CONTESTED COLLECTIVITIES:
EUROPE REIMAGINED BY CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

by

Brianne Cohen

B.A., Pomona College, 2004

M.A., Courtauld Institute of Art, 2005

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This dissertation was presented

by

Brianne Cohen

It was defended on

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and approved by

Barbara McCloskey, Associate Professor, History of Art and Architecture

Randall Halle, Professor, Department of German

Josh Ellenbogen, Assistant Professor, History of Art and Architecture

Dissertation Advisor: Terry Smith, Professor, History of Art and Architecture

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This dissertation studies a particular current of contemporary art, which is devoted to exploring positive models for an intercultural imaginary in Europe. In recent times, there has been much contestation over a European identity following decolonization, mass immigration, globalization, and the breaking down of political boundaries on the continent. Numerous artists are scrutinizing a symbolic-visual realm increasingly shaped by stereotypes, misinformation, and distortions concerning "foreigners" and immigrants. This dissertation examines the work of three artists and art groups – the filmmaker and video installation artist Harun Farocki, the public installation artist Thomas Hirschhorn, and the transnational art collective, "Henry VIII's Wives." Each explores various forms, such as film, television, the Internet, radio, and so on, in order to probe how the media shapes public opinion and group identification. Through these three cases, the dissertation charts a changing narrative of "Europeanness" from hopes for a federation after the racial genocide of World War II through critiques of nationalism after decolonization, the "failure" of multiculturalism since the 1990s, and intensified Roma discrimination, Islamophobia, and right-wing extremism in the twenty-first century.

At stake is a broader question of how strangers may relate to one another in an increasingly proximate world. Within the field of contemporary art history, scholars have focused recently on issues of collective spectatorship and participation, or how multiple viewers around an artwork may connect with one another and not just an object. Since the 1990's, there

has emerged a robust line of inquiry directed at socially-oriented art practices, variously studied as "community" art, "relational" art, "dialogical" art, and so on. While this scholarship has opened up a rich discourse about different aspects of socially-engaged practices, there has not been a study of artists who focus on the specific dilemmas of constructing a present-day "European community." The European Union itself, for example, which touts a slogan of being "United in Diversity," is an exemplary model to rethink questions of cross-cultural exchange and hopes for inter-relating a mass body of strangers. This dissertation investigates contemporary artists in Europe who are staking aesthetic questions of collective engagement in vivid socio– and geopolitical terms.

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PREFACE

I am tremendously grateful to many who have helped and guided me in the process of writing

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the local to the planetary, but also to attend to the many registrations and nuances within such

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Lastly, I am tremendously grateful to my family for their love and encouragement. My mother has guided me in innumerable, positive ways: her keen understanding of politics, justice, and interpersonal relationships has deeply shaped my life. My father, in turn, is the original Germanophile and instilled in me a great desire for travel, languages, and cultural learning at an early age. My aunt in Italy, Nancy Burns, has also provided me a second home in Europe and helped me immeasurably throughout this project. I do not know what we would do, lastly, without Becky Cohen and Michael Freeman in our lives now – their presence is inestimable.

Graduate life has also brought me together with Nels Beckman. More than any place, he is my home. With his love, all of the vagaries of life seem bearable, and all of possibilities of life endless. He is my partner in the truest sense of the word.

Finally, I have learned so much from my siblings as well – Matt and Mike, but particularly in the context of my academic career, Brigid, who is a professor in twentieth-century musicology. Over the past decade, she has not only acted as an important sounding board for my ideas, but also spent countless hours helping me hone applications, essays, and so on. More than anyone, I have drawn inspiration from her example, and her belief in my work has been invaluable. I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Brigid.

1.0   INTRODUCTION

In July 2011, right-wing extremist and self-described Christian crusader Anders Behring Breivik widely disseminated a 1,500-page manifesto, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence." Marking the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna, as supposedly the last united European effort to repel Muslim forces, the manifesto calls for the violent erasure of Islam, immigrants, multiculturalism, and "cultural Marxism" – all elements purportedly destroying European civilization.[1] He publicized his missive via social media accounts on Facebook and Twitter, and only days later on July 22, killed seventy-seven people in Oslo, Norway. After exploding a car bomb in front of a downtown government building, he traveled to a nearby island, Utoya, and calculatedly shot down the next generation of Labor Party leaders and political activists at a summer youth camp, some no more than sixteen years old. Breivik's act was singularly shocking, but perhaps more striking is the fact that his beliefs echo many widely-held, if less radical views today in Europe, regarding immigration, Muslims, and culturally-mixed communities.

Such hostilities have not occasioned this tragedy, but Breivik's manifesto is certainly symptomatic of a larger, growing problem on the continent over the last decades. How have fears of "non-European foreigners" calcified in every major western European country? How has their

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[1] "Breivik Manifesto: What Does '2083' Mean?," *International Business Times* (July 27, 2011), http://www.ibtimes.com/articles/187932/20110727/breivik-manifesto-2083-anders-behring-breivik-eurabia.htm (accessed August 5, 2011), no page numbers.

scapegoating and demonization become so acceptable and normal in a mainstream public discourse? Economic insecurities, particularly in the last few years, have aggravated the perception that "outsiders" are co-opting jobs and draining state resources, but material concerns only constitute part of the issue. Just as significant are the methods by which political leaders and the mass media have shaped such negative public opinion vis-à-vis a symbolic-visual realm. This dissertation interrogates the construction of such an aesthetic domain – its means and ends, and the possibilities of critically transforming it through collective awareness.

Indeed, this study analyzes a particular current of contemporary art, which is devoted to exploring positive models for an intercultural imaginary in Europe. In recent times, there has been much contestation over a European identity following decolonization, mass immigration, globalization, and the breaking down of political boundaries on the continent. Numerous artists are scrutinizing a symbolic-visual realm increasingly shaped by stereotypes, misinformation, and distortions concerning "foreigners" and immigrants. This dissertation examines the work of three artists and art groups – the filmmaker and video installation artist Harun Farocki, the public installation artist Thomas Hirschhorn, and the transnational art collective, "Henry VIII's Wives." Each explores various forms, such as film, television, the Internet, radio, and so on, in order to probe how the media shapes public opinion and group identification. Through these three cases, the dissertation charts a changing narrative of "Europeanness" from hopes for a federation after the racial genocide of World War II through critiques of nationalism after decolonization, the "failure" of multiculturalism since the 1990s, and intensified Roma discrimination, Islamophobia, and right-wing extremism in the twenty-first century.

Though the chapters in this dissertation highlight the respective work of their differing artistic practices, they also follow three basic, related questions: what, who, and how? What does

the modern social mediascape look like today; what predominantly constitutes it and makes it so malleable for the advancement of xeno-racist discourse? One answer is an overwhelming barrage of "objective" information, such as statistics, stereotypes, and surveillance, which Harun Farocki asks viewers to filter and reconfigure with a humanist ethics. Who then is the dominant public that absorbs this massive body of information? Who are the "outsiders" and the "insiders" in the public's perception? Thomas Hirschhorn tackles the question of this quite globalized, European "community" and denaturalizes its presumed social normatives in order to advocate a more creative, complex world-making. Lastly, how are such distinctly exclusivist, supremacist narratives disseminated and popularized among a larger demographic? Henry VIII's Wives investigate the avenues through which anti-immigrant, anti-"foreigner" sentiment propagates in the mass media (with icons, symbols, popular unifying narratives, etc.), attempting to appropriate those same channels to construct a more open, pluralistic vision of being-together. Though organized along the lines of these three principal questions – what, who, and how – it will become evident throughout this study that they are not so easily delimited from one other. Moreover, numerous artists are addressing a similar problematic, yet these three practices are exemplary, insofar as they offer rich, insightful responses to such fundamental questions.

This introduction, in turn, begins with the question of why. Why have xeno-racisms proliferated in the last ten to twenty years throughout Western Europe? Why has a fear of "outsiders" grown pronounced in the mass media, and why are political extremists able to co-opt this anxiety so successfully in mobilizing popular support? Why is such an analysis relevant to the field of art history? In so many words, contemporary artists are imagining how strangers can live together in a common, increasingly proximate world, without needing to rely on positive content such as religion, race, etc. The following chapter begins with a survey of critical thought

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regarding audience spectatorship in contemporary art. This section charts a transition from thinking about "community-based arts" in the 1990s through numerous other models for non-value-based collectivization in the 2000s. The next section situates such a pursuit, in the aesthetic realm, within the specific sociopolitical context of "Europe," paying particular attention to those countries that have long stood at the traditional heart of the continent, historically, discursively, and geographically (Germany, France, Italy, and so on). What are the stakes of these collectivizing artistic endeavors? What would their projects mean if set not in an abstract model, but within the difficult borders of a "European" community? The third section offers a number of examples of other artists, institutions, and exhibitions, beyond the work of Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives, that have also attempted to negotiate such issues. Finally, the last two sections develop a critical framework for this study, advocating primarily postcolonial and continental theoretical perspectives; provide an overview of the methodological issues involved; and lay out the principle content of the following chapters.

Crucial to this dissertation is an inquiry into the changing social imaginary of a globalized, contemporary Europe, and how to resist xeno-racisms that have arisen and will arise in conjunction with such a project. It is a question for a collective, not only an individual, because it principally interrogates methods and forms of communication – of intersubjective discourse and circulation – as they structure the inclusion/exclusion of certain peoples. Mass communicative processes in the last century are just as visual as enunciative or textual, mediated through innumerable technologies and forms, and the artistic practices featured in this study reflect the use of such a broad array of media. It is the hope that their experimentation can develop more positive models for reimagining contested collectivities in Europe, to reflect and

reconcile the diversity of numerous culturally-heterogeneous peoples increasingly bound together by virtue of their temporal, spatial, and technologically-constructed proximity.

1.1 LIVING IN A COMMON WORLD: CONTEMPORARY ART HISTORY AND THEORY

Theories of collective spectatorship abound in recent art historical scholarship on contemporary art, concerning the potential inter-relations and inter-activation generated among multiple viewers around an artwork. In previous decades, scholars challenged the notion of the individual viewer as an abstractly rational, holistic entity, suggesting that identity is a constantly reconstructed and shifting category. Not only poststructuralist and psychoanalytic theories, but also feminism, sex and gender, race, imperialism, and globalization theories helped to denaturalize the presumed, normative conventions of bodies in public spaces – or in other words, the abstract placeholder of a "neutral," white male viewing body. Today a widespread shift has occurred from decentering any essentialized category of a single viewer to examining the phenomenon of heterogeneous group viewership. There is a proliferation of signifiers to label people engaged with an artwork – audience members, spectators, participants, visitors, observers and so forth – and there are many more theories attempting to explain these viewers' newly heightened role – their engagement, interaction, participation, or inter-relationality with other viewers – in the communal production of the artwork's meaning. Whereas a post-1960s history of activating individual viewers in interactive environments has been well traced, a history of

artistic production as socially-oriented has only more recently surfaced as a robust line of inquiry.[2]

Problems of collectivism as "community" figured most prominently in the mid-1990s and around the turn of the century. During this time, for instance, Suzanne Lacy mapped a history of socially- and politically-engaged artworks as "new genre public art," which were pieces geared towards diverse audiences in public spaces, utilizing both traditional and non-traditional media.[3] Her alternative history invoked common values from a leftist tradition, including social activism and a collaborative methodology, and showcased issues of "audience, relationship, communication, and political intention."[4] Lacy's tracing of this history tied these multifarious new genre public artworks to critical historical events such as women's and minority movements, U.S. imperialism and violence, artistic censorship, and growing environmental awareness from the late '60s through the '80s.

Her volume set the stage for more extensive inquiries into the possibilities and limitations of "community-based art," as elaborated by Miwon Kwon and Grant Kester, for instance, who have adopted fairly distinct positions. In her book, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (2002), Kwon critiques the promulgation of "newly bureaucratized and formulaic versions of community-based art: art + community + social issue = new critical/public art."[5] She provides a typology of problematic community-oriented artworks, as well as a wide array of examples and academic perspectives concerning this rising trend, principally underscoring the fact that communities should not be reduced to a single point of association

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[2] See Claire Bishop's introduction to *Participation: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: Whitechapel, 2006), 10-17.
[3] Suzanne Lacy, *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).
[4] Ibid., 28.
[5] Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 146.

(racial, social, geographical, etc.). She wishes to stress the "mediating forces of the institutional and bureaucratic frameworks that direct such productions of identity, and the extent to which the identity of such institutional forces are themselves in continuous process of (re)articulation."[6] Rather than a genre of community-based arts, therefore, Kwon proposes the theorization of a "collective artistic practice," which continually reflects upon its own exclusionary and inclusionary processes. This self-reflexive, necessarily incomplete, and projective rather than descriptive modeling would operate provisionally and always with an awareness of the specific circumstances of its production.[7]

Kester, in turn, has advocated a more concretely delineated model of "dialogical aesthetics." In his book *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (2004), he provides numerous examples of artists and artist collectives, such as Suzanne Lacy, Wochenklausur, Superflex, and Ne Pas Plier, who attempt to catalyze material, positive social effects through an emphasis on collaborative encounters and conversations.[8] Site-specific and context-bound artistic interventions foster such discussions by creating more carefully-crafted spaces and non-judgmental, open scenarios. Kester insists that these works are not social activism per se, but must be analyzed as a complexly liminal type of art that nurtures new perspectives and possibilities for communicative exchange and community mediation.[9] Rather than shock the viewer out of a certain orthodox complacency – a tactic historically associated with the modernist avant-garde tradition – dialogical artworks act more cumulatively and

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[6] Ibid., 151.
[7] Ibid., 154-55.
[8] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
[9] Ibid., 11.

durationally, slowly building social change through time and multiple encounters.[10] Furthermore, Kester characterizes Kwon's position as overly critical, as foreclosing certain possibilities for practical work to be done in community building. He argues that some grounding in identity is necessary in order to strategically counter the oppression of particular subjects targeted by violence, but also maintains that this identity need not be essentialized. It can admit a degree of fluidity and incoherence in its continually-shifting construction of collective identity.[11]

To be sure, in the last decade, one of the most pressing issues in art historical scholarship has been the attempt to recuperate an idea of social collectivism from identitarian community politics.[12] Kwon concludes *One Place After Another*, for instance, by drawing from the work of Homi Bhabha, calling upon the reader to register the "relational specificity" of identities fabricated by place and space. One must recognize the inequities among people, places, and conditions, and not think of them sequentially one *after* another, but rather as proximately adjacent and contingently located.[13]

Kwon resolves her account with a type of "common world" approach. Rather than rehearse debates in terms of group essentialism and particularism, the idea of collective being-together has shifted in focus from an issue of identity to one of shared and relational, though perhaps anonymous framing – whether this be a dinner table or the planet.[14] Instead of community, therefore, one might speak in terms of a neighborhood, where inhabitants are bound together due to proximity, but identity does not circumscribe their positive identification with

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[10] Ibid., 12.
[11] Ibid., 159-70.
[12] See for instance the collection of essays in *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics*, eds. Beth Hinderliter, William Kaizen, Vered Maimon, Jaleh Mansoor, and Seth McCormick (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[13] Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 166.
[14] For recent theories of social affiliation based upon planetarity see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003) and Dipesh Chakrabarty, "The Climate of History: Four Theses" in *Critical Inquiry* (Vol. 35, No. 2, Winter 2009), 197-222.

each other. Space, time, and the material world frame cultural differences without defining them. Categories of "the public" or "planetarity," for instance, have come to signify an interactive collectivism built around and upon a common material world, emphasizing a social fabric for human communication and exchange rather than a rigidly-demarcated national, communal, or religious symbolic realm. This type of association is contingent and perhaps unstable, but still established upon a shared and tangible landscape (even if this landscape is itself continuously changing).

Art may play a key role in the construction of such extemporaneous common worlds. The question remains as to the criticality of such creations, or the artist's ability to also self-reflexively engage circumstantial, contextually-bound inequities that inform such fabricated worlds. Nicolas Bourriaud, for instance, has claimed that much art from the 1990s operated under the rubric of "relational aesthetics."[15] Artists, instead of tackling quite problematic issues of community building, attempted to create social microcosms for convivial encounter. He suggests, "Each particular artwork is a proposal to live in a shared world, and the work of every artist is a bundle of relations with the world, giving rise to other relations, and so on and so forth, ad infinitum;" inter-subjectivity becomes the "quintessence" of artistic practice.[16] Numerous scholars have subsequently scrutinized Bourriaud's account – Claire Bishop foremost among them. In her essay "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," she challenges Bourriaud's claim that these artworks are – by virtue of their social form – politically engaged.[17] Encounters or relationships in and of themselves do not constitute democratic communication or affiliation.

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[15] Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods with the participation of Mathieu Copeland (Dijon: Les Presses du réel, 2002).
[16] Ibid., 22.
[17] Claire Bishop, "Antagaonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 51-79.

Who are these artworks engaging: how so, and why?[18] By way of Rosalyn Deutsche's work on

art in the public sphere, Bishop reintroduces a theoretical framework of democratic, social

interaction by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, one demarcated by antagonism among

heterogeneous participants. As a purported model for critical artistic production in the realm of

human exchange, relational aesthetics does not allow for the necessary friction, debate, and

conflicts that arise with, again, non-immanent "communities."[19]

In the recent past, one of the most compelling versions of a common-world aesthetic

approach has been advanced by Jacques Rancière, who writes of the world of the "sensible."

This simultaneously signifies sensation (how one feels, sees, hears, etc.) and "sense" in terms of

meaning.[20] A "community of sense" is not grounded in feeling, but rather a common frame that

provides forms of visibility and patterns of intelligibility, one that separates and associates

humans at the same time. Communal art spectatorship, with this in mind, becomes a potential

locus for meaningful human interconnectivity: through shared objects, it reconfigures the relation

between bodies and the "cartography of the perceptible, the thinkable and the feasible."[21] Similar

to Kester, Rancière marks a paradigm shift in models of critical art, away from the modernist,

avant-garde "logic of dissensus" or dialectical clash and towards a "testimony of co-presence:"[22]

> For instance, by replacing matters of class conflict with matters of inclusion and exclusion, it puts worries
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> about the 'loss of the social bond,' concerns with 'bare humanity,' or tasks of empowering threatened
>
> identities in the place of political concerns. Art is summoned thus to put its political potentials to work in

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[18] Ibid., 65.
[19] Ibid., 65-7.
[20] Jacques, Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics," in *Communities of Sense*, 39.
[21] Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2009), 72.
[22] Rancière, "Contemporary Art and the Politics of Aesthetics," 48-9.

reframing a sense of community and mending the social bond. [This testifies to the] reconfiguration of the political in the form of the ethical.[23]

In another essay, Rancière tackles the problem of spectatorship as a phenomenon associated with passivity, ignorance, and potentially, voyeurism. The disciplinary field of theater represents this bias most distinctly, where numerous practitioners such as Bertolt Brecht (with the "epic theater") and Antonin Artaud ("theater of cruelty") have attempted to transform passive audiences into "the active body of a community enacting its living principle," or in other words, to engage spectators on the stage, in the world, as actors.[24] Rancière maintains that this desire for role-reversal upholds an unrealistic dichotomy between viewing and doing: spectatorship may involve quite engaged reflection and self-reflexive contemplation, where one may translate events into one's own experiences and values. Spectatorship, not action, is one's normal condition. Thus the "emancipated spectator" is not one defined by a rigid taxonomy of those who look and those who act, and an "emancipated community," in turn, is one of narrators and translators who make a story their own, not necessarily through live action but rather through critical observation and interpretation.[25] The "telling of a story, the reading of a book, or the gaze focused on an image" may have equal emancipatory potential for a group of spectators.[26]

Boris Groys extends the notion of a "community of viewers," which unlike traditional communities, are "radically contemporary."[27] They are created through mass culture and often do not even realize they are communities: they are transitory, anonymously associated, arbitrarily composed, lack a shared identity or prehistory, and may or may not have much to say to each

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[23] Ibid., 49.
[24] Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator*, 5.
[25] Ibid., 22.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Boris Groys, "Europe and Its Others," in *Art Power* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 181.

other.[28] Groys' description strikingly echoes Michael Warner's definition of a "public," which Chapter 3 outlines in detail.[29] With such a loosely-affiliated "community," one so widely prevalent in mass culture, art can assume a unique role.[30] Groys posits that the stage, screen, or otherwise sited artwork may redirect the gaze from looking forward, to looking around, within, and among a community of viewers. In so many words, art may be social and political today because it reflects upon the "space of assembly," irrespective of political content. An interchangeability of bodies and gazes is posited, and this possible exchange puts the self and other, the familiar and alien in heightened relief.[31] This is a slightly different vantage point on what would transform spectatorial collectivism into an act not only social (communicative, dialogical, interstitial), but also political.

In his analysis, Groys assigns unique importance to video installation, which alongside community-based arts or relational aesthetics, has also been the most prominent trend in artistic production since the 1990s. According to Tanya Leighton, in her introduction to *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (2008), it is now the "dominant form" of contemporary art.[32] Projected-image works are ubiquitous in the global biennial circuit, and not surprisingly so, for both formats often emphasize issues of display, exhibition, and location. Similar to Groys, Leighton insists that video experimentation frequently works to engage a "politics of counterpublicity:" not to engage necessarily with political content, but rather with a "homogenized public sphere of mass culture."[33] Rejecting a long history of audience immersion in cinema and installation art, much moving-image work today attempts to catalyze this "space

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[28] Ibid.
[29] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002).
[30] Groys, "Europe and Its Others," 182.
[31] Ibid.
[32] Tanya Leighton, ed., *Art and the Moving Image: A Critical Reader* (London: Tate, 2008), 7.
[33] Ibid., 27.

of assembly," or to offer "models or prototypes of collectivity," as Maeve Connolly alternately

describes it, against a backdrop of a hegemonic mass media.[34] Video art could potentially act as a

democratizing or at least communally self-reflexive tool. Leighton cites Walter Benjamin's

famous essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility:" "In big

parades and monster rallies, in sports events and in war, all of which nowadays are captured by

camera and sound recording, the masses are brought face to face with themselves."[35] What kind

of critical role can the screen/camera play in the social and political dimensions of the public

sphere and collectivization?

Groys suggests a vital one, which this study posits as a leading question. In the

contemporary world, most information is communicated by visual means, including political

information. In his essay, "Europe and Its Others" (2008), he maintains that though art is always

a commodity, it is also a statement in a public space.[36] A larger public always constitutes art's

primary audience. In Europe this is especially pertinent concerning the debates over Islamic

fundamentalism and multiculturalism, which inevitably become visually-oriented: "politically

explosive problems are ignited almost exclusively by images: Danish cartoons, women behind

veils, videos of bin Laden."[37] When newscasters report on the topic of multiculturalism in their

respective countries, this predictably leads to images of European metropolitan streets with

passersby of different colors. Culture automatically becomes visual, signified by race.[38] When

Groys speaks of collective spectatorship – a "community of viewers" – and the desire to disturb

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[34] Maeve Connolly, *The Place of Artists' Cinema* (Chicago: Intellect, 2009), 10.
[35] Leighton, *Art and the Moving Image*, 34.
[36] Groys, "Europe and Its Others," 180.
[37] Ibid., 179.
[38] Ibid.

the familiar and the alien in a "space of assembly," he specifically invokes the visual politics of integration and migration in Europe today.

This dissertation does not subscribe to any one model of artistic engagement (community-based arts, dialogical aesthetics, relational aesthetics, communities of sense, and so forth); indeed, there have been too many recent theories of spectatorial collectivism to elaborate on them all. What the following chapters do attempt is a sustained reflection on this shift in the scholarship, and its critical insights, in relation to a specific problematic of constructing a contemporary, culturally-heterogeneous, "European"-based identity. Why have issues of community and identity formation, forms of exchange, issues of democratic association, effects of media culture, and methods of inclusion and exclusion, all been so prevalent in the scholarship in the last two decades? Much of the aforementioned work is either highly theoretical and dislocated, or on the opposite side of the spectrum, quite specific in relation to unique, contained analyses of artworks or artistic practices. This study attempts to insert itself somewhere in-between these two critical strategies, taking as its object of inquiry an ongoing site of unparalleled historical and political mediation today – "Europe" – negotiated in the sense of both political-cultural conflict as well as visual-textual discourse. "Europe," as a socially- and discursively-conceived entity, offers a unique entry point to interrogate the real stakes of imagining pluralistic human affiliation in a "common world."

1.2 AT THE LIMITS OF A EUROPEAN COLLECTIVISM

In 2007, the European Union marked its fiftieth anniversary. In the early 1950s, a proposal to render France and Germany economically co-dependent precipitated the formation of the EU,

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aiming to prevent further warfare. In 1951 the European Coal and Steel Community was forged ostensibly as a purely economic pact among six nations (France, Germany, and also Italy, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands), but it was fundamentally shaped by an implicit mandate to create peaceful coexistence on the continent. Coal and steel, after all, were vital resources for any nation wishing to conduct war. Though not officially named the European Union at the time, the EU dates its origins back to the Treaty of Rome in 1957, which further deepened the economic ties of these six nations as a continental, economically-bound "community." Since then, the EU has developed into a massively bureaucratic, 27-member, supranational and intergovernmental entity. It has significantly expanded and deepened its own powers and responsibilities through successive treaties, and most recently, it has attempted to close any democratic deficit through direct representation of "the people" in a strengthened European Parliament. The EU enacts legislation concerning business and trade, human rights, environmental regulation, agriculture, immigration, and almost every area involved in the functioning of a traditional government. It even has its own court system and foreign relations. To be sure, it has been a tremendous, singular political experiment in its attempt to bring harmony and co-dependence to a region of historically-warring nation-states.

With such a project have come many more obstacles than easy alliances. Where are the borders of "Europe" located? Who are the "European people," and who or what defines such an identity? To put it in schematic terms, how has such an identity evolved from World War II through global decolonization to the end of the Cold War and the present-day, accelerated processes of globalization? In other words, has the European Union successfully moved in the direction of a cosmopolitical, citizen-based contemporaneity ("United in Diversity," as its slogan

declares)? Or has it itself invested too heavily in nationalist-style strategies, evolving into a

"Fortress Europe" by excluding and defining itself according to "non-European" others?

Étienne Balibar, in his collection of essays *We the People of Europe?*, foregrounds this

question of who or what precisely constitutes the "European people." For him, the question of

borders – both figurative and literal – is crucial. What is at stake are modes of exclusion and

inclusion in the European public sphere, in terms of both representation as well as material

circumstances.[39] How can the EU accomplish the "transnationalization" of the political, where

citizenship is the primary concern and not ethnic/cultural traits?[40]

Balibar claims that since the 1980s, Europe has witnessed a "recolonialization of social

relations," and goes so far as to compare it to the historical apartheid of South Africa.[41] For him,

there undeniably exists a hierarchy of populations, where the "foreigners among foreigners" –

the people coming from the global South including Africans, Arabs, and Turks – are situated at

the bottom of the social strata.[42] Many of these immigrants, still with homelands in the South,

straddle the border by producing on one side and reproducing on the other; they are "insiders"

but officially considered "outsiders."[43] Three types of violence arise from this recolonialization:

1) institutional violence, barely legal; 2) reactive violence by victims of discrimination (not from

undocumented workers, or *san papiers*, because their situation is too vulnerable, but rather

second- and third-generation young men who have been continually subjugated socially and

professionally); and 3) ideological, physical violence, by nationalist groups against aliens.[44]

Perhaps most serious of all for Balibar is the constructed invisibility of these social problems in

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[39] Étienne Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?: Reflections on Transnational Citizenship* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 4.
[40] Ibid., viii.
[41] Ibid., 41.
[42] Ibid., 63.
[43] Ibid., 123.
[44] Ibid., 46.

the public realm and its subsequent denial by the authorities in power. There is a whole class of "second-class citizens" under the arbitrary control of certain police and administrative bodies, where civil servants frequently transform into "petty tyrants convinced that they 'are the law' over an inferior population (just as was the case in the colonial empire)."[45]

Political theorist Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp, similarly, highlights the silenced invisibility of the immigrant and asylum-seeker detention system. For her, there is a growing ubiquity of "deterrence, regulation, settlement of populations in designated areas, bogus border closures, and incarceration" of (legal and illegal) immigrants throughout Europe – detention being the most acute phase and in "flagrant contradiction of the spirit of the 1951 Geneva Convention."[46] More broadly speaking, Europe has transitioned from a liberal democracy to "defensive democracy," in her opinion, one which favors security over liberty, where in Foucauldian terms, the "right to security" has become the "right to punish."[47] The expansion of the detention and imprisonment model attempts to naturalize this type of violence.[48] Aliens are silenced and isolated, their material detention made invisible. Tschopp cites, for example, a demonstration in Zurich where 500 protesters gathered outside of a prison to shout the word "freedom." 180 police officers confronted them, but the prison was so effectively sealed with special glazing and walls, that detainees could not even hear the demonstrators' call of solidarity.[49]

At the time of his analysis during the turn of the century, Balibar refers to the turmoil of the Balkan and Kosovo wars as the most pressing example of border violence, but in the last

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[45] Ibid., 64.
[46] Marie-Claire Caloz-Tschopp, "On the Detention of Aliens: The Impact on Democratic Rights," trans. Lindsay Hossack, *Journal of Refugee Studies* 10, no. 2 (1997): 166.
[47] Ibid., 166-7.
[48] Ibid., 168.
[49] Ibid., 177.

decade, one might point to the oppression of Romani peoples on the continent. The European

Union, Open Society Institute, World Bank, and United Nations Development Program are

among a number of institutions that have declared 2005-15 the Decade of Romani Inclusion in

nine countries in Central and Eastern Europe, an initiative that aims to advance Romani

integration by addressing issues of education, employment, health and housing, and widespread

discrimination throughout the continent.[50] Political scientist Nidhi Trehan and sociologist Angéla

Kóczé claim that since the fall of the eastern European socialist governments, there has been an

increase in the "spatial segregation" and housing evictions of Romani peoples.[51] French

president Nicolas Sarkozy, for instance, initiated a widespread crackdown on the country's

approximate 400,000 Roma in the summer of 2010 by destroying hundreds of encampments and

expelling a large number of their inhabitants, many of whom were legal French citizens.[52]

Belgium, Sweden, and Denmark have also attempted or actually deported hundreds of Roma as

well, and physical violence and discrimination against Romani groups is standard in eastern

European countries that are now part of the EU, including the Czech Republic, Hungary,

Slovakia, Romania, and Bulgaria. Many critics have viewed the deportations as a breach of EU

human rights laws. Even in Germany, in the process of repatriating thousands of Romani

children and adolescents to Kosovo in 2010, officials continued with the deportations despite the

fact that many of the Roma were born in Germany, had no Serbian or Albanian language skills,

and expected to face "appalling," discriminatory living conditions in Kosovo.[53]

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[50] Nidhi Trehan and Angéla Kóczé, "Racism, (neo-)colonialism and social justice: the struggle for the soul of the Romani movement in post-socialist Europe," in *Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe*, eds. Graham Huggan and Ian Law (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 51.
[51] Ibid., 54-5.
[52] Leigh Phillips, Kate Connolly, and Lizzy Davies, "EU turning blind eye to discrimination against Roma, say human rights groups," *The Guardian*, July 30, 2010, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/jul/30/european-union-roma-human-rights, no page numbers.
[53] Ibid.

In 2008, Italy declared a state of emergency over an influx of illegal immigrants and began a census of Roma, fingerprinting and photographing all above the age of fourteen.[54] Milan alone expelled 7,000 Roma between 2008-10, with Riccardo De Corato, the city's vice mayor in charge of handling the camps, explaining, "These are dark-skinned people, not Europeans like you and me." In Rome, the groups fair slightly better, where instead of outright deportation, the local government relocated them to camps with better sanitary conditions but also tighter security and twenty-four-hour video surveillance. Oliviero Forti, the immigration director for a Catholic charity in Rome, states that "it would be difficult now for immigration policy to get any more restrictive in Italy, unless we started to build walls." Part of the reason Italy's immigration policies have reached such a severe state, with criminal sentences for illegal immigrants typically longer than for regular citizens,[55] was due to Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi's recent government coalition with the extremist, right-wing Northern League Party, the fastest-growing party in Italy.[56] Since the 1990s, up until his resignation in November 2011, Berlusconi had continually won with the party's support and lost without it. Its members espouse a firm anti-immigrant, anti-European Union position and openly yield their influence in enacting anti-Roma legislation.

Almost every national government on the continent, as well as the supranational EU, has grappled with not only growing popular hostilities towards "dark-skinned non-Europeans," but also the concomitant rise to power of radical right-wing parties who have successfully exploited

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[54] Anthony Faiola, "Italy's Crackdown on Gypsies Reflects Rising Anti-Immigrant Tide in Europe," *Washington Post,* October 12, 2010, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/10/11/AR2010101105815.html?referrer=emailarticle, no page numbers.
[55] Richard Owen, "Italy Calls State of Emergency Over Influx of Immigrants," *Times*, July 26, 2008, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/europe/article4402443.ece, no page numbers.
[56] Rachel Donadio, "A New Power Broker Rises in Italy," *New York Times*, September 15, 2010, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/16/world/europe/16italy.html?scp=1&sq=A%20New%20Power%20Broker%20Rises%20in%20Italy&st=cse, no page numbers.

their electoral success. Though these parties are typically nationalist, their popular presence is pan-European, even in the traditionally liberal-leaning Scandinavian countries. The True Finns in Finland, for example, founded in 1995, won nineteen percent of the parliamentary vote in April 2011, becoming the third largest party in the nation, and in Norway, the Progress Party has become the second largest party, securing twenty-three percent of the vote in the last parliamentary election in September 2009.[57] Even Sweden for the first time in the fall of 2010 relinquished parliament seats to far-right party members. The governments of the Netherlands and Denmark, though leftist instead of conservative like Italy's, must also both depend on the support of far-right parties in their coalitions.[58] In the fall of 2010, the Danish People's Party, for instance, agreed to the government's annual fiscal budget only with the passing of "the most draconian immigration laws in Europe," which will establish real border controls again.[59] The growing success of the far-right parties has generally indicated waning support for center-left parties, such as the Dutch Labor party or Sweden's and Austria's social democratic parties.

Besides brokering the continual reshuffling, deportation, and denationalization of the Roma, the radical right-wing parties have also explicitly targeted Muslim groups. As in the United States, this often takes the form of resistance and violence against mosques. Most notably, in Switzerland in 2009 the construction of minarets, or Muslim prayer towers, was banned by popular referendum; not surprisingly, members of the far-right Swiss People's Party

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[57] Nicholas Kulish, "Norway Attacks Put Spotlight on Rise of Right-Wing Sentiment in Europe," *New York Times,* July 23, 2011, accessed August 5, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/24/world/europe/24europe.html?emc=eta1, 2.
[58] Suzanne Daley, "Swedes Begin to Question Liberal Migration Tenets," *New York Times*, February 26, 2011, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/27/world/europe/27sweden.html?emc=eta1, no page numbers.
[59] Ian Traynor, "Immigration: Far-Right Fringe Exploits European Coaltions," *Guardian*, Nov 15, 2010, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/nov/15/europe-immigration-far-right-threat, no pages numbers. See also Suzanne Daley, "Denmark Leads Nationalist Challenge to Europe's Open Borders," *New York Times,* June 24, 2011, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/25/world/europe/25denmark.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Denmark%20Leads%20Nationalist%20Challenge%20to%20Europe%E2%80%99s%20Open%20Borders&st=cse, no page numbers.

were pivotal in advancing the referendum. In October 2008, as another example, the Turkish-Islamic Union for Religious Affairs (DITIB) wished to build a larger, more visible mosque in lieu of an older one in Cologne, whose skyline is famously dominated by its Gothic-style Catholic cathedral.[60] A local, radical right-wing party Pro Köln exploited its representation in the city council to incite international debate, and the party invited members of Belgium's Vlaams Belang, France's National Front, and the Austrian Freedom Party to join in anti-Islam rallies in the city center. With counter-demonstrations planned, the police eventually banned the right-wing rally in order to prevent violent clashes.

