

Imagined Time
2020

Imagined Location
Plymouth Harbour,
United Kingdom
Extras reloaded
Proposal for spectral deportation of extraneous persons by applying a photosensitive suspension

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Abstract: Due to dualistic implications in the Bill of Human Rights, spirits should be granted the same universal rights like living human subjects. Hence, human beings and psychic forces should be treated the same—at least juridically. In the following, we clear the methodological conditions for a new work of portraiture photography that responds to cases of undocumented residence of spirits in the United Kingdom. The paper will not refer to legal concerns of ghost deportation nor present traditional procedures of exorcism applied by the Vatican State, LPO, NYCG, AGS, ASA, or spiritual or governmental organisations. We, rather, aim to explore secular possibilities for a modern way of spirit deportation in cases of an undocumented residence.

Keywords: afterlife, evidence, extraneous person, ghostly matter, paranormal activity, photography, pornography, psychic force, remote forces, spectres, spiritualism, trace record, Victorian portraiture, Zulu

Outline:
The tale of the bishop’s celestial slum dwelling
Dark matter in the light box
Nausea of a supposedly savage warrior
Modern visions on colloidal suspensions
Silver bromide souls
Conclusion for a photographical detachment of the extras
Feasibility and ethical assessment
The tale of the bishop’s celestial slum dwelling

In an essay on the history of photography, Bill Jay retold the story of a bishop that he got introduced to by photographer Eddie Adams. Here is the plotline: on dying, the bishop approached the Pearly Gates, where St. Peter automatically checked off his name and directed him to his dwelling in the City of God: a cold-water one room flat in the basement of a rundown tenement. As the bishop received his keys, an uncouth and oafish individual approached. Peter asked his name, then checked his list and suddenly switched to a chummy state of excitation. He pointed the new arrival to a spacious mansion with panoramic views. The bishop was a little disconcerted and returned to Peter, saying that he would not like to appear ungrateful, but as Peter should know, he had followed the Church’s teaching throughout his life, he had obeyed the Commandments and respected the rituals without questioning for a lifetime. So how come he received a slum dwelling while this shabby guy, obviously dissolute and sinful, was granted a palace? ‘Aw, c’mon’, Peter said, ‘we have many good churchmen like you in Heaven, but this guy is a photographer and we don’t get many of them up here’. The backside to the bishop’s tale is that a vast majority of deceased photographers would congregate in Hell. Is this a joke or a sincere occupational hazard? What would the reason be for such disrespect for photography? Once a bailer of visual fidelity, photography became very popular in the production of visual facts and knowledge. However, at the peak of its popularity, it somehow seems to have lost its credibility, and the term ‘imaging’ became a common replacement for what once was known as faithful reproduction. In the following, we will reflect on two works where we more or less made use of photography and analyse what we did within the history of the medium and its metaphysics.

Dark matter in the light box

We made use of photography twice. The first photograph that we produced from the shot to the print was Black is the New White (2012), a fashion poster applying the pictorial language of glamour magazines. During the production, we did not reflect on what
we were doing at any time, the photography was just a means of purpose. The purpose was the production of an object, an advertisement in a light box that we would use to hack the visual codes of a regionally specific infrastructure of consumption. By doing this, we did not reflect on photography as a specific media of reproduction, we simply made use of it. What counted was the result: a composite image composed of culturally specific codes that—despite all embedded regionally specific codes—would tell the story of a deterritorialised man. We applied gender codes, geographical tags, and mysterious gadgets in order to unlock the viewer’s imagination. Nothing in the image was natural; we manipulated every single feature. The photographed place does not exist—we took a picture of the skyline of Dubai with Burj Khalifa and put it in the background of a sand dune, which is not easy to find around Dubai. The man looks like a local, although the model is a foreigner. The garment was cut in the fashion of a local male dress, the candura, while the cloth was from the women’s abaya dress. Though the sweat on the forehead of the model makes sense in relation to the alleged desert, the picture was actually shot at 55 °F and luckily, our highly professional fashion photographer donated his own sweat that got pasted onto the image. The golf ball is a gimmick—the model had to look down to show us the fake sweat and the ball was just an option to give a sense of action. All details in the composition were set up to be very loosely coupled in terms of a significant message. It showed that this was a key to ignite one’s imagination.

