The artist contribution *The Headless Real* by the artist Yen Noh is a performance script, based on a script Noh first performed in 2019 at Dutch Art Institute.

Focussing on self-representation, Fabienne Chiang discusses what it means for artists, who are categorically defined as 'the Other', to take control of their image and perception. Works by the artists Carrie Mae Weems and Zanele Muholi demonstrate photography's role in the creation, dissemination, and justification of existing power structures. However, as Chiang elucidates, the artists also demonstrate approaches of subversion.

Steyn Bergs and Aline Hernández interviewed artist Oraib Toukan about her work *When Things Occur* (2016). Consisting of Skype conversations with Gaza inhabitants who were differentially involved in the making of such images, the work raises questions concerning (self-)representation in the face of asymmetrical warfare and violence.

Agnieszka Wodzińska focuses on Wageningen University's and Utrecht School of the Arts' design intervention, *Pig Chase* (2009-2012), which aims to interrupt the sanitised visual culture of the Capitalocene by rendering visible some of the current industrial farming practices. She considers whether such an intervention has the potential to expose and work against the lack of representation of both farm animals and industrialised animal farming in the collective imagination.

Finally, Christoph Chwatal carefully considers the concept of the 'forum' as locale of presentation and representation through the project *Destruction and Return in al-Araqīb* (2010–ongoing) by Forensic Architecture and artist Lawrence Abu Hamdan's work *Conflicted Phonemes* (2012). Chwatal charts the potential of the projects' capacities to assemble communities around a disputed issue, spanning from those directly affected to activists and nongovernmental organizations.

Sven Lütticken is an author, art critic, and theorist. He teaches art history at the Vrije Universiteit and theory at DAI. Lütticken publishes regularly in journals and magazines such as *New Left Review, Texte fur Kunst, e-flux journal, Grey Room* and *Afterall,* and contributes to catalogues and exhibitions as writer or guest curator.

THE NOTRE-DAME CATHEDRAL OF PARIS AND ITS PHASES OF REPRESENTATION

Máté Hulesch

On the 15th of April 2019, the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris burst into flames, destroying the spire and most of the roof. The tragedy shocked the world as the building, which is considered by many to be one of the most important cultural heritages in Western-Europe, became severely damaged. The fire was interpreted by some commentators as a representation of the crisis of European culture: a divine punishment for the failure of Christianity, the return of the spirit of '68, a medieval version of the Twin Towers.[1] Emmanuel Macron declared that the cathedral should be restored by the 2024 Paris Olympics and millions of Euros were donated by companies and billionaires. The response and the aftermath of the fire raise questions through which I will concentrate the representative powers of space from a critical approach: how is a building able to represent such an abstract idea as "(Western-)European culture?"[2] As it will become clear through the following analysis, the cultural significance of the Notre-Dame has been socially and historically produced. My goal is to unveil this process and with it, question our seemingly obvious relationship with our architectural heritage — and the built environment in general.

I have never been to Paris, and have never seen the Notre-Dame in person. As a child, I loved Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame* — it was my first encounter with the Parisian cathedral. Later on, I saw dozens of pictures of the building, I saw it in movies and other videos, I read texts about it, and most recently, I *walked* in and around it in a video game.[3] I learned about its design in architectural history classes where I even had to learn to draw its floor plan and façade. In other words, I owe all of my knowledge about the Notre-Dame to the different ways that the building is represented. I *know* the building even though I have never actually seen it in real life. For me, it exists only as an abstraction. But what about those who have visited the site? The fire largely damaged the building, *ruining* considerable parts of its structure, which had an immediate effect on the public's perception of the building. What the followers of the events saw in the flames was a shocking experience of a representative monument turning into ruins. However, as the anthropologist Gastón R. Gordillo's research on the ruins of Argentina suggests, *ruins* are abstract representations of the past, which raises the question whether the Notre-Dame was a ruin in this sense long before the fire made it crucially apparent, and therefore an abstraction for those who have visited it.