In France, symbolic and real violence to "immigrant" bodies has particularly taken center stage in political matters. This not only includes massive riots in 2005, originating in the *banlieue* of Clichy-sous-Bois and spreading to poor housing projects throughout the country (discussed in greater length in Chapter 2). It also includes a continuing series of hunger strikes by illegal immigrants for the right to reside and work in France. In Limoges in 2006, for instance, forty-four hunger strikers, mostly from Algeria and Guinea, petitioned specifically for twelve-month residence permits. The group occupied a former police station after the French parliament adopted a new law restricting possibilities for entry by the immigrants' dependents; Houssni el-Rherabi, a spokesperson, voiced the group's concern of "always having to hide for fear of checks which would lead to detention."[61] In terms of symbolic violence inflicted upon the body, as recently as the spring of 2011, Islamic women are also now banned from wearing a full-

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[60] Ulrich Kober, "Introduction: European Challenges, Call for European Responses," in *Strategies for Combating Right-Wing Extremism in Europe*, ed. Bertelsmann Stiftung (Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2009), 9.
[61] "Africans in French Hunger Strike," *BBC News*, August 28, 2006, accessed August 5, 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/5292780.stm, no page numbers.

face veil, or *niqab*, in public. France is the first country in Europe to impose restrictions on attire that some Muslims consider obligatory for their religion.[62]

The National Front party in France has been one of the most enduring radical right-wing, anti-immigrant parties on the continent, founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie Le Pen. Whereas his rhetoric was primarily anti-Semitic ("the Nazi occupation of France was not particularly inhuman;" the gas chambers were "a detail;" "the races are unequal;" and "Jews have conspired to rule the world"), the new leader of the National Front, his daughter Marine Le Pen, has particularly scapegoated Muslims (for example, comparing the French having to endure Muslims praying on their streets as if living under Nazi occupation).[63] Marine Le Pen purports to defend Jews, gays, and women, insisting that her hardline stance on Muslim immigration is not xenophobic but practical. Part of her success in the polls, with a higher ranking than President Nicolas Sarkozy in 2011, is not only her "straight-talking" image, but also her mixture of far-right nationalism with leftist economics, maintaining that the state be held accountable for health care, education, and so forth. Blue-collar workers in both the public and private sectors cast their votes for her "honest," "progressive" outlook.

The same Islamophobic trend exists in Germany, despite its profoundly racist past and subsequent institutional, social, and legal efforts to curb hate crimes and fascist movements. Similar to the situation in France, prejudice and discrimination has made it quite difficult for Muslims to acquire jobs, find housing, or pursue a less-than-mediocre education. Disregarding these structural roadblocks, however, a prominent German banker, Thilo Sarrazin, recently

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[62] Steven Erlanger, "France Enforces Ban on Full-Face Veils in Public," *New York Times*, April 11, 2011, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/12/world/europe/12france.html?_r=1&emc=eta1, no page numbers.
[63] Russel Shorto, "Marine Le Pen, France's (Kinder, Gentler) Extremist," *New York Times*, April 29, 2011, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/magazine/mag-01LePen-t.html?_r=1&emc=eta1, no page numbers.

stirred controversy by declaring Muslim immigrants genetically inferior. According to him, intelligence is inherited, and since Muslims are less intelligent, the German population will inevitably "dumb down." A life-long Social Democrat, Sarrazin also blames Muslims for not integrating after exploiting Germany's social welfare benefits: "No other religion in Europe is so demanding, and no other migration group depends so much on the social welfare state and is so much connected to criminality."[64] On the fiftieth anniversary of the guest-worker program from Turkey, in 2011, Chancellor Angela Merkel declared that multiculturalism "has failed, utterly failed."[65] Within the same six months, Sarkozy and Britsh Prime Minister David Cameron also voiced such a belief. Merkel and Sarkozy, in particular, have been accused of catering to the more conservative fringe in their governments, as well as popular discontent, in order to retain their weakening hold on power in their respective countries. Numerous critics and journalists report that for the first time in Germany and Europe since World War II, racist rhetoric like Sarrain's has become not only widely publicized, but also socially acceptable.[66]

The growing acceptability of Sarrazin's inflammatory rhetoric in the public sphere partially stems from a decade-long, polarized debate concerning Turkey's possible accession into the EU. As Turkey made significant progress in meeting its candidacy criteria and demanded accession negotiations in 2002, it met significant resistance from a plethora of voices in Germany. The renowned Social Democratic historian, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, for example,

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[64] Michael Slackman, "With Words on Muslims, Opening a Door Long Shut," *New York Times*, November 12, 2010, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/13/world/europe/13sarrazin.html?emc=eta1, no page numbers.

[65] Nicholas Kulish, "Norway Attacks Put Spotlight on Rise of Right-Wing Sentiment in Europe," 1.

[66] Michael Slackman, "Right-Wing Sentiment, Ready to Burst its Dam," *New York Times*, Sept 21, 2010, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/22/world/europe/22germany.html?sq=Right-Wing%20Sentiment,%20Ready%20to%20Burst%20its%20Dam,%E2%80%9D%20&st=cse&adxnnl=1&scp=1&adxnnlx=1312923509-bo+ZR0VEdpN3B1NF4Gmwsg, no page numbers. In January 2011, Baroness Sayeeda Warsi, a Muslim who acts as the co-chairman of the Conservative Party in the UK and a minister in Cameron's government, called this the "dinner-table test," where prejudice against Muslims is openly socially acceptable. Lauren Collins, "England, Their England: Immigration and Resurgent Nationalism," *New Yorker*, July 4, 2011, 32.

published an article, "Das Türkenproblem" (The Turkish Problem) in a German liberal weekly, stressing Turkey's "non-European" character with a long-rehearsed, stultified narrative:[67]

> The Muslim Ottoman Empire was almost incessantly at war with Christian Europe for about 450 years; once its armies even stood at the gates of Vienna. These events have been deeply inscribed into the collective memory of the peoples of Europe, but also Turkey. Therefore there is no reason why this incarnation of an antagonism should be admitted into the EU.[68]

Once again, a debate concerning the inclusion/exclusion of diverse Turkish-Germans into a "European" or "German" community becomes couched in essentialist terms, recalling the simplistic manifesto widely disseminated by Anders Behring Breivik, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence." Edmund Stoiber, the former Prime Minister of the German state of Bavaria and head of the Christian Social Union, went further than Wehler in claiming, "Turkey did not participate in the Enlightenment and in the struggle the peoples of Europe fought for liberty, emancipation and solidarity. These, however, are the foundations of European values and identity."[69] As Balibar and others maintain, the borders of "Europe" – both figurative and real – are at the heart of deeply-entrenched, growing social divisions on the continent.

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[67]Christoph Ramm, "The 'Sick Man' Beyond Europe: The Orientalization of Turkey and Turkish Immigrants in European Union Accession Discourses in Germany," in *Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe*, 105.

[68] Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Das Türkenproblem" (The Turkish Problem), in *Die Zeit* (2002), as quoted in Ramm, "The 'Sick Man' Beyond Europe," 105.

[69] Ibid., 107, from *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, December 11, 2002.

1.3 RESPONSE IN THE VISUAL DOMAIN: INSTITUTIONS, EXHIBITIONS, AND ARTISTS

Racist and xenophobic discourse has developed into a normal and acceptable practice, above all, in the visual realm. It is a visual domain that depicts "non-traditional" Europeans as alarmingly alien in popular, contemporary culture. In Germany, historian Christoph Ramm notes that whereas older images emphasized the ethnic and cultural "otherness" of Turkish-Germans as *Ausländer* (foreigners), now the "increasingly heterogeneous German-Turkish community is being reduced to the vision of a Muslim collective living in 'parallel societies' and 'resisting integration.'"[70] He terms this the "Islamization" of German Turks: repeated images in the mass media subtly or overtly demarcate the "Turkish problem" with religious imagery, highlighting minarets or women wearing headscarves.[71] Chapter 1 analyzes this imagery in more detail. Furthermore, as noted previously, debates about Islamic fundamentalism and multiculturalism are staged most dramatically as visual problems: by cartoons in Denmark, images of women in veils, brief television clips of burning cars in Parisian *banlieues*, or Swiss street posters illustrating "white sheep" kicking "black sheep" out of the country."[72]

Artists and cultural producers are in a unique position to critique and shape this reductive visual landscape, and they are receiving official support and funding to do so. The European Union, for instance, has launched a massive campaign to promote respectful cultural exchange and intercultural understanding within its territory. With the signing of the Treaty of Lisbon in

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[70] Ibid., 109.
[71] Ibid., 106.
[72] Groys, 179.

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2007 (in lieu of an official constitution), the European Commission dedicated €400 million to

projects and initiatives from 2007-2013 that would "celebrate Europe's cultural diversity and

enhance [its] shared cultural heritage through the development of cross-border co-operation

between cultural operators and institutions."[73] The Culture Program's three main objectives are

to promote cross-border mobility of "cultural actors" and artists, to encourage the transnational

circulation of their work, and to foster intercultural dialogue. The program has financed such

projects as the European Capitals of Culture each year; EU prizes in cultural heritage,

architecture, literature, and music; and a pilot project to catalyze transnational "artist mobility,"

which aims to "enhance the cultural area shared by Europeans and encourage active European

citizenship." In 2008, the massive program also reserved €10 million of its budget for "The Story

of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue;" with this mission, each nation developed a

program catered to its own unique histories and specific political climate.[74] The government

organ in charge of cultural sponsorship, the European Commission, also appointed an

"Ambassador of Visual Arts" in 2008 – Manifesta, a pan-European contemporary art biennial.

The nomadic installation attempts to provide a networking platform for artists and cultural

workers throughout the continent, but has met with limited critical success due to its tremendous

scope and aims.

Though the EU's massive bureaucratic arm has pushed the vague theme of "intercultural

dialogue" since the Treaty of Lisbon, its investment has often yielded self-reflexive, critically-

honed exhibitions and artist projects. *Unpacking Europe* (2001-2002), for example, was a

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[73] European Commission Culture, "Culture Programme: A Serious Cultural Investment," July 7, 2010, accessed
August 5, 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc411_en.htm, no page numbers.
[74] European Commission, "The Story of the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008," August 6, 2010,
accessed August 5, 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/culture/our-programmes-and-actions/doc415_en.htm, no page
numbers.

prominent show hosted by the Boijmans Van Beuningen Museum after being conceived and developed during the Rotterdam Cultural Capital 2001. Curated by Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, the project hoped to "show Europe as 'the other'" by asking, "How European is Europe?"[75] In line with the EU's intercultural aims, though overtly critical of a type of "cosmetic" multiculturalism with "Benetton-like" advertising in the mass media, the organizers hoped to deconstruct the assumption of a prior, "pure" European culture and to recognize the cultural hybridity of an increasingly diverse populace on the continent.[76] An impressive, accompanying volume of scholarly essays included contributions from Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rustom Bharucha, Rey Chow, Jimmie Durham, Okwui Enwezor, Frederic Jameson, Naoki Sakai, Slavoj Žižek, and many more.

The exhibition also featured works by a wide array of internationally-based, critically-acclaimed artists such as Coco Fusco, Isaac Julien, Anri Sala, Fred Wilson, among others. Yinka Shonibare exhibited his now iconic *The Swing (after Fragonard)*, a spoof on French rococo artist Jean-Honoré Fragonard's eponymous classical painting. Shonibare's installation dresses the headless mannequin female in "African" textiles – Batik fabric believed to be of African origin but actually manufactured in the Netherlands, Britain, Indonesia, or other Asian countries – thus spotlighting the superficiality of "packaged" ethnicities in Europe.[77] Other artworks included Ken Lum's publically-placed billboards with images of speaking-but-statically-captured, presumably immigrant figures alongside text ("Wow, I really like it here I don't think I ever want to go home!" or "I'm sick of your views about immigrants. This is our home too!"); Keith Piper's computer-generated mapping of the surveillance of black Europeans in *A Fictional*

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[75] Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, introduction to *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2001), 12.
[76] Ibid., 9, 12.
[77] Ibid., 18, 396-401.

Tourist in Europe; Nasrin Tabatabai's chat room artwork based on the everydayness of religious beliefs; and Carmela Uranga's *Have a Seat* performance and video where stereotyped Roma musicians are disallowed from sitting at a table of "European nations" in their own game of musical chairs. Though aided by official support from the EU, *Unpacking Europe* not only focused on fostering "intercultural dialogue" or refuting immigrant stereotypes: it also critically examined power dynamics behind the façade of creating a cosmopolitical "European" identity.

Another exhibition aided by the EU Culture 2000 program (from 2000-2006, the precursor to the one established by the Lisbon treaty, with a smaller though still significant budget of €236.5 million), was *Populism* (2005).[78] Rather than focus on the limits of "European-ness," the curators more generally interrogated populist ideologies, particularly as they have propagated in Europe over the last decade.[79] A significant number of charismatic, radical right-wing demagogues (such as Geert Wilders in the Netherlands, Jörg Haider in Austria, Christoph Blocher in Switzerland, Filip Dewinter in Belgium, Jean-Marie and Marine Le Pen in France, among others), have dominated debates in the mass media concerning immigration and Islam with their inflammatory, emotionally-charged rhetoric. They have played to citizens' fears concerning cultural otherness, unemployment, and the declining welfare state, scapegoating immigrants in order to shore up popular appeal. Above all, at stake is not only their electoral success and any possible concrete policy changes, but also how their extremist demagogy changes public opinion and simplifies the terms of debate concerning "outsiders" in Europe.

A problem not limited to one country, the curators (Lars Bang Larson, Cristina Ricupero, and Nicolaus Schafhausen) likewise hosted the show concurrently in four different venues: the

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[78] European Commission, "Culture 2000: Presentation," accessed August 5, 2011, http://ec.europa.eu/culture/archive/culture2000/cult_2000_en.html, no page numbers.
[79] Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero, and Nicolaus Schafhausen, eds., *The Populism Catalogue* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005).

Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo; the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; and the Frankfurter Kunstverein in Germany. The artists included tackled a wide array of issues related to populism, concerning protest movements, the dynamics of political parties, neo-nazism, popular music, propaganda, border control, asylum seekers, modern Turkish women, the mass media, and much more. A few notable artworks include Erik van Lieshout's series of charcoal drawings, *Pim Fortuyn Diary*, mimicking Dutch reactions towards the murder of right-wing populist Pim Fortuyn in 2002; Annika Lundgren's *Blind Tour*, guiding tourists in a window-less bus around the streets of a "new Amsterdam" with "the potential reality of a progressive, prosperous and well-functioning multi-cultural society;" and ESTO TV, an artist collective that parodied new nationalist tendencies in Estonian politics with the multimedia-based piece, *Choose Order* (also the slogan of the Estonian right-wing party Res Publica).[80] Chapter 3 centers around a project included in the show, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, by Henry VIII's Wives.

As radical right-wing populisms have become more salient in the last decade, art journals such as *Open* and *E-Flux* have also devoted whole editions to it. In 2010, the Rotterdam-based *Open* published *The Populist Imagination: The Role of Myths, Narrative and Identity in Politics*, and in early 2011, *E-Flux* printed its own collection of essays, edited by Paul Chan and Sven Lütticken with the introduction, "Idiot Wind: On the Rise of Right-Wing Populism in the US and Europe, and What It Means for Contemporary Art." Scholars and artists such as Ernesto Laclau, Claire Bishop, Tom Holert, Brian Holmes, Renée Green, Hito Steyerl, and more explore the contemporary recurrence of populist movements and a discourse of "the people" in countries throughout Europe and in the United States. As the curators of *Populism* acutely highlight,

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[80] Ibid., 28.

"…the effects and desires that characterise populist politics are not necessarily separate from the ones expressed in the sphere of art; one also finds dreams of direct democracy though the immediacy of collective participation of art."[81] How are artists responding to an emotionally-charged public discourse based on exclusion and stigmatization? What other forms of collectivism can positively dispel such constructed fears and hostilities towards these "out-groups"? Most critically, how are socially-based, participatory art projects, as described previously, informed by, or reacting to this political and social context? In what ways could art projects model a more complex, popular imaginary for intercultural collective belonging?

A significant number of participatory artist projects have directly confronted the turbulent situation throughout Europe concerning immigration and cultural diversity. Three distinctive projects in the last decade and a half, for example, all set in Austria, provide a salutary comparison of different, evolving approaches to the problematic. In Salzburg in 1996, for instance, the artist collective Wochenklausur, organized a "community-based," art-activist project, *Intervention in a Deportation Detention Facility*, along the lines of Kester's "dialogical aesthetics." According to the group, conditions in the immigrant detention center were worse than any prison.[82] Inmates lived in inadequate quarters, were habitually denied information about their rights, and were not allowed media of any kind (books, radio, television, etc.). Wochenklausur effected concrete changes in the detainees' living conditions by organizing productive conversations among the Salzburg Police Detention Center, Interior Ministry, local churches, media outlets, and other aid organizations.

In stark contrast, Christoph Schlingensief staged a quite controversial, spectacular public installation in Vienna, Austria four years later: *Bitte liebt Östterreich*: *erste österreichische*

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[81] Ibid., 15.
[82] Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces*, 100.

Koalitionswoche (*Please Love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week*, 2000). Much more

cynical than Wochenklausur's piece, Schlingensief housed twelve purportedly illegal immigrants

in a shipping container in front of the opera house in the city center. For a week the "foreigners"

were surveilled and exhibited 24-hours-a-day on television and via the Internet, à la Big Brother,

a show quite popular at the time. The installation's audience was solicited, moreover, to

participate each day by voting out two detained aliens, who were then ostensibly deported. The

winner would win a cash prize or possibly Austrian citizenship through marriage, depending on

the availability of a volunteer.[83] Schlingensief's piece occurred right at the height of heated

reactions to neo-fascist Jörg Haider's election in the government, and it sparked much debate

concerning the sensationalism and publicity (mimicked by Schlingensief) brought to bear on

immigration issues by Haider and the mass media.

Most recently in 2010, also hosted in Vienna, the xurban_collective began a group of

works entitled *Evacuation Series*. Its first iteration, set in a white cube gallery, focused on the

socially-oriented space of a Turkish *mescid* (originating from the Arabic word "masjid," or

mosque), or a small prayer room improvisatorially and ubiquitously placed in many modern

buildings – shopping malls, schools, hospitals, commercial centers, etc. around the globe. For

this piece, xurban_collective specifically highlighted the "immigration problem" in Europe and

the idea of a *mescid* as a potentially "democratic," "networked," or "de-hierarchized" organizing

site for its users.[84] In the installation, the group attempted to transform a quite politically- and

religiously-charged space into a "pure social space," covering up its overtly religious signifiers

and making it more like a white cube. The idea of "evacuation" – evacuating the social space of

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[83] "Please Love Austria: First Austrian Coalition Week," accessed August 5, 2011,
http://www.schlingensief.com/projekt_eng.php?id=t033, no page numbers.
[84] xurban_collective, "Evacuation #1: The Sacred Evacuation," April 2010, accessed August 5, 2011,
http://xurban.net/scope/thesacredevacuation/, no page numbers.

these controversial markers – specifically puts into question, according to the group, current participatory models in the art world that are dominated by "membership-based pseudo-democratic associations."[85] Whereas Wochenklausur's project focused on effecting actual policy changes, and Schlingensief's extreme participatory model critiqued forms of spectacular publicity through mimicry and parody, xurban_collective's installation quietly interrogates how an aesthetic-symbolic realm may shape or detract from discussions of the current sociopolitical climate.

There have been innumerable artworks and exhibitions that have positively contributed to a discussion and evaluation of charged social politics in Europe in the recent past, and quite divergent approaches, as the last three individual examples in Austria highlight. This study could not possibly present or examine them all. Instead, it provides in-depth, close analyses of the practices of three artists/artist collectives in particular: those of Harun Farocki, Thomas Hirschhorn, and the group Henry VIII's Wives. Each is heavily invested in more egalitarian forms of collectivism that do not stigmatize or scapegoat vulnerable groups, and each approaches the problem from a unique aesthetic perspective. Farocki works in film and video installation; Hirschhorn exhibits multi-media installations, often in public spaces; and Henry VIII's Wives develops pieces through numerous forms (video, Internet, installation, photography, and more). Popular opinion regarding "European" collectivities, immigration, multiculturalism, and integration will not be shaped through any one means, but rather through a panoply of media and visual forms: this study attempts to showcase the inclusionary/exclusionary politics of social participation in eclectic manifestations.

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[85] Ibid.

1.4 "UNITED IN DIVERSITY:" DEVELOPING A CRITICAL FRAMEWORK

Given such an overwhelming response by institutions, artists, curators, and other visual actors to pressing issues of cultural diversity and the borders of a "New Europe," art historians should, likewise, reevaluate what critical perspectives best resonate with the stakes of such art practices. Understanding the prejudices and abuses that have arisen recently from globalizing processes in Europe calls for a broad array of theoretical perspectives, not least of all a postcolonial one. In art history, a "postcolonial turn" has become more evident since the proliferation of biennials and triennials around the globe in the 1990s and 2000s, and particularly since the staging of Okwui Enwezor's *Documenta 11* in Kassel, Germany (2001-2002). Without a doubt, postcolonial perspectives are essential to the study of contemporary art in general, insofar as postcolonial scholarship has developed an incisive vocabulary and framework for challenging the power dynamics of an evolutionary historiographical model, a geopolitics based on center/periphery, and essentializing constructions of identity and cultural affiliation. Moreover, nothing could be more central to a postwar "European" identity than an outlook premised upon the marginalized, the displaced, and the disempowered living at the traditional heart of the continent. The rhetoric of universalism and the idea of the European liberal democratic state are intimately tied to a history of the continent's imperialism. Yet art historians still resist employing such a perspective when the artist in question does not overtly originate from the Global South, or does not manifestly treat colonial or decolonizing themes. Such a leftover modernist tendency must be taken to task. A postcolonial interpretative framework undoubtedly enriches the discussion of any "Western" or "European" artistic practice critically invested in themes of cultural exchange, translation, historiography, or cosmopolitical affiliation.

One overarching facet of the problem in Europe is a perceived failure of multicultural

policies. After World War II, labor was in desperate demand, and waves of unskilled immigrant

workers arrived to help rebuild a war-torn landscape in the 1950s. When unemployment became

a structural reality for many countries in the 1960s and 70s, the same immigrants did not leave

but rather stayed and brought over their families. In Britain, for instance, the Muslim population

grew by about 350% between 1961 and 1971.[86] In 1968, the populist English parliamentarian,

Enoch Powell Rivers, gave a now famous reactionary speech – known as the "Rivers of Blood"

speech – against the "rising peril" of continued immigration into the UK. Throughout Europe,

suburban social housing for immigrants, such as the HLM (Habitations à Loyers Modérés) in

France, became categorized as "problem" areas, associated with violence, economic instability,

and youth delinquency.[87] Chapter 2 particularly focuses on the creation of such *banlieues*, or

impoverished and stigmatized suburbs. As Étienne Balibar posits, the *banlieues* have created a

type of "interior exclusion" for these immigrant groups, who face rampant discrimination in

access to employment, education, housing, and health care, and suffer most acutely from the

weakening of the welfare state – all of which, according to the theorist, are remnants of a

colonial past.[88]

A policy of multiculturalism failed (and is failing), according to many critics and political

leaders, because it established such culturally-distinct "parallel communities" that did not

integrate into mainstream European society but rather drained state resources. Cultural diversity

was officially celebrated but cordoned off, emphasizing differences rather than commonalities

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[86] Lauren Collins, "England, Their England," 32.
[87] Michel Wieviorka, "Violence in France: Crisis or Towards Post-Republicanism?" in *Racism, Postcolonialism, Europe*, 166.
[88] Balibar, *We, the People of Europe?*, 61, 24.

and "cultural relativism over a liberal universalism."[89] As Homi Bhabha suggests concerning a static policy of multiculturalism versus dynamic cross-cultural exchange, "To revise the problem of global space from the postcolonial perspective is to move the location of cultural difference away from the space of demographic *plurality* to the borderline negotiations of cultural translation" [original emphasis].[90] Rather than token heterogeneity, then, the real issue at hand is to foster cross-cultural communication and translation.

Another distinct product of a postcolonial legacy in Europe is the bordering/defining of a homogeneous national community against its Others. Chapter Two elaborates on the reductive narratives that are often employed, according to Bhabha, in order to unify a nation's "people" along supremacist, essentializing lines. Practices of exclusion are often most transparent at the borders of a nation, in the form of a passport. The European Union has worked extensively to break down national borders and to promote the free circulation of goods, services, ideas, and peoples, but as is evident, many countries are clinging ever more strongly to a nationalist identity and mythology. Many have argued that the European Union is itself adopting a nationalist attitude, attempting to legitimate "European" allegiance above and against the influx of "non-Europeans" in a type of Fortress Europe model.

Above all, however, artists in Europe are questioning the underlying assumption of a European universalism, one that sets the social and cultural normatives, defining minorities as alien, "backward," or inferior. Who shapes public perception, and why? Who is "the public" in Europe, and how do powerful institutions, the mass media, and political leaders create a public

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[89] Inka Salovaara-Moring,, ed., *Manufacturing Europe: Spaces of Democracy, Diversity and Communication* (Göteborg: Nordicom, 2009), 157.
[90] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 223 .

discourse that – consciously or not – catalyzes hostility and violence against those outside of the dominant society?

A question of the "public sphere," as a potential locus for egalitarian participatory democracy, is critical here. Though certain postwar German intellectuals have been central in theorizing such a space, namely Jürgen Habermas with his book *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (originally published in German in 1962) and Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge with *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (originally published in German in 1972), this dissertation draws from more recent, non-class-focused interpretations of the public sphere.[91] Michael Warner's theorization of a cultural "counterpublic," for instance, critiquing a Habermasian "universal" bourgeois public sphere, particularly resonates with a number of key arguments in this study. Chapter 3 elaborates on the liberatory potential of such "counterpublics" in *banlieues*, which would acknowledge that "rational-critical dialogue" in such a site of struggle does not adequately account for many expressive forms of embodied social relations.

This dissertation also heavily relies upon the earlier and mid-twentieth century cultural criticism of Walter Benjamin, Bertolt Brecht, and Hannah Arendt, who developed a line of humanist thought based upon the experiences of those peoples most marginalized and subjugated in European society. No analysis of the current sociopolitical fabric, in other words, would be sufficient without a treatment of the lessons garnered from World War II and the Holocaust. Racialized politics reached its peak with the concentration camps, or the most severe example of a type of "inclusionary exclusion" of human beings, as Giorgio Agamben terms it. As Arendt

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[91] Jürgen Habermas (German 1962), *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, ed. Thomas Burger (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989); and Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge (German 1972), *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

poignantly suggests, "The comity of European peoples went to pieces when, and because it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted."[92] The political experiment of the European Union was based upon this trauma, and its lessons are evermore critical for a social landscape that increasingly scapegoats and reduces whole groups of peoples along xeno-racist lines. Chapter One begins with a more extensive treatment of this history as it has shaped contemporary attitudes in Europe.

According to Arendt, one of the greatest problems of modern society is the growing conformism inherent to a new category called the "social," as opposed to the "political."[93] The social, manifested most clearly by the masses, attempts to control an unpredictable web of human relationships by enforcing normativized, rule-governed conduct from a homogenous perspective. It is the "social" realm (a dangerous admixture of public and private realms) and not the political, in other words, that may stigmatize "the stranger" figure as pariah or alien. As she suggested in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*,

> Social factors, unaccounted for in political or economic history, hidden under the surface of events, never perceived by the historian and recorded only by the more penetrating and passionate force of poets or novelists […] changed the course that mere political anti-Semitism would have taken if left to itself, and which might have resulted in anti-Jewish legislation and even mass expulsion but hardly in wholesale extermination."[94]

Against a homogenizing social sphere, how do individuals represent their singular right to be in the world? As cultural theorist Michael Warner notes, there has been a revitalization of Arendt's ideas in humanities scholarship, not least of all due to her considerations of self-disclosure and

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[92] Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, ed. Ron H. Feldman (New York: Grove, 1978), 66.
[93] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1958/1998), 38-49.
[94] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), 87.

its implications for a more just world-making.[95] The gas chambers represented the ultimate Worldlessness, where the absolute loss of a place to act or exist in the world also signaled the end of freedom and humanity. The personal is political, insofar as humans must be acknowledged according to *who* they are and not *what* they are, or according to their actions and opinions and not some contained, racially- or ethnically-based identity. At the heart of this dissertation lies a tension concerning the roles of the social and the political in shaping exclusionary, xeno-racist sentiment in Europe. How are negative cultural stereotypes shaped above and against democratic, citizen-based policies? How powerful is public opinion in steering policy? How pivotal is political legislation and leadership, in turn, in combating populist demonization?

Arendt's work in particular undergirds much of the analysis in this dissertation: her response to the moral catastrophes of her times, her exploration of the "human condition" rooted in mutually dependent action and speech, and her hope for the future of a more inclusive European federation bound together both by powerful constraints and unprecedented possibilities. Similar to Rancière after her, she believed in the need for a "space of appearance" for humans to assert themselves and act amidst a pluralistic assembly of people. Rather than stressing friction and dissensus in order to reflect that inherent diversity, however, her model emphasizes its unpredictability, its positive potential for newness and human initiative. Chapter 2 elaborates on her political theory in much more detail. Ultimately, *The Human Condition* theorizes a common framework for ethical, collective interaction, which still holds currency for a twenty-first-century Europe. Not only Arendt, but also Benjamin and Brecht each refuted a notion of "Man" instead of humans – a society both historically-specific and humanly-alterable

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[95] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 6.

in concrete, determinate ways through political action. It is a model of the collective that may offer a more egalitarian form of world-making premised upon cultural plurality and a shared, material framework.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE DISSERTATION: FAROCKI, HIRSCHHORN, AND HENRY VIII'S WIVES

Each of the three artists outlined in the following chapters are deeply invested in issues of collectivity. All of them, moreover, begin with an examination of contemporary problems of social exclusion and marginalization from their own base of knowledge: Europe. What a juxtaposition of these three in particular brings to light is a story of changing ideas of "Europeanness" since World War II – from aspirations for a federation after the racial genocide of mid-century to critiques of the nation-state after decolonization, the pan-regional "failure" of multiculturalism, and the immediate repercussions of heightened Islamophobia, Roma disenfranchisement, and extremist right-wing, populist demagogy.

Farocki is the oldest among them, born during World War II in what was then Germany-annexed Czechoslovakia. He became a Berlin leftist intellectual and activist during the student movements of '68, and in his filmwork, has continually returned to issues of ethical social affiliation after the trauma of the mid-century. Hirschhorn, born in the late '50s and now a mid-career artist, lives in a *banlieue* of Paris himself and continually spotlights social inequities and practices of political discrimination that have plagued immigrant groups in Europe since decolonization. He was born in Switzerland but left the country after becoming disillusioned with a Swiss mentality of "armed neutrality," isolationist politics, and jingoistic nationalism.

Finally, the six members of Henry VIII's Wives have only worked together as a collective since 1997, when they graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in the same class. Until recently, they lived scattered throughout major cities in Europe (one has just moved to New York). Their transnational collaboration reflects the growing cohesion and integration of the European Union, aided as it is by fewer obstacles for movement and communication. Their work speaks, however, not only to an increasingly connected and unified continent since the 1990s, but also to the looming, pan-European success of right-wing political parties and their populist demagogy. The overarching narrative of the three main chapters, treating respectively the practices of these artists in detail, moves from a post-WWII-torn landscape to current-day aspirations for a more supranational, intercultural region.

Chapter 2 begins with an examination of the recent film and video work of Harun Farocki. Much has been written about his extensive oeuvre since the late 1960s, but the artist is still producing work prolifically, and more so now in a gallery setting. This chapter unpacks two structural transitions that have occurred in his work particularly since in the 2000s; one has gone unnoticed and the other merits further close attention. As to the former, Farocki has begun producing silent works. The first half of the chapter analyzes two in particular, *Respite* (2007) and *In-Formation* (2005), which both speak to a type of figurative voiceless-ness of minorities and "foreigners" during, and in the aftermath of the Holocaust in Germany and Europe. This political and social muting occurred vis-à-vis the assemblage of information – data that reduced and de-subjectified whole groups of peoples through "objectivizing" statistics, stereotypes, and surveillance. The second half of the chapter examines Farocki's further attempt to reconfigure such dehumanizing data- and media-scapes into vitalized platforms for collective, engaged, and critical observation/participation. His aesthetic transition from film to multi-channel video

installation sets the stage for this possibility, as evidenced by his new twelve-screen, Brechtian-inspired piece, *Deep Play* (2007). Viewers may become agents in refuting social homogenization and by acting politically, as Arendt would attest.

The third chapter asks who exactly this "community of viewers," in Groys' words, might be, or what defines "the people" or "the public." Thomas Hirschhorn has not only produced massive gallery installations – ones that bombard an audience with tremendous amounts of information, as Farocki's installations do – but the artist also takes such installations out to "the public." Not any public, however: Hirschhorn creates makeshift "cultural centers" in impoverished, largely immigrant-populated suburbs, or *banlieues*. In fact, he has received much criticism for this, accused of exploiting cheap labor or romanticizing subaltern groups, among other concerns, in a superficial claim to political action. Chapter 2 addresses such criticism, positing that these installations, rather, attempt to establish "counterpublics," not cohesive communities. Drawing from Michael Warner's theorization of "the public," an analysis of these pieces suggests that Hirschhorn does not strive for concrete social-material changes for a specific, stigmatized sector of society, but instead, aims to transform the underlying, dominant symbolic realm that scapegoats them in the first place. This hegemonic public may be constituted by a historically bourgeois art crowd, a traditional national "imagined community," or a white European milieu. A "counterpublic," in contrast, has the liberatory potential to allow marginalized groups to redefine the terms of their circulating image within a broader public sphere.

Finally, Chapter 4 investigates Henry VIII's Wives' burgeoning practice and their treatment not of the "what" or "who" of contemporary, dominant forms of mediated discourse, but rather the means, or the "how." As their name suggests, they are interested in spotlighting

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marginalized groups of people who have been historically lost, or erased, from traditional, popular narratives. Because their practice is relatively unknown in art historical scholarship, more attention will be devoted to their earlier pieces than was the case in Chapter 1 or 2. Yet it is their most recent, ongoing multi-media project, *Tatlin's Tower and the World* (2005-present) – informed as it is by their earlier experimentation with popular symbols, icons, and narratives – that is most pertinent to this study. *Tatlin's Tower and the World* aims to construct the famous Russian Constructivist tower (drafted in 1917, never realized) in fragmented segments throughout the world (all of which, until 2011, has occurred on the Internet and on European territory). *Tatlin's Tower* acts as a response to tragic events such as the fall of the World Trade Center, which radical right-wing political leaders have exploited in order to pathologize minorities and shore up power. Chapter 4 draws from Terry Smith's *The Architecture of Aftermath* in order to probe the construction and exploitation of such "iconotypes" as the Twin Towers, or potentially, *Tatlin's Tower*. Through the use of diverse, popular media – the Internet, film, television, radio, posters, etc. – the Wives critique such populist, reductive, and ideologically-vested rhetoric. Instead of a top-down, totalizing approach, the participatory "campaign" has taken the form of small gestures and open scenarios, giving multifarious strangers more of an opportunity to self-reflexively cooperate and contribute.

In undertaking such a broad, yet detailed study of certain artistic practices, my methodology has included various approaches to the material. Besides information gathered from exhibition catalogs and secondary sources, it has also been necessary to interview artists, particularly in the case of Henry VIII's Wives, four of whom I interviewed extensively in person. There has been little published concerning their work, either in catalogs or in scholarship, though their Internet site includes much valuable documentation of their pieces. Besides these sources,

critical press reviews have also been crucial in understanding the reception of these artworks, and I have been able, additionally, to view many of the installations/pieces firsthand in various sites throughout Europe and New York. This dissertation does not intend to present a survey of their works, but instead to focus on the overarching aspects of their practices that speak compellingly and insightfully to a widespread problem of exclusionary politics and xeno-racism in Europe today. Moreover, a juxtaposition of three practices that on the surface, seem quite divergent, leads to a better understanding of the underlying complexity and breadth of the issues at hand.

Before delving into their practices in greater detail, I wish to conclude here with three larger points regarding my aims. First, it is my hope that a current trend in art historical scholarship – that of analyzing the role of the audience in the social production of meaning – will continue to develop with an ethical awareness of the inequities and injustices often concealed by abstract placeholders such as "viewers," "spectators," "site," and "space." The question remains not only as to why a significant number of contemporary artists are searching for ways to make "common worlds" to associate strangers – be they convivial or contestatory – but also why so within quite particular sociopolitical circumstances. What are the larger stakes of shifting a discourse about "community" and "identity" to interrelationality and participation? Second, in a growing trend toward the writing of world art history, a postcolonial lens has been widely adopted to analyze artistic practices from the "developing" world, but its groundbreaking reflections upon material culture and historiography have remained underutilized in the analysis of works by prominent artists from the U.S. and Europe. At a time of unprecedented global exchange and conflict, it should be clear that an understanding of much of the latter work would be tremendously enriched through a sustained attention to insights from postcolonial scholarship.