We simply skipped photographic production issues for the sake of representation and concentrated on a composition of codes and signs. All references to the real world, such as the skyline, the sand, the cloth, the model, and other accessories, were secondary to us. What counted was nothing but the meaning constituted by the entire composition. This message emerges from pictorial codes and connotations, it determines how a photograph, either realistic or imaginary, would be read. It is a kind of dark matter that is invisible, but at the same time directing how an image would be seen. Roland Barthes noted some concerns that address the problem of the photographic message.\(^1\) His major problems are: how do we read photograms? What do we perceive? In which order and succession?
Is it possible to perceive an image without linguistic categorisation? In other words, can we see the image detached from its codification?

**Nausea of a supposedly savage warrior**

We had to deal with these kind of questions again in *Faces*, a portraiture series presented in *Cabinet of Souls*, the basement section of the Mosaic Rooms’ 2014 ‘Future Rewound’ exhibit in London. The *BITNW* light box was a good preparation for this work. This time we did not produce an image, we recycled an already existing one that was found in the archives of the KwaZulu-Natal University Library in Durban, South Africa. The photograph was taken more than one century ago and tagged in the library catalogue with ‘Chief of Zulus, his wives and troop of Zulus’, as if it were part of an ethnological exhibition. Looking at this picture for a longer period of time, it became a bit disturbing. We felt that something was wrong. At this time, we were also running archeological research in the Tower House, the location of the Mosaic Rooms in London, Kensington, close to Earl’s Court. We found that the first tenant of the house was Imre Kiralfy, a Hungarian impresario and showman who was also the founding director of London’s Exhibition Ltd., who organised the *Greater Britain* exhibition at the Earl’s Court exhibition grounds, among many others. This universal exhibition was meant to promote the colonies of the Empire and drag in some possible investors. The South African section included an equestrian spectacle of the Anglo-Zulu Wars and it was exclusively sponsored by the Chartered Company owned by Cecil Rhodes, a South African mining tycoon who made an unparalleled mineral fortune due to intense string-pulling and a warlord-like disposition. The colonial department in Cape Colony, as well as the colonial secretary in London, withdrew any support for the show since they feared a misrepresentation of South African life and people.

At the turn of the 20th century, Rhodes had a poor reputation in London. He got blamed for provoking the outbreak of violence in the Transvaal region a few years earlier since he was behind the digging rights to the land of the Matabele tribe. It came to an asymmetric war between Rhodes’s militia and native warriors in which many
white settlers got killed. For this reason it was not a surprise that the main attraction from South Africa at the exhibition was a spectacle called ‘Savage South Africa’ produced by Frank E. Fillis, a circus performer and showman from South Africa. The event was strongly promoted in newspapers and exhibition guides as a faithful representation of ‘life in the wilds of South Africa’. These wilds were shown in one of Feszty’s panoramas that figured as a background for 35 mud huts that housed 174 native South Africans, exported to London by Fillis on behalf of Cecil Rhodes.

Keeping this in mind, we started to read the archival photograph quite differently. We looked closely into the faces of the alleged ‘warriors’, using a drum scan of the image that allowed multiple magnifications. The whole picture was a perfect mise-en-scène, the extras were dressed like warriors with shields and spears, wearing feather dresses. Though the costumes were not overly exaggerated, they were untypical for Matabeles at that time. Also, we felt that their faces did not look like the faces of ‘savages’ at all. If one would change their clothing, they could as well be considered teachers, accountants, officers, missionaries, interpreters, and—according to the results of further research—this would better reflect what they actually were.²

The close up on some of the extras’ faces drew our attention to a curious look: some of them appeared to express seasickness. We found ropes and chimneys in the background and concluded that the image must have been taken on a ship. Further research confirmed our hypothesis: it was taken on the SS Goth, an intermediate steamer of the Union Line. The photo must have been taken before the steamer entered the harbour in Plymouth in order to provide visual material to the press in England for the announcement of the spectacle. After the facial expression of the seasick traveller attracted our attention, we also looked closer into the eyes of the other extras in the group photo. Finally, it was revealed that the whole scene was a setup. This unintended expression was also part of the message, but it bypassed the attention of the photographer. It is an unwittingly objective side note that was captured by the exposure of the plate rather than by the shutter-pressing subject of the photographer. Barthes calls this
kind of semiotic side effect an ‘unsharp meaning’.\(^3\) It is not obvious, like the well-composed meaning of an image, but it is readable and understandable as well. However, it is not explicit and most probably an unauthorised feature of the image, but it cracks the shell of sensemaking and triggers curiosity for further questioning and interpretations.