1
For a vivid summary of the reactions see Paul B. Preciado, "Notre Dame of Ruins," *Artforum* (2019) <https://www.artforum.com/slant/paul-b-preciado-on-the-notre-dame-fire-79492>

2
I refer to "European culture" as an abstract concept in a sense that it is isolated from the concrete, quotidien experience; in its concrete reality, there is a multiplicity of heterogeneous cultures which are all part of Europe. From this point of view, the idea that European culture can be represented by a single building is misleading, such an approach will necessarily exclude certain groups of people.

3
Assassin's Creed Unity, Ubisoft, 2014.

In his book, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction*, Gordillo proposes a new approach towards ruins based on his field studies in the Argentine Gran Chaco region: that of the *rubble*. In a similar way to my abstract knowledge of the Notre-Dame, "[p]rior to visiting the site, [Gordillo] knew of 'the ruins of San Juan Bautista de Balbuena' [an old Jesuit church] only through books and therefore as an *abstraction* about *the past*." As he continues:

> "My impulsive veneration of the ruin's form, in this regard, resulted from my affective distancing and bodily estrangement from that place as an ancient relic. Alfredo [a local guide], in contrast interacted with the site as part of his work and daily habits and thus experienced it as something tangible, earthly, an old church. His casual punching of the stucco revealed an engagement with an object that he was familiar with at a sensuous, bodily level and that he did not perceive as a fetish to be revered."[4]

The discrepancy in the relationship to the building between the local farmer and the academic intellectual shapes Gordillo's conceptualisation of the difference between *ruin* — an abstraction of the past — and *rubble* — a "concrete, textured physical form."[5] The differentiation stems from the theoretical sources of Gordillo: the French philosopher, Henri Lefebvre.

For Lefebvre, social space is a *concrete abstraction* that emerges through three dialectically interlinked moments: *spatial practice*, *representations of space*, and *representational space*. Spatial practices are the everyday practices of a society through which the individuals perceive the spaces that they inhabit; representations of space are abstractions conceived and conceptualized by scientists, urban planners, architects, and artists, amongst others. Representational spaces are the concrete, directly lived spaces of "inhabitants" and "users" which are filled with meaning.[6] The relationship between the three moments can be summarized simply: abstract, conceived space becomes concrete lived space through spatial practices; however, capitalism turns lived space into a commodity and therefore into abstract space.[7] For Gordillo, it is this abstraction of space that allows the heritage industry to turn ruins into "tightly managed places where visitors pay to contemplate a relic that they are ordered to photograph but not to touch."[8]

The case of the Notre-Dame is similar. We have seen that for those like me, who have never seen the cathedral in real life, it is an abstraction. However, based on the above, I would argue that it is an abstraction for most of the tourists and other visitors, and many Parisians as well: it functions more as a representation of the past than a physical reality of the present. Indeed, there are people for whom the space of the cathedral is a concrete, lived space: for those who encounter it on a regular basis as a part of their everyday life.[9] Yet, for most visitors, the Notre-Dame is not part of their present, it is a remnant of the past: they do not see it in its materiality, as a structure of wood, stone, and glass. They consider it as a representation of the past, of the history of Paris, the French nation or Western European culture. In this sense, the building becomes, in the words of the cultural critic Fredric Jameson, "an image of itself, of its concrete life" — a referent of its own history.[10] To put it differently, the Notre-Dame was a *ruin* long before the recent fire — and perhaps it was the fire itself that served as a reminder of the materiality of the cathedral; alongside its representative function it has a physical and material existence that is continuously exposed by the elements. As Gordillo quotes the ethnographer Quetzil Castañeda, ruins are, in our (post)modern culture, "the copy of an original that never existed" — which lead us to the French sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard's notion of the simulacrum.[11] Briefly speaking, Baudrillard defines the simulacrum exactly as Castañeda describes the ruin: a copy of an original that never existed, a reference with no referent. Describing the precession of the simulacrum, Baudrillard distinguishes four phases of the image in its relation to reality, from representing reality as it is, to pure simulacrum which has no relation to reality anymore.[12] To comprehend how the Notre-Dame became what it is today we must understand its history in relation to Baudrillard's successive phases of the image. Consequently, I explore three events from the cathedral's history to frame the changes in the public's relationship with the building: the circumstances of its construction, its role in the French Revolution, and its restoration by Viollet-le-Duc in the 19th-century.