Lastly, it is my belief that art can and must assume a vital position today, to act as a kind of critical counterweight to reductive visual discourses propagated by the mass media and powerful, institutional actors. Otherwise the proliferation of gross caricatures such as those in Anders Behring Breivik's manifesto may come to appear banal and normal. We must continually re-imagine our connections to strangers, whether antagonistic or sympathetic, with an acute awareness of their humanity.

2.0   HARUN FAROCKI: CONFIGURING BODIES OF INFORMATION

In his recent book *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood* (2011), James Gleick identifies 1948—when Claude Shannon coined the term "bit" in his essay, "A Mathematical Theory of Communication"— as a critical year for the onset of the Information Age.[96] This seminal text brokered a new way of conceiving of the relationship between people and technology: "We can now see that information is what our world runs on: the blood and the fuel, the vital principle."[97] Yet it is precisely this organic, "vital principle" that data often belies with its relentless statistical flow and detached objectification. In 2007, David Foster Wallace labeled the growing inundation of available facts "Total Noise," but as early as 1927, Bertolt Brecht had seen it as more like "radio silence": "A man who has something to say and finds no listeners is in a bad way. Worse off are the listeners who can find no one with something to say to them."[98] Amidst the clamorous data-scape swamping all aspects of modern life, the most astute listeners encounter a profound silence of information.

Shannon's 1948 essay may have been a watershed in the last century, but the channels for recording and disseminating even the minutest information, with rare exception, have always

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[96] James Gleick, *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2011), 3.
[97] Gleick, *The Information*, 8.
[98] David Foster Wallace, "The Tsunami of Available Fact," introduction to *The Best American Essays* (New York: mariner, 2007); Bertolt Brecht, "Radio – An Antediluvian Invention?" in *Brecht on Film and Radio*, ed. and trans. Marc Silberman (London: Methuen, 2000), 38.

been historically subject to the censorship, manipulation, or control of the authors/authorities in power. That these may be the state, the military, the rich, or a myriad of other influential actors is a point that filmmaker and video installation artist Harun Farocki will never cease to drive home through his work. The necessity for optical acuity in discerning those inequitable power networks is a message that defines much of Farocki's oeuvre. So does an appeal for broader and more open avenues for human expression, in order to foster a more egalitarian political sphere of pluralistic speech and action. Reductiveness, closure, and the appearance of totalizing objectivity are the enemies of this wary hopefulness. Visual absence and absolute silence may be the keys to understanding the implacable logic of the new information order, and thus developing modes of resistance to it. The first half of this chapter will examine Farocki's recent application of absolute silence in his pieces *Respite* (2007) and *In-Formation* (2005) in particular, and what this soundlessness implies in terms of the artist's continued interest in processes of human objectification vis-à-vis the filmic apparatus. These two works especially highlight how a dominant mediascape has, at times, dangerously rendered minorities in Europe voice-less over the course of the last century.

The second half of the chapter will focus on the possibility of critically processing and resisting such a seemingly benign, yet dehumanizing flow of data. Besides experimenting with soundless works, Farocki has also transitioned from film to video installation in the recent past, above all placing a greater emphasis on the crucial role of the audience in the social production of meaning. Viewers are challenged, in a Brechtian sense, to become collective agents or actors – the actual "vital principle" – in the interpretation and staging of their everyday, media-inundated lives. The sweeping, twelve-screen *Deep Play* (2007), in particular, redesigns the "epic theater" with a panoptic scheme, calling on spectators to simultaneously assume the role of ethnographic

observer and participant in their own data-encompassed culture. Only then will historically

recursive, normativized patterns of xeno-racism in Europe today – otherwise abstracted and

naturalized vis-à-vis statistics, stereotypes, and surveillance – become ineluctably prominent.

2.1 THE SILENCE OF INFORMATION

"…by forcing Jews to leave the Reich passportless and penniless, the legend of the Wandering

Jew was realized…" – Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*

In Farocki's recent film, *Respite* (2007), an intertitle notes that from the relatively large amount

of film footage taken in a Nazi transit labor camp in 1944, there is only one close-up. Only four

years before the "bit" radically transformed the modern era into one with seemingly limitless,

unadulterated information, the analog apparatus records the hollow face of a ten-year-old child.

The SS camp commander mandated that an inmate, Rudolf Breslauer, film the daily routines of

the Westerbork labor camp in the Netherlands, where thousands of prisoners were temporarily

detained and forced to work before being shipped off to death camps in the east, including

Auschwitz. At one point, however, Breslauer's camera features at close range this face of a

headscarfed girl.[99] She stares at the camera with a disturbingly vacant look and open, slack-

jawed mouth. As a frequently circulated image from the 1960s to the 1990s in books and on

posters. this close-up became an iconic representation of the suffering of the Dutch Jews during

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[99] Sylvie Lindeperg, "Suspended Lives, Revenant Images. On Harun Farocki's Film *Respite*," ed. Antje Ehmann and Kodwo Eshun (London: Koenig, 2009), 33.

the war.[100] It was not until much later that the girl was finally identified as Anna Maria Settela

Steinbach, and furthermore, not as a Jew but as a member of another persecuted minority, a Sinti,

or "gypsy" to the Nazis. In his editing of Breslauer's archival footage, Farocki suggests with an

inscription that the premonition of death can be read in Steinbach's face, and adds: "I think that

is why the cameraman Rudolf Breslauer avoided any further close-ups."

In the image, Steinbach appears ghostlike. Her face signals an utter lack of cognizance, as

if she had already transformed into one of the camps' many living dead, or *Figuren* (figures,

dolls), as the SS called them. In other words, the one close-up of Breslauer's footage seems to

depict a *Muselmann*, or "Muslim" – the name for prisoners who had lost all human

consciousness, widely used at camps such as Auschwitz. In his analysis of the term, Giorgio

Agamben suggests that the most likely explanation for such usage was the literal meaning of the

Arabic word Muslim: "the one who submits unconditionally to the will of God."[101] European

legends since the Middle Ages have evoked Islam's apparent fatalism, and this belittling sense of

the term, according to Agamben, lives on in European languages.[102] Steinbach's close-up –

because of its profound hollowness and the *Figur*'s own inability to communicate through her

representation – might signal a multiplicity of contiguous, problematic identifications (as

opposed to identities) of her: as a "Jew," "gypsy," and "Muslim."

The close-up raises a question: after the Nazi death camps, whose voices are retrievable?

Quoting Primo Levi and other survivors at length, Agamben designates the *Muselmann* as

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[100] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 2008), 63.

[101] Ibid., 45.

[102] Agamben continues to note that whereas the Muslim's "resignation consists in the conviction that the will of Allah is at work every moment and in even the smallest events, the *Muselmann* of Auschwitz is instead defined by a loss of all will and consciousness." Ibid.

representative of that which is untestifiable, as a lacuna in testimony.[103] Even those such as Levi, who developed ways of testifying to the horrors of Auschwitz, could do so only by bearing witness, in the *Muselmann*'s name, to the impossibility of bearing witness. The "true" witnesses, the *Müselmänner*, are those "who did not bear witness and could not bear witness."[104] The survivors speak in their stead, but impossibly so, for a mass of living dead who have no "story," no "face," and even less, any "thought."[105] Yet most would argue that there is an ethical responsibility on the part of those who can speak, to do so for those who could not, and cannot, speak.

Respite is a silent film, composed of footage taken by a prisoner who himself died in Auschwitz. Is the soundlessness of the camera indicative of Breslauer's inability to testify – precisely because of his transformation from political subject to bare life? Or is that inability part of the apparatus itself: how far can the mechanical, fact-gathering apparatus be imbued with a corporealized eye and voice?

It is precisely this kind of silence that is central to the politics of Harun Farocki's recent moving-image works. A more emphatic attention to sound, or lack of sound, has increasingly informed the conceptual territory of his video installations, including *Listening Stations*

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[103] Ibid., 33, 41.
[104] Ibid., 34.
[105] Primo Levi, *Survival in Auschwitz and The Reawakening: Two Memoirs*, trans. Stuart Woolf (New York: Summit Books, 1986), 90, as cited in Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 34. It is worth quoting Levi at length: "All the *Müselmänner* who finished in the gas chambers have the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run down to the sea. On their entry into the camp, through basic incapacity, or by misfortune, or through some banal incident, they are overcome before they can adapt themselves; they are beaten by time, they do not begin to learn German, to disentangle the infernal knot of laws and prohibitions until their body is already in decay, and nothing can save them from selections or from death by exhaustion. Their life is short, but their number is endless; they, the *Müselmänner*, the drowned, form the backbone of the camp, an anonymous mass, continually renewed and always identical, of non-men who march and labour in silence, the divine spark dead in them, already too empty to really suffer. One hesitates to call them living; one hesitates to call their death death, in the face of which they have no fear, as they are too tired to understand. They crowd my memory with their faceless presence, and if I could enclose all the evil of our time in one image, I would choose this image which is familiar to me: an emaciated man, with head dropped and shoulders curved, on whose face and in whose eyes not a trace of thought is to be seen."

(*Hörstationen*, 2006) and *Dubbing* (*Synchronisation*, 2006). Absolute silence is a new strategy,

marking three other installations in the last decade as well: *Music-Video* (*Musik-Video*, 2000),

In-Formation (Aufstellung, 2005), and *On Construction of Griffith's Films* (*Zur Bauweise des*

Films bei Griffith, 2006). These silent films and video installations literally include no auditory

elements: they either borrow from a history of early twentieth century silent film or are new

pieces that only consist of imagery or written word. The writing about Farocki's work tends to

concentrate on his crafting of visual imagery rather than his sound editing, and this recent trend

of employing absolute silence has escaped any attention.[106]

The soundlessness of the camera, in the case of *Respite* and *In-Formation* in particular,

suggests a type of human silence, muteness, or lack of voice – an association that this chapter

will develop.[107] *In-Formation* (2005) is a one-channel video installation that montages fragments

from German newspapers, official state publications, and school textbooks in order to highlight

radically fluctuating migration and displacement patterns in twentieth-century Germany and

Europe. *Respite* employs primary source material from a transit labor camp during WWII, and

In-Formation reconfigures a tremendous amount of secondary source material concerning

demographic movement in Europe from WWI until the 1990s. What, or whose, silence is the

artist evoking, and why? The extraordinary mass upheaval and genocide of Jewish and minority

peoples during WWII underpin the material of both of these works.

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[106] Film historian Nora Alter does note the "dead silence" of *Respite*, as it raises the specters of the concentration camps with a "hard and flattening impact." In the same essay, she provides a useful analysis of Farocki's quite detailed used of sound in a number of his earlier fiction and non-fiction films. However, the dead silence of *Respite* is not, as Alter states, an exception within Farocki's larger oeuvre, and she does not investigate *Respite*'s multiple uses of silence in any detail. Alter, "Dead Silence" in *Harun Farocki: Against What? Against Whom?*, 172-78.
[107] Another example that this essay will not focus on is Farocki's silent installation, *On the Construction of Griffith's Films* (2006). The piece analyzes D.W. Griffith's filmic transition in *Intolerance* (1916) from employing long tracking shots across space to utilizing shot/counter-shot in order to suggest narrative movement. With two screens, the installation tracks a romantic courtship between a man and a woman, separated in space by a door. Fundamentally, it pictures the construction of a (gendered) relationship in space, across walls, despite a striking lack of voice. In other words, it examines a historically specific filmic grammar, developed around and through silence.

The silence of the two works, however, speaks to a broader problematic regarding access to agency or subjectivity via second-hand political and aesthetic representation. As this chapter will demonstrate throughout, a multilayered use of soundlessness in Farocki's recent films and videos not only highlights the inability of Jews, minorities, or "displaced persons" to voice their subjectivity in the historically-specific moments portrayed in *Respite* and *In-Formation*, but moreover, suggests Farocki's targeting of a type of "quietude" exposes raw, present-day cultural tensions in Europe as well, concerning the pathologized visibility of Muslims and Roma in particular, among other unpopular, stigmatized minority groups. *In-Formation* does this by mimicking the cacophony of a present-day, ubiquitous twenty-four-hour news cycle. It bombards the viewer with repetitious visual "information" that ultimately says little about the complex problems of a contemporary, globalized society in Europe. The difference is that it entreats the public to filter critically this all-pervasive mediascape and to witness a reductive, "universalizing" visual language that remains un-speakable for many. It does this by stripping the noise from the barrage of data, allowing the viewer to concentrate on what this media blitz makes banal: bolder and more institutional discrimination and violence against "foreign" peoples on the continent.

2.1.1   *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*: Can the Subaltern Speak?

Issues of objectification and subjectification undergird the production of all of Farocki's pieces. With over a hundred works to date, he has produced films and videos placing a lens on the war in Vietnam, prisons, shopping malls, television and advertising, "intelligent" weapons, filmmaking

and acting, workplace training, and much more.[108] To a large extent, the artist creates works with archival resources precisely in order to examine how certain images circulate within broader institutional sites and networks.

Above all, Farocki molds such concerns with a detailed attention to environments, methods, and technologies of visualization.[109] A constant theme in his work remains the slippage between sensory perception and intellectual recognition in the polysemantic German sense of *erkennen*. Any analysis of *Respite* and *In-formation* must include a discussion of his essay film *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989), for instance, which analyzes images from both Auschwitz, as well as an Algerian colonial internment camp, as they relate to problems of visual access and cognizance. Two photographs in *Images of the World* especially resonate with *Respite*: an Allied aerial snapshot of Auschwitz and a photograph of a woman in the same camp, taken by an SS officer.[110] The Allied bird's-eye photograph was intended to capture the I.G. Farben industrial plant on film, and it was not until 1977 that the CIA recognized inadvertently taken images of Auschwitz from the same reconnaissance documents. This image was shot only one month before the footage in *Respite*.[111] Additionally, the other photograph of the woman in Auschwitz recalls the visage of Settela Steinbach, though the agency of their gazes is quite dissimilar.

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[108] Thomas Elsaesser's *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), a collection of scholarly essays, remains an invaluable resource regarding Farocki's earlier oeuvre, as well as the artist's own extensive writings.

[109] See also for further reading Hal Foster, "Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki," *Artforum* XLIII, no. 3 (Nov 2004): 156-161, 250.

[110] Thomas Elsaesser makes this comparison in "Holocaust Memory as the Epistemology of Forgetting? Rewind and Postponement in *Respite*," in *Harun Farocki: Against What? Against Whom?*, 62-63.

[111] Elsaesser remarks that they were both filmed in May, but the reconnaissance images were shot in April of 1944. Ibid., 62.

In her investigation of *Images of the World*, film historian Nora Alter places a feminist lens on the problem of the "im/perceptible" in relation to vision and visuality.[112] The female voiceover in the film suggests that the photograph with the woman in Auschwitz resembles a classic male/filmic gaze aimed at a woman, who in this instance registers and returns an awareness of the lens' presence. The voiceover underlines the woman's inability to act or speak; she is just as politically "in/audible" as "im/perceptible," according to Alter.[113] Any "speaking" occurs through her oblique gaze back at the camera and, presumably, the SS officer. Both Alter and film historian Kaja Silverman, in her own analysis, connect the woman's look to other prominently objectified female faces in the film: a Dior model being caked with make-up,[114] as well as unveiled Algerian Berber women, suspected of terrorism and held in a military internment camp during Algeria's war for independence.[115] We know the names of the French photographer-soldier, Marc Garanger, who shot over 2,000 identification photographs – mostly of women – during ten days in the camp in 1960, but not the identities of the women.[116]

In her book *The Threshold of the Visible*, Silverman provides a compelling analysis of *Images of the World* in terms of the "look" versus the "camera/gaze," explicitly with regard to both gender and race. Critically, whereas the camera/gaze offers a mechanical and decorporealized lens that mortifies and memorializes subjects, the "look" is still located within

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[112] Nora Alter, "The Political Im/perceptible: Farocki's *Images of the World and the Inscription of War*," in *Working on the Sightlines*, 211-34.
[113] Alter, "The Political Im/perceptible," 215.
[114] This footage originates in a 1973 film by Farocki, *Make-Up*, again depicting a male's hand fashioning/objectifying a female face.
[115] Ibid., 219-24, and Kaja Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World* (New York: Routledge,1996), 139-40, 146-49, 152-54.
[116] James Estrini, "Unwilling Subjects in the Algerian War," http://lens.blogs.nytimes.com/tag/marc-garanger/, *New York Times*, May 14, 2010; Olivier Laurent, "Marc Garanger's Femmes Algériennes," *British Journal of Photography*, May 14, 2010, http://www.bjp-online.com/british-journal-of-photography/profile/1651168/nyph-2010-marc-garanger-femmes-algeriennes.

the body and temporality, and thus can offer forms of political resistance.[117] The anonymous,

speaking female voice in the film "articulates or bears witness to what the photograph might be

said actively to repress – the corporeal and psychic 'reality' of being female and Algerian in a

French colony in 1960, or female and Jewish in Germany in the early 1940s."[118] Both Alter and

Silverman attempt to ground their analyses in terms of specific, differentiated bodies because

that is exactly what is at stake in these images: the danger of absolute human abstraction by a

mechanical lens purportedly aimed at "pure" information-gathering or documentation.

Apart from Silverman's rigorous psychoanalytic investigation, and Alter's feminist

critique, however, the implications of gendered and raced visuality in Farocki's films have not

received sustained or significant attention in the scholarship regarding his work.[119] Problems of

visualization and visuality are a dominant thread connecting most of Farocki's work; he has

attempted to showcase intimate linkages between technologies of visualization and changing

human perception, especially within the workplace (factories, corporations, banks) and on the

battlefield (Vietnam, WWII, Iraq). When scholars discuss issues of human perception and

visualization in his work, however, they are often discussed abstractly, dissociated from specific

bodies and particular cultural environments in his films. Cultural clashes arising from

colonialism, imperialism, and totalitarianism in Europe connect a number of his earliest,

prominent films such as *Images of the World*, *As you See* (*Wie Man Sieht*, 1986), *Between Two

Wars* (*Zwischen Zwei Kriegen*, 1978), *Das Doppelte Gesicht Peter Lorre* (1982), and *Before*

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[117] Silverman, *The Threshold of the Visible World*, 137, 160.
[118] Ibid., 159.
[119] For more examples of Farocki's sustained attention to the objectification of the female body, see his work *An Image* (*Ein Bild*, 1983), which depicts the elaborate process of Playboy studios styling and photographing a naked woman, or *Image and Umsatz oder:Wie kann man einen Schuh darstellen?* (1989), roughly translated as *Image and Sales or: How can one display a shoe?*. Produced only one year after *Images of the World*, the latter details the commercialized process of stylizing an advertisement for women's shoes, obviously a sign for social mobility. A male design team selects and fashions attractive female models for the ad, who for sales purposes, must not look too "Turkish." The film ends with a shot of an all-female factory line, backlogged by their shoe quota.

Your Eyes (*Etwas wird Sichtbar*, 1981). These films produce a complex web of imagery concerning (but not limited to) Enlightenment "universality" and humanism, nineteenth century policing and surveying techniques, the division of colonial Africa, the development of the Gatling gun to the invasion of Iraq, and iconic images of violence in Vietnam. That Farocki considers the sexed, raced politics of the body, does not mean that he focuses on "identity politics," a phrase that he rejects.[120] Rather, it is more accurate to say that Farocki has shown deep concern about the lack of voice among culturally marginalized groups within broader configurations of global capitalism, mass media, technologization, and warfare. In scholarship regarding Farocki's work, these latter, macroscopic themes have often been analyzed in terms of a general humanism, rather than within specific cultural contexts.

In *Images of the World*, Farocki's own hand, in the segment with photographs of the Algerian colonial women, both frames and fragments their faces. In the act of covering, the hand, paradoxically, exposes the violence done to these anonymous women when their veils are stripped from their faces for colonialist policing purposes in an internment camp. Yet whereas the veil could still allow the women's voices to be heard, does the artist's hand symbolically threaten to muffle them? Many of the images were published for the first time by Garanger in 1982, just before Farocki produced *Images of the World* (1988). Farocki's critique of the documentary photos still holds particular currency today (most notably in France), where the veil remains one of the most powerfully ambivalent symbols of visuality, voice, and female objectification/subjectification.

Does this segment in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* point to the deep problematic identified by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak – that is, can the sexed subaltern subject

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[120] Randall Halle, "History is Not a Matter of Generations: Interview with Harun Farocki," trans. Sabine Czylwik, *Camera Obscura* 46, vol. 16, no. 1 (2001): 61-62.

speak? In her seminal essay (first presented in 1983 and then widely published in 1988),[121] Spivak criticizes leftist intellectuals in Europe who, situated in a privileged position of socialized capital without recognizing it – who fail to acknowledge the epistemic violence of imperialism or its contemporary mirroring in an unbalanced international division of labor – make the claim that the subaltern, if given the chance, could speak for him/herself and know his/her conditions.[122] She discloses a complicity between "Western intellectual production" and "Western international economic interests."[123] The fact that Farocki, as a leftist European intellectual, has, without a doubt, critiqued his own position within a globally inequitable capitalist system, is widely acknowledged.[124] But again, his work's attention to the reverberating forces of decolonization and its effects on cultural politics in Europe today, has remained peripheral in scholarly discussions of it.[125]

Images of the World and the Inscription of War created a conceptual juncture for much of Farocki's subsequent work up until the present, including Respite and In-Formation. Both recent works move beyond the film, however, by charting a wall of absolute human silence inscribed by the collection/visualization of information by the state, as revealed through the disembodied eye of the camera. Listening to (not only hearing) Respite's and In-Formation's startling

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[121] "Can the Subaltern Speak?" was first presented in 1983 at a conference at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champagne; see Rosalind C. Morris, ed., Can the Subaltern Speak?: Reflections on the History of an Idea (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 81.

[122] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 283.

[123] Ibid., 271.

[124] Farocki's leftist commitment to labor/class/economic concerns has been extensively analyzed, and his recent video work has broadened to a globalized outlook, in such pieces as In Comparison and Comparison via a Third, which focus on brick production in Germany, India, and Burkina Faso. For examples of writing, see Thomas Elsaesser, "Political Filmmaking After Brecht: Harun Farocki, For Example," 133-153, and Harun Farocki, "Workers Leaving the Factory" in Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines, 237-244.

[125] On October 8, 2010, Farocki debuted a new video installation, The Silver and the Cross, at the exhibition Principio Potosí in Berlin at the Haus der Kulturen der Welt. It perhaps marks his most overt treatment of a history of colonialism, in Potosí, Bolivia during the sixteenth century.

soundlessness proves generative for mapping the displacement of particular marginalized voices in twentieth century European history.

2.1.2   *Respite*: What is Testifiable?

Respite's 16 mm footage begins and ends with a train, entering and leaving the Westerbork Police Transit Camp for Jews in the Netherlands – a coming-in and going-out. The footage was commissioned by the SS camp commander Albert Gemmeker and shot by inmate Rudolf Breslauer in May of 1944. According to *Respite*'s minimalist black intertitles, a train deported inmates every Tuesday to concentration camps in the east. As the commentary underscores, it is rare to have footage of the concentration camps before liberation, and this is the only train that was captured on film. Though the train defined their spectral existence, the Westerbork inmates hoped to remain in the camp through productive labor. Work signaled a type of respite, recalling the chilling slogan above a number of camps, including Auschwitz, "Arbeit macht frei." Breslauer himself died soon thereafter in Auschwitz and was never able to produce an edited version of the "business" of the camp, depicting the banal manual labor conducted by the prisoners.

As with Farocki's other films, a central question in *Respite* revolves around the problem of perception versus recognition, seeing versus understanding, or hearing versus listening – this time assuming tremendous gravity – for Auschwitz epitomizes what is ultimately at stake in this wager for Farocki: the status of the human. *Respite* begins to explore the aporia of Auschwitz through the intermediary, liminal space of a transit camp. The film notes that the inmates are hungry but not starving, still have medical and dental facilities, are allowed moments of recreation, and effectively run and police the camp themselves. There are still moments of "self-

assertion." At what point, however, will the *Fliegende Kolonne*, a policing squad in Westerbork,

transform into the *Sonderkommando*, the inmates mandated with helping execute fellow

prisoners in the gas chambers and then scrapping their body parts? Perception versus recognition,

or seeing versus understanding, here assumes a retrospective urgency.

The pronounced difficulty of these images lies in their proximity to the horrors of other

concentration camps like Auschwitz, where civilized activities turn into a matter of extreme

biopolitics. According to Agamben, the concentration camp was a pure space of exception,

where the inmates were stripped of any political status whatsoever and fully reduced to the

category of an animal species, or "bare life."[126] *Remnants of Auschwitz* is the third book in

Agamben's tripartite series concerning the *homo sacer*, or "sacred man," an obscure figure of

archaic Roman law who may be killed yet not sacrificed. The *homo sacer* is a human life banned

from society and politics, "included in the juridical order solely in the form of its exclusion (that

is, of its capacity to be killed)."[127] Agamben maintains that the *homo sacer*, in its originary

"inclusionary exclusion," has come to represent the paradigm of twentieth century politics,

insofar as it depicts the increasing indistinction between bare life and political life. Human life as

such not only assumes primary importance in the calculations of State power (as Foucauldian

biopolitics), but what was once the exception to the rule – the realm of bare life – now becomes

central to the political realm.[128] This is what Hitler's totalitarian regime accomplished to a new,

unfathomable degree in the last century.

In *Respite*, the Westerbork inmates live in an unstable, intermediary space, and can only

hope to remain in the camp through productive labor. Indeed, the film suggests that Westerbork

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[126] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 171.
[127] Ibid., 8.
[128] Ibid., 9.

also has a unique type of industrial logo: two rail lines leading to a smokestack, again recalling

the crematoria and fabrication of corpses at Auschwitz.[129] It is the only diagram in *Respite*,

displayed prominently halfway through the length of the film, and indicates the statistical

transfer of inmates to different camps. The diagram, with its precise numbers and abstract

arrows, suggests a balance in the transfer of inmates, an equal entry and exit of Westerbork. The

incoming quantity on the left, however, is not commensurate with the sum of the numbers on the

right, and at least a few thousand inmates are unaccounted for, lost in the space of that industrial

logo. For a camp that was so rigorously exact in documenting the number of its victims, even

crossing out "74" to replace it with "75" boxcar detainees on the May 19th train, the statistical

error disrupts the normality of an otherwise wholly banalized, standardized representation of

transfer, of coming-in and going-out.

The crux of this film, as Thomas Elsaesser opines, is its "lacunary present" – "creating

out of Breslauer's images and Gemmeker's narrative a history with holes, so to speak – once

more open, without being open-ended."[130] The notion of a "lacunary present" in *Respite*,

however, should be expanded in relation to an idea of testimony as both bodily witnessing and

bearing witness. Recalling the survivors' accounts of *Müselmänner*, there exists a type of

testimony that contains at its core an essential lacuna, the bearing of witness to something to

which it is impossible to do so.[131] In the spectral zone of Westerbork, how could Breslauer,

murdered in the end, bear witness to the concentration camps with his recorded footage, and how

does the camera problematize this original, bodily witnessing? Does Farocki's rehabilitation of

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[129] Elsaesser offers a compelling analysis of *Respite* as a type of industrial film "in reverse," in "Holocaust Memory as the Epistemology of Forgetting?," 66.
[130] Ibid., 68.
[131] Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 13.

the material go so far as to feature this problem of structural "incompleteness" – this lacuna in testimony, the untestifiable – rather than merely point out the holes?

To be sure, viewers are able to reflect and understand in their listening to silence, what is ultimately unsaid, and untestifiable in Breslauer's footage. Three examples, prompted by the intertitles' last three observations in the film, support this proposition. Each piece of commentary concerns the role of the camera, and each speaks to the aforementioned questions regarding testimony and silencing.

The very last analytic moment makes a statement without stating it: it constructs an argument through silence. The intertitle observes that in court, Gemmeker denied knowledge of the film footage, just as he denied knowledge of Auschwitz. The following piece of footage depicts Gemmeker glancing at the camera, with a red circle around his face (the only color used in the film, and the second time this altered image is shown). We recognize from the intertitles' subsequent silence that if Gemmeker lied about the footage, he almost certainly lied about Auschwitz as well. Gemmeker, a member of the *Geheimnisträger*, or keeper of secrets of the "Final Solution," is on trial in the film for his withholding of testimony. The *Geheimnisträger* were those who imposed silence and attempted to impose the impossibility of testifying as well. In *Respite*, the camera is cut out from the enclosed space of these figures. Perhaps Breslauer's capturing of Gemmeker's returned look is one instance of the camera enabling a type of testimony, or the active disclosure of this barrier of silence.

Another of *Respite*'s last intertitles explains that eye-witness accounts testified to "moments of desperation" on the train platform as the train deported inmates every Tuesday. Yet in Breslauer's footage, a couple of inmates actually help shut their own boxcar doors and even smile. The commentary questions if people act more calmly because of the camera: if the Nazis

are filming the train's departure, could the inmates' destination actually be that bad? Does the camera here have a "normalizing," or muting effect? In the film, the inmates are most obviously silent, or silenced, while performing on stage. They sing, talk, tap-dance, play musical instruments, but no sound accompanies the gestures. Do they perform as if everything is normal because the camera is present? According to the film, the stage is the only space where the inmates are allowed to not wear their yellow stars. These scenes of the stage and orchestra pit are extraordinary for their apparent normality; they could be filmed in any theater. Yet the added presence of Breslauer's camera reveals the paradoxical nature of the actors' performance. Are they performing in order to exhibit the "success" of Westerbork camp (through their compliance with its activities and methods), and thereby escape deportation and possible death? Or are they performing for themselves, as "moments of self-assertion," on the only stage where they are not forced to wear Nazi insignia of their non-humanity? In either case, the soundless camera mimics the inmates' true lack of voice.

The last of the three final intertitle observations notes that there is only one close-up in the approximately fifty minutes of Breslauer's footage, as stated before. At one point, the camera features at close range the spectral face of Settela Steinbach, whose persecution as a Sinti was obscured, unfortunately, by her silent iconicity after the war. Farocki suggests that Breslauer read the frightening premonition of death on her face and thus avoided further close-ups. Again, did it mark the prisoner's inability to fully testify with the mechanical apparatus?

The lifeless camera may not be able to offer political resistance or to "testify" to the atrocities of the concentration camps, but it effectively marks that which is un-testifiable. *Respite* uniquely captures that which is unsaid and silenced – or rather, unsayable – precisely because its account is mediated through the mechanical and decorporealized lens of the camera. The film not

only depicts the eerie, liminal space of the transit camp, but also underscores its absolute limit –

as a state of exception, where inmates still struggle to claim a modicum of agency or subjectivity

against bare life, but where this allowance is only an illusion. To be sure, the inmates are already

full-speed on a trajectory to fulfill the Nazi's conquest of a *volkloser Raum*, or space empty of

people. The filmic apparatus is uniquely equipped to register this process of de-subjectification.

2.1.3   Making Bodies Superfluous

In an interview concerning *Images of the World*, Farocki suggests that cameras are circling the

world to make it superfluous, and that he is part of this apparatus of surveillance.[132] Farocki

admits his complicity in utilizing the filmic apparatus, but he claims that the difference is that he

works to "hear" the camera's silence, to understand who "speaks the image."[133] Likewise, Arendt

notes that totalitarianism's ultimate goal is to make all of humankind "superfluous."[134] The

concentration camps are where this actually occurred, where humans were made absolutely

replaceable, un-seeable and un-hearable, as abstract numbers/figures (*Figuren*, representations)

dispossessed from any community, or, as the Nazis repeatedly announced, mere bedbugs to be

exterminated.[135] In the middle of *Images of the World*, a female voiceover quotes at length

Arendt's words concerning totalitarianism's ultimate goal to dominate human beings completely,

ending with the verdict: "Here the question was to establish what was possible at all and to

obtain proof that absolutely everything was possible."[136]

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[132] Elsaesser, "Making the World Superfluous," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, 188-89.
[133] Ibid., 189.
[134] Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951), 428.
[135] Ibid., 417, 415.
[136] Throughout his career, Farocki has explicitly borrowed from and staged a dialogue with Arendt's work. At times, this has been quite direct, for instance, with this quotation, or even footage of her book *The Human Condition* in *As*

As Arendt asserts in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* it is not the abstract human rights of

freedom or equality that are the basis of humanity. It is the membership in a political community

that is willing and able to guarantee these and any other rights in the first place. Divided into

three sections, "Anti-Semitism," "Imperialism," and "Totalitarianism," *Origins* extensively

details critical connections from the growth of anti-Semitism in central Europe in the 19th

century; to the development of imperialism and racial thinking from the division of Africa in

1884 until WWI; and finally to the interwar rise to power of Hitler's and Stalin's totalitarian

regimes. The breadth of her historical account – more fragmented than linear – resonates with

Farocki's intertextual oeuvre and his own humanist attempts to untangle the intricate, deleterious

complicity of nineteenth and twentieth century wars with global, capitalist exchange. Both draw

critical connections among these broader historical configurations with precise detail.

In Arendt's account, minority rights, such as the right to residence and the right to work,

were far from guaranteed by the League of Nations in its weak, post-WWI Minority Treaties.

The stateless, "the newest mass phenomenon in contemporary history, were forced to live

outside the pale of the law."[137] A couple of groups of stateless, or "displaced persons," were the

Heimatlose after WWI, refugees from the interwar period (denationalized by their countries for

fighting on the wrong side of revolutions),[138] millions of survivors from the Nazi concentration

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You See (*Wie Man Sieht*, 1986), and at other times, this has been more oblique. For instance, in *What's Up* (*Was ist Los?*, 1991), what is clearly Farocki's voice (though not identified as such) speaks into a voice recorder connected to a computer. The computer's dictation software then 'decodes' and transcribes on screen the words of the human speaker (at times quite unsuccessfully). Farocki, attempting to present ironically the potential downfalls of increasing human-machine interactions, states into the recorder, 'Nach eine Vorstellung, die auf Athen zurückgeht, gibt es keine Politik ohne dass Menschen miteinander sprechen' (According to an idea going back to Athens, politics only exist if people speak with each other.') His statement could easily allude to Arendt's *The Human Condition*, which repeatedly cites the ancient Greek polis as an exemplar for present-day political action and speech in an unpredictable realm of human affairs.

[137] Ibid., 275-76.

[138] This included, according to Arendt, "in chronological order, millions of Russians, hundreds of thousands of Armenians, thousands of Hungarians, hundreds of thousands of Germans, and more than half a million Spaniards – to enumerate only the more important categories." Ibid., 277.

camps, and millions of refugees from countries within Stalin's regime. More crucial than the abstract rights of freedom and justice, these stateless were stripped of a place in the world that made their thoughts or opinions even hear-able. As early as the thirties, the internment camp was the only "country" available to the stateless, and this space fell off the map for ordinary citizens.[139] As no one or no government claimed these groups, they became "perfectly 'superfluous.'"[140]

2.1.4   *In-Formation*: Stereotypes and ISOTYPE

Like *Respite*, *In-Formation* begins and ends with an entering and leaving, a coming-in and going-out. Instead of a train, however, it is an abstract stick-figure that walks into and out of a simple, transparent box. The video depicts this A to B movement – and its reverse, B to A, using the most elementary forms possible. The simplistic framing device mimics the style of an official, public information film. The body of the work will highlight a critical movement between inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion, depicting something, at its most rudimentary level, as "in-formation."

Ostensibly, *In-Formation* takes on a huge narrative: nothing less than the history of migration in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or former West Germany), following the end of WWII. Toward this apparent end, the video pedagogically displays a slide show of hundreds of archival drawings, pictographs, graphs, and maps culled from official national publications, impressively gathered by Farocki's team from state archives such as the Georg-Eckert-Institut für Internationale Schulbuchforschung (Georg Eckert Institute for International

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[139] Ibid., 290, 282.
[140] Ibid., 293.

Schoolbook Research) or the Bayerisches Landesamt für Statistik und Datenverarbeitung (Bavarian State Office for Statistics and Data Processing). In *In-Formation*, the viewer is offered a plethora of statistical data and imagery in sixteen minutes – but quickly, with slides shown fleetingly, for only about three to four seconds each. The archived documents are also fragmented by Farocki, ordered against strict chronology, and highly abstracted, in that they depict essentialized categories of "foreigners" and "Germans." By showing clearly inequitable statistical quantities, yet in a seemingly "objective" manner, the video purports to reconstruct the immeasurably convoluted geopolitical narrative of demographic movement within former West Germany, while at the same time quite evidently failing to do so. The video's content recalls the diagram of the "industrial logo" in *Respite* with its unequal inflow and outflow statistics of camp inmates.