Despite the historical context of the *Greater Britain* exhibition and the signs that indicated the steamer in the photograph, when we found it in the archives’ catalogue, it was still labeled with the same wording with which it was branded by Rhodes and Fillis in 1899. Both wanted the picture to be read as an example of South African savages. Although totally constructed, it was a very strong message that could even hold up against the critical expertise of academic archivists. For this reason, we tried to hack the sealed meaning of the image by way of a photographic tradition that would help to re-establish a similar situation as looking into each single face on a magnified drum scan. Thus we isolated each individual and re-framed them in the style of Victorian portrait photography. Back in the day, many single person portraiture were produced in the same way, as an extraction from family portraits. The typical oval frame was ideal to isolate a face from others. It changed the way the subjects were looked at. Suddenly they started to look like disguised young men and women.

By applying this method of face extraction, we could get closer to the individual character of each extra, but it did not wipe out all categorisation and codes. We learned that in the religion of the Zulus and in South African mythology, life after death is divided between the horizon of Samani, the eternal life of a soul, and in a Sasa period, an intermediate world that is closer to actuality. It connects the living and the dead. In addition to this, a South African soul is site-specific—it is bound to the place where a person passed away. As long as the deceased are remembered by the living, their souls would not be granted access to eternity. This would not have been a problem, since memory in Zulu terms is mainly an orally transmitted memory. As soon as the last friend, relative, or acquaintance died would they be allowed to move? However, most of them were baptised and educated as mission
boys, and in Christianity—if one looks at all devotional objects and monuments—memory is obviously a materialistic concept. Since they were cultural hybrids of Zulu belief and Christianity, their souls must have gotten trapped in the suspension of the photograph taken on the Goth. As long as their faces would be recognisable in the group photo, they would be retained in the Sasa period and stuck between life and the realm of the dead. The photograph condemns them to a remoteness presence.

The work ‘Faces’ could attribute a kind of social dignity to the misrepresented extras, but it could not redeem their souls. In contrast, it even fortified their actual state of being by making their faces even more recognisable. By this logic, we need to address this issue by asking if there is a possible salvation of the extras at all? Looking for a conclusion in this request, we need to go back to the history of photography and propel our problem towards a kind of homoeopathic solution. What was caused by photographical reproduction must be solved by photographical reproduction.

**Modern visions on colloidal suspensions**

Going back to the beginning, the dead bishop did not fancy photographers, but St. Peter did. The acknowledgement of photography went through a drastic change although its technical principles remained the same. While the optical mechanism in the camera was often credited, the anthropomorphism of the camera-eye also caused an undervaluation of photographical reproduction in terms of visual objectivity. The success of a photographic exploration of a visual world beyond human eyesight was actually due to the photochemical emulsion that captures the intensity of light that is either reflected or absorbed from objects in front of the camera lens. László Maholy-Nagy drew attention to this basic feature in 1927, stating that the photochemical emulsion either applied on glass, metal, paper, or celluloid would be the basic requirement for any productive use of the medium, be it for cognitive or aesthetic purposes. Until that time, the common understanding of photography was mainly linked to the optical aspects of the
technique that reproduced the more than 500-year-old principles of the camera obscura. The main focus was on the way light masked the factual newness of the direct imprint of light onto the photosensitive emulsion. The photosensitivity of haline and bromide crystals is the real reason for photographical evidence because these reactions are caused by light that reflects from outer objects. Hence, every entity that connects to the cosmos via light can get printed in the emulsion.

Towards the end of the 19th century, the success of photography was undeniable and pulled down the reliability of the human eye in terms of objectivity. It was applied in science and got particularly famous in anthropology and criminology studies. Eadweard Muybridge arranged 12 cameras in a row to show that galloping horses had a moment with all hooves off the ground—a fraction of a second that was unrecognisable to human eyes. No painter paid any attention to this detail; even Muybridge only discovered it in order to defend his claim and win a bet. The result was a bit shocking; it was the evidence of a fact that had never been seen although it occurred regularly.