Built between 1163 and 1345, the Notre-Dame of Paris is a prime example of Gothic architecture, a style that ruled the European region during the High and Late Middle Ages. In his book, *The Gothic Cathedral* (1962), the German architectural historian Otto Georg von Simson emphasises how philosophical and theological thoughts were inseparable from the architectural planning. According to his writing, an important feature of Gothic architecture was "the new relationship between function and form, structure and appearance."[13] Influenced by Neoplatonic and Augustinian aesthetic ideas, Gothic cathedrals were developed "according to true measure" — a phrase inherited from the Roman architect, Vitruvius, which von Simson defines as "the geometrical expression of the octave ratio in terms not of the rectangle, 1:2 [...], but of the square, the geometrical representation of the Godhead."[14] The whole structure of the cathedral derived from this geometry that served a "seemingly dual symbolism of the cathedral, which is at once a 'model' of the cosmos and an image of the Celestial

4
Gastón R. Gordillo, *Rubble: The Afterlife of Destruction* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 5.

5
Ibid., 6.

6
Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicolson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 38-39.

7
This is an oversimplified explanation of the spatial triad, for a more complex analysis of the dialectic relations between the three moments see Christian Schmid, "Henri Lefebvre's Theory of the Production of Space: Towards a Three-Dimensional Dialectic," in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*, ed. Kanishka Goonewardena et al. (New York and London: Routledge, 2008) 27-45.

8
Gordillo, *Rubble*, 9.

9
It is a question whether the space of any kind of church is a concrete or an abstract space from the religious believers' point of view. I would argue that it is an abstraction since these spaces are meant to represent something else — the heavenly Jerusalem — but on the other hand they can be perceived as concrete manifestations of the sacred as well. It is a theological question — similarly to the debate of iconoclasm.

10
Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991), 118.

11
Gordillo, *Rubble*, 9.

12
Jean Baudrillard, *Simulations* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1983.) 11-12.

13
Otto von Simson, *The Gothic Cathedral. Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order*, (Princeton University Press, 1962), 4.

14
Ibid., 49.

City."[15] In other words, for the medieval mind, the Gothic cathedral was not just an abstract representation of the Heavenly Jerusalem, but a concrete, tangible equivalence of it that made it possible for them to experience it. In Lefebvrian terms, the cathedral was primarily a directly lived representational space that provided the believers with an immediate connection to what the space of the building represented. This aspect of the creation of Notre-Dame corresponds to Baudrillard's first successive phase of the image: "the reflection of a basic reality" where "the representation is of the order of sacrament."[16] The spatial design of the building reflected the religious ideas, thus it made it possible for the believers to experience the sanctity through the liturgic (spatial) practices. In this sense, the perceived, the conceived, and the lived space of the cathedral were unified.