Like *Images of the World*, *In-Formation* highlights specific episodes of human de-subjectification. Chronologically and thematically, the video is divided into two distinct halves. The first half begins with a portrayal of immigration, work, and consumption in the FRG after WWII, focusing on Turkish immigrants in the 1960s and 70s in particular. It betrays, for example, concerns of integration, family life, and inter-marriages between "foreigners" and "Germans." At one point, six images of male, presumably Turkish, cartoon-like figures succeed each other in different slides. Each man dons a distinctive black mustache, one wears a fez or *taqiyah*, some have no facial features except for a mustache, and almost all are pixilated in some respect. A moment thereafter, five images of headscarfed, Turkish women appear. The penultimate is only a black shadow, and the last – like the Algerian colonized women with Farocki's hand over their mouths – is trapped by a large red circle and "X" across her face.

The video's repetition of these visages fails to enrich or corporealize its flat, gendered, and racialized categories. Rather, it depicts their formation. Stereotypes are constructed around something always known, a certain fixity, as well as an anxious repetition of that certainty. Official discursive spheres of government, reportage, and education are here imbued with derogatory, reiterated imagery of "outsiders" that reflects fears concerning national community and economic prosperity.

The second half of *In-Formation* steps back to represent the end of World War I and the Versailles Treaty, then accelerates temporally to depict both displaced peoples after World War II as well as refugees from the Soviet zone and the former East Germany (GDR) into West Germany. Like the stereotyped Turkish figures, the video at one point features an image of the "Wandering Jew" with his cane, crooked nose, and *yarmulke*. The figure, at the bottom right of the screen, traverses a map of Eastern Europe with other Jews into Germany and Austria. Subsequent slides depict maps of, and statistical data from, retaliatory German military offensives in the East (apparently linked consequentially to the Jews' movement) as well as maps pinpointing the locations of concentration camps. "All must take part," a textbook eerily declares, accompanied by illustrations of uniform school children and Nazi youth lining up.

As Arendt extensively argued in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, the Nazis attempted to establish such conditions on a mass scale for the Jews and other undesired minorities – no passport, no money, no profession – so that any sympathies would be rapidly transformed into negative popular opinion.[141] Arendt observes ironically that "…by forcing Jews to leave the

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[141] "The official SS newspaper, the *Schwarze Korps*, stated explicitly in 1938 that if the world was not yet convinced that the Jews were the scum of the earth, it would be soon when unidentifiable beggars, without nationality, without money, and without passports crossed their frontiers." Ibid., 268.

Reich passportless and penniless, the legend of the Wandering Jew was realized…"[142] Her

observation strikes to the core of how stereotypes are often formed and disseminated: not only

through a "natural" human anxiety concerning otherness, but primarily through politically-

constructed and socially-fabricated differentiation.[143]

In her chapter, "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man,"

Arendt traces the victimization of two specific groups in Europe after WWI – the stateless and

minorities – who, increasingly, had no government to represent or protect them.[144] After the

devastation of WWI, nation-states across Europe were crippled with extraordinary inflation and

unemployment: migrations of groups were unwelcomed and un-assimilable.[145] These two

ostracized groups, the stateless and minorities, were worse off than any other impoverished,

unemployed class or group. With the loss of political representation by the nation-state, they also

lost those rights that were supposedly inalienable – the Rights of Man, or basic human rights, as

established during the French Revolution.

For Arendt, belonging to a polity is paramount, which is a theme that she developed

further in her subsequent book, *The Human Condition*. Without the recognition and right to

action and opinion by organized groups of humans – a tenet fundamental to Farocki's politically-

charged oeuvre – nothing is inalienable. According to Arendt, the tradition of asylum, not

officially written into any law, had been established for exceptional cases, not masses of people,

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[142] Ibid., 394.
[143] For another interesting examination of social stereotypes and German exile, see Farocki's film *Das Doppelte Gesicht Peter Lorre* (roughly translated as *The Double-Face Peter Lorre*, 1982), which charts the actor's professional transformation as a Brechtian epic actor in Weimar Germany to a caricatured, stock-role performer in Hollywood films.
[144] Placed at the end of her section "Imperialism," Arendt, not surprisingly, links the victimization of these two groups to a type of "continental imperialism:" this "…growing number of people and peoples suddenly appeared whose elementary rights were as little safeguarded by the ordinary functioning of nation-states in the middle of Europe as they would have been in the heart of Africa." Ibid., 288.
[145] Ibid., 266.

and it was designated to help those who were persecuted for something that they had done or

thought, not for those who were unchangeably themselves, "born into the wrong kind of race or

the wrong kind of class…"[146]

> The paradox involved in the loss of human rights is that such loss coincides with the instant when a person
>
> becomes a human being in general – without a profession, without a citizenship, without an opinion,
>
> without a deed by which to identify and specify himself – and different in general, representing nothing but
>
> his own absolute unique individuality which, deprived of expression within and action upon a common
>
> world, loses all significance.[147]

Without membership in and protection from a political community, humans are no longer active,

thinking subjects, but merely members of a race or human species. One image in *In-Formation* –

of a group of hollowed-out men with black mustaches and fezzes scattered throughout a crowd

of blank human figures – uniquely captures this paradox of standing for both human beings in

general, and difference in general. Above all, Farocki's work has emphasized the critical

necessity of creating collectivizing spaces and structures that will produce active, thinking

subjects – not dehumanized stand-ins.

Most of the graphs in *In-Formation* either include culturally stereotyped figures or

incorporate rationalized, ghostly bodies into their structural components: arms, faces, or suitcases

become the measuring tools of these immigrants' own abstraction. A man is smaller or larger in

a bar chart, for example, depending on how much money he earns. The larger the immigration

total, likewise, the more zeroes after a number can be filled with cartoonish smiley faces.

Literally graph-ed, the bodies of these figures are simultaneously included and excluded in the

slide show's narrative – homogenized and differentiated. As the video proceeds, Farocki

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[146] Ibid., 291.
[147] Ibid., 297-98.

underscores the politically-constructed "inclusionary exclusion" of the iconic, headscarfed Turkish woman just as much as the Wandering Jew. In the aftermath of WWII race politics, the fact that these images were all generated in official West Germany state publications or newspapers, for governmental, pedagogical, or informational purposes, is especially disquieting.

Moreover, the video is silent. The numerous, inscribed bodies have no voice, so-to-speak, in their own representation. Their "alien" faces and bodies are muted, equipped with only mustaches rather than mouths, or trapped like criminals behind the bars of a chart. All of this "information" originates in secondary sources, in official documents or other public sphere materials, and arrives to the viewer via multiple avenues of mediation. In contrast, the dead silence of *Respite* is arguably more pronounced by witnessing firsthand camera footage of labor camp subjects sing and speak with no sound. In *In-Formation*, there is no documentary lens, only shuffled and bureaucratized paperwork. Moreover, *Respite* is edited as a film, to be viewed as a complete, narrative form for a full forty minutes, whereas *In-Formation* (sixteen minutes) allows the viewer to step in and out of its installation space, to catch only random fragments of its material, and to choose how long to stand amidst the unsettling silence.

The possibility of these subjects speaking for themselves is, in these circumstances, disallowed. In her essay, Spivak describes a unique historical case in India when *sati*, or the self-immolation by widows on the funeral pyres of their deceased husbands, was criminalized by the British colonial system.[148] She clearly does not condone the killing of widows, but rather, in a subtle analysis of Hindu laws, tradition, and language, as well as British colonial records, describes the constrained space of the sexed subaltern subject – the widow herself – that makes it impossible for her to speak:

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[148] Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?," 297.

One never encounters the testimony of the women's voice-consciousness. Such a testimony would not be ideology-transcendent or 'fully' subjective, of course, but it would have constituted the ingredients for producing a countersentence. As one goes down the grotesquely mistranscribed names of these women, the sacrificed widows, in the police reports included in the records of the East India Company, one cannot put together a "voice." The most one can sense is the immense heterogeneity breaking through even such a skeletal and ignorant account..."[149]

In-Formation cannot possibly include enough of its reductive material to present a full picture of immigration in the FRG. Instead of "speaking for" these abstracted, staticized, and stereotyped minorities, immigrants, refugees, guest workers, asylum seekers, and stateless, Farocki includes no voiceover or intertitles, a noticeable stylistic shift from his signature essay films such as *Images of the World*. These heterogeneous subjects, the vast number of displaced persons and refugees throughout Europe in the twentieth century, will never be able to testify through this archival material to the complexity or turbulence of their past conditions.

In its last section, *In-Formation* depicts abstracted bodies of immigrants, and particularly asylum seekers, from all over the world arriving to Germany and Europe up until the end of the twentieth century. Due to the country's traumatic past, Germany's Basic Law offered the most liberal asylum policy on the continent for fifty years, offering any politically persecuted person the right to refuge in the country. But with almost half a million asylum seekers by the end of 1992, significant post-1989 economic troubles with reunification, and increasing anti-Semitic, anti-Roma, and anti-foreigner sentiment and violence, Germany dramatically restricted its asylum law in 1993. Notably, this restriction has come to serve as the model for the European Union's policy as well. *In-Formation*, unable to represent the tremendous debate and controversy concerning this historical shift in asylum policy after the transformation of German statehood,

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[149] Ibid.

instead offers an image of one vacuous stick figure pointing a rifle at another stick figure with a label below, "17 million politically persecuted," or rather, "politically haunted" [*politisch Verfolgte*]. In this case, the multilayered translatability of the German offers far more semantic nuance to the asylum seeker than the flat figural signs.

Most critically, the video's silence reflects not only what is unspoken, but also a programmed un-speakability. Indeed, its very structure works to unmask the failure of a certain modern visual language to provide global, cross-cultural representation. Most of the slides employ graphic illustration in the style of the ISOTYPE, or International System of Typographic Picture Education, conceived of by early twentieth century Austrian urban theorist Otto Neurath. Originally termed the Vienna Method of Pictorial Statistics, the ISOTYPE (as of 1935) was conceptualized as a uniform system of icons and signs that would be able to deliver the greatest amount of information with the greatest efficiency to the greatest number of people possible. It would utilize two-dimensional, non-perspectival, simplified images – recontextualized from everyday, mass communicative forms such as popular films or newspaper cartoons – in order to facilitate an understanding of the world in terms of patterns and systems.[150]

Neurath intended it to democratize knowledge and to promote greater international understanding. He aspired to forge a sense of community (*Gemeinschaft*) within an increasingly alienated, urban society (*Gesellschaft*). ISOTYPE, through its "universal" sign system, was intended to both teach and empower members of the workers' movement (designated as its primary, original audience), as well as contribute to the creation of a "multiethnic urban citizenry," an international solidarity between workers unimpeded by the difficulties of

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[150] Nader Vossoughian, *Otto Neurath: The Language of the Global Polis* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2008), 65.

translating between languages.[151] In the early 1920s, in response to the situation of mass homelessness wrought by WWI, Neurath developed a model of modern city planning centered around the ideal figure of the "Gypsy-Settler," who would take advantage of both industrial and non-market forces to "self-help." [152] In the latter 1920s, he translated these utopian aims from the practical sphere of urban development to the realm of museum education and exhibition design.

Similar systems of icons and signs continue to interest artists today. In his project, *Book from the Ground* (2003 – present) Xu Bing employs such symbols to create a utopian, global language.[153] It takes its inspiration from mass communication forms—such as airport and cell phone signs—in order to reach a larger audience; in fact, it only draws from publicly existent signs and logos and does not invent new ones. Viewers may utilize the Internet at home, or on computers installed physically at exhibition sites, in order to type English, soon Chinese, and theoretically in the future, any other vernacular into standardized pictograms. Farocki's video, in contrast, uses fragmentation, montage, and anachronism to highlight the often non-ecumenical, non-progressive historical weight of this type of simplified visual language.

The last slides of *In-Formation* project data concerning the "*Krankheit des Westens*," or "illness of the West," implied to be unemployment caused by too many foreigners. The viewer is left with an image of footprints crossing a closed border gate, and a stick figure "leaving" instead of "coming," framing the entire issue of immigration, again, in terms of unwanted, stateless, and ghost-like peoples. Such graphic imagery is popularly utilized throughout Europe today in order

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[151] Ibid., 61.
[152] In Neurath's proposed *Gemeinwirtschaft*, a portmanteau that translates to a "communal" or "cooperative economy," displaced "gypsy-settlers" would spontaneously and communally self-organize; they would barter through subsistence farming but also capitalize on the infrastructure of the modern metropolis. Ibid., 29.
[153] Xu Bing states about his project, "Regardless of your cultural background or mother tongue, you will be able to read this book as long as you have experience of contemporary life. The educated and illiterate should be able to enjoy equally the pleasure of what it means to read." Xu Bing, "Regarding *Book from the Ground*," accessed January 4, 2011, http://www.bookfromtheground.com/home_english.htm.

to politicize negatively immigration by non-Europeans, for instance in poster campaigns by the right-wing, xenophobic Swiss People's Party. Last year, the party successfully mobilized citizens in Switzerland to ban the construction of minarets, or Muslim prayer towers, by referendum. Its particularly effective poster campaign included imagery of sinister-looking, cloaked Muslim women appearing quite similar to the Turkish women found in *In-Formation*.

Despite Neurath's modernist, utopian aims at community-building, his "all-inclusive" visual system created a language that certain peoples were unable to speak. Within its visual economy, Roma and Sinti (Gypsy-settlers), Turkish guest-workers, Jews, and asylum seekers were at once included and excluded, represented and silenced. As Farocki has repeatedly shown us, the visualization of information is a key area of contestation. At a time when numerous European radical right-wing parties are increasingly vocal in mass media channels about their xenophobic, populist programs – and where biological life has become ever more frequently placed at the center of state politics – it is crucial that present day minority or stateless groups such as the refugee or guest worker are institutionally guaranteed a political voice in their own representation.

2.1.5 Moving from a *volkloser Raum* to Embodied Collectives

In the middle of *In-Formation*, two black screens, the only two in the video, section off a handful of maps depicting movements of peoples across Europe during a much earlier time, from the Bronze Age to approximately the end of the Roman Empire. The message is that migration is nothing new. People come and go, whether by foot or train or any newer technology. But at certain moments in the twentieth century, this movement itself became superfluous because a space of exception, or "exclusionary inclusion," arguably became the new political paradigm of

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modernity. The camp represents the purest expression of this biopolitical statelessness, a space where humans exist but do not exist as humans, a *volkloser Raum*. Humans, like Settela Steinbach, are stripped of any political community, and therefore any humanity or subjective quality whatsoever, denied human agency and reduced to bare life by the power of the State.

In-Formation and *Respite* offer snapshots of a biopolitical history of human abstraction in twentieth century Europe. The former presents a long and almost numbing view of history, mimicking the now omnipresent, reductive and repetitious twenty-four-hour news cycle, whereas the latter dramatically details a quite singular, violent date in that trajectory. Was *Respite* produced two years after *In-Formation* in order to jolt viewers out of a quotidian complacency? There is a certain urgency at a time when European nations increasingly wield the power to situate populations in a state of exception or expel them from their territorial borders (as was most recently the case with France and a percentage of its Roma population in the summer of 2010). As the idea of the nation-state becomes increasingly tenuous within a transnational system of markets and information flow, it may also become increasingly critical, as Arendt most poignantly detailed in 1951, for the protection of peoples most disenfranchised by that global upheaval. Whether the nation-state continues to be a sustainable model or not, or if the European Union develops to the extent of imagining its own supranational community in such a way, it is crucial that present day minority or stateless peoples such as the asylum seeker or guest worker are guaranteed a voice within organized political communities. As Arendt poignantly observes, we are not born equal. Instead, we have developed political affiliations to guarantee those rights of equality against a tremendous background of real, disquieting human differentiation – the "disturbing miracle" that each of us is "single, unique, unchangeable."[154] Guaranteeing a voice to

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[154] Arendt, *Origins*, 296.

present-day marginalized, stateless, or minority groups in Europe means, above all, constructing

a visual, political platform defined by actions and opinions, not ethnic stereotypes. Otherwise,

the legend of the Wandering Jew, image of the stateless Roma, or stereotype of the radical

Muslim, become lived realities for millions.

As film historian Randall Halle astutely notes, "For Farocki, film does serve to awaken

political consciousness, but he tempers this with an awareness that only mass political

movements have the ability to transform the conditions that he examines, criticizes, and

indicts."[155] Whereas the first half of this chapter has focused on Farocki's rigorous treatment of

silence – or the aural – in the historical dehumanization of groups of peoples, the next section

interrogates the possibility for creating mobilized, active collectives today. The following

section, in contrast, returns to a question of the visual, and the critical filtering of information

through communal, embodied spectatorship.

2.2   RAISING THE STAKES OF THE GAME

Produced the same year as the film *Respite* (2007), another piece by Farocki, *Deep Play*, departs

dramatically in many respects – as a twelve-screen, surround sound video installation – depicting

the 2006 World Cup final game between Italy and France. Yet like *Respite*, it also films a

"normal" sports game. In *Respite*, quotidian images of men playing soccer represent "the true

horror of the camp"; Primo Levi recalls the story of one of the last Auschwitz survivors, Miklos

Nyszli, who played in a soccer match between the SS and the *Sonderkommando*: "they take

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[155] Randall Halle, "History is Not a Matter of Generations," 51.

sides, bet, applaud, urge the players on as if, rather than at the gates of hell, the game were taking place on the village green."[156] Agamben suggests that we are somehow still spectators of this soccer match, "which repeats itself in every match in our stadiums, in every television broadcast, in the normalcy of everyday life."[157] The 2006 World Cup final game, in fact hosted in Berlin at the famous, Nazi-constructed Olympic Stadium, is no exception. How can spectators today make sense of this soccer game, as a historically-recurring playing field of human differentiation and cultural affiliation?

The games in *Respite* and *Deep Play* recall another, earlier, two-screen video installation by Farocki, *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* (2000), where the deaths of prisoners (from a U.S. state prison, not a transit camp) barely register on camera. What is most shocking is that the relentless banality of the black-and-white surveillance footage renders their deaths scarcely visible. In one instance, on April 7, 1989 at the Corcoran State Prison in California, it takes guards a full nine minutes to retrieve the body of a man, William Martinez, who is fatally wounded. He is shot in the prison yard by a guard up above for fighting with another inmate. Farocki provides intertitles throughout, but a human voiceover layers the video only when focused on these precise deaths, as if to lend them a certain corporeality and humanity again. *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* also reveals the fact that prison guards would arrange to have inmates with divisive cultural affiliations placed in the yard together, and then bet on the outcome of the expected fights. Betting in such an arena offers only a gruesome payoff:

> The prisoners belong to prison gangs with names like "Aryan Brotherhood" or "Mexican Mafia." They
> have received long sentences and are locked up far away from the world in a maximum-security prison.
> They have hardly anything but their bodies, whose muscles they train constantly, and their affiliation to an

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[156] Primo Levi, *The Drowned and the Saved*, trans. Raymond Rosenthal (New York: Random House, 1989), 55, as quoted in Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz*, 25.
[157] Ibid., 26.

organization. Their honour is more important to them than their life; they fight although they know they

will be fired on.[158]

The surveillance camera shoots the men from the same angle as the gun. Though far removed in

one sense, it is not difficult to draw a connection between the austere gray box of the prison yard

and the minimalist gray room where the installation viewer stands, also captured by surveillance

cameras.

Besides his scrutiny of the dehumanizing space of transit, internment, and concentration

camps, Farocki has also long been interested in Jeremy Bentham's ideal panoptic prison and

Foucauldian disciplinarian structures.[159] In the hybrid black box/white cube space of *Deep Play*,

as it was initially displayed at Documenta 12, the twelve screens were arranged in a semi-circular

format. It was originally intended as a fully circular, 24-screen installation without interruption

by curtains.[160] The specialized configuration evokes a panoptic-like space, and the soccer

players, like the "gladiator" convicts in the disciplinary prison yard of *I Thought I Was Seeing

Convicts*, fight for their honor with only their bodies and cultural affiliations.

In his *Theory of Legislation*, Jeremy Bentham coined the phrase *deep play*. Basically it

means that within gambling, a point is reached at which the stakes become so high that it is

irrational for the bettors to continue their wager. In other words, the marginal utility of what one

stands to win is less than the marginal disutility of what one stands to lose. In *deep play*, this is

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[158] Harun Farocki, "Controlling Observation," in *Nachdruck/Imprint: Texte/Writings*, ed. Susanne Gaensheimer and Nicolaus Schafhausen (New York: Lukas and Sternberg, 2001), 289.
[159] See particularly his essay "Controlling Observation," in Harun Farocki, *Imprint: Writinsg*, as well as Christa Blümlinger, "Harun Farocki: Critical Strategies," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 315-22; Jan Verwoert, "Production Pattern Associations: On the Work of Harun Farocki," *Afterall* 11 (Spring/Summer 2005): 65-78.
[160] Farocki had originally hoped to exhibit this piece as twenty-four screens around the Hercules monument in the Wilhemshöhe park, but due to funding issues and curatorial decisions, it was placed in the Fridericianum's central rotunda. See Harun Farocki, "Auf zwölf flachen Schirmen: Kaum noch ein Handwerk," *New Filmkritik*, December 16, 2007, http://newfilmkritik.de/archiv/2007-12/auf-zwolf-flachen-schirmen/, and "Harun Farocki *Deep Play*: Spiel mit tiefer Bedeutung. Ein Gespräch von Ursula Maria Probst," *Kunstforum* 187 (Aug/Sept 2007): 464.

the case for both participants, and despite entering the bet in search of pleasure, the net pain will inevitably exceed the net pleasure.

Clearly, the guards' gambling in *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* may result in a type of profound dehumanization and debasement – to bare life and banal death – but in the *deep play* of a present-day soccer game, could the stakes be as dire? In his 550-page treatise, *Theory of Legislation*, Bentham only once mentions this phrase in a footnote, referring to it as the "evils of deep play."[161] It is anthropologist Clifford Geertz, rather, who appropriated and fully developed the concept in perhaps his best-known essay, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight."[162] Geertz borrowed the phrase in order to understand gambling in the Balinese cockfight less as a matter of economic utility, and more one of social significance. In his analysis, the stakes are much more than material: they are bound up in esteem, honor, dignity, respect, and status. He asserts, "It is in large part *because* the marginal disutility of loss is so great at the higher levels of betting that to engage in such betting is to lay one's public self, allusively and metaphorically, through the medium of one's cock, on the line."[163] So what was at stake in Farocki's unveiling of *Deep Play* at Documenta 12, beyond the outcome of a World Cup soccer match that millions had already viewed?

In the broadest sense, *Deep Play* stages a Brechtian "epic" play to present a realistic picture of the world and to teach the greatest number of people about it. As a filmmaker based in Berlin since the late 1960s, Farocki has explored the intellectual legacy of not only Hannah Arendt, but also of Walter Benjamin and playwright Bertolt Brecht. Specifically, Farocki has established himself within the tradition of an "author as producer" – as Benjamin once described

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[161] Jeremy Bentham, *The Theory of Legislation* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1931), 106.
[162] Clifford Geertz, "Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 80-98.
[163] Geertz, "Deep Play," 88.

Brecht's practice – constantly stressing his own role in the transformation of a class-based, exploitative process of production. Much of his film and video work utilizes the tools of Brecht's epic theater and in particular, the alienation effect, in order to showcase the inequities of a capitalist economic order and the often deleterious effects it has had on resources and peoples worldwide.

Yet *Deep Play* offers a critical point of departure in Farocki's recent work as well, not only for its staged, expanded spatial design, but also for its shift towards a greater emphasis on the critical role of the audience. The second half of this chapter investigates Farocki's long-running adaptation of Brechtian theoretical, pedagogical models in his artistic career, particularly the enacted *Gestus* (socially-based attitude), which scholars have not examined in any detail. The following section will delve into his transition from filmwork to video installation in the last fifteen years, providing a close analysis of his film, *In Comparison*, contrasted with its installation equivalent, *Comparison Via a Third*. Each features basically the same material vis-à-vis an anthropological gaze: examples of brick production techniques from around the world. Their differing formats, however, offer an avenue to explore the implications, in terms of audience viewership, of Farocki's broader shift since 1995 from black box cinema to white cube mediascapes. Lastly, the essay will examine *Deep Play* as it uniquely models a twenty-first century, global epic theater, problematized as it is within a panoptic design. Farocki's career-long strategies of "artist as producer" and "artist as ethnographer" take backstage to the newly featured emphasis on spectators as collective participant-observers.

When there are no longer actors on the epic stage – in the sense that those actors are dehumanized to an unprecedented degree by a controlling, automated apparatus, as in *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts* or *Deep Play* – then spectators must learn to engage a new site of struggle,

not one of class per se, but more fundamentally, of cultural production and representation. *Deep Play* signals this struggle vis-à-vis the under-whelming footage of French-Algerian soccer player Zinedine Zidane's historically-specific, impassioned head-butt of an Italian player. Spectators in many cultural arenas today, like sports viewers, are placed frequently at the center of elaborate, technological dis-plays and bombarded at all angles by a nonstop flow of mundane data. In his most recent installations, such as *Comparison Via a Third* or *Deep Play*, Farocki stresses the participative, ethnographic fieldwork necessary on the part of exhibition visitors to filter and interpret this information. Above all, Farocki is concerned with discovering a theater of his own time, as was Brecht. In a search for cultural significance and the status of the human in the twenty-first century, *Deep Play* offers the ultimate betting ring – and ultimate stage – for a "sporting" public.[164]

2.2.1   The Artist as Producer

"We pin our hopes to the sporting public."

-Bertolt Brecht, "Emphasis on Sport" (1926)

"At the center of [Bertolt Brecht's] experiment stands the human being. […] He is subjected to tests, examinations. What emerges is this: events are alterable not at their climaxes, not by virtue and resolution, but only in their strictly habitual course, by reason and practice. To construct

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[164] Though I will focus on *Deep Play* as it was installed at Documenta 12, the piece has subsequently traveled to different exhibition sites. Tom McDonough wrote a compelling review of the piece in its iteration at the Greene Naftali Gallery in early 2010. He also connects the piece to Geertz's essay, but considers it ironic. Our ideas were arrived at independently, and I hope this essay reinforces some of his own, while taking them in a different direction and treating them more expansively. Tom McDonough, "Harun Farocki at Greene Naftali," *Art in America* 96, issue 5 (May 2008): 186.

from the smallest elements of behavior [Gesten] what in Aristotelian dramaturgy is called

'action' [handeln] is the purpose of the epic theater."

–Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer" (1934)

Farocki's work is profoundly indebted to the theories and praxis of Brecht, and many scholars have analyzed the manner in which his oeuvre has redeployed and adapted Brecht's methods for a later, specific historical moment. Thomas Elsaesser, above all, in his essay "Political Filmmaking After Brecht: Harun Farocki, For Example," provides one of the most nuanced analyses of Farocki's interest in the playwright's work, contextualizing it within a 1970s European filmmaking discourse. The question then was the continued applicability of Brecht's ideas. Elsaesser claims that most of the New German Cinema filmmakers during that post-'68 era borrowed primarily from Brecht's practical, interventionist strategies, engaging in institutional battles and tactical strategies, for example, introducing their films to live audiences or taking up social issues as their subject matter.[165] In contrast to Brecht's institutional, public sphere interventionism, however, practical necessities – such as lack of funds – marginalized filmmakers who would have continued to engage exclusively with Brecht's theories of disjunctive formal experimentation. Moreover, for those who were preoccupied with a theoretical discourse at the time (namely feminists, according to Elsaesser), Brecht's radical concepts of "distanciation" were coming to be displaced by a Lacanian psychoanalytic perspective that promoted a more deconstructive approach to tackling the illusionism of spectacle culture. The notable exception to this trend was work by Farocki, who continued to interrogate the continued applicability of Brecht's ideas within such a conceptually-evolving

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[165] Thomas Elsaesser, "Political Filmmaking After Brecht: Harun Farocki, For Example," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, 136-37.

topography. As evidence, Elsaesser provides a close reading of Farocki's *Before Your Eyes –*

Vietnam (*Etwas Wird Sichtbar*, 1980), as it spoke to this shifting discursive terrain and still

engaged a Brechtian notion of function versus appearance. *Before Your Eyes* highlights the

problem of uncovering political realities behind certain images, in this case iconic photographs

from Vietnam. In his essay, Elsaesser establishes concretely Farocki's early dialogue with a

Brechtian tradition as one that could still productively inform a changing filmic discourse.

In terms of his later work, Christa Blümlinger provides a thoughtful analysis of Farocki's

first video installation, *Schnittstelle* (*Interface*, 1995),[166] as a distinct and complex foregrounding

of the "author as producer." According to Walter Benjamin in his eponymous essay, the "place

of the intellectual in the class struggle can be identified – or, better, chosen – only on the basis of

his position in the process of production."[167] Critically, *Schnittstelle*'s two-screen video display

disrupts the illusion of the filmic apparatus by highlighting Farocki's own role in the social

production of images, fragmenting and recombining his past works. It recursively portrays

screens within screens, implicates the artist as he reiterates voiceovers from past films, and

emphasizes his hand as it materially frames or interacts with the film strip or the video button.

One scene illustrates Farocki handling money, describing how in this gesture, it is easy to

understand how little appearance and essence actually coincide. Clearly, even with his shift to

video installation, Farocki has continued to apply Brecht's dictum to engage a means of

production and not just the products, in the hopes of altering an apparatus of mass consumption.

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[166] For the purpose of this essay, I will use the artwork's German title because it better evokes the editor's position in the process of production. Blümlinger, "Harun Farocki: Critical Strategies," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*.

[167] Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *Selected Writings, Volume 2: 1927-1934*, eds. Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith, trans. Rodney Livingstone (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 773.

There is, however, another quite specific, Brechtian concept that is not identified by scholars in their analyses of Farocki's "instructional" films from the 1980s and 90s, up until the present. That is Brecht's notion of the *Gestus* – the combined bodily gestures and posture, tone of voice, facial expression, language, and habits that together reflect specific social, historical processes and relationships.[168] "*Gestus*" does not translate as mere gesture, but rather as an adoption of particular behaviors and bodily attitudes that reveal broader social laws governing a collective.[169] These behaviors and language are alterable. Thus, while it may seem that the human species, at times, progresses according to an underlying, inexorable fate, the actual state of affairs – political and economic – is contrived, constructed by humans, and is, therefore, alterable by human behavior in its smallest acts. Brecht's epic theater worked to break this illusion of a "natural" human course and to point to the historical specificity, and the class struggle, of his own time. Among other methods, his actors were charged with demonstrating particular social *Gesten* through episodic interruption, or to show the showing of these *Gesten*. This encouraged a spectator to become an informed observer, rather than a hypnotized subject, by pedagogically displaying to him/her how to recognize, imitate, and change human behavior and ultimately, historical circumstances, in a quite material way.

A significant number of Farocki's films, such as *Indoctrination* (*Die Schulung*, 1987), *How to Live in the FRG* (*Leben – BRD*, 1990), *What's Up?* (*Was ist Los?*, 1991), *Re-Education* (*Die Umschulung*, 1994), *The Expression of Hands* (*Der Ausdruck der Hände, 1997)*, and *The Interview* (*Die Bewerbung*, 1997), investigate microcosms of human gesture/language/mood in social situations. This mostly involves occupational training and performance testing in

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[168] Hal Foster does mention the notion of *Gestus* passingly in a footnote: "Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki," *Artforum* XLIII, no. 3 (Nov 2004): 250.
[169] Bertolt Brecht, "On Gestic Music," in *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. and trans. John Willet (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), 104-106.

workplace settings, but also includes "how-to" instruction for the management and

administration of activities in all spheres of quotidian life. In *How to Live in the FRG*, for

instance, police practice how to arrest suspects who resist, midwives are shown how to deliver

babies safely, children are taught how to cross the street, and much more. Art historian Hal

Foster notes how these "lessons in proper behavior shade into forced socialization,"[170] and

Elsaesser identifies how the training often commodifies and objectifies the very people that it

aims to empower.[171] Blümlinger, in turn, elaborates on how these films offer a "reflection on

disciplinary institutions as precursors of control societies,"[172] which clearly ties them to the

artist's later video installations focused on prisons, shopping malls, grocery stores, and sports

arenas. There is no doubt that these films project a dark image of human order and "progress" in

different public and private spheres.

They also, however, reflect a certain Brechtian hope for social change. To be sure, they

betray moments of rupture in the overall *Grundgestus* [basic *Gestus*] of human training and

mechanization. Farocki states:

> I am stylistically indebted to the early Brecht: his idea of 'man is man.' It has to do with the fact that Man
>
> himself is not that great, he is the raw material to be constructed. Both Brecht, in his play on British
>
> colonialism [Mann ist Mann], and I, in my film on Vietnam, abhor the abuses that took place, but we also
>
> find that there are possibilities hiding in those situations.[173]

Blümlinger observes a moment in *How to Live in the FRG*, for example, when a workplace

trainer plays his role badly with a "young and rather attractive" woman, revealing a crack in his

professional façade when he suggests that she use her (girlish) charm. Role-playing and reality,

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[170] Foster, "Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki," 160.
[171] Thomas Elsaesser, "Harun Farocki: Fimmaker, Artist, Media Theorist," in *Harun Farocki: Working the Sightlines*, 20-21.
[172] Blümlinger, "Harun Farocki: Critical Strategies," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, 316-17.
[173] "A Perfect Replica: An Interview with Harun Farocki and Jill Godmilow," *Afterimage* 26, no. 3 (Nov/Dec1998): 14.

through Farocki's careful editing, are shown to misalign in this instance, thus betraying and

unhinging the social laws that govern such behavior. Rather than an individual human attitude, a

social *Gestus* is revealed. While this documented workplace is no epic theater in the literal sense,

with no professional actors such as Peter Lorre in *Mann Ist Mann* to exhibit the showing of

Gesten, Farocki is able to edit footage in order to punctuate episodically gestic language and

behaviors in another social arena.[174]

In *What's Up?*, likewise, Farocki focuses on the socially-based, gestic language of

chance and order. The film provides intertitles with word pairs such as "fortune/destiny" to chart

different human attempts to create controlled, rationalistic environments/processes against the

backdrop of unpredictable forces. Bank managers weigh investment risks, companies balance the

replacement of laborers by Japanese-imported robots, and business researchers calculate

consumer reactions to television advertisements. Like *How Live in the FRG*, the camera

anthropologically targets and hones in on the body language, mannerisms, speech intonation and

word choice that are employed in these different economic exchange rituals. At one point there is

even "how-to" instruction for holding chips properly at a gambling table. The implication is that

with proper handling, there can be more adept gambling, or better management of monetary risk.

What's Up? depicts the Grundgestus of attempting to manage and control every aspect of one's

life through the "equalizing," "universalizing" medium of capital.

Fiscal security and control in the film, however, are stripped of their illusory character

through the capturing of anomalies in social habit and speech. Farocki updates the class struggle

of Brecht's era in terms of the broad financial deregulation and "casino capitalism" of the 1980s,

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[174] Farocki has produced another film focusing on the career of Peter Lorre: *Das Doppelte Gesicht Peter Lorre* (1982).

which reflected the increasing significance of financial speculation over industry.[175] In one scene, an investment broker, sitting at an office desk in front of diagnostic line graphs on his computer, contacts a potential buyer with a "sure bet." His software analysis indicates that investment today is guaranteed to bring dividends tomorrow. The phone line is symbolically weak, however, and the conversation begins poorly. Once the buyer finally hears what the broker has to say, he challenges the caller's confidence, citing his own life experience with an always unpredictable market. What was originally a routine sales call turns into a subtly antagonistic debate concerning the risk of the stock market. The broker, above all, seems offended that the potential buyer would view it as a "game." With clearly Brechtian methods in *What's Up?*, Farocki exposes a historically-specific moment, and points to the transformative potential of experience-trained, cognizant human behavior.

2.2.2   The Artist as Ethnographer

In the last few years, particularly since the exhibition of *Deep Play* at Documenta 12, critical interest in Farocki's oeuvre has accelerated. Since the late 1960s his work has played a key role in German aesthetic circles, but as of the mid-1990s, with his incorporation of multiple-screen, moving-image works into the museum-gallery nexus, his work has attracted more international attention. In 2004, for instance, Hal Foster introduced the "old '68er" to an *Artforum* public, highlighting the artist's complexly intertwining thematic concerns, such as forms of "everyday"

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[175] See for example Susan Strange, *Casino Capitalism* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

socialization and training, the instrumentalization of modes of representation, and the military-industrial-complex.[176]

Schnittstelle (1995) began this transition, as Farocki's first video installation. Since then, the artist has continued to expand his practice spatially and temporally, including more screens and more innovative layouts in museum and gallery settings. Of about a hundred works, approximately twenty of these have stretched beyond a single-screen cinematic environment, and among these twenty, most juxtapose two screens. Recently, however, with *Deep Play*, *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (*Arbeiter verlassen die Fabrik in elf Jahrzehnten*, 2006), and *Feasting or Flying* (*Fressen oder Fliegen*, 2008), the artist's displays have expanded to six or twelve screens.