Another productive use of photographical techniques is linked to the name Francis Galton, a relative of Charles Darwin, who also became known for phrenology studies. His idea was the composite portrait for which he did multiple exposures of one or different persons on the same plate. Then he photographed the superimposed image to portray the resulting face image. The final result was surprisingly successful and considered to have significant characteristics. It seems that they represented an idealised look of a person or group. These composite images would become both birth and confirmation of anthropometric typologies. Galton became interested in particular generational and also different racial types such as the Hindu or the Caucasian type. With not much speculative effort, one could even claim that composite photography fostered the theory of descent.

From anthropometry, it was a little step into criminology. Edmund DuCane, Director General of Prisons, supplied a series of portraiture taken from murderers detained in London’s prisons. The shots were superimposed and reproduced by Reynolds, who specialised in scientific applications of photography. The idea was
to find out a general ‘murderer’ type to identify a possible murderer before he committed a crime. A temporal aspect kicked in as prosecutors applied visualising techniques to forecast criminal acts. Usually, forensics functions in the opposite way.

Later developments of photographic techniques using infrared, ultraviolet, X-ray, dark light and Terahertz rays would extend our visuality far beyond the range of human vision. All these technologies were developed and refined for one purpose: to deliver the human eye visual facts that it was unable to detect itself.

This kind of image is different from those we are used to ‘reading’. Reading the unseen image is impossible since no one ever learned to understand its language. Barthes calls these kinds of images ‘shocking’ since they bring to light a photographic insignificance and repel codifications and styles of representations. In relation to interpretation, these images seem to be closer to the light of objective truth since they do not distract with cultural codes. Instead they bypass our apperceptive capacities and reduce us to an undirected seeing.

**Silver bromide souls**

The history of photography is also crisscrossed by mysteries that emphasise the psychic capacity of the reproduction of the unseen. Many examples are documented in the Vatican archives. The research on miracles such as the Shroud of Turin are fragments of this media history. There are even attempts to explain this phenomenon with photographic principles. If this were accepted, the face of Jesus Christ would be the original exposure (die Ur-Belichtung) and photography would have started with a portrait.

The second half of the 19th century was not only the era of humanities such as physiology, anthropometry, and psychology—sciences that referred mainly to irrational aspects of the human subject—it was also the time for modern spiritualism. Starting with the occurrences at the house of the Fox family in New York in 1851, the interest in psychic phenomena exploded and only four years later, the number of spiritual practitioners in the USA was more than
two million. In the early 1860s, William H. Mumler was drawn into spirit photography by chance. The jewellery engraver and amateur photographer experimented with autoportraits in the studio of a photographer friend and discovered on one plate the apparition of what they called an ‘extra’ or extraneous person. Instead of himself, a little girl was sitting on the chair. He was surprised and showed the picture to his friend who said that the plate was probably not well cleaned. A little later, he mentioned this occurrence in conversation without clearly noticing his interlocutor’s interest in spiritualism. Two days later, he found the story, including the address of the studio where the alleged ghost was conjured, in several spiritualist magazines and newspapers all over Boston and the country. He was shocked and decided to warn his friend who owned the studio where he took the pictures. As he arrived the studio was already full of sensationalists who subscribed to the waiting list for their portraits.

Since Mumler was interested in both photography and in apparitions, he took the opportunity in hand and started a new business and genre: spirit photography. Since he did not promise any positive results to a client—he was not sure if the apparition would happen again—he did not take any further risk and by doing so, he got paid for the photography but not for the apparitions. Most of his clients had already been spiritualists before they came to Mumler’s studio. Some of them were even known as mediums. Mumler produced some ghost shots from time to time. He also tried auto-portraiture again and found the apparition of a figure that he identified as his cousin who died twelve years earlier. After that he bought out his friend to pursue spirit photography full time.

