

EDITORIAL

CONTESTING HISTORIES: ART PRACTICES OF/FOR JUSTICE

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This is our second of two Kunstlicht issues investigating art practices of/for justice. Our first issue dealt with Radical Imaginings as ways of envisioning alternatives of/for justice through art-related practices. In this way, the first part of our investigation on the topic marked an attempt to consider how to go about that which proves to be irreparable; how to deal with what cannot be exhausted by redistributive and transitional models of justice.

As the title suggests, this time we turn to art practices that deal with justice by contesting normative frameworks of belonging and hegemonic narratives about the past. In investigating different forms of struggles that are being undertaken over oblivion as well as differential forms of recognition, and by bringing to the fore art-related practices that interrupt the perceptual and epistemic underpinnings of power, the contributions collected here highlight how art practices can help contest exclusions, erasures, and other forms of historical violence that continue to be reiterated in postcolonial settings.

Miriam Bak McKenna's text discusses Danh Vo's 2018 retrospective *Take My Breath Away*. Engaging with the many artefacts included in the exhibition, McKenna is attentive to how Vo touches upon multiple layers of meaning at once. She demonstrates how Vo joins intimate narratives with world-historical events, personal traumas with collective ones, and in so doing reveals how the past bleeds into the present, traversing geographic, cultural, and generational borders.

Also delving into a solo exhibition, Margaret Tali's contribution looks at the strategies employed by Rajkamal Kahlon in *Staying with Trouble*, held at the Vienna Welmuseum. Leaning on Ariella Azoulay's notion of potential histories, Tali considers how Kahlon attempts to confront the ethnographic museum with its own historical ties to colonialism and its implicit forms of epistemic violence.

In her conversation with Mirjam Westen, artist Christine Ayo discusses her project *Voicing Entebbe* which revolves around the disappearance of twenty-three women in Uganda. Originally envisaged as a monument dedicated to the memory of these women, Ayo talks about the resistance her project was met with by local authorities, and how this has affected the final form of the work, which now exists as an archive of stories and testimonies.

Minia Biabiany's artistic contribution consists of stills extracted from her video *Blue spelling, a change of perspective is a change of temporality*. Itself an animation consisting of chalk drawings on blackboard, the video explores the possibilities for fostering a different and decolonial way of looking. As such, it draws its viewers into a lucid form of perception, as if in light sleep, when the experience of temporality alters and comes to echo the non-linear time of Caribbean History.

Irmgard Emmelhainz's text deals with the Xico Valley Community

Museum, which is situated in Chalco, Mexico, an area marked by state neglect, dispossession, and ecological destruction. The article describes how the Museum proposes a way to live in dignity at the margins of the capitalist and neoliberal States, enabling subjects to begin to recognize themselves as autonomous entities that resist by surviving.

Anna Sejbæk Torp-Pedersen narrates the parallel development of the Sámi reindeer herder Jovsset Ánte Sara's lawsuit against the Norwegian state, which took place in a court of law, and Máret Anne Sara's artwork, *Pile o' Sápmi*, which unfolded in the public eye. The article shows how while the case inside the court-room challenged the state on its right to marginalize an indigenous livelihood, the artwork illustrated Norway's ongoing assimilation policy of the Sámi people and its neo-colonial projects on Sámi land.

Hong Yu Liu's essay examines discourses on community art, with a specific focus on the issue of inclusion in post-colonial locals. More particularly still, Yu Liu combines an ethnographic approach with colonial history to assess how community art spaces in Hong Kong allow marginalized ethnic minorities means of (self-)representation beyond the model of assimilatory multiculturalism espoused by state institutions.

Lastly, a note about both issues: it is our view that Radical Imaginings and Contesting Histories can be read and kept together as two parts of a whole. To our delight, many contributions follow from one another and speak to each other almost directly, and many were so rich in content that they could easily be included in either part of the two-part investigation. At the end of the day, past, present, future, are all concepts for which one cannot speak without the other; political imagination grows out of historical consciousness and contestation grows out of imaginative affects and affordances of the gaps and silences of history that we find ourselves up against. We do hope to have showcased these interrelations through both our publications.

With this issue we are happy to welcome Maja Klaassens, as a new English-language proofreader.

On behalf of the editorial board,
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