A number of scholars have posited various reasons for this critical move. Film historian and artist Chris Pavsek worries that Farocki's later works register and mimic an increasing process of dehumanization in the larger visual field – that it suggests there are no longer collective subjects to catalyze amidst the bombardment of a spectacular media culture.[177] With his initial foray into filmmaking in the late 1960s, Farocki produced overt agit-prop material, and his now classic essay films from the 1980s and 90s have been characterized as didactic.[178] Pavsek suggests that the artist's new installation pieces betray a certain cynicism concerning twenty-first century visual culture, one which fails completely to edify.[179] Whereas Farocki utilized pedagogical commentary in his film *Respite*, for example, he did not employ intertitles or voiceover for the video installation, *In-Formation*. Much more than the former, *In-Formation*

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[176] Hal Foster, "Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki," 156-161, 250.
[177] Christopher Pavsek, "Harun Farocki's Images of the World," *Rouge* 12 (2008), accessed April 7, 2011, http://www.rouge.com.au/12/farocki.html, no page numbers.
[178] Pavsek discusses this element of didacticism, as well as Elsaesser in "Harun Farocki: Fimmaker, Artist, Media Theorist," in *Harun Farocki: Working the Sightlines*, 14.
[179] Christopher Pavsek, "Harun Farocki's Images of the World."

mimics a quite contemporary 24-hour-news cycle with compressed visual clips and requires

more interpretative guessing from a spectator. Beyond literally mobilizing viewers in a

controlled museum environment, how can these installations still hope to incite spectators to

political resistance and action?

Invariably, there will be many factors that play into Farocki's evolving practice, mostly

involving funding opportunities, the desire for creative and intellectual experimentation, and an

awareness of a radically changing social-visual field. Yet his installations do offer a new kind of

hope for subjective agency and collective mobilization, one that implicates viewers in a new and

transformative manner. Referring to Farocki's "direct cinema" of the 1960s and '70s, Elsaesser

posits that "… he has probably remained too much of an agitator-activist to create the openness

that usually gives the viewer the illusion of entering into the ongoing events as a participant or

co-conspirator…"[180] With his shift to installation, Farocki's practice has moved precisely in this

direction, in that it often now designates much more trust – or rather responsibility – to the

embodied spectator.[181]

In this regard, his aesthetic transition resonates with a growing trend in the art world

since the 1990s to engage spectators collectively and inter-relationally. The most critical

difference between his work, however, and much artistic production that falls under the rubric of

relational aesthetics, for example, is his continued political commitment to contesting

exploitative systems of production and to fostering thoughtful, politically-charged engagement

within a public sphere. His work attempts to initiate conversations – like many interactive

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[180] Thomas Elsaesser, "Harun Farocki: Fimmaker, Artist, Media Theorist," 14.
[181] This is not to suggest that every museum or gallery installation will include the same strategy or set of formal elements for engaging visitors. *In-Formation* (2005), for instance, has only one channel but challenges the viewer with a complete absence of authorial intertitles or commentary, whereas *The Silver and the Cross* (2010), a double-screen installation, does include a woman's instructive voiceover. Each piece speaks to a different set of issues and consequently, will call for uniquely innovative design layouts. Yet with Farocki's shift to spatial displays, there is a clear move to experiment with implicating embodied viewers in new and complex ways.

installation pieces today – but not necessarily for convivial, "playful" exchange. Rather his challenging projects call for a frank debate over current, macroscopic social and economic problems.

A provocative example of the contrast between Farocki's film work and video installation would be his recent one-channel, cinematic *In Comparison* (*Zum Vergleich*, 2009) versus its two-screen counterpart, an installed *Comparison via a Third* (*Vergleich über ein Drittes*, 2007). Both utilize the same material, but the different formats subtly alter the effect of the larger message. The footage in both depicts a spectrum of brick production methods: from highly industrialized, automated machine-work in Germany to purely communal handwork in Burkina Faso, and a mixture of both in Indian cities. The film *In Comparison* unfolds as an episodic "narrative," interspersed throughout with authorial intertitles and diagrammatic inter-images. The artist once again reveals his thumbprint with montage and commentary, and carefully identifies specific temporalities and locations (cities and towns in Burkina Faso, India, France, Germany, and Switzerland). The film charts a historically-situated conversion from manual to machinic labor across these different sites – presenting it "one brick at a time" – beginning with the mixing of raw material in Burkina Faso to the final shot of a digitally-designed, elaborately-constructed building in Switzerland.

Whereas the first half of the film appears to proceed in an uncomfortably linear fashion, the second half shuffles around between different production sites, problematizing an association of temporal or historical progress with cultural "development." Indeed, the first half chronologically situates a sequence of production plants: from one in India that has had the same routine since 1930, to a French plant operated by Moroccan workers since 1945, and lastly to a fully machine-operated plant constructed in Germany in 2003. The second half of the film,

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however, fragments this progression by jumping more dramatically among production techniques and sites and by offering authoritative judgments (as for a building being constructed in Gando, Burkina Faso): "Nothing is imported for this building and only human energy is expended;" or for a firing kiln in Toutipakkam, India: "The socially minded idea: the building is fired and the heat is used to fire bricks as well." The film also displays European architectural students in India, sketching and laying bricks, and learning by both ethnographic observation and participation.

The double-screen, moving-image projection *Comparison via a Third*, on the other hand, eschews text or voiceover, instead presenting a soft montage of the same images of brick workers in Germany, India, and Burkina Faso.[182] Art critic and historian Helmut Draxler correctly raises the question of a "simultaneity of the non-simultaneous" in *Comparison via a Third*. In other words, the installation challenges a conflation of notions of temporal and historical "development" (from categories of the primitive to developing to highly developed) that are often employed to assign value to different methods of cultural organization and production. Farocki does not juxtapose an image of communal hand labor with that of automated machine work in order to either value the former as ideal or "natural," or to devalue it as rudimentary or "primitive." Rather, the images are placed temporally and spatially contiguous, not hierarchically, via the two screens.

In discussing his 12-screen installation, *Workers Leaving the Factory in Eleven Decades* (2006), which utilizes basically the same material as his earlier one-channel essay film, *Workers Leaving the Factory* (1995), Farocki explains that in the case of the 12-screen version:

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[182] "Soft montage" is a term that Farocki employs to describe his work; see Harun Farocki, "Cross Influence/Soft Montage," in *Harun Farocki: Against What? Against Whom?*, ed. Antje Ehmann and Kodwo Eshun (London: Koenig, 2009).

> Film clips from the past 110 years are shown simultaneously. The succession of montage allows one shot to
>
> replace the next and the message is: this image, not the one before. Simultaneity, on the contrary,
>
> expresses: this shot and at the same time this other one.[183]

Draxler suggests that the "third" element referred to in the title marks a different mode of comprehending social production altogether, but understood more simply, the third element in this composition, beyond the two contiguous screens, may refer instead to the viewer.

Rather than depict anonymous architecture students (footage that is removed in this version), *Comparison Via a Third* challenges gallery visitors not only to register conceptually both screens simultaneously, but also to embody both distinct ethnographic roles of observer and participant. The film *In Comparison* attempts to present an anthropological, pedagogical description of global brick production methods, but the installation places much more responsibility on the viewer. *In Comparison* offers precise dates and locations, whereas *Comparison via a Third* does not. Instead, the installation situates the viewer phenomenologically, as a *de facto*, necessarily implicated participant, in a state of contemporaneity with the filmed subjects, focusing on the simultaneity of present modes of being and working in an increasingly proximate international context.

2.2.3   The Stakes of *Deep Play*

Deep Play implicates spectators to an even further degree than *Comparison via a Third*. Rather than a third actor between two channels, the viewer is placed at the center of a massive, twelve-screen mediascape, a configuration that mimics a semicircular panoptic viewing space. Visitors

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[183] Antje Ehmann and Harun Farocki , eds., *Kino Wie Noch Nie/Cinema Like Never Before* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2006), 20.

become the guards/observers of an extensive, horizontal tableau of the 2006 World Cup final game. Time is integral to the video presentation (set at a specific two hour fifteen minute interval in history), but it is looped, endlessly repeated, and immutable. It is an object fixed in time, lending itself more to a synchronic "reading," such as in anthropology, rather than a historical, diachronic one. Spectators are integral to the "fieldwork" of the soccer game. In the Balinese cockfight, as Geertz concludes, the audience gambles in *deep play* despite inevitable economic loss because the enterprise involves much more than monetary value: it garners social status, honor, respect, and dignity. The event also allows the Balinese audience an opportunity to tell a story about itself to itself, to better understand moments of profound social meaning within its own culture. Likewise, visitors to *Deep Play* are challenged to realize an event of deep social significance within their own ritualistic game, and it is this ability, just as much as any wager, that is at stake.

Insofar as *Deep Play* de-emphasizes Farocki's own authorial hand in its construction, it marks a divergence from his past single-channel films. While Farocki has been quite attentive to crafting sound (or lack of sound) in his films, in *Deep Play*, sound is entirely diegetic, with no voiceover and nothing altered from the noise of cheering fans to the television director's quick camera instructions. Nor does the installation include inscriptions that are essential to his essay films. No text supplements the installation except for the piece's title, which is, strikingly, given in English with no German translation. The one exception to Farocki's diminished authorial presence is the very first, split-screen channel on the left, which recursively displays screens. On this channel, we see a game analyst watching a television screen with the soccer match on, and on the second, we see the analysts' hand marking down information from what he views. This evokes the self-referential editor in Farocki's *Schnittstelle*, providing a close-up of the analyst's

hand in juxtaposition with his watching a screen. It is the only channel among the twelve that implicates via an obvious substitution the "artist as producer" through the use of montage.

In the first channel, one gathers that the game analyst will interpret players' movements ("twitches") into strategically-significant actions ("winks"). According to Clifford Geertz, to note a mere twitch of the eye would be "thin" description, only transmitted data, but understanding a socially-significant, polysemous wink would necessitate "thick" description on the part of a cultural analyst or ethnographer. For Geertz, the idea of culture is fundamentally semiotic. Ethnography works to discern the difference between twitches and winks, movements and gestures (or *Gesten* as the case may be). This is the "interpretive turn" in anthropology that Geertz introduced and advanced. His essay "Deep Play: Notes on a Balinese Cockfight" perhaps best exemplifies this commitment to an interpretative method of "thick description."[184] With enough thick description – derived from long-term, quantitative and qualitative, highly participative, and microscopic observation – an ethnographer can essentially "read" another culture's webs of social signification as texts.

Ostensibly, *Deep Play* presents more than enough information to develop a "thick description" of the World Cup final, but the quality of that information remains inferior to the statistical quantity (a pattern also evidenced in *In-Formation*). According to the anthropologist, one gains access to the signs of another imaginative universe by inspecting events, not by "abstract[ing] entities into unified patterns."[185] *Deep Play*, however, presents approximately twenty-seven total hours of game coverage as exactly that: abstracted, aestheticized patterns. A

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[184] Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30. In an interview with Ursula Maria Probst, Farocki discloses the fact that he read Geertz's theory of thick description during the production of *Deep Play* and even considered titling the work "Dichte Beschreibung" ("thick description"). However, he did not want to make the connection so explicit. "Harun Farocki *Deep Play*: Spiel mit tiefer Bedeutung. Ein Gespräch von Ursula Maria Probst," 464.

[185] Geertz, "Thick Description," 17.

constant theme in Farocki's work is the critical necessity to distinguish between mere data-gathering, and understanding or interpreting that data. In *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* (1989), for example, he explores the multivalent character of *Aufklärung*, as either "reconnaissance" or "enlightenment," data-gathering or human intellectual illumination.[186] He also notes multiple translations of the German word *erkennen*: to "perceive," or on the other hand, to "recognize" in the sense of "understand." *Deep Play* also offers surveillance but not human cognizance.

Indeed, the eighth and twelfth screens stream only surveillance footage: a view of the Berlin Olympic Stadium from up above as the sun sets, as well as fans throughout the stadium. The final channel in the installation monitors not only the spectators of the game, but also ironically, the guards around the perimeter of the field that also survey the crowds. Just as in the maximum security prison of *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts*, every corner of the stadium, and every player of the game, is supervised and controlled through visual access. Bodies are rationalized as abstract material. *Deep Play* attempts to present the centrally-located viewer with every possible, panoptic line of sight into the game.

Dehumanization occurs on multiple levels. The tenth screen, with edited live footage, reduces players to statistical numbers with real-time miniature speed charts on the bottom of the screen. The seventh screen focuses on the French and Italian coaches, capturing them behind digital, "chalk" game boards as if containing and caging them; and the third and ninth screens evoke individual players' vital signs, with line graphs (for rates of speed) that mimic medical heart monitors.

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[186] This is evident in *Images of the World and the Inscription of War* and the *Eye/Machine* trilogy, a point which Foster highlights in "Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki."

Additionally, a number of other screens schematize the whole match as if it were a video game. In his discussion of *I Thought I Was Seeing Convicts*, Farocki writes, "The fights in the yard look like something from a cheap computer game. It is hard to imagine a less dramatic representation of death."[187] Like the convicts who are represented as track-able, computerized dots on screen for their guards, made possible by electronic ankle bracelets, the soccer players of the *Deep Play* Ascencio software analysis also materialize on screen as mere dots, connected to other players by outward radiating lines. Interpretative text is created by the computer software itself. The screens appear diagnostic and predictive, rather than spontaneous: any idea of a "gamble" vanishes in this game.

To be sure, analysis becomes purely machinic, completely disembodied from humans and "safe" from human error or chance. It recalls the camera-equipped, heat-seeking missiles depicted in Farocki's earlier installation piece, *Eye/Machine I, II,* and *III* (*Auge/Maschine I*, *II*, and *III,* 2001-03) that were developed as intelligent killing machines. Of course this is the extreme example, but Farocki's incorporation of this type of machine vision software points to a threatening scenario of dehumanization. There is a certain violence in the representation of those players through such stark visual abstraction.

Rather than this mundane statistical data, what most fans will remember from the game was French player Zinedine Zidane's head-butt of the Italian player Marco Materazzi. The full-game fifth screen replays this moment several times. It schematizes the two men's bodies into lines and dots and isolates them in different replays, highlighting both the movement of the abstracted figures and the fact that it can offer no substantive interpretation of the act itself. Furthermore, after Zidane receives the red card for misconduct, his representative bar in the

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[187] Harun Farocki, "Controlling Observation," 290.

lower graph of players' speeds transforms into a stationary red block. Because he no longer

functions in the game, his involvement is neatly struck out, even though despite the offense,

Zidane went on to win the Golden Ball award for best player of the tournament. His ejection

from the game also marked the end of a tremendously popular and successful soccer career.

Immediately after the match, there was widespread speculation about what provoked the

act. Several media sites hired lip readers, with a couple announcing that Materazzi had called

Zidane "the son of a terrorist whore."[188] Zidane's family also suggested that the Italian player

had called him a terrorist or the son of a *harki*, a disparaging name for Algerians who had sided

with the French during Algeria's war for independence.[189] Materazzi denied ever using a racial

slur and claimed that he had only insulted Zidane's sister. Zidane, in turn, stated that several

offensive remarks had been aimed at both his sister and mother, but had not been racially-

inflected. FIFA also officially proclaimed that the comments were "of a defamatory but not a

racist nature."[190] In the end, the media was inundated with varying accounts and uncorroborated

claims.

More than Italy's victory, this is the moment that arguably defined the 2006 World Cup

final. Zidane's head-butt, otherwise a routine soccer movement like a Geertzian "twitch" rather

than "wink," was not only a shocking, visceral gesture. It was a social *Gestus* in the sense that it

signified, and continues to signify, increasingly profound tensions in Europe concerning

immigration, community, and cultural difference. The media's hyped coverage of Algerian-born

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[188] "Read My Lippi," *New York Times*, July 12, 2006, accessed August 15, 2011,
http://worldcup.blogs.nytimes.com/category/lip-reading/, no page numbers.
[189] Jason Diamos, "A Mouth Shouldn't Run Too Far," *New York Times*, August 1, 2006, accessed August 15, 2011,
http://www.nytimes.com/2006/08/01/sports/soccer/01trash.html?sq=zinedine%20zidane%20headbutt%20reason&st
=cse&adxnnl=1&scp=2&adxnnlx=1311702105-HpK1eGYtJaj0B5YmFEsUog, 1.
[190] Ibid.

Zidane's raw and instantaneous backlash against Italian player Materazzi's insults, disrespecting his family, cut to the core of deep-seated divisions on the continent.

Zidane has been continually confronted about his mixed cultural identity on the field and in the media. The soccer player is an icon for his popular success as a national French-Algerian, having grown up in a poor *banlieue* of Marseille after his Kabyle Berber parents emigrated before the start of the Algerian War.[191] During the 1998 World Cup series, in a game against Saudi Arabia, Zidane was penalized for stomping on an opposing player after what a few people close to Zidane say was a racial slur aimed against him.[192] After the French won the World Cup in 1998, the right-wing leader of the National Front, Jean-Marie Le Pen, complained of the racial origins of the French team, specifically pointing to Zidane as "a son of French Algeria," which in the media negatively implies the status of an Algerian-born colonial collaborator. Both he and the national soccer team have advocated against the racist rhetoric of the Front National and Le Pen. Then in 2001, as a participant in the first-ever soccer match between France and Algeria in Paris, Zidane received much unwanted attention, even death threats. Posters derogatorily labeled him "Zidane-Harki."[193] The match ended early when hundreds of Algerian fans stormed onto the pitch, forcing the game to be discontinued. Otherwise reserved about his personal background, Zidane responded by publically announcing to the press that his father was not a *harki* and by proclaiming pride in his Algerian heritage.[194]

In the aftermath of the head-butt, various journalists also pointed to a stark contrast between ethnic origins of the French and Italian teams. All but four of the fourteen French

[191] Andrew Hussey, "ZZ Top," *Observer*, April 4, 2004, accessed August 15, 2011, http://www.guardian.co.uk/football/2004/apr/04/sport.features, no page numbers.
[192] Tony Karon, "The Head Butt Furor: A Window on Europe's Identity Crisis," *Time*, July 13, 2006, accessed August 5, 2011, http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1213502,00.html, no page numbers.
[193] Hussey, "ZZ Top," no page numbers.
[194] Ibid.

players had parents or grandparents originating from Africa, whereas the ethnically-homogeneous Italian team, in one reporter's account, was "the whitest of the Western European teams at the World Cup."[195] Following Italy's victory, Rome's historic Jewish district was graffitied with swastikas, and a former minister of a past Berlusconi government openly declared success against a team of "negroes, communists, and Muslims."[196]

Whether or not a racial slur led to Zidane's head-butt, the postcolonial politics of multiculturalism were anxiously and unanswerably referenced throughout subsequent television and Internet coverage. His gesture incited a torrent of impassioned responses concerning race and cultural affiliation in Europe. Brecht provides a compelling example in the theater that resonates with Zidane's unbridled act:

> Woman in a play has not gotten compensation for a hurt leg in a traffic accident: *Working without the A-effect, the theatre was unable to make use of this exceptional scene to show the horror of a bloody epoch. Few people in the audience noticed it; hardly anyone who reads this will remember that cry.* The actress spoke the cry as if it were something perfectly natural. But it is exactly this – the fact that this poor creature finds such a complaint natural – that she should have reported to the public like a horrified messenger returning from the lowest of all hells. To that end she would of course have needed a special technique which would have allowed her to underline the historical aspect of a specific social condition. Only the A-effect makes this possible.[197] [my emphasis]

In Zidane's case, spectators were jolted by the soccer player's extraordinary action; footage spread like wildfire across internet and television outlets. It was more of a street-fighting move within the carefully regulated scenario of soccer. Yet the endlessly replayed footage, as well as the act's abstract schematization in *Deep Play*, only aid in making the head-butt appear natural, like any other normal soccer movement or "twitch." No actor in this panoptic theater, not even

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[195] Karon, "The Head Butt Furor," no page numbers.
[196] Ibid.
[197] Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 98.

the iconic Zidane, could intentionally perform it as a signifier of a "bloody epoch," could

alienate it as a sign of growing cultural hostilities and discrimination in all European nations and

the European Union against "foreigners." The World Cup final game, a symbolic international

arena for the peaceful mediation of different cultural affiliations, and played between two major

European nations in 2006, set the perfect stage for the thick significance of this violent *Gestus* to

be revealed. Yet televisions cameras could only register Zidane's head movement as thin

description.

2.2.4   The Spectator as Observer-Participant

In his *Return of the Real* (1996), art historian Hal Foster suggests that there has occurred a

paradigm shift in much avant-garde artistic production from the left: that of the "author/artist as

producer" to the "artist as ethnographer."[198] He posits that the subject of association has

changed: the new site of struggle will be located not in terms of economic relation, but rather,

cultural identity. The artist will locate his/her practice not through solidarity with the worker, but

through the other. Astutely, Foster warns of the pitfalls of this "ethnographic turn" and elaborates

on practices within anthropology that have worked to reformulate culture as text, thereby

reducing it and "decoding" its society (Geertz would fit within this model). He also cautions

against old primitivist fantasies and advocates "parallactic work that attempts to frame the framer

as he or she frames the other."[199]

 Farocki's artistic career clearly challenges such a dichotomy. He has long worked within

both paradigms, of both "artist as producer" and "artist as ethnographer." Though many

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[198] Hal Foster, *The Return of the Real* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996), 171-204.
[199] Ibid., 203.

scholars, for instance, point to *How to Live in the FRG* as a classic leftist film – by which it identifies instances of worker training and mechanized socialization in every sphere of life – the film also clearly places an ethnographic lens on the artist's own culture. Indeed, rather than exoticize or superficially ally himself with an "other" culture, one for which he lacks thick description, Farocki interrogates the "natural" processes of his own. In the last decade in Berlin, Germany, and the European Union, the most pressing site of struggle – both economic and cultural – happens to be the formation of a culturally-heterogeneous community, threatened by entrenched xenophobia and material insecurity throughout the continent.

How can one begin to address this problem, however, when pieces like *Deep Play* reveal only alarmingly dehumanized and abstracted "actors" on the world stage? Farocki recalls his experience producing *Indoctrination* (1987), a film that documents business managers training role-playing during training to improve their performance:

> When I saw the manager training, how the managers played workers, I thought: man, this is finally Brecht! That's how you'd have to stage the *Badener Lehrstück vom Einverständnis* [*The Baden Cantata of Consent*, 1929]. In his most extreme period, Brecht demanded that the learning play was only for the actors who played it. With these role plays it's the same thing: the role play is not so much intended for a viewing public but as an instruction for the actors.[200]

Ideally, in Brecht's time, actors would not only edify themselves, but also teach an audience through their *Gesten*, to show the significance of moments in their narrative by alienating critical episodes for spectators to observe with care. The spectators, in turn, were expected not to empathize with illusory characters, but to comprehend the significance of such human behavior within the space of their own historically-specific lives.[201] *Deep Play* is a filmic update on the

[200] Tilman Baumgärtel, *Vom Guerillakino zum Essayfilm*: *Harun Farocki: Werkmonographie eines Autorenfilmers* (Berlin: B_Books, 2002), 228, as translated by Christopher Pavsek in "Harun Farocki's Images of the World."
[201] Bertolt Brecht, "Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting," 94-5.

epic theater as Brecht would have intended it: the playwright stressed the need to reach and

instruct as many people possible. The World Cup soccer game, in this sense, was a model arena,

viewed by millions of fans around the world. Yet in *Deep Play*, a different apparatus of our own

time – of panoptic surveillance and machinic observation – strips actors/players of their agency

to an unprecedented degree. In 2004, Foster noted this in relation to Farocki's *Eye/Machine*

triptych. He asks how a Brechtian alienation effect may contend with a "world of

hyperalienation," as depicted in *Eye/Machine*: "In short, [Farocki] traces such a grim telos that it

threatens to nail us all…"[202]

In *Deep Play*, with no epic actors to manifest the presenting of collective, historically-

specific human behavior, all that remains are spectators, taking center stage in the elaborate

twelve-screen panoptic mediascape.[203] In other words, when players in a prison fight, soccer

game, or any other socially-loaded ritual are abstracted and stripped of the unique cultural

differences that mark them as humans, then spectators must recognize a different type of "A-

effect." In Brecht's time, the informed observer was needed to recognize class conflict and to

incite the working class into appropriating and transforming an unjust means of production. The

stakes of this present-day, increasingly globalized theater is the ability not only to recognize an

inequitable capitalist order, but also to interpret human culture and contestation itself, above and

beyond an omnipresent, machinic eye.

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[202] Foster, "Vision Quest: The Cinema of Harun Farocki," 161.

[203] Here one calls to mind a classic assertion by Brecht: "Some exercise in complex seeing is needed – though it is perhaps more important to be able to think above the stream than to think in the stream. Moreover the use of screens imposes and facilitates a new style of acting. This style is the epic style. As he reads the projections on the screen the spectator adopts an attitude of smoking-and-watching. Such an attitude on his part at once compels a better and clearer performance as it is hopeless to try to 'carry away' any man who is smoking and accordingly pretty well occupied with himself. By these means one would soon have a theatre full of experts, just as one has sporting arenas full of experts." In "The Literarization of the Theatre," in *Brecht on Theatre*, 44. Of course, this assumption of an ironic, detached attitude is arguably no longer the best method for resisting a twenty-first century, all-pervasive spectacular and surveilling culture.

2.2.5   Conclusion

One of the greatest sites of cultural negotiation today remains in Europe, concerning the influx of immigrants and their integration into established patterns and rituals of "European" society. Farocki's silent works such as *Respite* and *In-Formation* treat earlier historical moments of racialized stigmatization that have continued to shape the political, continental landscape through the twenty-first century. Concomitant with the rise of the "Information Age," and the attempt to objectify, manage, and visualize massive bodies of data through controlled and machinic processes, particular marginalized groups lost the ability to represent themselves in this transformation. They were denied a political say in the governing bodies or an aesthetic voice in the dominant social media. *Respite* demonstrates the limit case of this inclusionary exclusion, evoking what became untestifiable for a *volkloser Raum* in a Nazi transit camp, and *In-Formation* illustrates the pernicious legacy of state-controlled, reductive visual discourses after the war. In both instances, specific corporeal bodies – or those most disempowered – were configured and controlled as abstracted, de-subjectified bodies of information.

However grim this depiction, Farocki's work has also attempted to offer pathways of resistance to such reductive models of representation. What distinguishes much of the artist's new multi-channel installation work, as I have attempted to suggest with close analyses of *Comparison via a Third* or *Deep Play*, is its attempt to superimpose more responsibility on spectators, or as Benjamin would attest, "…this apparatus is better the more consumers it is able to turn into producers – that is readers or spectators into collaborators."[204] The museum or gallery space, itself a controlled and surveyed environment, but one also geared towards

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[204] Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," 777.

thoughtful reflection, is a reasonable location to expect such a shift in engaged perception. Throughout his practice, Farocki has self-reflexively acted as an "artist as producer" and attempted to catalyze intelligent listening and viewing by an audience – with the aim of producing more informed collectives. The spectator's cognizant observation is still crucial, but added to the toolbox, s/he must also adopt an ethnographic gaze – one of participative, embodied simultaneity – to combat such a currently entrenched, panoptic and data-gathering design in the broader social field. Moreover, as in Geertz's analysis of the Balinese cockfight, this must be a collective shift in awareness. This is the crucial "vital principle" necessary for today's Information Age. Through thick description, not only as expert observers but also as observer-participants, viewers will be able to interpret the objectifying yet discriminatory social forces that govern a contemporary world, not least of all in a European sociopolitical climate, and to recognize critical *Grundgesten* such as Zidane's head-butt. Farocki has raised the stakes of the game: in a theater of increasing alienation, we must learn to tell a story about ourselves to ourselves through *deep play*.

3.0 THOMAS HIRSCHHORN: NEGOTIATING THE PUBLIC IN EUROPEAN BANLIEUES

"The challenge […] is to understand how world making unfolds in publics that are, after all, not just natural collections of people, not just "communities," but mediated publics."

-Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*

In the East End of London in 2000, Thomas Hirschhorn constructed a bridge between the "white cube" spaces of the Whitechapel Art Gallery and a dusty, hundred-year-old anarchist bookshop, Freedom Press, nearby on the High Street. Elevated above the ground and designed with plywood, cardboard, and brown packaging tape, at best it appeared precarious and at worst, foolhardy and unsound. Hirschhorn's supplementary structure withstood the city's notoriously rainy climate and foot traffic for the entire duration of the exhibition, "Protest and Survive." Another famous bridge erected that summer – the sleek, budget-breaking Millennium Bridge over the Thames River – was closed after a mere two days due to the designers' failure to anticipate the roiling of foot traffic and not reopened for another two years. The symbolism of a bridge is hard to miss. Hirschhorn's piece, *Public Works – The Bridge*, represents a number of crucial temporal and spatial linkages that continue to define his increasingly ambitious installation practice. One might point to its bracing of art and politics, for instance. The bridge

above all, however, acted metonymically as a channel for multigeneric communication and discourse: it upheld an anonymous, yet real public.

This chapter interrogates Hirschhorn's mantra to "make art politically – not political art" vis-à-vis his unique aesthetic hybrids ("counter-monuments" and neighborhood "art centers"), in light of turn-of-the-century divisive cultural politics in Europe.[205] At the heart of his practice, Hirschhorn claims a commitment to explore the "human condition." How can one take this universalist claim at face value? His participatory installation projects are purportedly transplantable, not site-specific, yet they depend profoundly on their location for meaning. If his interactive works were not set in highly charged European *banlieues* and generated by the paid labor and popular support of lower-income, largely immigrant communities, his practice would not receive the pervasive attention that it does. Critics often latch on to Hirschhorn's use of cheaper, weaker packaging materials as a definitive node of meaning, yet this material symbolism, like the bridge, goes only so far in explaining the critical core of his work. Rather than the installations' maximalist materialism, it is, I suggest, the enveloping, heightened processes of public attention, discourse, dissemination, and circulation that illuminate his claim to political action.

This chapter unfolds in a roughly tripartite manner, developing the cardinal question of who or what constitutes "the public" in Hirschhorn's installations. The first section begins with an analysis of Hirschhorn's now iconic "monuments," "altars," and other ceremonial structures devoted to the remembrance of particular artistic and literary figures. In their celebration of

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[205] Hirschhorn has repeatedly insisted upon this. In an interview with Okwui Enwezor, for instance, he states, "Becoming an artist was a political choice. This does not mean that I make 'political art,' or even 'political graphic art.' My choice was to refuse to make political art. I make art politically." *Thomas Hirschhorn: Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake and Flugplatz Welt/World Airport* (Chicago: The Art Institute and The Renaissance Society at the University of Chicago, exh. cat., 2000), 8.

subjectivity set against an unpredictable, pluralistic realm of human affairs, these dedications

resonate with Hannah Arendt's charge for political action, as elaborated in her post-World War

II book *The Human Condition*.[206] This segment particularly focuses on Hirschhorn's *Bataille*

Monument from Documenta 11, which was also his first elaborate participatory artwork set in a

banlieue (Fig. 1). It exemplified such a humanist commitment, yet its divisive critical reception

raises renewed pressing issues concerning community integration on the continent. Why did

Hirschhorn choose to celebrate Bataille's example in an economically-depressed, Turkish

neighborhood in Germany? How can one reconcile such universal, collectivizing aspirations with

particular, uneven material and social conditions? Such concerns and criticisms, broadly

regarding the category of "community art," constitute a primary investigation in this chapter.

The second segment begins with an examination of the basic problematic of "community

art" through an in-depth analysis of Hirschhorn's piece, *Swiss Swiss Democracy* (Fig. 2). The

parodic, cave-like installation territorialized the "imagined community" of Switzerland,

confounding what it means to bind a set of strangers as a cohesive "people." If in the last half

century the model of a pre-World War II nation-state has lost much of its currency and the

European federation continues to deepen and expand, how will the twenty-first century promote

democratic collectivization among an even broader cross-section of diverse peoples? Rather than

a notion of "community," it would be generative to reconceive this social imaginary as a

"public."

Although Hirschhorn's materially-bombarding gallery installations such as *Swiss Swiss*

Democracy project a deconstructive, satirical view of a homogeneous "community," the final

portion of this chapter demonstrates how his participatory neighborhood projects, such as the

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[206] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

Bijlmer Spinoza Festival (2009), offer a reconstructive, positive approach to envisioning the broader public (Fig. 3 and 4). The artist does not attempt to work as a political activist for a marginalized group, social movement, or minority alliance. Instead, he challenges the monocular, homogenizing vision of a dominant public and mediascape. His installations reject the very hegemonic discourse that creates the need for such movements in the first place, symbolically demarcating their precarious, marginalized existence in contrast to a larger, dominant public sphere. Rather, installations such as the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* instantiate a type of counterpublic, insisting upon the necessary interrelationality of diverse strangers, but also advocating a restructuring, in Michael Warner's terms, of "the symbolic process through which the social imaginary – nation, culture or community – becomes the subject of discourse."[207] In other words, his neighborhood installations tackle another specifically modern mode of power beyond the nation-state: the creation of authoritatively entrenched publics.[208] His participatory artworks radically create a "world-making" that mediates strangers in a self-reflexive and embodied manner, transforming a reductive, hegemonic discursive binary of us/them into a public for heterogeneous, multidirectional, and web-like collective association.

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[207] Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 153. Curator and critic Simon Sheikh proposes that Hirschhorn's Bataille Monument be understood as a "counterpublic" as well, but he connects the term to Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge's work on the public sphere. This essay will take a different direction, relying on Warner's theorization of a "counterpublic," and treat the issue much more expansively. See Simon Sheikh, "Planes of Immanence, or The Form of Ideas: Notes on the (Anti-)Monuments of Thomas Hirschhorn." *Afterall* 9 (2004): 97-8; and Oskar Negt and Alexander Kluge, *Public Sphere and Experience: Toward an Analysis of the Bourgeois and Proletarian Public Sphere* (1972), trans. Peter Labanyi, Jamie Owen Daniel, and Assenka Oksiloff (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).
[208] Ibid., 108.

3.1 THE *BATAILLE MONUMENT* AND QUESTIONS OF "COMMUNITY" WORK

Hirschhorn constructs his installations with materials that box, package, seal, contain, enwrap, and bind. The artist's now signature use of cheap materials such as tinfoil, duct tape, and cardboard boxes without a doubt signals his awareness of the waste of consumable objects, their manufactured obsolescence, and the symbolic ubiquity of their discarded packaging on a massive, global scale.[209] Thus many art historians and critics have adopted a historical materialist lens to examine Hirschhorn's art practice. Benjamin Buchloh, with several earlier essays on Hirschhorn's work, has particularly advanced an understanding of Hirschhorn's practice in such terms, focusing on the apparent excess and disposability of these maximalist displays and materials as they may critique a capitalist order, or the "proto-totalitarian conditions" of consumer culture.[210] According to Buchloh, Hirschhorn's art serves most uniquely as "a record of those advanced historical conditions of material accumulation where the subject that had once been conceived as the result of production has now been eliminated by it."[211] Hirschhorn has surely addressed recent global economic conditions and the power it affords or withholds from individuals and populations, but this one aspect does not constitute the entirety of his project. Moreover, his installations certainly have never posited the death of the subject. Central to his

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[209] For instance, James Rondeau, in his discussion of the art piece, *Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake* (2000) goes at length to define the "profoundly economic" ramifications of Hirschhorn's *Big Cake*, which must be understood as a critique of globalism and "the new world order." Alison Gingeras, similarly, describes Hirschhorn's project in terms of the "sign-values of Capital," specifically pointing to the "poorer, weaker" materials constituting his art. *Thomas Hirschhorn: Jumbo Spoons and Big Cake, The Art Institute of Chicago; World Airport, The Renaissance Society at The University of Chicago* (Chicago: Lowitz + Sons, 2000), 13-14; Alison Gingeras, "Cheap Tricks: Thomas Hirschhorn's Transvaluation Machine," *Parkett* 57 (1999):137.

[210] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Detritus and Decrepitude: The Sculpture of Thomas Hirschhorn," *Oxford Art Journal* 24.2 (2001): 53.