One of Mumler’s clients was Abraham Lincoln’s wife, who wished for a photograph together with her husband. Mumler became famous even though he was a controversial figure. His careless, happy-go-lucky disposition did not protect him from failures that caused him to undergo trial for fraud. The showman Phileas Taylor Barnum, at this time mentor of the above-mentioned Imre Kiralfy, testified against Mumler. He hired Abraham Bogardus, the famous New York daguerreotypist, to fabricate an image of himself and the supposed ghost of Abraham Lincoln. This photograph was tendered as evidence in Mumler’s trial to demonstrate to the court
how easy it was to forge spirit photographs. But who could tell whether this apparition of Lincoln’s ghost was a forgery or not? In the end, Mumler was found not guilty, since no one could prove that Mumler didn’t believe in what he was doing. However, the US$3,000 expense of the trial killed his business.

Barnum himself was an American politician, showman, and businessman remembered for celebrated hoaxes. He was the leading figure in marketing sensations at this time, and—this is quite important—he did not invent the spirit photography that attracted an audience of more than 2 million. Furthermore, Mumler owed nothing to Barnum and Barnum had no reason to blame Mumler for anything, he was not even a client. He probably felt menaced by a new competitor and defended his claims in the market of sensation against the mysterious newcomer Mumler.

Towards the turn of the century, spirit photography became very common among middle class Victorian England, where no case like Mumler’s fraud trial occurred. Here, it was the opposite. Spirit photographers were renowned persons with professional backgrounds and ties to either Oxford or Cambridge. The public scepticism was also less aggressive although the business of spectral portraits was productive. It was a totally different climate than in America and the hype of the genre lasted longer. At the turn of the century, an underground market developed that supplied easy-to-use tools for spirit forgery and a lot of fraud was committed. Nevertheless, one must admit that academics and professional photographers often controlled pioneers and stars of the genre, and they were never convicted of fraud. In addition, many later-known spirit photographers first stepped in after they were hired to supervise the methods of other of spirit photographers.

With all this taken into account, it is justifiable to assume that Barnum campaigned against Mumler to defend the value of his own hoaxes and spectacles. As we already mentioned, Barnum was the mentor of Kiralfy, who allowed the ‘Savage South Africa’ spectacle to take place at Earl’s Court exhibition grounds. He was not amused by it and even considered it a bad and unnecessary representation of South African people. On the other hand, he did not reject Cecil
Rhodes’s blood diamonds. Hence the story of ‘Faces’ continues and we suppose that it will do this until the souls of the South African extras are redeemed and allowed to leave the intermediary world between actuality and enter their remote cosmic eternity.

**Conclusion for a photographic detachment of the extras**

According to the African mythologies collected by John S. Mbiti\(^7\) and Arthur Conan Doyle’s personal experiences with modern spiritualism journeying in Australia and New Zealand\(^8\), the only successful method to redeem the souls of the extras sealed on the archival photograph would be to re-enact the original event. The reconstruction of the SS Goth steamer and the application of the same photomechanical appliances and methods would be mandatory for a successful outcome of this venture. In order to determine the originally applied techniques, we propose a procedure based on trial and error. The following steps gathered in the table below are mandatory for goal achievement: a) the finding of the appropriate camera and lens, b) the determination of the components and mix ratio of the original emulsion, and c) the carrier of the emulsion, either glass, metal, or paper. These findings will be brought to light by A) further analysis of the original photograph and B) by the simple decision-making based on trial and error mentioned above.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A) analysis of the archival photograph</th>
<th>B) testing based on trial and error</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) determination of the lens</td>
<td>a) determination of the camera</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) suspension components</td>
<td>c) carrier</td>
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*Table 1: Analytical and experimental approach of determination*
Feasibility and ethical assessment

Photography is the functional exploitation of the physics of light. This makes the technique superior to the functions of the human eye, which is usually decelerated by physiology and tamed by intellect. The chemical emulsion is able to capture visual information without any selective psycho-physiological \textit{relais} such as the retina, optic nerves, brain or attention, perception, memory, emotions, or the censorship of consciousness. If one considers the velocity of light compared to the speed of human perceptions, it is quite clear that the difference between a visual object and its photographical reproduction would be insignificant. Intuitively, we do not tell any difference between objects and reproductions—this is the reason why we collect photographs of our beloved. The difference seems to be made by the intellect, which is trained to respond to interactions and goal attainment. It is most likely that any facts in conflict with a socially successful behaviour are usually excluded from human perception. In contrast, light is an all-embracing cosmic energy, and its speed defines the limits of space and time. This is the reason why we conclude that photography that applies the speed of light for the pictorial reproduction is the only reliable means of capturing spiritual facts that were never seen but always there. Since light emanates in space and time and superimposes one on the other by physical laws, it is our only medium to get in touch with the remote and rewrite its past.