Fast-forwarding through history, the French Revolution, a period of bloody insurrection inspired by Enlightenment ideals against the *Ancient Régime* — the feudalist absolute monarchy and the political influence of the Catholic Church — marks a change in the Notre-Dame's representative order. In the 1790s, the French revolutionary republicans encountered a major dilemma: on the one hand, they knew that "France was a treasure house of Western art" that needed to be protected, but on the other hand, "the men of the Revolution knew that painting, sculpture, and architecture, in the years before 1789, had been used as instruments of social control."[17] For the revolutionaries, the social, political, and religious values represented by pre-revolutionary art were 'untrue,' therefore they had to be destroyed. The Notre-Dame, amongst other churches, was 'dechristianized' and turned into a Temple of Reason, where many paintings and sculptures of the *ancien régime* were destroyed in bonfires celebrating the Enlightenment, although, some of the revolutionaries recognized the value of these artworks, thus many of them were saved. This destructive attitude towards artistic representations can be understood through Baudrillard's 'second phase of the image': the revolutionaries saw the artefacts as representations of a social, political, and religious order that was no longer their reality. It perverted their reality, as it was an "*evil* appearance — of the order of malefice."[18] For the building itself it was a step towards becoming a simulacrum. With its rationally conceived geometry, and the new spatial practices in its space, the Notre-Dame became a Temple of Reason, and with it a representation of the absolute opposite of its original meaning. For this, an abstraction of the space was necessary to allow the revolutionaries to separate the physical space of the cathedral from its representations. Simultaneously, the quandary of the republicans wanting to destroy the representations of the old system and saving valuable artworks resulted in the creation of public museums, such as the Louvre. In turn, another abstract comprehension was necessary to deprive the re-contextualised artworks of their original meaning: "immure a political symbol in a museum and it becomes merely art — iconoclasm is thus achieved without destruction."[19]

15
Ibid., 37.
16
Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 11-12.
17
Stanley J. Idzerda, "Iconoclasm During the French Revolution," *The American Historical Review* 60, no. 1. (1954): 13.
18
Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 12.

The French Revolution lasted only 10 years — a relatively short time considering the centuries-old history of the building — but the representational space of the Notre-Dame would not be the same after it, despite the efforts made to restore the building in the middle of the nineteenth-century. During the dictatorial reign of Napoleon III following the 1848 revolution, the Gothic cathedral was considered a historic monument which, due to its condition after the *vandalisme* of the Revolution, needed to be restored, however, the question was how to restore it. In 1853, Baron Haussmann was appointed prefect of the Seine by Napoleon III, and with him, the modernization of Paris had begun — a process that radically reshaped the urban environment in alignment with the political intents of the regime, during which the role of the historic building in the city changed into a depoliticized cultural monument.[20] The restoration work of the Notre-Dame however, already started in 1845 by the architect Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc and his colleague, Jean-Baptiste Lassus. The goal of the restorations was to stop the decay of the building, and then to restore it to the way it looked before the Revolution. However, for Viollet-le-Duc, "restoring a building 'means neither to maintain it, nor to repair it, nor to rebuild it; it means to re-establish it in a finished state, which may in fact never have actually existed at any given moment'."[21] In this sense, his standpoint was similar to those nineteenth-century critics, for whom the restoration of historic buildings paradoxically meant the loss of their historical significance: "through its very restoration, the historic building is cut off from the present, thus from the continuum of history."[22] This idea is reflected by Viollet-le-Duc's 1857 design for the new spire — after the death of Lassus.[23] This spire — the same one that was destroyed in the recent fire — stood out from the historic structure of the cathedral by its style, the used matters, and by the statues added to its base. For the architect, it was a tool "to transform Notre-Dame into a marker of medieval Paris in the reconstructed fabric of the city."[24] Consequently, Viollet-le-Duc's restorations had two purposes: to eradicate the physical evidence of the role of the Notre-Dame in the French Revolution and to give it a new meaning in the modern city; both of which were in alignment with the newly emerged modern representations of space.