[211] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "Thomas Hirschhorn: Lay Out Sculpture and Display Diagrams," in *Thomas Hirschhorn* (Hong Kong: Phaidon Press Limited, 2004), 47.

work, a point he has asserted emphatically, remains "the human condition" and how that may

exist today not only economically, but also politically and socially.[212]

Such a constellation of factors is explored in the eponymous book, *The Human Condition*

(1958), by theorist Hannah Arendt. Written seven years after *Origins of Totalitarianism, The*

Human Condition was partially an outgrowth of her interest in those features of Marxist theory

that had led to Stalinist regime atrocities.[213] However, her primary focus shifted to a concern that

political action had increasingly come to be defined and dominated by economic issues in

modern society, not least of all by Marxist theory. Marxism, for her, lacked stories of unique,

mortal individuals. In other words, it was a human history, rather, of a "collective life-process of

a species." For Arendt, "Man" does not make his own history: rather, "men, not Man, live on the

earth and inhabit the world."[214] No tidy, rational model could encapsulate political action

because humans are above all plural and capable of different perspectives and new, unpredictable

actions. It is this realization of political action, a theory of distinct individuals who can act and

initiate new processes, who can relate to but still preserve their uniqueness among a diversity,

that better describes Thomas Hirschhorn's role as an artist and distinguishes it from other artists-

as-political-actors who also address and inhabit a modern consumerist society.

Hirschhorn echoes in his practice a belief closely aligned with Arendt's position: that in a

story of political action, a question of *who* matters more than that of *what*. His distinct genre of

"monuments," "altars," and "kiosks," dedicated to exemplary figures for his own committed

practice, are homages to subjectivity, to any individual with the courage to act, speak, and insert

him- or herself into an unpredictable realm of human affairs. Many mistake Arendt's position as

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[212] *Thomas Hirschhorn*, 120.
[213] Margaret Canovan, introduction to *The Human Condition*, xi. Hannah Arendt, *The Origins of Totatlitarianism* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1951).
[214] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7.

recommending a life of heroic action, in lieu of social material concerns, but at the very heart of her project is the crucial need for human support, for a durable world that may frame and shield against the dangers of incalculable and boundless actions by humans. She states, "To live together in the world means essentially that a world of things is between those who have it in common, as a table is located between those who sit around it; the world, like every in-between, relates and separates [humans] at the same time."[215] Hirschhorn, likewise, is committed to the development of subjectivity amidst plurality, so as to preserve political choice and speech through heterogeneity, and to recognize and create a different type of value system built around, but not entirely based upon, material objects.

Hirschhorn's *Altar to Raymond Carver* (1998), for example, spotlights this celebration of subjectivity, despite its mound of kitschy artifacts (Fig. 5 and 6). The altar mimics the spontaneous local sites that have sprung up for popular figures such as Princess Diana or Michael Jackson, with a red heart-shaped helium balloon, stuffed animals, flower bouquets, trinkets, and innumerable messages of love for not only the work, but also the life of Raymond Carver. Littered with banners such as "Raymond Carver your world is close to mine. Your books help me live thanks," and even a hand-drawn red heart initialed with R.C., the piece's realization via popular cultural forms might seem to negate any serious interest in the author's work. The altar, however, is far from ironic. It manifests a "space of appearance," in Arendt's terms, where revealing oneself as a subject takes courage in a concrete yet extemporaneous realm of human interaction. Particularly Hirschhorn's street altars have been subject to theft and vandalism. The *Altar to Raymond Carver* attempted to remember and preserve the author's example in an unpredictable, ever-changing public space.

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[215] Ibid., 52.

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An American short-story writer, Carver stands as only one in a long list of literary and artistic figures from whom Hirschhorn draws inspiration. Hirschhorn worries that the dynamic stories of these historical figures – artists, writers, philosophers – will become extinguished from the contemporary affairs of a society that views such activities as "unproductive labor." He has constructed similar altars to Piet Mondrian, Otto Freundlich, and Ingeborg Bachmann, as well as kiosks for figures such as Robert Walser, Emil Nolde, and Fernand Léger. He has also created three monuments for Benedict Spinoza, Georges Bataille, and Gilles Deleuze, and had discussed constructing a monument for Arendt in Pittsburgh in 2008 for the Carnegie International but eventually re-installed another piece instead. The list of figures is striking. Art historian Hal Foster situates Hirschhorn among a contemporary crowd of artists with a new and distinctive "archival impulse" to recover and reanimate seemingly outdated or forgotten historical materials.[216] But Hirschhorn's un-cynical devotedness to these past persons, not only their works, is singular. In his view, what deserves our attention is the commitment and energy that exceeds the mere form or content of these figures' art and books. About *The Human Condition* itself, Hirschhorn has stated, "I want to fight with it, I want to struggle with it, I want to reach it and I want to get the energy, the work, the complexity and the love who is in the book!"[217] With his piece *Emergency Library* (2003), for example, Hirschhorn insists that he does not love books merely for their content or meaning, but rather, for the fact that they presume an act of assertion.[218] They demand attention before they are even opened.

Books assume a special role in the artist's oeuvre. They might be duct-taped to fake, tinfoil explosives, such as in *Cavemanman* (2002), or as enlarged copies, dominate the skyline of

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[216] Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 3-22.
[217] Personal email correspondence with the artist, May 29, 2005.
[218] Benjamin H.D. Buchloh, Alison M. Gingeras, Carlos Basualdo, *Thomas Hirschhorn* (London: Phaidon, 2004), 113.

a whole installation like Benedict Spinoza's book *Ethics* in the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* (2009).

They constitute entire libraries in his installations, or often stand human-sized as cardboard cut-outs, like a fan might own of a Hollywood celebrity. Hirschhorn himself identifies as a "fan," exhorting a deep commitment to the existence of these works, and not necessarily claiming to understand, or even to have read them at all. Their public-ation or publicity, as bold insertions into an overwhelming human realm, is what matters most, and notably so at a time of decreasing print consumption globally. These books are still authored publicly, and that constitutes not only courageous assertion in an unpredictable public sphere, but also political action in an Arendtian sense. Books are not only objects, but also vehicles of agency and subjectivity in a broader collective space of social circulation.

A critical piece that conceptually ties Hirschhorn's subject-based works, his monuments and altars, to his neighborhood projects set in *banlieues* is the *Bataille Monument* (2002). It is his best known work, developed over the course of Documenta 11 in a largely working-class, Turkish suburb of Kassel – Nordstadt, Germany. Only about five percent of Documenta's audience reportedly visited the extraterritorial installation because of its distance and limited accessibility via two *Monument*-operated taxis.[219] Besides this shuttle service to ferry visitors back and forth, the artwork included seven other distinct elements: a large outdoor sculpture, a library and exhibition dedicated to Georges Bataille's oeuvre, workshops, a television show broadcast daily, a food stand, and a website streaming images of the artwork online (Fig. 7 and 8).[220] The *Bataille Monument* was a massive, expensive undertaking, and most of the labor for its

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[219] Ariana Kristina Braun, *Thomas Hirschhorns Bataille Monument: Ein ephemeres Denkmal auf der Documenta11* (Saarbrücken, Germany: VDM Verlag Dr. Müller, 2010), 31.
[220] Buchloh, et.al., *Thomas Hirschhorn*, 98.

construction and implementation came from Turkish immigrants in the housing complex, as well as youths from a local European Union-funded social project.

Hirschhorn envisioned the project ostensibly with two aims in mind: first, to remember and preserve the life and work of Bataille; and second, to extend Bataille's example as a committed individual to as many people possible, with as many means possible. Hirschhorn describes Bataille as simultaneously a role model and a pretext.[221] In preparation for the piece, Hirschhorn not only studied two of Bataille's key texts, *The Notion of Expenditure* (1933) and *The Accursed Share* (1949), but even took a pilgrimage with a collaborator Christophe Fiat to four sites in Bataille's life, including his gravestone.[222] These excursions were documented and represented in videos in the exhibition.

According to Carlos Basualdo, one of the co-curators of Documenta 11, Hirschhorn's second strongest aspiration, beyond representing the life and work of Bataille, was to connect the artwork closely to the "people of Kassel" – not necessarily through sculptural form, but rather through forms of experience.[223] In Arendt's terms, there exist first and foremost tangible objects that provide "interests" to bind and interconnect people with physical, material matters of the world.[224] Merely discussing such objects and interests, however, results in an intermediary space where humans may reveal themselves as subjects. Arendt asserts, "… for all its intangibility, this in-between is no less real than the world of things we visibly have in common. We call this reality the 'web' of human relationships…"[225] Self-disclosure, positioning oneself, and

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[221] Thomas Hirschhorn, *Bataille Maschine* (Berlin: Merve, 2002), 42.
[222] Ibid., 6.
[222] Ariana Kristina Braun, *Thomas Hirschhorns Bataille Monument*, 16-17.
[223] Buchloh, et.al., *Thomas Hirschhorn*, 101.
[224] Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 182.
[225] Ibid., 182-183.

newness/natality are all integral to this sphere – just as integral as the physical materials that compose it.

Hirschhorn chose the neighborhood of the Friedrich Wöhler-Complex for two reasons: it was inhabited by a low-income demographic; and of the potential neighborhoods for his project, he found it to be the most "active" community, presumably meaning that its inhabitants were involved with the neighborhood and their neighbors on a day-to-day basis.[226] This was critical, considering that most of the *Monument*'s elements existed not only for informational purposes, but also as interstitial points for human exchange, such as the food stand, shuttle service, and workshops. The introductory panel to the site included a welcoming text by Hirschhorn translated not only in German, English, French, and Turkish, but also in Russian, Polish, Albanian, Serbian, Arabic, and Eritrean.[227] The public-access television show and streaming website were geared towards reaching a broader, off-site audience, and the library included 700 books and videos for German, French, English, and Turkish speakers, as well as a sitting area with lounging chairs, tables, televisions, and video players. The books were not by or about Bataille but rather intersected themes of the author's work in different respects: in Hirschhorn's words, he wished "to go beyond" Bataille as well.[228] The exhibition section, in turn, was arranged more like a science fair, with an enormous topographical map in the center surrounded by handmade posters illustrating different theories of Bataille. The horizontal map, constructed with the help of Christophe Fiat, navigated Bataille's complex conceptual work in three-dimensional form, with books standing in lieu of buildings, superimposed on a Kassel city

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[226] Buchloh, et.al., *Thomas Hirschhorn*, 104.
[227] Braun, *Thomas Hirschhorns Bataille Monument*, 9.
[228] Benjamin H. D. Buchloh, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," *October* 113 (Summer 2005): 87.

plan.[229] Crucially, all of the information was translated into multiple languages as well. This made it as accessible as possible – not delimited to any one group – and also offered new valence with each translation.

In order to ensure the functioning of the different elements of the *Bataille Monument*, Hirschhorn lived in the apartment complex for six months, remaining before and during the exhibition.[230] According to the artist's account, it was a difficult yet rewarding process. After the first week, his apartment was broken into and his personal computer and hi-tech equipment stolen, but when he threatened to shut the project down, the resources were returned anonymously three days later.[231] He was in constant contact with his neighbors and could not have realized the project without the support of the neighborhood. Another unexpected element was impromptu graffiti and unsolicited drawings, but Hirschhorn embraced this as something that enriched the monument's circulation and exchange.[232]

Art critic Claire Bishop has maintained that his art project involved an element of antagonism between art visitors and local residents. In her well-known essay, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," she cites Hirschhorn's project as a counter-example to artworks that fall under the rubric of *relational aesthetics*, as a project that did not offer a contained, necessarily convivial space for the same class of gallery-goers to converse with each other. She emphasizes that Hirschhorn, above all, did not want a "zoo effect" with buses of tourists arriving to a peripheral area off the main circuit of an elite contemporary art scene.[233] Hirschhorn wished to

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[229] Braun, *Thomas Hirschhorns Bataille Monument*, 16.
[230] Thomas Hirschhorn, *Bataille Maschine*, 228.
[231] Ibid., 45.
[232] Ibid., 126.
[233] Claire Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," *October* 110 (Fall 2004): 84.

construct the project with people in the housing complex, and to do so in a way that would enable friction and engagement with non-homogeneous voices and perspectives.[234]

Her charge against relational aesthetics (as superficially "political" in its social scenarios) coincides with a defense against criticism leveled at the *Bataille Monument*. At the time of Documenta 11, Nordstadt had an unemployment rate of 25%, and the mere mention of working with a Turkish community in Germany instantly raises attention due to a profoundly complicated, contentious history of *Gastarbeiter* and Turkish immigration in the country.[235] Since the choice of neighborhood was seemingly arbitrary in relation to his focus on Bataille, some critics viewed it as a type of social project to "educate" local residents, to forge superficial ties between local and international communities, or even worse, to exploit accessible labor. The fact that Hirschhorn has claimed not to be a "social worker," but rather an independent artist working in only one of many public spaces, has elicited questions from many. Ariane Kristina Braun lays out the *Bataille Monuemnt*'s criticisms clearly in her recent book about the exhibition.[236] In theory, Hirschhorn may be committed to a form of political action and "world-making" that celebrates individual agency amidst a diversity of humans, but who are these peoples? Did the *Bataille Monument* have a more permanent, positive result for the local residents? Did it need to? Has anyone asked them? Did the piece ultimately exploit, coopt, or romanticize a marginalized community for artistic publicity and "street" credibility? For all of the artist's bombastic announcements of equality and justice, how could someone in Hirschhorn's position of power work with his co-producers as equals, yet still claim artistic

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[234] Ibid., 83.
[235] Thomas Hirschhorn, *Bataille Maschine*, 246.
[236] Braun, *Thomas Hirschhorns Bataille Monument*, 40-45.

authority and autonomy? These questions constitute the stakes of his practice, and this essay will return to them after a more thorough evaluation of the artist's strategies and artworks.

3.2   PRECARIOUS COLLECTIVITIES VERSUS IMAGINED COMMUNITIES

Hirschhorn's works are precarious, a term that the artist continually insists upon, declaring precariousness to be both a "decision and as a responsibility."[237] In his always personalized terminology, he asserts that the "ephemeral" derives from the natural world, whereas precariousness is "the human."[238] A state of precariousness suggests both an unstable, or fragile space, as well as a contingent, immediate, and impermanent time: "It is an instant, it is the moment. It is the unique moment. In order to reach this moment I have to be present and I have to be awake. I have to stand up, I have to face the world, the reality, the time and I have to risk myself."[239] A state of uncertainty and instability, in other words, requires decision-making, and with that declaration of action, accountability as well. Above all, the precarious is political.[240]

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[237] Thomas Hirschhorn, "Restore Now," (Aubervilliers: June 1, 2006), 1.

[238] The term "precarious" has a specific history in the ethics of Emmanuel Levinas and Judith Butler. See for example "Peace and Proximity," in *Emmanuel Lévinas: Basic Philosophical Writings* (Indiana University Press, 1984), and Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London; New York: Verso, 2003). For a closer look at the way in which Butler's *Precarious Life* resonates with Hirschhorn's practice, see my essay "Thomas Hirschhorn's *Utopia, Utopia = One World, One War, One Army, One Dress*: Imagining Alternative Forms of Political Affiliation," in *Crossing the Boundaries XVI: Trading Spaces* (Binghamton, NY: Binghamton University, 2008), 20-27. The installation, defined by an all-pervasive camouflaging that violently homogenizes the space and its "communities" of dismembered mannequins, also attempts to fragment this hegemonic signification and to imagine a path for a more cosmopolitan political affiliation. This would arrive through an ethical recognition of shared corporeal vulnerability and human loss, as theorized by Butler.

[239] Thomas Hirschhorn, "Restore Now," 2.

[240] For another, in-depth analysis of this term in relation to Hirschhorn's practice, see Hal Foster, "A Grammar of Emergency," *New Left Review* 68 (Mar/Apr 2011): 105-118.

Art historian Rachel Haidu, in her discussion of his piece, the *Musée Précaire Albinet* ("Precarious Museum Albinet," 2004), links the term to a specifically French political context.[241] According to her, p*recarité* refers to present-day, unstable market dynamics in France, as well as the immigrant groups that often fill these temporary labor openings in the country's new service economy. "*Génération* p*recarité*" designates the young people in this economy with no contracts or only partial employment benefits.[242] Hirschhorn constructed the *Musée Précaire* in a Parisian *banlieue* with a primarily Malian and North African demographic, similarly stigmatized as the culturally-heterogeneous inhabitants who worked with Hirschhorn on the *Bataille Monument* in the suburb Nordstadt. In this sense, according to Haidu, Hirschhorn structured the *Musée Précaire Albinet* upon the "short-term, low-paid or unpaid – i.e., precarious – labor" of the neighborhood Landy and specifically, the Cité Albinet, or subsidized apartment building next to the abandoned lot reserved for the piece.[243] The *Musée Précaire*'s omnipresent, precarious duct-taping and cardboard boxes, instead of automatically signifying wasteful consumerism, for instance, here "reminds us of the new meanings of homelessness and migration to which any modernist idealization of circulation must respond."[244]

Only a year after the exhibition, in November 2005, massive rioting occurred in the Parisian *banlieues* and across the country for three weeks. They began in Clichy-sous-Bois, a

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[241] Rachel Haidu, "Precarité, Autorité, Autonomie," in *Communities of Sense: Rethinking Aesthetics and Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 215-37.

[242] Ibid., 215-16. This term is widely used internationally now to describe unstable employment; see for example, Andrew Ross, *Nice Work if You Can Get It: Life and Labor in Precarious Times* (New York: New York University Press, 2009). It has also been taken up as a theme in the journal *Open*, which includes an essay on the existence of "precarious art" by Nicolas Bourriaud, "Precarious Constructions: An Answer to Jacques Rancière on Art and Politics," in *Open: A Precarious Existence: Vulnerability in The Public Domain* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009). See additionally the section of discourse on the "Precariat," *Republic Art*, http://www.republicart.net/disc/precariat/index.htm, which includes an essay by Paul Virno and interview with Brian Holmes.

[243] Ibid., 216.

[244] Ibid., 230.

particularly ill-reputed suburb of Paris, after police chased two teenagers into an electric-power station, and they died from electrocution. As interior minister at the time, it was Nicolas Sarkozy's job to reestablish peace, but he further incited hostility by declaring the *banlieue* rioters to be *racaille*, or scum.[245] Only the previous summer, he had also announced that he would clean up the *cités* with a *Kärcher*, or high-pressure industrial cleaning machine. Sarkozy maintained that "there was an obvious link between thirty or forty years of a policy of uncontrolled immigration and the social explosion in French cities," and soon thereafter, during his presidential campaign, revealed his plan for a new ministry, the "Ministry of Immigration and National Identity."[246]

Rather than this explosive background and the people of this *génération* p*recarité*, however, Haidu focuses on the underlying precariousness of official institutions in *Musée Précaire Albinet*, and how their framed reinscription or redeployment in a contingent fashion may critique dominant structures such as the museum. The installation lasted eight weeks, and each week featured seminal works by a different artist whom Hirschhorn selected – Duchamp, Malevich, Mondrian, Dalì, Beuys, Le Corbusier, Warhol, and Léger – a personal choice mimicking, yet functioning differently from his altars and monuments. For the first time, Hirschhorn actually included quite valuable objects, focusing on their display rather than his commitment to their artistic creators. The precious objects, such as Duchamp's *Bicycle Wheel*, were borrowed from the Centre Pompidou, which trained local Landy youth in the proper handling and management of their cultural *patrimoine*.[247] Comparable to the *Bataille Monument*, each week of the temporary exhibition also involved numerous activities and events for the

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[245] David Rieff, "Battle Over the Banlieues," *New York Times*, April 15, 2007, 2-4.
[246] Ibid.
[247] Thomas Hirschhorn, *Thomas Hirschhorn Musée Précaire Albinet, Quartier du Landy, Aubervilliers, 2004* (Aubervilliers: Xavier Barral, 2005), no page numbers.

public. These were organized in conjunction with many other regional institutions, such as the Laboratoires d'Aubervilliers, the Centre Pompidou, and the association of residents at Le Corbusier's Maison Radieuse, for example, resulting in a type of collaboration not only with this institutional network, but also "with the full system of (very French) values that support and sustain that network."[248] Haidu highlights divergent communities and their concomitant bureaucracies coming into contact here, but does not offer any concrete conclusion that this "precarious" interaction was ultimately productive or transformative.

Indeed, what becomes occluded frequently in analyses of Hirschhorn's installations is his work with culturally-diverse and marginalized communities – "with" being the operative word. If the installations attempted to form a movement or alliance with stigmatized subaltern groups, answers to these questions would be more straightforward and politically cogent. As stated before, Hirschhorn's "community" artworks, however, present a much more ambiguous problematic. If the precarious is "human" for Hirschhorn, these participatory installations, like his monuments and altars, operate with an Arendtian understanding of human conditions and above all, for a plurality of people – the question remaining as to what kind of collective people. Does he in fact attempt to create, represent, or imagine precarious "communities" through his art? How are these people affiliated – through institutional networks, democracies, cultural "identity politics," mass media, ideologies? Without a doubt, Hirschhorn stages the problem of social and political affiliation through multiple forms, be it an altar or kiosk, museum, cultural center, hotel, apartment building, school, or multiple other sites of congregation. They serve as frameworks for social gathering and everyday encounter. Citing Hirschhorn's "anti-monuments"

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[248] Rachel Haidu, "The imaginary space of the wishful other: Thomas Hirschhorn's Cardboard Utopias," *Vector E-Zine* 4 (Jan 2006), http://www.virose.pt/vector/x_04/haidu.html, no page numbers.

in particular, curator Simon Sheikh correctly asserts that "these are places for action, or living, and not for centralized memory or narrative."[249]

One model of social/political belonging that particularly confounds Hirschhorn is the territorially-bound nation-state. According to Benedict Anderson, certain discursive forms emerged usefully in conjunction with the creation of national "imagined communities" in nineteenth-century Europe. In his eponymous book, Anderson charts a number of these critical forms, such as the monument, museum, map, book, newspaper, and others, as they symbolically enabled a national, anonymous population to imagine themselves as belonging together. These identities were "imagined" because the populace of even the smallest nation would never know most of its fellow members, and they created a community because a "deep, horizontal comradeship" linked the circumscribed nation's populace.[250] Hirschhorn has worked with the same forms in relation to issues of "community" affiliation. Through them, he has confronted the nationalist paradigm in particular, reinventing its homogenizing, "horizontal" narratives from the ground up. Its centralizing discursive framework, for him, must be tempered and restructured as contingent, heterogeneous, and precarious in order to include a more egalitarian and vibrant articulation of "the people," otherwise a static category exploited by politicians to retain power. The danger inherent to a flat rendering of national identity is the exclusion and marginalization of economically and culturally scapegoated peoples.

Switzerland, for instance, continually registers on Hirschhorn's radar for extreme national isolationism and xenophobia. As his home country, the artist has produced numerous pieces spotlighting its conservative politics: *Time to Go* (1997), *Swiss Converter* (1998)*, Gold Mic-Mac*

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[249] Simon Sheikh, "Planes of immanence, or the form of ideas: Notes on the (anti-)monuments of Thomas Hirschhorn," *Afterall* 9 (2004): 94.

[250] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 2006), 7.

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(1998), *Swiss Army Knife* (1998), *Wirtschaftsland Davos* ("Economic Landscape Davos," 2001),

to name only a few. Most of these focus on the country's militarism and banking/corporate

wealth, for instance, with enlarged, cardboard-and-tinfoil Swiss watches symbolizing both.

Hirschhorn moved to Paris in 1984 to escape a situation where he had to serve prison time for

refusing mandatory military conscription. Switzerland has not fought in a war since 1815, but as

of 2005, the country has "more soldiers per capita than any Western democracy."[251] From 1977-

82, Hirschhorn participated in the mandatory service, even rising to the level of lieutenant, but as

he became more critical of the country's paradoxical policy of "armed neutrality," he refused to

continue with the annual training and ended up in jail for four months. Pamela Lee notes that as

he encountered people he would not have met otherwise, his political and ethical attitudes took

more incisive shape.[252]

The installation *Swiss Swiss Democracy* (2004-5) foregrounds a reactionary nationalist

discourse that fictively homogenizes and essentializes "its people" for political ends (Fig. 9 and

10). Open for two months, from December 4, 2004 until January 30, 2005, *Swiss Swiss*

Democracy completely inundated the Swiss Cultural Center in Paris, screening every inch of its

space with cardboard, printouts, duct tape, and numerous other packaging and informational

materials.[253] Text and imagery were panoramically yet incoherently photocopied and pasted

through the cavern-like space, further fragmented by Hirschhorn's own scrawling graffiti

missives. If there was one central strategy of the maximalist, disjointed exhibition at all, it was to

overwhelm the viewer with potential scenarios and blueprints for critical reflection. Added to the

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[251] Pamela M. Lee, "The World as Figure/Ground and Its Disturbance," in *Thomas Hirschhorn: Utopia, Utopia, One World, One War, One Army, One Dress* (Boston: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 2005), 11.
[252] Ibid., see note 22.
[253] My subsequent analysis draws primarily from video documentation provided to me by the artist, as well as archival research conducted at the Swiss Cultural Center in Paris, which houses all of the printed newspapers from the exhibition.

guerrilla terrain, therefore, were spaces for human encounter and performance. Downstairs there was a theater auditorium, café, and media room, and upstairs was a library and lecture hall. Similar to the *Bataille Monument*, Hirschhorn stayed on site for the duration of the show, ten hours a day, facilitating a legion of activities that turned an otherwise static, claustrophobic topography (like *Cavemanman* or the camouflaged *Utopia Utopia: One World, One War, One Army, One Dress*) into a living environment.

Instead of an actual, inhabited residence like the Friedrich Wöhler-Complex or Cité Albinet, however, the installation engaged the "imagined community" of Switzerland. Nothing confirms this more than the extraordinary, instant reaction it provoked from the Swiss government. After ten days of impassioned debate, the parliament cut funding to the annual budget of Pro Helvetia, the government-subsidized cultural institute that owns the Swiss Cultural Center in Paris, by over a million Swiss francs. Following a debate between the senate and lower chamber, the senate ultimately ratified the measure, 22 to 19, and further insisted upon the resignation of the center's director, Michel Ritter, which the institution refused.[254] What purportedly incited the economic censorship? The mass media had widely misreported an incident in the exhibition's theatrical, parodic staging of *William Tell*, one in which an actor urinates on an image of the federal minister for justice and police, Christoph Blocher, and then vomits into an election box.

In 2003, Hirschhorn had declared that he would no longer exhibit in Switzerland, not as long as the newly-elected federal councilor Blocher remained in power. The artist had made a similar declaration in 2001 with the election of Jörg Haider in Austria. Both Blocher and Haider were charismatic, populist leaders of radical right-wing parties in their respective countries, but

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[254] Alan Riding, "Dissecting Democracy, Swiss Artist Stirs Debate," *New York Times,* December 27, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/27/arts/design/27hirs.html, 1.

whereas Haider's controversial election catalyzed diplomatic sanctions from countries

throughout the European Union, Blocher's received less of an international response.[255] His entry

to the Swiss federal council came after the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische

Volkspartei/Union démocratique du centre; SVP/UDC) accrued the largest number of votes in

the national election and demanded another seat on the top-level, seven-person federal council.

Blocher, a billionaire from the chemical industry, had founded his political career on an anti-

immigration and anti-EU platform. Only months after *Swiss Swiss Democracy*, for instance,

Blocher ardently called for the shoring up of Swiss borders in a national debate concerning the

EU's Schengen-Dublin Treaty, which would promote cross border police cooperation and extend

the free movement of labor.[256] The SVP warned that accepting these treaties would leave the

country vulnerable to criminal and itinerant foreigners.[257]

Playing with such a discourse, Hirschhorn staged *Swiss Swiss Democracy*

extraterritorially, in line with his boycott to not exhibit within the borders of Switzerland.

Clearly, however, the Swiss parliament still viewed it as operating within its "national horizon"

because it exploited a supplementary national space. The Swiss Cultural Center is owned and

operated vis-à-vis Swiss governmental funding, with the mandate to promote Swiss cultural

patrimony and a positive national image in a critical neighboring country, France. The space of

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[255] Hirschhorn compares the Swiss public's muted, domestic reaction to Blocher's election with the outcry against Jorg Haider's rise to power in 2000: "there was no movement like in Austria. There was no common cry. I think it's because – and this one of the problems – because in Switzerland, the people became objects of democracy, not subjects." From Nicolas Trembley's video documentary piece, *Swiss Swiss Democracy Experience*, 2006.

[256] About the referendum, the minister stated in July of 2005, "Whoever wants to dissolve borders should not wonder if not only those borders dissolve, but also the whole state with them" ("Wer alle Grenzen auflosesen will, muss sich nicht wundern, wenn damit nicht nur Grenzen, sondern der ganze Staat aufgeloest wird."). In *Zwanzig Minuten* (Basel, Switzerland: June 5, 2005).

[257] In one of the installation's daily newspapers (January 7, 2005), Hirschhorn even prints a highly inflammatory remark concerning the exhibition, which was posted December 29, 2004: "Jerome" states, "Thomas Hirschhorn must be cool with all this [1.1 mil slashed from 40 mil budget]. But when the Muslims run Europe, not only will he be out of a profession, as the new culture ministers laugh in scorn at his every proposal; he will be *redefined* as a lower form of human. Duct tape won't help him then." The statement reflects the high degree of vitriol that is often found on blogs, for instance, when complete anonymity replaces social accountability.

the cultural center acts as a kind of supplementary, secondary, or belated structure, one additive to the original, without the original and supplement necessarily "adding up." In other words, the supplementary in this case was a useful strategy to disturb the equation, or the clear territorial borders of Switzerland. Similar to the phrase, "an artist's artist," the doubled adjective, "Swiss Swiss Democracy," unequivocally marks the delimited "insider" community/public that this installation wished to address.

As a superficial, grotto-like enclosure, *Swiss Swiss Democracy* worked to territorialize its audience completely in a "Swiss" visual economy. Its primary aesthetic strategies, however – hybridity of forms, deformation, inversion, masking, and mimicry – subverted any Swiss "originary," essentializing rhetoric. For this reason, the space functioned ironically in the same manner as one of its many model train sets looping around through the tunnels of an artificial Alpine landscape. Brown, duct-taped couches became indistinguishable from fake mountain ranges that concealed miniature train tracks, exposed and hidden on different sides. The mountains and tunnels are famous national icons in Switzerland, and for Hirschhorn, represent a certain isolationism from the world, evident in the country's historical policy of diplomatic and militaristic "neutrality." Numerous coats of arms also adorned the walls of the exhibition, representing the twenty-six different cantons unique to the Swiss federation. Each canton was a fully sovereign state from 1648 until the nation's unification in 1848, and that legacy still bears with it a significant degree of regionalism in the country. General popular assemblies and ballots in the various regions symbolize Switzerland's singular and quite elaborate system of direct democracy. In the installation, additionally, ballot boxes are shielded by vitrines, which ethnographically encase various "Swiss" paraphernalia such as coins, hats, "William Tell"-brand beers, as well as fragmentary, three-dimensional pie charts. The charts are overrun by cancerous

protrusions, suggesting their failure as an informative tool. Each signifier of "Swiss" nationhood

is deformed or satirized.

To be sure, every square inch of the gallery space is packaged with traditional Swiss

iconography. According to Hirschhorn, the three predominant colors on the walls – pastel blue,

yellow, and pink – served various purposes. It was less cost-prohibitive to utilize a chromatic

scheme mixed with white; blue, yellow, and red are the colors of the Swiss National Guard; and

the hues are all found on the background of the *William Tell Monument* in Altdorf (which

translates literally to "old village"), erected in 1895 by Richard Kissling. In a classical,

traditional style, Kissling depicts the broad-chested national hero with his bow slung casually

over his back and his son gazing adoringly up at the god-like figure. The sculptor's best-known

work, the bronze figure stands grandiosely in front of a serene Swiss landscape, enclosed and

buttressed by a tricolored brick wall of red, blue, and yellow.

Every evening, Hirschhorn's collaborator, Gwenaël Morin, would stage his adaptation of

Friedrich Schiller's *William Tell* (1804), the classic telling of Switzerland's most celebrated

national progenitor and folk legend. The town Altdorf hosts Kissling's rugged mountain peasant

because this is supposedly where Tell resisted the Hapsburg Empire's encroachment into the

canton Uri in 1307, enabled by the recent opening of a mountain pass (highlighting again, the

narrative of a weak border).[258] The story of William Tell has been repeatedly chronicled and

adapted since the fifteenth century, in text, song, and on the stage, but it particularly gained

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[258] As the myth goes, Tell defied the Habsburger bailiff in Altdorf by refusing to bow before his hat posted on a pole in the central square. As punishment, the officer Gessling demanded that Tell shoot an apple off of his own son's head, but as an accomplished marksman, Tell easily did so with the first arrow. When Tell then revealed to Gessling, however, that if the first arrow had pierced his son, the second would have killed Gessling, the officer condemned Tell to life imprisonment in his castle's dungeon. In the end, after initially escaping, Tell was able to utilize the second arrow and assassinate Gessling in the woods near his estate.

popularity as a nationalist narrative in Switzerland in the nineteenth century with state unification.

This mythological text, the model train sets, regional coats of arms, ballot boxes, and nationalist colors all ostensibly create the topography of a Swiss *Heimat*, but their deployment in Hirschhorn's maximalist and "cheap" style renders the encapsulated terrain *unheimlich*. *Heimat* is a polyvalent German term, not quite translatable in English, which signifies the "home," "homeland," "landscape," regional identity, and local dialect all at once. In the modern era, the term came to register nostalgia for a non-urban, "simple" way of living on the land that still fostered intimate community relationships. Later during World War II, it was coopted by the Nazis to suggest a natural *volk*, or "people," ancestrally rooted in the land, embodying a "blood and soil" ethos that rejected anything "foreign." Christoph Blocher and the SVP explicitly utilize the visual signs of this provincializing discourse, arranging parades in small towns, for instance, with women in traditional dresses, men with alphorns and cowbells, and even their mascot billy goat in tow. Blocher has given speeches that compare a "fight for freedom" against the European Union as one against the Hapsburgs, and thus the national story maintains its continuity and teleology.[259] *Swiss Swiss Democracy* critically challenges any such interpretation of the *Heimat* with parody, mimicry, deformation, incongruence, fragmentation, and precariousness – all strategies aimed at adulterating and revising this exclusivist national narrative.

In his seminal essay, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," Homi Bhabha interrogates the rhetorical gesture of "the people," defined as a holistic

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[259] See this *Spiegel* article for a brilliant description of the party's propagandistic performances: Mathieu van Rohr, "White Sheep, Black Sheep: Bringing Rancor to a Swiss Election," *Spiegel Online International*, October 17, 2007, http://www.spiegel.de/international/europe/0,1518,511849,00.html .

cultural entity with supremacist nationalist claims.[260] For Bhabha, "the people" are not simply a

patriotic, political body but act as a double move in the narration of the nation. On the one hand,

"the people" are an *a priori* historical presence, the pedagogical objects of a mythologizing,

nationalist official discourse; on the other hand, they are the subjects of that process of

signification.[261] "The people," in other words, must also "erase any prior or originary presence of

the nation-people to demonstrate the prodigious, living principles of the people as

contemporaneity: as that sign of the *present* through which national life is redeemed and iterated

as a reproductive process."[262] For the theorist, this split process produces a tension in the

temporality of imagining the national community. The nation as discourse must include both a

continuist, accumulative temporality in teaching the objects of its primordial past, as well as a

performative time of repetition and recursion in the present, constantly stressing the

reproductive, living element of "the people." Above all, *Swiss Swiss Democracy* fused

pedagogical and performative temporalities to display a motley, pluralistic embodiment of the

Swiss "people." The entire space was objectified and reified into rhetorical pie charts,

informational newspaper articles, Swiss icons, and so forth, but the space was also enlivened by

performing bodies every single day – Hirschhorn himself, the philosopher Marcus Steinweg,

Gwenaël Morin, and numerous, international visitors.

Nothing illustrates this temporal disjunction between historical, objectified pedagogy and

contemporary, living performativity better than the clockwork staging of Morin's *William Tell*.