Pasolini always understood cinema as a medium of the conjuring. It is basically a transfer print of light that emits from outer objects onto a photographic emulsion. He never accepted that semiotic categories of cinematographic pictures would occupy more attention than its ontology.\textsuperscript{9} Cinema shows the light that reflects from the objects onto celluloid as a raw image of the visible and invisible world without any rational or physiological filtering. It is a purely physical vision—a transmission of electromagnetic rays that immediately connect objects, eyes, and brains to the cosmos. By this understanding, Pasolini’s aim was not to compose a message and render an image readable to the human observer. He was rather after the image as such,
the shocking image that would be its own message. These insignificant images speak to us in a language that we first have to learn to understand. And we are obliged to do so for the sake of cosmological and spiritual integrity.

2. Valery Ward and Margery Moberly, two South African journalists, referred in 1999 to an archival photograph taken in the compound showing a congregation of fully dressed South Africans listening to the prayer of an English priest. Each Sunday morning before the exhibition grounds would open, the exhibition organisers had to allow a service. This was a condition set by the extras of the spectacle. Ward, V. and Moberly, M., “The Travelling Circus from ‘Savage’ South Africa”, The Witness, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, October 19, 1999.
6. Note that there are also many mythologies that date the invention of photography long before the birth of Christ. One myth refers to a Chinese emperor who lived in 1,000 BC and others date even further back to Ancient Egypt.
BIOGRAPHIES
Hans-Ulrich Obrist
(b. 1968, Zurich, Switzerland)
is Artistic Director of the
Serpentine Galleries, London.
Prior to this, he was the Curator
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la Ville de Paris. Since his first
show ‘World Soup’ (The Kitchen
Show) in 1991, he has curated
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recent publications include
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(2016), Ways of Curating
(2016), The Age of Earthquakes
(2015) with Douglas Coupland
and Shumon Basar, and Lives
of The Artists, Lives of The
Architects (2016).

Tim Lee
(b. 1975, Seoul, South Korea)
works with photography, video,
text, and sculpture. Lee’s work
both replicates and reimagines
seminal moments in art history
and popular culture. He has had
solo exhibitions at Asia Society,
New York (2013), daadgalerie
(2010), Hayward Gallery
(2009), CCA Wattis Institute
for Contemporary Arts, San
Francisco, CA, USA (2008), and
Contemporary Arts Museum,
Houston, TX, USA (2008). He
has participated in international
group exhibitions including
biennales in Shanghai (2012),
Istanbul (2011), Sydney (2008),
and Yokohama (2008). He has
a Bachelor of Design from the
University of Alberta, Canada,
and an MFA from the University
of British Columbia, Canada.

Santiago Sierra
(b. 1966, Madrid, Spain)
graduated in Fine Arts at
Madrid’s Complutense University
and then completed his artistic
training in Hamburg, where he
studied under professors F.
E. Walter, S. Brown, and B. J.
Blume. His beginnings are linked
to alternative art circuits in the
capital of Spain—El Ojo Atómico,
Espacio P—although he would go
on to develop much of his career
in Mexico (1995–2006) and Italy
(2006–10), and his with work
influencing artistic literature and
criticism. Sierra lives and works
in Madrid, Spain.

Iftikhar Dadi & Elizabeth Dadi
have collaborated in their art
practice for twenty years. Their
work investigates the salience of
popular media in the construction
of memory, borders, and identity
in contemporary globalisation,
and the potential of creative
resilience in urban informalities.
Their work has been exhibited
widely internationally, including
in the 24th Bienal de São
Paulo, Brazil; Third Asia-Pacific
Triennial, Brisbane, Australia;
Liverpool Biennial, Tate Liverpool;
Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris; Queens Museum of Art, New York; Whitechapel Gallery, London; and Art Gallery of Windsor, Canada. Iftikhar Dadi is also an associate professor of History of Art at Cornell University.