The modernization and 'Haussmannization' of the city that cleared the politically undesirable elements — the slums of the working-class — from the surroundings of the cathedral had a similar effect by reconceptualizing the building as a "politically neutral cultural monument that would not disturb the political regimes that brought the modern city into being through references to violent uprisings or to specifically local concerns.[25] From that moment on, the Notre-Dame had lost its political significance and became part of a process that Baudrillard later described as "museumification" through the case of the mummy of Ramses.[26] There

19
Idzerda, "Iconoclasm During the French Revolution," 26.
20
Kevin D. Murphy, "The Historic Building in the Modernized City: The Cathedrals of Paris and Rouen in the Nineteenth century." *Journal of Urban History* 37, no. 2 (2011): 281.
21
Ibid., 280.
22
Ibid., 279.
23
Ibid., 288.
24
Ibid., 289.
25
Ibid., 293.
26
See Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 13-23. ("Rameses, or Rose-Coloured Resurrection").

is a similar logic behind the preservation of the Gothic cathedral and the preservation of an Egyptian mummy. As it is articulated by Baudrillard, "[o]ur entire linear and accumulative culture would collapse if we could not stockpile the past in plain view."[27] However, as we saw in Murphy's analysis of Violet-le-Duc's intentions, the eradication of the revolutionary role of the cathedral by the means of its restoration served the purpose of emphasizing an imagined continuity in the history of France.[28] Paradoxically, therefore, it was its nineteenth-century restoration that turned the Notre-Dame into a ruin: an abstract representation of its own history.

The fire that destroyed the spire and other parts of the cathedral created a cognitive dissonance: it was difficult to comprehend the destruction of something that was, in the mind of the public, supposed to be everlasting; an object that was canonized as a significant element of Western-European culture and thus a representation of Paris and France. As such, it was supposed to exist beyond the concept of time. After the catastrophe, there were two options: to reconstruct the building as it was before the fire, or to give it a new form, and with it, a new meaning to incorporate it into the present. Architects and artists from around the world created proposals for possible new designs — some of them were serious, others more flippant, while others tried to critically reflect on issues, such as climate change or the ongoing events of unrest in France. Nevertheless, the decision of the French senate was to rebuild the spire in its "original" form. What does this mean in light of our analysis? The building will become a copy of a never-existing original — as its "original" was already an inauthentic copy itself. We arrive at Baudrillard's final phase of the image which "bears no relation to any reality whatever: it is its own pure simulacrum."[29] While the fire was a truly tragic event, it created an opportunity to reincorporate the historic monument into the present reality: to turn it into something that is not just a *ruin*, a fetishized remnant of the past, or a signifier of an idealized linear European history.

Nonetheless, the decisions made at a higher level are not the only elements that define the future of the building. As we saw, the spatial practices of the users can radically shift the meanings linked to spaces of representation, therefore what Baudrillard considered a one-way procession of the simulacra can be detoured and take on new directions. In the meantime, spatial practices of the users can be regulated by rules and policies, that is, representations of space made by decision-makers. Therefore, the chance that the building ceases to be a mere representation, a tourist attraction, are small. It is here, where the dialectics of the Lefebvrian triad are the most discernible: space — in this case the space of a building — is not fixed, it is in constant change, even when conceived differently. For some, the Gothic cathedral might still represent the Heavenly Jerusalem in its very structure and materiality, for others, it might be a symbol of oppression. Yet, for the majority, it is a depoliticized and profane tourist attraction that represents the site of historic events but, as an abstraction, it is extracted from the flow of history, therefore it is imagined as unchangeable. The purpose of rebuilding the cathedral as it was before the fire — which can be understood from the perspective of decision-makers as a reaction to the contemporary public sentiment, heated by right-wing populists, encouraging the narrative that Western European culture is in danger — is to keep the building out of history. However, in its material existence, the Notre-Dame will always be exposed to change, a fact that is easily forgotten when we look at it only as a representation. Whether its reconstruction will create the simulation of an uninterrupted, linear, continuously developing history is questionable, as its role in history should be.

Máté Hulesch is a Research Master student in Critical Studies in Art and Culture at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, with a background in architecture and design theory. His research revolves around spatial questions, experimenting with the applicability of a dialectic analysis of space on various levels.

27 Ibid., 19.

28 Murphy "The Historic Building in the Modernized City", 292.

29 Baudrillard, *Simulations*, 11.