The actor adapted Schiller's classic play, a fixed narrative meant to demonstrate the succession

and historical "progress" of a Swiss identity and community through the figure of William Tell,

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[260] Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation," in *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 139-70.
[261] Ibid., 145.
[262] Ibid.

but did so in an exaggeratedly untraditional, satirical, recursive, and self-reflexive manner. The media's reportage of the play was inaccurate. The actors did not literally urinate on Blocher's image or vomit into a ballot box, though clearly their figurative staging was meant to elicit the same basic interpretation.[263] These bodily functions, for instance, as well as the boisterous singing and clapping by fellow actors (an example verse regarding secret bank accounts: "well hidden, well stashed away, a bunker to protect you, got your hands in your pockets…"), contrast starkly with the playing of traditional, classical (i.e. Western European) harpsichord music. At one point, actors even strip down to their underwear and throw their clothes into the audience, who respond by tossing it back. Whatever integrity Schiller's *William Tell* had before, as a nationalist pedagogical tool, Morin has corrupted with taboo corporeal functions and inappropriate public behavior. At the end of the performance, Morin cynically declares, "we're free," and then covers the sleeping troupe with the pedagogical sign – a large, laminated poster/bed sheet – of William Tell's heroic image. Unfortunately the country's "people," once again in their rehearsed signification of Tell's story, have fallen uncritically into an inert slumber. Following the reproduction and performance of the story as living, everyday subjects in a state of contemporaneity, the actors then re-enter a symbolically objectified and dormant state, until the next day when the play will be re-performed at precisely seven o'clock.

For Benedict Anderson, national time is a narrative of the "meanwhile," or progressive, temporal coincidence. It is a form of "homogeneous, empty time," as Walter Benjamin termed it, measured by clocks and calendars and prescribing a clear spatial, social horizon.[264] This type of temporality, symbolized by Hirschhorn's motif of the Swiss watch, for instance, links

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[263] However, the media's canard of the events only rehearsed, ironically, one of Hirschhorn's larger critiques in the installation, regarding the superficial, uncritical filtering of information.
[264] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 24.

anonymous people and activities by a steady synchronicity, allowing them to envision a form of collective cohesion. In particular, Anderson asserts that print-capitalism – the emergence of books and newspapers as the first self-sustained, mass consumer objects – played a vital role in the particular social imagination of the nation-state.[265] Books, and their more "extreme" form, newspapers, enable a "meanwhile" temporality to bind together an anonymous people. Reading the newspaper diurnally at approximately the same time becomes a ceremonial ritual, where the world is imagined concretely in quotidian life.[266] For Bhabha, however, from the "place of the 'meanwhile' […] there emerges a more instantaneous and subaltern voice of the people, minority discourses that speak betwixt and between time and places."[267] This "betwixt and between" occurs in the "splitting" double narrative of "the people," between the time of reified, nationalist pedagogy (*William Tell*) and living, local subjects. This splitting "makes untenable any supremacist, or nationalist claims to cultural mastery, for the position of narrative control is neither monocular nor monologic."[268] Instead, counter-narratives and minority discourses emerge in the disjunctive cracks of the nation as double narration.

Besides the discordant performance of *William Tell*, a critical ritual in *Swiss Swiss Democracy* was the release of Hirschhorn's newspaper, printed on pink, pastel blue, and yellow paper, at three o'clock every afternoon. The newspapers were an indispensable part of the exhibition and free of charge. A whole room was devoted to this ceremony – just like the play and lecture, respectively – with a photocopier, two computers for free internet usage, past newspapers hung up by duct tape for reading, and each newspaper's front page cut and collaged into a grid on the wall. Each newspaper had a diverse array of content: generally including a

[265] Ibid., 33-36.
[266] Ibid., 35.
[267] Bhabha "DissemiNation," 158.
[268] Ibid., 150.

transcript of the philosophical lecture from Marcus Steinweg that day, information concerning Hirschhorn's past artworks and life, contemporary news articles, commercial advertisements, collages, diagrams, poems, and excerpts from literary and theoretical texts. The journal from Thursday, January 6, for instance, juxtaposes multifarious references to the playwright Heiner Müller, Édouard Glissant, and Georgio Agamben's *State of Exception*, with images of fashion photography and, not surprisingly, a classical painting of William Tell.

The newspaper here, like Morin's parody, enabled counter-narratives of "the minority, exilic, marginal, and emergent" to continually fracture and supplement the territorialized, Swiss imagined community of the installation.[269] The paper from Wednesday, December 22, for example, highlights an outsider to the art historical canon: a Swiss art-maker from the early twentieth century, Adolf Wölfli, a mentally-insane patient who created a type of art now categorized as *art brut*. The journal also includes an (at the time, week-old) article from a Swiss tabloid newspaper, entitled, "EU decides over the admission of Turkey: Will all Turks then be allowed in Switzerland?" Hirschhorn's newspaper repeatedly draws parallels among voices considered to be outside a homogeneous, traditional Swiss community, and does so in a chronologically non-linear fashion, suturing in outdated historical sources.

In particular, Switzerland's complicity with German Nazis during World War II is an overarching narrative that frays the margins any supremacist account of "the people." Friday, January 7th's newspaper depicts Hirschhorn's piece *Swiss Converter* (1998) at the Herzliya Museum in Israel, along with a review alluding to the then recent controversy concerning Swiss bank accounts during the war. In 1997, due to immense international pressure, major Swiss banks finally began acknowledging their role as financiers to the Nazis during World War II. The

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[269] Ibid., 149.

banks processed billions of dollars of gold and other valuables looted by the Nazis from

Holocaust victims, transforming it all into paper money for the Germans' immense military

campaign. The Swiss banks also finally published in 1997 an open list of dormant accounts from

Holocaust victims in order for families to file restitution claims. In another newspaper from

Thursday, January 20th, Hirschhorn includes a 1991 article by curator Stephanie Barron

regarding the selling of confiscated "degenerate art" at an auction by Galerie Fischer in Lucerne

on June 30, 1939. These distinctly non-neutral operations by Switzerland during the war are still

a matter of contention. Moreover, whereas Germany was forced to come to terms with its

atrocities and still stigmatizes supremacist, nationalist expression to a tremendous degree,

Switzerland's lack of post-WWII, self-reflexive discourse regarding its Nazi complicity

continues to shape reactionary, jingoistic politics today.

Newspapers allow a community of strangers to imagine themselves as belonging

contemporaneously in the world to a particular "people" with a common language and territorial

horizon. They report on contemporary events, in other words, to situate this discourse on a

temporal axis of the meanwhile. Hirschhorn's newspapers, in contrast, continually highlight

disjunctive temporalities and counter-narratives, not allowing the viewer to forget histories that

jar a static, politically- or culturally-holistic category of "the Swiss people." Originary

genealogies demand that these ill-fitting narratives be forgotten. Hirschhorn's aim with *Swiss

Swiss Democracy* is to expose the illusion of a Swiss *Heimat* and to refocus attention from the

boundary "outside" to the "finitude 'within;'" a fear of cultural otherness, or the problem of

policing the boundary against "outside" people, then, is restaged as a matter of plurality already

within.[270]

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[270] Ibid., 150.

The bounded, cave-like, imaginary space of *Swiss Swiss Democracy* creates this threat to an unprecedented degree, bombarding a confined diversity of visitors with a profusion of jarring, discursive frameworks. "The people" must navigate a complex network of pedagogical, informational avenues – books, newspapers, analytical texts, television screens, lectures on video tape, the Internet, wall-graffitied slogans, propaganda posters, graphs and charts, diagrams, photographs, and more. Yet they have the time to do it, with a collective public, sitting in a café or on the duct-taped couches in the library, or among other audience members in the theater or lecture hall. As Marcus Steinweg recites his lectures, black amplifiers mimic images of rounded Swiss tunnels immediately behind. One form projects outward and one inward, suggesting that the space is only superficially demarcated. The contained spaces and compressed temporalities in the exhibition – disjunctively staged – enable visitors to recognize, above all, a heterogeneous living people within the artificial constructs of a closed, "Swiss" frontier.

In one newspaper, Hirschhorn includes a text from the Documenta 11 catalog, Homi Bhabha's "Democracy De-realized."[271] It is printed only one day after a sequence of newspaper articles that cite a critical Swiss referendum from September 2004. In the vote, 57% of the population, or 1,452,669 people, mostly from the conservative German-speaking cantons as opposed to the more liberal-leaning, French-speaking cantons, elected once again to prevent third-generation "foreigners," born in Switzerland, from automatically becoming citizens. Juxtaposed to Bhabha's article is a long list of antidepressants, suggesting a grim outcome from such an exclusivist, "democratic" vote. In his essay, Bhabha advocates a model of "de-realizing" democracy in order to ultimately deconstruct such a nationalistic, homogenizing model of collectivity:

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[271] Homi Bhabha, "Democracy De-Realized," in *Democracy Unrealized Documenta 11_Platform 1,* eds. Okwui Enzenor, Carlos Basualdo, Ute Meta Bauer, et al. (Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2002), 347-64.

If we attempt to De-realize Democracy, by defamiliarizing its historical context and its political project [in a Brechtian sense of alienation], we recognize not its failure, but its *frailty*, its *fraying edges or limits* that impose their will of inclusion and exclusion on those who are considered – on the grounds of their race, culture, gender, or class – unworthy of the democratic process. In these dire times of global intransigence and war, we recognize what a fragile thing democracy is, how fraught with limitations and contradictions; and yet it is that *fragility, rather than failure or success*, I believe, that fulfills the agenda of the Documenta11 manifesto […].[272]

At a time when essentialized cultural dichotomies, between in-groups and out-groups, increasingly dominate the European public sphere and public opinion, Bhabha proposes a paradigm of democracy that generates out of contradiction, subalternity, contingency, and fragility, or precariousness. Rather than dominate a *generation precarité* through material exclusion and social discrimination, we would be better served recognizing and attending to the inherent fragility of any democratic state. This is a more productive understanding and transformation of the precarious as political, as Hirschhorn has demonstrated through projects such as the *Bataille Monument*, *Musée Précaire*, and *Swiss Swiss Democracy*. The nation-state model that Hirschhorn specifically alienates and defamiliarizes in *Swiss Swiss Democracy* points to the falsehood of a purportedly uniform "people" or any imagined community, and advocates the critical, self-reflexive deconstruction of a body politic from the inside out.

3.3   STRANGERS IN A COMMON PUBLIC

If the national community, as it is imagined in Switzerland, is not a viable option for Hirschhorn, it is partially because he does not propose the construction of communities at all. Rather, he

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[272] Ibid., 349.

creates publics. Hirschhorn's participatory installations do not aim to unite a "people," but rather to mediate a public. A public is constituted by strangers, much like the national imagined community, but it does not presuppose kinship or any kind of territorial, linguistic, racial, or other positive identification. Instead, these are strangers connected to each other via pure discourse, by the sheer fact that they are addressed. Without some kind of limiting membership criteria, a public forms theoretically by participation alone. It is based on volition, yet a public is not necessarily a voluntary association in the sense of civic society. In other words, if the attention of the public no longer exists, neither does any actual group: the strangers compose a virtual entity. Cultural theorist Michael Warner describes it aptly:

> Most social classes and groups are understood to encompass their members all the time, no matter what. A nation, for example, includes its members whether they are awake or asleep, sober or drunk, sane or deranged, alert or comatose. Publics are different. Because a public exists only by virtue of address, it must predicate some degree of attention, however notional, from its members.[273]

While a public demands people's attention for its existence, this may be sustained and deep, or random, perfunctory, or cursory. "Attention" could describe a casual onlooker or an engaged debater.[274] What composes it is at least some degree of engagement and self-organization by indefinite others, regardless of commonalities in belief, ideology, identity, and so forth.

If there is one element that binds Hirschhorn's practice – besides a humanist commitment – it is discourse. Text informs his entire oeuvre, from linking an anarchist bookstore to a gallery in *Public Works – The Bridge*, to featuring enlarged, cardboard books or pasting photocopied

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[273] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 87.

[274] Hirschhorn states, "This is and has always been my guideline: to create—through art—a form which implicates the other, the unexpected, the uninterested, the neighbour, the unknown, the stranger." In Thomas Hirschhorn, "Six Concerns About Bijlmer" (2009), a statement available online through Stadt Zürich Kunst im öffentlichen Raum, http://www.stadt-zuerich.ch/content/dam/stzh/ted/Deutsch/oeffentlicher_raum/Kunst/Publikationen_und_Broschueren/Symposium09/06_Hirschhorn.pdf, 2.

text all over the walls of his installations. He even prints unorthodox public-ations of his pieces

that include all of the documentation for their preparation and realization. These latter are almost

extensions of his artworks, prolonging their manifestation in a public sphere, rather than

admitting them "finished" with a polished catalog. Indeed, the principal outcome of his artworks,

with their attention-demanding profusion of fragmented and bombarding texts, is a circulating

discourse.[275] The artist even attempts to regulate his own particular set of terms: words and

phrases such as "installation art," "display," "precarious," "process and production," are all

specifically denoted with personalized definitions (in contrast to terms used carelessly such as

racaille or *Kärcher*). Moreover, the artworks are intertextual and continue to inform and shape

each other. The newspapers in *Swiss Swiss Democracy*, for instance, repeatedly cite and feature

his earlier installations and sculptures, insisting on their continued, public currency.

According to Michael Warner, in order for texts to form a public, this requires not only

the voluntary attention of an assortment of strangers, but also a temporality of circulation.

Similar to Anderson, who considers the development of the modern nation, Warner suggests that

"the key development in the emergence of modern publics was the appearance of newsletters and

other temporally structured forms oriented to their own circulation."[276] The dissemination of

newspapers, or the televisual news hour today, provides the sense that public discourse unfolds

invariably in a predictable, rhythmic manner. Not only is this not a meditative timelessness, but it

also reflects, crucially, a historical time with actual subjects.[277] Whereas Anderson describes the

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[275] Hirschhorn has even had the opportunity to design an actual Swiss postage stamp for the 54th Venice Biennale. He states about it, "I was thrilled, because a stamp is a popular platform! Everybody's familiar with stamps, and everybody uses them. With my stamp, I can reach a broad, non-exclusive public all over the world, even people who don't know my work or are not interested in art, and I like that idea. But a stamp is damned small, so I confined myself to using it as a vehicle for a written message." "International Art on a Swiss Stamp," *Focus on Stamps: The Collector's Magazine* (Berne, Switzerland: Swiss Post, 2011), 23.
[276] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 94.
[277] Ibid., 96.

"meanwhile" of the nation-state as an abstracted "homogeneous, empty time," allowing a false sense of stable "community" to strangers who otherwise would never be aware of each other, Warner's depiction offers a more intricate theorization of the public's temporal dynamics. The steady, punctuated rhythm of dailies, almanacs, magazines, and books allowed the mediation of a modern public, but the public also developed a certain reflexivity through supplementary reviews, citations, and republications. The modern public did not temporalize in a linear direction, but rather moved in a cross-citational field of many heterogeneous actors/onlookers with different, overlapping rhythms of intervention/attention.[278] Hirschhorn's public works, similarly, imbricate quite divergent rhythms such as the abbreviated news hour or more time-lagged, academic work – each of which may cite and review one other in the larger, contemporaneous public sphere.[279]

Discursive cross-citationality over time is not tantamount to a public "conversation" or "dialogue." Such metaphors, more akin to the genres of argument and polemic, according to Warner, reduce the complexity and heterochronicity of a "multigeneric lifeworld organized not just by a relational axis of utterance and response but by potentially infinite axes of citation and characterization."[280] The public may include voices that are agonistic or passive, involved or indifferent, or belonging to completely different genres (i.e. a catalog reader, video producer, or theater actor) who will never directly encounter each other but whose words are cited multi-directionally in different implicated texts. Hirschhorn's maximalist installations, traversing numerous genres and audiences, are much more in line with this interactive imagining of a "multigeneric lifeworld." His works are participatory, but not necessarily so because a viewer

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[278] Ibid., 95.
[279] Ibid. 96-7.
[280] Ibid., 91.

can purchase a cup of coffee, sit on a communal couch, and begin a conversation with other disparate visitors. Rather, they are interactive because their structure is predicated on the self-reflexive attention of the audience as a complexly mediated, temporally-overlapping, and cross-generic lifeworld.

All too frequently, however, public works such as the *Bataille Monument* or *Musée Précaire* are categorized as two-party "dialogues:" between powerful institutions and "ghettoized" neighborhoods; the art world elite and an impoverished minority group; or the center and periphery. Metaphors of dialogue, monologue, discussion, debate, and conversation ineluctably crop up in relation to the artist's interactive works. In her essay, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," for instance, Claire Bishop crucially highlights the limits of a Bourriaud's *relational aesthetics* model by stressing the questions: "Who is the public? How is a culture made, and who is it for?"[281] She contrasts Rirkrit Tiravanija's interactive *Pad Thai*, a work that is "political only in the loosest sense of advocating dialogue over monologue," one that presupposes a congenial, communal togetherness – with Hirschhorn's *Bataille Monument*, a different type of relational installation that emphasizes "the role of dialogue and negotiation" but does so "without collapsing these relationships into the work's content."[282] Hirschhorn's neighborhood installation, in other words, reveal contextually-bound and politically-charged, antagonistic relations, which is certainly correct. In Bishop's account, however, this interrelational public space is still metaphorically couched in terms of a dichotomous, contentious "debate" between the local community and visiting art crowd. She writes that "the 'zoo effect' worked two ways."[283]

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[281] Bishop, "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics," 65.
[282] Ibid., 68, 70.
[283] Ibid., 76.

Such metaphors obscure the poetic elements of language and expressive bodies in public together; rational discussion alone does not and cannot wholly describe communication in a public amongst strangers.[284] This is Warner's primary critique of Jürgen Habermas' seminal theorization of the bourgeois public sphere, one that is by now largely acknowledged and taken to task by scholars: his model is too universalizing in a discussion of "people's reason." The public sphere not only allows the staging of critical, democratic debates; it also constitutes in itself different vital forms of embodied social relations and contestation. Members of a particular public, for instance, might not only rationally argue for a more egalitarian set of gender or sexual relations, but rather physically instantiate those filiations through their bodies, vis-à-vis their differentiated styles, locutions, and habits.[285] Rational-critical dialogue in such a sphere, because of the very site of struggle (embodied discrimination), is not neutral and may not be characterized as a purely detached, cerebral procedure.[286] Warner elaborates on this in terms of heteronormative gender and sex politics (one need not "come out" as heterosexual, for instance; or in another case, what public locker rooms, bathrooms, etc. are available for transgendered individuals?). The same principles apply in light of racial and ethnic divisions foregrounded in the *Bataille Monument*, often characterized dualistically between the economically-disadvantaged, local community and a visiting art-bourgeois circuit (which assumes that Turkish bodies would not naturally frequent the spaces of museums and galleries).[287] A metaphor of

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[284] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 115.
[285] Ibid., 54.
[286] Ibid., 51.
[287] Buchloh presses Hirschhorn on this point in an interview, and one can see Hirschhorn attempting to reframe the problematic, that certain forms of discourse (if even well-intended) often reinforce normative exclusion:
Buchloh: One of the criticisms raised of your work, especially in regard to your *Bataille Monument*, was that it pretended to communicate with a local audience in a way that could actually never happen. Is the mere intention or the actuality of communication a criterion for you to evaluate the success of your work?
Hirschhorn: That is very easy to answer. First, I didn't want to exclude anyone. I find that anyone who thinks that local Muslim kids could not get involved with Bataille makes a huge mistake. I reject that strongly. That would

rational-critical debate is not enough to describe the complexity of Hirschhorn's public sphere works, and moreover, threatens to rehearse a preexisting, essentializing brand of public discourse that locates cultural otherness in us/them terms.

Another neighborhood installation that manifestly played with the idea of a "rational" discursive framework was Hirschhorn's *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* from 2009. As with the *Bataille Monument*, Hirschhorn once again constructed a makeshift "cultural center" in a racially and ethnically diverse suburb of a major European metropolis, Amsterdam. For eight weeks, Hirschhorn and his crew lived in one of the local high-rises in Bijlmermeer (colloquially known as Bijlmer) and hosted an assortment of events each day, which attracted a multitude of types of onlookers, speakers, performers, inhabitants, and other public actors. The events included workshops, guest lectures and readings, a philosophical tract from Marcus Steinweg, a theater piece written by Steinweg and directed by Hirschhorn, and a radio and television broadcast. There were also numerous spaces for congregation in the café, in the Internet room, exhibition spaces dedicated to Spinoza and the neighborhood, and online via a streaming webcam. This time Hirschhorn had a larger team on hand: Marcus Steinweg, Vittoria Martini as the "Ambassador of Art History," Alexandre Costanzo, who edited the daily newspaper (available online as well), and though not physically *in situ* the entire duration, Guillaume Desanges, who wrote the theatrical piece, *Child's Play*. Beyond this group, Hirschhorn also collaborated closely with a residential family in the neighborhood, the Monsels. As a local primary school teacher,

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mean that someone was excluded from the outset, for what reason I don't know. Why should they be shut out? Why would anybody say they can't handle it? I don't buy that. Sadly, it is precisely this argument that frequently comes from a leftist position. If I say I want to make a work for a *collective* public, then I am obliged to, and it is my desire to make a work in which I don't ever exclude anyone.
Buchloh: Yet it seems that you quite deliberately set up the most extreme confrontations. A Bataille monument in a Turkish workers' housing project in Germany, or a Spinoza monument in Amsterdam's red-light district: those are sites that create the extreme confrontations that are important for the understanding of your work.
In Buchloh, "An Interview with Thomas Hirschhorn," 86.

Muriel Monsels coached different children each week for *Child's Play*, in which they would enact an assortment of canonical artworks by Martha Rosler, Vito Acconci, Marina Abramovic, and others during a performance every Saturday. Her husband, Sammy Monsels, initially invited Hirschhorn to erect the *Festival* next to his running track in the apartment complex, and the Monsels' son, additionally, was pivotal in helping construct and raise awareness about the project in the neighborhood.[288]

As the title indicates, the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* emphasized the state of the *banlieue* even more so than in past works. The project marks a noticeable shift ten years after the construction of his first public monument, the *Spinoza Monument* (1999), in the red light district of Amsterdam. The earlier work only featured a provisional replica of Spinoza with a small library of books – quite a minimalist precursor to the elaborate media-attention-grabbing apparatus of the *Festival*. Hirschhorn situated the *Spinoza Monument* in a transgressive space, but the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* morphed the philosopher's image into a subversive public, with the title evoking the unruly and popular character of a carnival, for instance.

The neighborhood complex has experienced a turbulent history since its inception. After World War II the Netherlands, and Amsterdam in particular, had an enormous housing shortage, and the prefabricated estate in Bijlmermeer arose in response to this need in the 1960s, with 13,000 dwellings (thirty-one large blocks, ten stories high) erected between 1968 and 1975.[289] It was an idealistic, modernist project, envisioned in the style of Le Corbusier and the CIAM movement ("Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne," or International Congress of Modern Architecture), with functional zoning (habitation, work, recreation), open green

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[288] Much of the following description comes from my own visit to the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* in June of 2008 and discussion with Hirschhorn and his collaborators.
[289] Gerben Helleman and Frank Wassenberg, "The renewal of what was tomorrow's idealistic city. Amsterdam's Bijlmermeer high-rise," *Cities* 12, issue 1 (Feb 2004): 5.

landscapes, numerous parking garages, and an elevated road system. The hexagonal grid layout was designed, above all, to foster collective living and neighborliness with communal facilities and social spaces, and it was geared towards attracting middle-income families who wished for a quieter suburban life.

Today the complex houses almost 100,000 people of over 150 nationalities. The modernist vision of typically "Dutch" bourgeois collectivity in Bijlmermeer was never realized; its monumental, anonymous high-rises failed to attract the desired tenants. Instead the government ended up locating numerous Surinamese immigrants into the flats in 1975, following a flood of ex-colonials from the South American country after its liberation the same year. Bijlmermeer became known as the "first black town in the country."[290] As of 2003, the apartments held about 40% people from Surinam and the Netherlands Antilles, 40% from other countries, particularly in West Africa, and about 20% with continental Dutch roots. Over the decades, it has been stigmatized in the media for poverty, crime, and delinquency, and recently, the Dutch government has invested heavily in its revitalization, tearing down over half of its original blocks and subsidizing social programs in the neighborhood.[291] Sammy Monsels himself, who initially invited Hirschhorn to Bijlmer, comes from Surinam. He studied in the Netherlands between 1971 and 1975 before leaving to join the newly-formed, postcolonial government as a sports administrator. In 1972, he had represented the Dutch in the Olympic games, and then again in the 1980s, and since finally resettling in Bijlmermeer, has founded two sports clubs in the suburb and acts as a track coach to local youth. Nonetheless, a broad swath of the public would still classify him as neither Dutch nor European.

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[290] Ibid., 5.
[291] Ibid., 9.

There is also the incident known as the "Bilmer disaster." In 1992, a Boeing 747 cargo plane crashed into a couple of towers, killing forty-three people. It was an Israeli aircraft, El Al Flight 1862 – which between the explosion of depleted plutonium from the plane's tail and its cargo containing chemicals for the Israeli national defense department – caused grave, lasting health issues for many of the residents, who developed symptoms similar to those of the Gulf War Syndrome. The event precipitated and instigated the city's urban regeneration program, and the complex now includes a memorial for the victims of the crash. The *Bjilmer Spinoza Festival* not only employs local residents to run a Surinamese-food snack bar, but also more critically, includes a full room devoted to the history of the neighborhood with videos detailing the tragic event. The plane crash cannot help but recall 9/11, the fall of the twin towers, and the divisive global, cultural politics that have erupted afterward.

The inclusion of Spinoza into the equation, forcefully signaled by a blown-up image of the philosopher's *Ethics* on top of the structure, is not without its own regional politics. Hirschhorn's installation was included as part of a larger widespread effort throughout Amsterdam, "My Name is Spinoza," which featured fourteen art projects dedicated to promoting the values of tolerance and freedom of speech for which the oft-called "father of the Enlightenment" now stands. In 2006, the Circle of Spinoza was created to revitalize his memory and work in Amsterdam, where Spinoza himself was born a "foreigner," the descendent of Portuguese Jewish refugees from the Spanish Inquisition.

Not surprisingly, the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival* received funding from both the Dutch government as well as the European Union at a time when intolerance and hostility toward "outsiders," particularly Muslims, is pronounced. Only in 2004, the filmmaker Theo van Gogh was murdered bicycling on the streets of Amsterdam, almost decapitated for his criticism against

Muslim immigration, and in 2007, the populist leader Geert Wilders, founder of the radical right-wing Freedom Party, called for the Koran to be banned in the country.[292] Many blame such extremism on a Dutch leftist policy of multiculturalism in the 1980s and 90s, which helped immigrant communities preserve the traditions and language of their homelands, "maintaining little Moroccos and Turkeys" instead of advocating greater integration.[293] In some respect, the Bijlmermeer complex was a product of this legacy, isolated yet representative of a metropolis that ranked first for the most nationalities in 2007, even surpassing New York though one-tenth its size.

As the mayor of Amsterdam from 2001-2010 and the current leader of the Labor Party, Job Cohen has championed a new course of integration and has successfully offered a counter-model to Wilders' inflammatory, xenophobic rhetoric.[294] His official policy is one of "keeping things together," evocative of Hirschhorn's precarious, duct-taped structures.[295] In 2004, in response to van Gogh's murder, he gathered several hundred civil leaders – not police but rather alderman, district leaders, and school principals – to walk the streets and to talk and listen to residents, in a tactic of gathering information about the social climate. The simple yet effective move signaled a new course. Unlike his predecessors, Cohen also worked to combat radicalism in the Muslim community by reaching out to the city's Moroccan alderman, Ahmed Aboutaleb, now the mayor of Rotterdam and the first Muslim mayor of a major Dutch city.[296] In 2006, Cohen further commissioned a report on what made certain Muslim communities turn toward

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[292] Russel Shorto, "The Integrationist," *New York Times*, May 28, 2010, 2-3.
[293] Ibid., 3.
[294] Job Cohen is quite popular, with a Facebook page entitled "Yes We Cohen" that drew over 12,000 members in its first week. Ibid., 2.
[295] Art critic Sven Lütticken also draws a connection to Hirschhorn's aesthetic: "Especially against the background of Dutch debates about the supposedly failed "assimilation" of Islamic communities and socially "explosive" suburbs, Hirschhorn's familiar, brown duct tape guaranteed formal as well as social cohesion." "Taped Together: On 'The Bijlmer Spinoza Festival' by Thomas Hirschhorn," *Texte zur Kunst* 75 (Sept 2009): 151.
[296] Shorto, "The Integrationist," 3.

violent radicalism and assessed that it resulted from social isolation. His anti-radicalization plan assists ethnic "strong communities," or those that exchange ideas on a daily basis, because the report found that if a strong network is given support, its members will become more active participants in society. The plan's main designer, Jean Tillie, claims that whereas incidents of racial and religious violence have still plagued other parts of the country since Van Gogh's murder, Amsterdam remains peaceful.[297]

Cohen's policies in Amsterdam represent hope for an increasingly tumultuous sociopolitical atmosphere in Europe, as well as a potential antidote to Wilders' populist, essentializing rhetoric. Cohen's paternal grandparents died at Bergen-Belsen, and his parents spent World War II hiding from the Nazis. Top on his agenda are immigration and integration concerns, and he touts what he views as the most crucial "Dutch" value – freedom – advocating that newcomers study a "Dutch canon of important historical events and figures."[298] Obviously this includes Spinoza and probably explains the sudden increased attention to the seventeenth-century philosopher in Amsterdam in the last few years. Towards the end of the Bijlmer installation, Toni Negri also lectured on Spinoza's currency today, citing his post-'68 importance for Deleuze and Alexandre Matheron. A critic summarized his presentation: "In an intellectual climate dominated by Marxism, Spinoza became a touchstone because of his critical philosophy of immanence, of life, a philosophy that emphasized that the state is not some transcendent entity imposed from above, but something produced by people, by a 'multitude of singularities.'"[299]

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[297] Ibid., 3-4.
[298] Ibid., 3.
[299] Sven Lütticken, "Taped Together," 153. Negri has written a book about Spinoza's legacy: *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

All of this is not to say that Hirschhorn wished to do "social work" with the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival*, build a more cohesive "community" in Amsterdam, or tackle state politics of multiculturalism more broadly speaking. Though implicated with Dutch cultural bureaucracy, as one art critic suggests, he also went beyond it.[300] Despite sponsorship by governmental cultural institutions, the *Festival* does not reflect a paternalistic mode of communication exemplified by 1970s American "plop" art, for instance, sculptures placed on public squares throughout major cities as an educational "gift" from the state to the people.[301] His work should be categorized neither as "political art" nor "public art." In the same vein, one might say he "makes art publically." A resident from 1983 – 2010, Jan van Adrichem, for instance, juxtaposes Hirschhorn's project to Spinoza statues erected in Amsterdam during the same time:

> You can compare Hirschhorn's work to the five permanent sculptures in bronze that were set up in the center of Amsterdam that same year, commemorating Spinoza. They are vulgar. They were put up in five spots in town. I almost cannot look at them. And when all is said and done, if *The Bijlmer Spinoza-Festival* – as part of the *Street of Sculpture* project – is an unforgettable experience, then it is something important. Hirschhorn's project is definitely something that a lot of people are not going to forget.[302]

Likewise, Sammy Monsels claims, "For most people here, it was more like a festival. Because you cannot come into this area and think you can put art here "for the people." People are not interested in art, like 'art.'"[303]

According to local residents, the greatest value of the project lay in its attempt to transform a continually-circulating, negative image of the neighborhood in the larger public

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[300] Ibid., 154.
[301] Miwon Kwon, "Public Art as Publicity," *Republic Art*, January 2002, http://www.republicart.net/disc/publicum/kwon01_en.htm, 2.
[302] Interview with Claire Bishop in *Thomas Hirschhorn: Establishing a Critical Corpus* (Zurich: JRP Ringier, 2011), 36.
[303] Ibid. 16.

domain. Henk van der Belt, for instance, a resident of thirty-nine years in the neighborhood, who

organized the documentation center in the project, states,

> …people always have to defend themselves that they are living here, because the media are
>
> reporting a lot of bad news from here. And I must say that since the plane crash they have
>
> discovered the Bijlmer as an area rich in "human interest stories." But still, there's a lot unknown about
>
> the Bijlmer, there's a lot of misunderstanding, a lot of strange ideas.[304]

Similarly, the managing director of one of the housing corporations, Monique Brewster, who has

lived in the complex for eleven years, states:

> I think the main impact was that when we started, a lot of people thought we were crazy: "You cannot do
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> this in this neighborhood, it's not possible, people will break things, put graffiti on it, you won't get any
>
> money from anyone because no one will believe in art in this neighborhood." Because really this is one of
>
> Holland's most infamous ghettoes. So people were proud that this could happen in the neighborhood.[305]

She continues about the pride that residents felt when the Queen visited the festival:

> The people here were proud of it. Especially after the incident on Queen's Day [when she was attacked] – it
>
> was the first time she had been out in public. Some people told me, "Here she can come and it's safe, but
>
> they call us criminal. She had been out in a white neighborhood and she wasn't safe."[306]

Brewster and Reggae Monsols both stressed the positive, broadened publicity that Bijlmer

accrued through the duration of Hirschhorn's project and through incidents such as the Queen's

official visit.

With this in mind, the *Bijlmer Spinoza Festival*, Hirschhorn mediated a type of

"counterpublic" rather than a positively identifiable, spatialized "people." As Warner theorizes it,

a counterpublic arises not when a dominated group opposes the main social set in power, but

rather, when a dominated group attempts to recreate itself as a public and thus challenges the

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[304] Ibid., 23.
[305] Ibid., 42.
[306] Ibid., 43.

socially-fabricated norms that constitute the dominant culture as the "universal" public.[307] A counterpublic is also composed of strangers (thus not a group or community), but they are not just any strangers. They are stigmatized. The Bjilmer neighborhood, likewise, is pathologized, not on the map of traditional Dutch society. Identity automatically becomes a defining issue and trait, yet the complex is tremendously diverse, encompassing a multitude of strangers. They are grouped nonetheless because Bijlmer's inhabitants do not fit the dominant public's monocular vision: neither as "Dutch" nor as universalizable art spectators.

Hirschhorn's power as a successful "Swiss," white male artist enabled him to realize the project, and as such, the piece perhaps cannot be credited with creating a counterpublic entirely in the sense that Warner suggests. A public theoretically wishes to engage the attention of as many strangers as possible, but the discourse is also limited by its own conditions of circulation and temporality. Factors that have positive content will necessarily circumscribe it: language, habitus, social environments, topical concerns, and much more. It may also be self-organized but not have access to certain channels of dissemination and authorial power. [308] Hirschhorn himself led the effort for counter-publicity, instead of a self-organized neighborhood.[309]

Though Hirschhorn asserts his individual agency and responsibility in his own practice, he has never claimed to be able to create these works without many other disparate collaborators. In the end, his neighborhood works accomplish the same effect and have been only possible with the sustained, self-reflexive attention and organization of the local inhabitants: "counterpublics are 'counter' to the extent that they try to supply different ways of imagining stranger sociability

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[307] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 112-13.
[308] Ibid., 106.
[309] Ibid., 112.

and its reflexivity."[310] In this sense, they do create a type of counterpublic in Warner's terms. In

his essay, "Liar's Poker," which critically reflects on a number of hypocrisies in the art world

concerning dependence on corporate money and claims to political activism, Brian Holmes

writes:

> Art today is one of the few fields open to experimentation with the techniques, habits and hierarchies of
> symbolic exchange, whose importance in a media-driven society is fundamental. But these experiments can
> only take on a transformative force in the open, evolving context of a social movement, outside the cliques
> and clienteles of the artistic game. Which is why the work of someone like Thomas Hirschhorn appears so
> dubious. How can anyone be sure of its success, when the reception is dominated by his proper name?[311]

A real confusion arises when critics evaluate his projects based on whether they serve social

movements. Hirschhorn does not claim to "represent" any social group or movement (in a

political sense), though marginalized groups are obviously represented in a palpable way

(aesthetically). Hirschhorn's question becomes not the content of their already-stigmatized

representation, but the very "hierarchies of symbolic exhange," methods, techniques, and

discourses through which that pathologized representation becomes normative within a dominant

public discourse. Hirschhorn, as a "proper name," has a unique opportunity to subvert the

standard, cross-citational narratives of publicity (with quite unorthodox "monuments" and

"cultural centers") and expose their limitations due to imposed hierarchies in a primarily mass-

media-driven society. This effect is not limited to a museum/gallery setting, but also includes the

televisual, newsprint, or any other powerful, modern discursive frameworks in a larger,

abstracted social sphere.

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[310] Ibid., 122.
[311] Brian Holmes, "Liar's Poker: Representation of Politics/Politics of Representation," *16beaver* articles, May 9, 2004, http://www.16beavergroup.org/mtarchive/archives/000943.php, no page numbers.