**Justine Ludwig**
(b. 1986, USA) is the Director of Exhibitions/Senior Curator at Dallas Contemporary. Her professional experience includes the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, the Rose Art Museum, the Colby College Museum of Art, and the MIT List Visual Arts Center. She has also curated exhibitions at the Tufts University Art Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Recent curated exhibitions include Nadia Kaabi-Linke: *Walk the Line*, Pia Camil: *Skins*, Pedro Reyes: *For Future Reference*, and Laercio Redondo: *What ends every day*. Her research interests include architecture, economics, violence, and the aesthetics of globalisation.

**Brook Andrew**
(b. 1970, Sydney, Australia) examines dominant narratives, often relating to colonialism and modernist histories. Through museum and archival interventions he aims to offer alternate versions of forgotten histories; illustrating different means for interpreting history in the world today. He also travels internationally to work with communities and various private and public collections to tease out new interpretations. Most recently, Andrew has been awarded a Smithsonian Artist Research Fellowship and worked with the musée du quai Branly, Paris, as a Photography Residencies Laureate. Andrew is represented by Tolarno Galleries, Melbourne; Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney; and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels.

**Risham Syed**
(b. 1969, Pakistan) has a diverse art practice where, while painting remains central, she also uses found objects, textiles, pattern, margins, borders, and frames creating a context for the painted surface. Her work has been included in national and international exhibitions, including the ABRAAJ Capital Art Prize, Dubai, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, Asia Pacific Triennial Brisbane, Hangzhou Triennial of Fiber Art, China, Mohatta Palace Museum, Karachi, National
Gallery of Art, Islamabad, Harris Museum, Preston, Barbican Centre, London, and the Fukuoka Triennale, Japan. Syed currently heads the Visual Arts Department at the School of Visual Arts and Design at the Beaconhouse National University, Lahore. She is a graduate of the National College of Arts, Lahore and the Royal College of Art, London.

John Akomfrah  
(b. 1957) is an artist and filmmaker whose works are characterised by their investigations into memory, post-colonialism, temporality, and aesthetics that often explore the experience of the African diaspora in Europe and the USA. *The Unfinished Conversation* (2012), a moving portrait of the cultural theorist Stuart Hall’s life and work; *Peripeteia* (2012), an imagined drama visualising the lives of individuals included in two 16th century portraits by Albrecht Dürer, and *Mnemosyne* (2010) which exposes the experience of migrants in the UK. He lives and works in London.

Karen Tei Yamashita  
(b. 1951, Oakland, California) is the author of *Through the Arc of the Rain Forest, Brazil-Maru, Tropic of Orange*, Circle K Cycles, *I Hotel, Anime Wong: Fictions of Performance*, and forthcoming, *Letters to Memory*, all published by Coffee House Press. *I Hotel* was selected as a finalist for the National Book Award and awarded the California Book Award, the American Book Award, the Asian/Pacific American Librarians Association Award, and the Association for Asian American Studies Book Award. She received a US Artists Ford Foundation Fellowship and is Professor of Literature and Creative Writing at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Carsten Nicolai  
(b. 1965, Karl-Marx-Stadt) is part of an artistic generation that has worked intensively in the transitional area between music, art, and science. Recent international exhibitions include documenta X and the 49th and 50th Venice Biennales. Nicolai has participated in extensive solo and group worldwide exhibitions and his artistic œuvre echoes through his practice as a musician, where he produces under the pseudonym Alva Noto. Nicolai co-scored the music for Alejandro González Iñárritu’s most recent film ‘The Revenant’, which has received nominations for the Golden Globe, BAFTA,

Fred Wilson  
(b. 1954, the Bronx, New York) creates work that encourages viewers to reconsider social and historical narratives, and raises critical questions about the politics of erasure and exclusion. Beginning with the acclaimed exhibition *Mining the Museum* (1992-93) at the Maryland Historical Society, Fred Wilson has juxtaposed and re-contextualised existing objects to create new installations, which alter their traditional meanings or interpretations. In 2003, Wilson represented the United States at the 50th Venice Biennale with the solo exhibition *Fred Wilson: Speak of Me as I Am*. His many awards include the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation ‘Genius’ Grant (1999), amongst others.

Wes Janz  
(b. 1953, USA) PhD, RA, is a Professor of Architecture at Ball State University, and the founder of onesmallproject, a collection of local initiatives from around the world, that highlights the lives of people that many observers consider to be in-need or at-risk. Janz was recipient of Ball State’s Outstanding Teacher Award in 2006, and in 2008 he was a finalist for the Curry Stone Design Prize, awarded to breakthrough projects that have the ‘power and potential to improve our lives and the world we live in’. He was curator of ‘small architecture BIG LANDSCAPES’, which was exhibited at the Swope Art Museum in Terre Haute, Indiana in winter 2010.

Motohiko Odani  
(b. 1972, Kyoto, Japan) work connected to the themes of physical sensation called ‘phantom-limb’, whereby a person who has lost an arm or a leg continuously feels sensation from the missing body part. Odani’s works have been presented at numerous international exhibitions including Venice Biennale Japan Pavilion (2003), Lyon Biennale (2000) and İstanbul Biennial (2001). He recently had solo exhibitions *Odani Motohiko Phantom Limb* at Mori Art Museum, Tokyo (2010-2011, traveling exhibition), *Terminal Moment* at Kyoto Art Center, Kyoto (2014), and *MOTOHIKO ODANI: DEPTH OF THE BODY* at Albertz Benda, New York (2016). Odani received an MFA from Tokyo University of the Arts, where he currently teaches.
Leeza Ahmady (b. Kabul, Afghanistan) is an independent curator, and Director of Asia Contemporary Art Week (ACAW) since 2005. Beginning in 2014, she has staged activities with over 200 diverse creative minds from across Asia and beyond in four iterations of FIELD MEETING, ACAW’s annual forum for arts professionals, through performances, lecture-performances, and discussions hosted at The Metropolitan Museum, Asia Society, Performa, and Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum. Ahmady has also presented numerous exhibitions and programs at dOCUMENTA (13), Independent Curators International (ICI), Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), Tyler Rollins Fine Art, Mathaf Arab Museum of Modern Art, Venice Biennale, and Istanbul Biennial amongst others.

Nadia Kaabi Linke with Timo Kaabi-Linke (b. 1978, Tunis, Tunisia) studied at the University of Fine Arts in Tunis (1999) before receiving a PhD from the Sorbonne University in Paris (2008). Her works give physical presence to that which tends to remain invisible, be it people, structures, or the geopolitical forces that shape them. Timo Kaabi-Linke is Nadia Kaabi-Linke’s closest collaborator. His research concentrates on historical and anthropological studies while he lectures and publishes on a variety of topics. They both live and work in Berlin.

Brinda Somaya with team SNK (b. 1949, Bengaluru, India). Upon completion of her Bachelor of Architecture from Mumbai University and her Master of Arts from Smith College in Northampton, MA, USA, she started Somaya and Kalappa Consultants in 1978 in Mumbai. Over four decades she has merged architecture, conservation, and social equity in projects ranging from institutional campuses and rehabilitation of an earthquake torn village to the restoration of a 18th century Cathedral. In 2014, she was awarded the Indian Institute of Architects–Baburao Mhatre Gold Medal for Lifetime Achievement.
Present Elsewhere
Rashid Rana

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John Akomfrah
Brook Andrew
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Wes Janz
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Tim Lee
Justine Ludwig
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Hans Ulrich Obrist
Motohiko Odani
Santiago Sierra
Brinda Somaya
Risham Syed
Fred Wilson
Karen Tei Yamashita

Brook Andrew is represented by Tolarno Galleries Melbourne; Roslyn Oxley9 Gallery, Sydney; and Galerie Nathalie Obadia, Paris and Brussels.

Carsten Nicolai is represented by Galerie EIGEN + ART Leipzig/ Berlin and Pace Gallery

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Asia Art Archive marks its 15th year by extending *15 Invitations* to creative practitioners to look within and beyond the organisation as an archive, a collection of material, a digital platform, and a node in a wider collective network. *15 Invitations* take various sizes, forms, and creative directions—literary, polemic, political, sonic, physical, and digital—and function as a series of ‘drop pins’ to alternatively navigate where AAA originated and where it may be going. AAA’s e-journal *Field Notes* traces the 15 participants as they contribute notes and entries to document the process.

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