In the last half century, political movements have been centered primarily on issues of identity, and one of the greatest obstacles towards political equality has been the presumption of a bourgeois public sphere as context. Indeed, public discourse – "the public" – makes identity a perpetual problem: the movements' "rallying cries of difference take for granted the official rhetoric of self-abstraction."[312] Marginalized groups and minorities, in other words, will not achieve full equality until a framework of "self-abstraction" in publicity has been disavowed.[313] Hirschhorn's artwork does not demonstrate a space and discourse for "the people's reason" to play out, as the historical realm of a museum, gallery, or art critical scholarship presumes. Rather, his *banlieue* projects attempt to restructure what it means to have a "universal" public sphere in the first place, a quite modern mode of power. The struggle for equality is not only fought on the grounds of rational debate, policy, and legislation, which are undoubtedly crucial. Hirschhorn's projects instead focus on creating messy, multigeneric lifworlds – with many diverse, quite real publics engaging in diverse modes of affect, expressivity, embodied habit, and other non-fungible instances of heterochronic circulation. When the multifariousness of this expressive discourse is acknowledged and celebrated in the public domain – as in a festival – identity formation does not overwhelm and preordain the terms of social equality.

3.4   CONCLUSION: A CREATIVE WORLD-MAKING

In contradistinction to his lived, neighborhood artworks, Hirschhorn creates nightmare scenarios of violently fragmented yet homogenized "world-making" in gallery settings. They are confined

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[312] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 185.
[313] Ibid., 186.

and frenetic like *Swiss Swiss Democracy*, created for an "imagined community," but provide no entry point for actual participation. Falling under this rubric are pieces such as *Cavemanman*; *Utopia, Utopia: One World, One War, One Army, One Dress*; *Superficial Engagement* (2006); and *Das Auge* ("The Eye," 2008). Within them lies a repetitious camouflaging, concealment, or violence done to the visual markers of cultural difference. This includes disfigured mannequins sporting military camo in *Utopia, Utopia*; fake cave walls and tinfoil "aliens" in *Cavemanman*; ubiquitous nails and screws drilled into the precarious mannequins of *Superficial Engagement*; or the monocular eye and bloody color red defining *Das Auge*. Within these oppressive environments there are no organized activities for spectators, but rather, dismembered and scattered mannequin bodies, often superficially grouped by corporeal parts or afflicted with cancerous protrusions. These deformed bodies and environments exist out-of-time in non-places. They are also not site-specific, except that they *are* to a certain extent. They are beholden to a particular type of space and circulation: that of the white cube museum/gallery. Whereas duct tape "keeps things together" as a framework in his participatory installations, here it suggests a type of superficial, oppressive taping, or covering up. The skin can only superficially elide the social deformities and material inequities that rupture the repetitiously monocular and homogenized discursive environment of the abstracted art institution.

For Bhabha, the stranger incites an anxiety and aggression, and this is an ineluctable cultural condition left by the ultimate failure of an artificial, nationalistic "imagined community" to bind its strangers in a productively non-conforming way.[314] Warner also stresses this unavoidability in a contemporary world: "…strangers can be treated as already belonging to our world. More: they *must* be. We are routinely oriented to them in common life. They are a normal

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[314] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 166.

feature of the social."[315] Nations like Switzerland and the Netherlands are not unique in

confronting this issue, and the European Union now deals with this problematic on a larger

territorial basis, negotiating not only how to mediate but also "unify" millions of people who do

not, and should not necessarily hold any other positive source of collective identification.

Ultimately, Hirschhorn's installations in *banlieues* do not attempt to mobilize the

precariat for legislative changes and civil rights, but instead, to redefine preexisting terms of

attention/circulation concerning their widely stereotyped and precarious publicity. This is not

political art, but making art politically. Warner notes that "strangers are less strange if you can

trust them to read as you read or if the sense of what they say can be fully abstracted from the

way they say it."[316] Hirschhorn challenges such a mentality. Not only Bijlmermeer's publicness,

but also the very defining contours of the broader, "natural" public, one which may take its status

for granted – whether that be a historically-bourgeois art crowd, traditional "Dutch" society, or a

post-World War II European "community" – is at stake. These projects call for a more creative

and courageous world-making, one that demands the recognition of an always pluralistically-

embodied social imaginary.

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[315] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 75.
[316] Ibid., 116.

4.0 HENRY VIII'S WIVES: TRANSFORMING POPULAR MEDIA AND POPULISM

A popular mnemonic recalls the story of Henry VIII of England (1491-1547): "King Henry the Eighth, to six wives he was wedded: two beheaded, one died, two divorced, one survived." Historically this is not quite accurate, yet it is no coincidence that the artist collective "Henry VIII's Wives" has adopted such a prepackaged name, referring to a group of marginalized, discarded figures whose personal lives oddly shaped the backdrop for one of the most critical ruptures in European Christian history. After graduating from the Glasgow School of Art in 1997, the group of six – Rachel Dagnall, Bob Grieve, Sirko Knüpfer, Simon Polli, Per Sander, and Lucy Skaer – decided to form the collective as a way of still collaborating together as they individually relocated across Europe (from Copenhagen to Berlin, Bonn, London, Glasgow, and Oslo). According to the group, the sixteenth-century king's wives did not all know each other, but people today tend to identify them as one entity, anonymously and incidentally. The wives acted temporally adjacent to each other in the famed story: they represent a cohesive collectivity, yet also an irreconcilable plurality.[317]

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[317] Information about about Henry VIII's Wives and their artworks can be found at their website, http://h8w.net/. Unless otherwise noted, my information about the group's practice has come from this website, as well as interviews with Sirko Knüpfer (2/12/10, 4/1/10), Lucy Skaer (4/22/10), Bob Grieve (6/7/10), and Rachel Dagnall (10/29/11). In my subsequent analysis of their work, I will not reference individual members' accounts because Henry VIII's Wives works as a collaborative entity.

The artist collective also titled their first exhibition in January 1998, "Henry VIII's Wives," in response to Princess of Wales Diana Spencer's car crash in August of 1997; afterwards they assumed the name for the group.[318] Their alias not only registers the repression of marginalized figures in an authorial historical narrative, but also signals a quite contemporary, mass mediated phenomenon in Britain: the "people's princess." The death of Princess Diana – the contemporary divorced "wife" – absolutely dominated the media at the time. According to one member of the artist group, public response was tremendously emotional and a "bit hysterical." Her public funeral drew an estimated three million mourners and onlookers – one million of them alone lined the four-mile route from Kensington Palace to Westminster Abbey. More than one million bouquets were also left for her at Kensington Palace, a scale inconceivable compared to Hirschhorn's modest street altars.[319] According to Michael Warner, public figures such as her become phantasmic images, or concrete embodiments of the "people-as-one."[320] She assumed an iconicity as Prince Charles' divorced wife – the popular symbol of a more liberal, open British society – and could not recapture her personal life as Diana Spencer. In their work, as their name indicates, Henry VIII's Wives assume the same public anonymity, but also parody it – confounding the notion of a "people-as-one," or how a mass subject is formed.

Whereas the previous chapter focused on what or who constitutes "the public," this chapter focuses on the role of the media in shaping public opinion, or mass subjectivity. How do

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[318] The next year, they even attempted to recreate the Princess Diana's crashed car in Tramway Gallery for the exhibition, *Host*.

[319] There has even been a study published detailing the extraordinary rise in cases of suicide and self-harm during the four weeks following her funeral compared to the past four years in England and Wales. According to its authors, this was apparently caused by an "identification" effect, particularly among women in her age bracket. Keith Hawton, Louise Harriss, et. al., "Effect of death of Diana, princess of Wales on suicide and deliberate self-harm," *British Journal of Psychiatry* 177 (Nov 2000): 463–466.

[320] Michael Warner, Public and Counterpublics (New York: Zone Books, 2002), 172.

varying contexts of mediation (official, mass-cultural, subcultural, for instance) shape public

discourse differently? The mass public sphere today has developed certain genres of collective

identification, above all, which particularly visualize or publicize bodies. As Warner suggests,

"Whereas printed public discourse formerly relied on a rhetoric of abstract disembodiment,

visual media, including print, now display bodies for a range of purposes: admiration,

identification, appropriation, scandal, and so on. To be public in the West means to have an

iconicity…"[321] Such genres of mass identification include, for instance, horror, assassination,

terrorism.[322] Injury to the mass body, in other words, catalyzes the formation of a type of mass

subjectivity. This included the car crash of Princess Diana, who came to embody the unitary

people, as well as instances of terror such as 9.11.01, the public transportation bombings in

Madrid (2004) and London (2005), or Breivik's shootings, which through their tremendous

media coverage, all catalyzed a sense of public, collective identification.

Not surprisingly, Henry VIII's Wives utilize a wide assortment of media in their practice

– photography, video and film installation, street posters, radio, the Internet, and more – in order

to explore how processes of mediated visualization may create identification among a broad

spectrum of strangers. The first half of this chapter charts the group's earlier experimentation

with these different media. Rather than any definite content, these works focus on the

construction and deployment of icons, symbols, and popular/official narratives. How do these

forms mediate collective identification in the public, and to what end? In their explorations, the

Wives showcase how the mass media may easily edit, distort, re-script, misinform, or elide

constestatory representations into easily-consumable, packaged narratives and images. The

resulting icons or popular stereotypes shape public opinion for certain political ends, for

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[321] Ibid., 169.
[322] Ibid., 176-77.

instance, by reductively categorizing whole groups of peoples, as in *Spiral Betty*, or instilling

mass fear/anxiety of outsiders, as in *The Returning Officer*. The first half of the chapter also

serves to provide some necessary context regarding the Wives' larger goals and collaboration

over the past fifteen years, since no art historical scholarship exists concerning their fifteen-year

oeuvre.

The second half of the chapter investigates the Wives' more specific critique of the mass

media as it is employed to incite a populist fear of cultural "out-groups." Their contributions to

the exhibition *Populism* (2005, as discussed in the Introduction) speak to the successful rise of

populist parties in Europe, particularly over the last decade, which have scapegoated minority

peoples to shore up power. One piece from the show, *Tatlin's Tower and the World* (2005 –

present) subverts such methods of populist communication in order to productively transform a

mass-mediated subjectivity. For their ongoing "campaign," the Wives wish to construct Vladimir

Tatlin's unrealized *Monument to the Third International* in pieces throughout the world. The

utopian, socialist, potential "iconotype," a term coined by Terry Smith in *The Architecture of

Aftermath*, also effectively serves as a counterweight to the discourse of fear and a "clash of

civilizations" attitude sparked by the fall of the Twin Towers on 9.11.01. It mimics the

construction of a totalizing iconotype that would envision the world based upon sharply-divided,

flat ideologies. In its numerous, diverse manifestations since 2005, however, *Tatlin's Tower* has

aimed instead to mobilize and collectivize a public through grassroots gestures and thoughtful,

cosmopolitical reflection. This is the type of mass subjectivity that must arise in the aftermath of

such widespread tragedy – a collective identification not mediated by distorted fears and

anxieties, but rather an affective binding premised upon reflective engagement and encounter.

**4.1	UNTETHERING AUTHORITATIVE NARRATIVES: EARLY PHOTOGRAPHY**

AND VIDEO INSTALLATION

Early in their career, Henry VIIIs' Wives began to playfully subvert and recontextualize iconic images and narratives. In 1999, for instance, only two years after their formation, the Wives staged a series of photographs entitled *Iconic Moments of the 20th Century*. In the series, elderly pensioners pose as historic figures, reenacting perhaps the most well-known images captured on film in the last century. In one photograph, two British octogenarians occupy a banal suburban street. The two pensioners look identically innocuous with their white hair and large-framed glasses, except for the fact that one raises a pistol to the other's head. The image clearly references the famed photograph of the assassination of a Viet Cong member in Saigon in 1968. Instead of the black-and-white, plaid button-down on the Viet Cong victim, a color-faded plaid shirt is incongruously thrown over the old man's blazer. In *Iconic Moments of the 20th Century – Napalm Attack*, similarly, a group of five elderly men and women face the camera on an abandoned street under a typically British overcast sky. The neighborhood playground is empty, and the helmets do not quite fit the diminutive size of the older gentlemen, standing otherwise comfortably in their winter coats and loafers. One woman with penciled-in eyebrows and magenta lipstick pretends to scream. What these parodic, comical images clearly lack is the horrific violence that catapulted these two Pulitzer-prize photographs to the forefront of ideologically-charged debates concerning American global militarism. Yet it is exactly this evacuation of meaning that the series strikingly illustrates – their significance dulled by their iconicity and over-saturation in the mass media.

Other images in the series include reenactments of the assassination of Lee Harvey Oswald; the Yalta Conference with Winston Churchill, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Joseph Stalin;

Pope John II granting forgiveness to his almost-assassin, Mehmet Ali Ağca; the raising of the flag on Iwo Jima; and Jesse Owens receiving a gold medal at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin. All of the photographs are framed at a slightly oblique angle from the originals, adding to the discontinuity of their composition. The Yalta Conference photograph appears most plausibly mimetic, with two older gentlemen substituting for Churchill and Roosevelt (Roosevelt uncannily holding a pen instead of a cigarette in this case), but Stalin is replaced by the same lipstick-ed woman from the *Napalm Attack* photograph, linking the disparate shots through their similar visual substitution. The Yalta image, moreover, is also comically absurd, with cross-stitched cat and dog pictures hanging in the background, next to the retirement home's calendar for "cookery," "sing-a-longs," "snooker," "bingo!," etc. By employing elderly members of a communal retirement home, the series underlines the human corporeality of the original subjects, as well as their historicity: the elderly group represents a progression in time, but also lends the now-stultified, iconic images a certain vitality once again. The retirees' personal connection and corporeal vulnerability effectively revivify the iconic figures, narratives, and filmic shots of this last century in an accessible context. With the Yalta image, the Wives invite the viewer into a communal living room but simultaneously jar the quotidian scene, for instance, by posing a ghostly, fragile woman as Stalin. Older people have continued to figure prominently in much of the Wives' oeuvre, representing in some sense a link to the past, but also embodying a precarious moment in the present.

From the beginning of their collaboration, the Wives have worked to reframe official, hegemonic narratives from the margins. Video production has proven particularly effective for them in rethinking historical/temporal accounting from a local, disempowered perspective. In 2003, for instance, as one of their first ventures into video installation, the Wives participated in

the Grizedale Arts' *Roadshow*, exhibiting three single-channel videos in makeshift tents

throughout the UK – in the Lake District, Wales, and near Birmingham. *The Halfway I*, *II*, and

III, though not displayed together, function as a triptych. Each presents a lone figure reciting a

diary passage written by Robert Falcon Scott, the English Royal Navy officer who pioneered

exploration in the Antarctic after the turn of the century. He organized two expeditions, the

Discovery (1901-1904) and *Terra Nova* (1910-1913), the latter of which led to his death and

fame. As the story goes, Scott died having just lost the race to the South Pole by a month to

Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen. After the recovery of his records and scientific specimens

eight months later, Scott immediately became a national icon. His grandiloquent diary entries,

taught in English schools throughout this century, address not only to an intimate circle, but also

the wider English public:

> We took risks, we knew we took them; things have come out against us, and therefore we have no cause for
> complaint, but bow to the will of Providence, determined still to do our best to the last [...] Had we lived, I
> should have had a tale to tell of the hardihood, endurance, and courage of my companions which would
> have stirred the heart of every Englishman. These rough notes and our dead bodies must tell the tale, but
> surely, surely, a great rich country like ours will see that those who are dependent on us are properly
> provided for.[323]

More than thirty monuments were erected for Scott following his death, and he remained a hero

in the UK for over fifty years. A number of revisionist histories in 1960s-70s, however, revealed

his mistakes, failures, and personal shortcomings in the expedition and debunked the mythology

surrounding this classic, imperialistic narrative.[324]

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[323] Leonard Huxley, ed., "Scott's Message to the Public," in *Scott's Last Expedition Volume* I (London: Elder & Co, 1913), 605-7.
[324] See, for instance, David Thomson, *Scott's Men* (London: Allen Lane, 1977), and Roland Huntford, *Scott and Amundsen* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1979).

In *Halfway I*, *II*, and *III*, sections of his diary are read aloud in Welsh rather than English. For the video exhibited in Blaenau Ffestiniog, a small secluded mining town in Wales, for example, Henry VIII's Wives had the text translated into Welsh and voiced by a local Welsh woman. The *Halfway* series disrupts the jingoistic account of Scott – paradigmatic hero of the Victorian era and heralded throughout English schools – with a language and voice that was at the same time, rigorously suppressed in the British educational system. Similar to Hirschhorn's *Swiss-Swiss Democracy*, the video series fragments Scott's official, inscribed account of a "great rich country" with historically subjugated voices, jarring the homogenization of a textbook history with a counter narrative, or "minority history."[325]

The Wives have consistently challenged dominant historical constructions from a vernacular perspective, interrogating how the broader public opinion comes to be shaped through particular tactics of narration. For another video installation in the following year, *Spiral Betty* (2004), the central question posed was the difference between "good" and "bad" people. In the two-channel installation, a simple dialogue occurs between two blind (i.e. objective), elderly (historicizing) women, one framed on each screen. Their space cursorily overlaps in the footage to suggest continuity, but they are effectively cordoned off from each other via the separate video screens. Their dialogue, moreover, is not truly their own. The script originates from interviews that Henry VIII's Wives conducted with two separate groups of peoples: convicts and church members. The artist collective compiled statements from the "bad" and the "good," respectively, and reorganized their remarks into acting lines for the elderly women. The "good" woman displays a benevolent attitude and generally discusses family, friends, and religion. The other, however, practically her sister in appearance and demeanor, speaks from the perspective of the

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[325] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 152-57.

convicts, punctuating the dialogue with bizarre statements for such a benign older lady: "Yeah, I crave… Every now and again I crave for drugs," recounting her material, even homicidal, desires.

Whereas the *Halfway* series focuses on disrupting an official account through a minority vernacular, *Spiral Betty* presents a more nuanced problem. Voices are clearly altered and placed out-of-context, but to what end? The women ostensibly speak of faith, morality, and remembrance; their remarks derive from accounts of quite personal experiences and lessons. Yet their "dialogue" offers no real understanding or reflection:

> #2: We've all been a little bit bad now and then, but evil is really bad, really wrong, really nasty.
>
> #1: Just go with the flow.
>
> #2: Evil is something out of hand, it's not just evil, it's mixed up with other things.
>
> #1: Yeah, but… If he was going around and doing these things, then he, he's an animal, isn't he?
>
> #2: There's evil and there's bad. I mean, is evil the worst kind of bad?

They can offer no thoughtful exchange because their discussion is reduced and filtered from stereotyped categories of "good" and "bad" people. The real experiences that inform those categories are lost – only simulated through edited, mistranscribed, and mediated representation.

In *Spiral Betty* (an homage to Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*), the women sit in a bland, high-rise office space amidst a New York backdrop of skyscrapers and industrial power plants. Beneath the superficial topic of good, bad, and evil in the world, the elderly women also touch on deeper issues of power, wealth, and equality ("I think some people can manipulate the future… People with power;" "No, I don't believe that should only be for rich people;" "No, because we're all equal, aren't we?"). These themes, however, remain occluded by the uncertainty and discontinuity of their script:

> #1: Three o'clock in the morning and he screamed out a proper scary scream… And you say to her, what are those for, babe? She says to keep the ghosts away.

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#2: I think you're probably reincarnated from something or someone.

#1: I was going to say something there but, ha, I don't believe that.

#2: I don't know. I think it's just too mystical to understand.

The women literally have no real idea what they are saying, each provided lines by a Wife through an ear piece. In the end, the women each represent a whole category of people, but remain blind to their environment and can only parrot others' mistranscribed statements.

It is no coincidence that Henry VIII's Wives produced *Spiral Betty* in New York, their first show in the U.S., only a few years after 9.11.01 and George W. Bush's State of the Union Address labeling certain countries along an "axis of evil." Bush's sweeping generalizations helped exacerbate an atmosphere of fear and uncertainty in the country at a critical moment, pushing toward a war with Iraq based on the false premise of weapons of mass destruction. He easily reduced the U.S. to the role of "good guy" versus Islamic "bad guys," confounding a vast array of contestatory accounts and representations and ultimately reinforcing an imperialistic, American stance. Like the elderly women, he became the parrot of misinformed, edited, filtered, and mediated representations that ultimately foreclosed the possibility of any productive dialogue.

4.1.1   Moving Towards Architecture: Deconstructing an "Originary" Community

In 2002, Henry VIII's Wives began constructing architectural elements in their installations, including a complete, life-sized model of the Neolithic settlement Skara Brae (ca. 3100-2500 B.C.E.) for their piece, *Light Without Shadow*. Discovered in 1850 on Orkney Island, off the coast of Scotland, Skara Brae is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and considered to be the most perfectly preserved Neolithic settlement in Europe. Along with a workshop, the settlement

could house approximately fifty people in its seven, modest residential quarters, each forty square meters on average and sunk into the ground with a central hearth, stone beds set into the walls, a few shelves, and a roof with a chimney. Pieced together with medium-density fiberboard, Henry VIII's Wives' minimalist yet labyrinthine replica filled the entire space of Glasgow's Tramway Gallery, an old, de-industrialized tram depot.

Within the barren rooms, the Wives included two separate, multi-screen video installations. Each video triptych displays a disjointed conversation among three different actors, with each person again filmed on a different screen, though camera movement indicates that the participants in each group share the same, respective space. Similar to the *Halfway* series and *Spiral Betty*, the actors do not speak their own words. Instead, Henry VIII's Wives conducted interviews with local residents in Glasgow and reconfigured their statements into a script for each group. For the younger actors' lines, Henry VIII's Wives interviewed members of a retirement home and people in a courthouse, and for the elderly set, they visited people at a local hydroponic tomato farm and acting school. Though the Wives only composed from extant transcripts, like ethnographers, they asked leading questions in order to acquire particular types of comments and then scrambled the order of those statements. Like the former inhabitants of Skara Brae, the lives of Glasgow locals inform the installation but remain anonymous and spectral, uttered by strangers. Though their interviews acted as a kind of oral documentation, *Light Without Shadow* does not attempt to represent the present-day community of Glasgow, which is temporally distant from, yet spatially near the Scottish site of Skara Brae. Instead the artwork subtly implicates its voices in a constructed conversation, as it does the bodies of viewers in the fake architectural space. It creates a "public" rather than community.

Whereas Spiral Betty focused on themes of morality, belief, and social constructions of "good" versus "bad" people, *Light Without Shadow* hinges on notions of temporality and historicization. The element that binds the video conversations is time, rather than any clear content or narrative: the three younger actors speak in the past tense, whereas the three elderly ones discuss matters in the future. The environments in the two triptychs also change subtly, jarring the temporal continuity of the spaces: the backgrounds shift from dark to light and vice versa. Sunlight in the younger trio's room oscillates between light and shadow, despite the artwork's title, and in the older actors' space, the Wives painted different shades/tints of blue on the walls for separate shots. As signaled most evidently by the anachronistic replica of Skara Brae, the concept of time assumes a leading role in *Light Without Shadow*.

The three younger drama actors offer incomplete, disjointed statements about memory and temporality as they move around a dilapidated house. The first actor initiates the conversation, "I remember a sunny day…," and only much later in the conversation returns to the ellipses: "That was a sunny day and I can remember it and that." Another man states, "I can't remember, so yes I am positive," whereas the one woman suggests, "The man was too far in front of his time." Though grammatically correct, the assertions are ambiguous and nonsensical in context, suggesting a connection among the people but simultaneously disallowing it. A fuller segment illustrates a general impression of time and memory as the content of the "conversation:"

> #3: And in the real world it happens that people aggressively dislike each other (…) This is for some of you, for sure, the first time (…) Are you on fairly close terms?
>
> #2: You are happy enough to pass time together? (…) Do you remember this house at all?
>
> #1: There was a plaque on the wall down there, they stripped it, took it down, there was a wall down there with a plaque on it.

Each statement alludes to temporality, remembering, or markers of time, such as the plaque. The three participants appear to relay comprehensible thoughts to one another, but in the end, their communication breaks down as indeterminate or reiterated unnaturally.

In terms of location, the three young students are also filmed between interior and exterior spaces, and the environment/mood suggests a tension between containment/control and openness/uncontrollability. Pans across a forest scene frame the video installation, but the footage primarily focuses on a modern domestic space, abandoned and derelict, like the quarters of Skara Brae. The three actors describe the interior of a house and its rooms, awkwardly holding props like a ceramic vase, but they also mention uncontrolled spaces, such as a funfair park that was mobbed, "visits of contamination," and crowds. The filmed room includes a wild horned owl at one point, suddenly appearing and disappearing on a stool, in contrast to two caged magpies. Overall, the actors convey an anxious tone concerning borders, inside and outside spaces, and who or what is contained or knowable within those walls. The three-channel video installation evokes the general unknowability of Skara Brae's prehistoric community as an object of inquiry. Why did the inhabitants abandon the settlement? How did they live on a day-to-day basis, and why did their community fall apart? The borders of the site dissolved somehow, either from internal or external pressures. The younger actors recollect and recount thoughts, but it cannot mask their own contemporaneous distance and disconnection.

The elderly actors, in contrast, tend to discuss a future time in positive terms of love, beauty, relationships, and fruition, and their remarks, instead of recalling the past, often assume an imperative form, advising action in the present or future. The statements are still paradoxical and vague: "You have to be opposite;" "Be more or less aggressive;" or "Just stop, that's absolutely right." Much of the advice also concerns time – at what pace thought or action should

occur: "Give yourself the time to have that thought;" "I've no problem with that but we can do it more slowly;" or "Have the thoughts but have them sooner." Though positive, they offer only inadequate, empty directions.

Despite their future orientation, however, the older actors sit amidst archaeological objects in a bare room. Henry VIII's Wives borrowed the objects – such as a sword, vase, jewelry, and an Egyptian amulet in the shape of a hand – from a public gallery, an antique shop, and the Ministry of Defense. The camera captures the blind elderly as they physically handle the objects but ignore them in their discussion. Again, Henry VIII's Wives utilize blind, older subjects in order to suggest historical bearing and a search for the "truth." According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, analyzing such archaeological objects as markers of a past life involves a type of historical "eye-witnessing." Similar to ethnographic observation, the process includes a shuttling back-and-forth between the roles of participant and observer, the "eye" being simultaneously engaged and distant.[326] These particular three discussants, however, are blind: the objects are visually inaccessible to them. As the woman remarks, "Why does he say there is something in his eye? Why?" Any question of "witnessing" these objects historically or ethnographically is denied, and the elderly participants remain just as ignorant and alienated from their surroundings as their younger counterparts.

The Wives' installation, *Light Without Shadow*, refers to Plato's cave allegory, an originary parable that warns against the domination of reason and thought by images, opinions, and representations. The prisoners of the underground cave can only see their shadows and a distorted, reflected reality. *Light Without Shadow* signals, in turn, a search for the "true" reality of its original, mythical peoples through the objectivizing disciplines of historiography,

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[326] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2000), 239.

ethnography, and archaeology, yet every element is mediated, refracted, reconstructed, and represented. The Wives offer a simulated, plywood architecture of a prehistoric time; include video footage of alienated, generationally-separated subjects unable to connect or communicate with each other; and fill the soundspace with re-scripted words from a proximate yet detached Glaswegian community. The visitor must navigate, in other words, a jarring labyrinth of contemporaneity, with multiple temporalities and imagined life-worlds filling the architectural void. The installation – contrary to its claim on truth or light – is all shadow. It is defined by representations, mediations, and artifice.

Skara Brae, in some sense, symbolizes the "origins" of European peoples and civilization on the continent, as its most perfectly preserved Neolithic settlement. Yet in *Light Without Shadow*, the Wives highlight its story as obscured and inaccessible, de-mythologized and deconstructed, and they call into question the interpretative methods used to discover its past. At a time when numerous political leaders on the continent are offering primordial, essentialized accounts of "the people" in order to shore up borders and scapegoat those outside the "original" community, Henry VIII's Wives portray the manipulation and construction of such imaginary histories. Viewers are invited not to the architecture of a folkloric, pure community, but into a disjunctive space of contemporaneity and multiplicity and a social-visual field that is, above all, mediated.

4.1.2   Black Box Installation and Fear: *The Returning Officer*

Henry VIII's Wives most recent three-screen installation, *The Returning Officer* (2007), also offers a multi-generic, uncanny historical narrative, one haunted by simultaneous, seemingly irreconcilable temporalities. Instead of video, however, the Wives created the material for this

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piece with 16 mm film footage and installed the projection screens with old-timey musical

accompaniment by an organ. Two screens stand back-to-back, and an organ lies visibly

underneath and inside the partition wall; the third screen sits perpendicular to this arrangement.

Outside of the installation in the entrance hallway, the Wives even offered a "trailer" for the film.

A professional editor created a one-minute piece from their footage, which is now available on

Youtube. It begins typically, "Coming Soon…," a "Film in three parts." The polished clip

suggests an exciting, easily consumable drama; melodic operative singing invites the viewer

through a climax and denouement of imagery, within a mere sixty seconds.

The three-screen installation, however, offers a much more complex juxtaposition of

seemingly unrelated narratives and imagery. There is no scripted conversation in this piece,

unlike in *Spiral Betty*, the *Halfway* series, or *Light Without Shadow*. There is no dialogue, in fact,

only eerie organ music. Similar to their other works, the piece does feature elderly figures again

as historical recount-ers or recollect-ors. They are not blind, but the artist collective solicited

their participation from a residential home for those who suffer from dementia. Representing

historical time, they lack the necessary mnemonic ability for accurate recollection.

When the Wives shot some of the piece's film footage in Belgrade, Serbia, local residents

recited to them the local legend of an unsolved murder. Apparently, an officer from WWII had

returned to his villa (the Legacy House) during the last days of the war and was brutally shot in

the back by an illegal squatter. According to one Wife, the group knew nothing of this narrative,

yet locals continually repeated it to them on different occasions. The tale kept returning to them

in the form of rumor or gossip. *The Returning Officer* "reenacts" this violent shooting. In the

film, an elderly man attempts to fix a chandelier in his home, oddly hanging it with no light in an

empty room, then walks out to his garden, and mimes being shot. No weapon or assassin is in

sight. Daytime suddenly transforms into night, and dissonant organ pipes play an unsettling soundtrack for the spoof murder. The overall effect is uncanny, creating the sense of a ghost story or horror film.

At the time of the film shooting, the Legacy House was in the process of being handed over to the Museum of Contemporary Art. It had previously served as a casino and brothel during former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milošević's era. Officially known as the "Legacy of Milica Zorić and Rodoljub Čolaković," the villa housed a prominent communist party leader who amassed an impressive art collection during the 1930s and bequeathed it to the museum after his death.[327] In the 1980s, the museum lost control of the premises when it was leased to the Montenegro Harvest company and then subleased to A. D. Koleseum, as "a symptom of the Milošević-era transition," and run as a semi-closed restaurant (i.e. casino and brothel). Its operator, Darko Ašanin, coincidentally, was killed in a gunfight in the villa's yard in 1997, and his wife continued to manage the business until the museum successfully reclaimed the site in 2004 through court battles. *The Returning Officer* registers the overall anxiety concerning the Legacy House's tumultuous past, yet does not attempt to reconcile these conflicting stories – local gossip versus a legally-documented account.

The Returning Officer illustrates a transnational Europe: the first two screens (back-to-back) portray the Legacy House in Belgrade Serbia and an organ builder's house/workshop outside of Vilnius, Lithuania. The third exhibits the elderly figures in England, as well as an open poppy field in Austria. Each site is also a location where the group has worked together before, threading their own border-crossing collaboration obliquely in the piece's narrative. For the Vilnius footage, for instance, Henry VIII's Wives returned to an organ-maker with whom

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[327] Branislav Dimitrijević, accessed Septberm 6, 2011, http://www.oktobarskisalon.org/47/pages/solakov.html.

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they had worked previously. They filmed the quotidian process of fabricating organ pipes, and commissioned a miniature one for the installation. According to the Wives, the organ serves as an open metaphor for Christianity, as a traditional vehicle used for mass psychedelic communication, or a type of propaganda. In a classicaly Brechtian sense, the Wives showcase this apparatus of mass illusion in their process of production.

The third video segment shifts between the elderly in London and a poppy field in Austria. The older people only sit and observe, as if witnessing the action taking place in the poppy field. In the latter location, a boy suddenly becomes dazed amidst a vast horizon of poppies and either falls asleep or loses consciousness. The dissonant organ music begins at this point, and an armed group of men and women begin running through the field, ostensibly searching for the young child. The narrative is quite disjointed, however, and even switches between two different sets of searching families. Though the rising dissonance and volume of the organ suggests a heightened, fearful drama, the narrative lacks any coherent structure or content.

According to Henry VIII's Wives, they filmed this segment in a fourth-generation-owned poppy field. The poppy flower is a multilayered symbol. It can signal, for instance, the remembrance of soldiers' deaths in WWI and later WWII, made famous by the poem, "Flanders Fields," perhaps evoking the "returning officer" to the Legacy House. Still a charged symbol of military remembrance in Britain, a Muslim man sparked conflict by burning poppies in the UK in 2004.[328] The production of heroin from large opium poppy fields in Afghanistan, however, is also a tremendously charged topic today; it is estimated that 90% of illegal heroin originates

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[328] Lauren Collins, "England, Their England: Immigration and Resurgent Nationalism," *New Yorker*, July 4, 2011, 33.

from Afghanistan's fields.[329] According to one Wife, forces such as the CIA are "toying and trying to predict the elections of other countries, and trying to kick off certain developments elsewhere that don't develop the way you thought," such as a massive, global drug trade. The "returning officer" also refers to an agent responsible for overseeing elections in various parliamentary systems throughout the world. Stabilizing the Afghan government and economy is a pressing international concern. The elderly figures in the film appear to watch over a multiplicity of conflicting stories and symbols, local and transnational, that all occur simultaneously and disjointedly in the spoof horror film.

Rather than any clear narration, the film filters multiple histories through a "rumor"-based lens. Whereas *Spiral Betty* or the *Halfway* series offered clear (if distorted) scripts, *The Returning Officer* only suggests linkages through visually dramatic scenarios and emotive sound. The resulting associations are indeterminate, and a generally alienating and anxious tone results from the bizarre mixture of sound, imagery, and temporal disjunctions. Specific histories transform into vague, fearful scenarios and histrionic, cinematic moments for local peoples (traditional organ builders, fourth-generation farmers): an old veteran is apparently "shot" in his garden or a young child loses consciousness in a field of flowers. The mnemonically-disabled elderly historians, who observe it all from a distance, cannot effectively articulate these stories into a more coherent picture.

Indeed, the disjointed presentation of the film mimics how fear and anxiety may spread through misinformed, abbreviated, decontextualized, and overwrought stories in the mass media – all for the sake of a packaged, dramatic storyline. Even the sixty-second "trailer" is purposefully misrepresentative, including footage not presented in the actual installation. In the

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[329] Rupert Wingfield-Hayes "Russia blames Nato for drug surge," *BBC News*, February 27, 2010, accessed September 6, 2011, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8540726.stm, no page numbers.

end, *The Returning Officer* confounds pressing, worldwide concerns (religion, continued warfare, globalization) with popular local tales, situating them in a transnational Europe, in order to expose an irrational, emotive fear that increasingly propagates from a contemporary mass media apparatus. With each mediated version, a chain of signifiers leads further to an uncanny and indeterminate sense of fear.

4.2   *POPULISM* AND THE MASS MEDIA

The speed and pervasiveness of rumor holds particular political value, similar to propaganda as a deliberate narrative strategy. In fact, Homi Bhabha describes the force of rumor as potentially revolutionary.[330] It is because its temporality is iterative and indeterminate that it yields such potential, populist power. *The Returning Officer* points towards this possibility, but an earlier set of pieces by the Wives, created for the exhibition *Populism* (2005), specifically work to showcase the politically-geared, populist dynamic of rumor-based communication.

As detailed in the Introduction, the pan-European exhibition occurred in multiple venues: at the Contemporary Arts Centre in Vilnius, Lithuania; the National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design in Oslo; the Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam; and the Frankfurter Kunstverein from April until September. Instead of traveling in sequence, the show took place concurrently, with some of the same pieces and some different in each location. Its message, however, was cohesive throughout: to raise and debate themes of populism, and particularly in relation to the rise of populist parties in Europe over the preceding fifteen years, "insofar as they

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[330] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 203.

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can be isolated from discussions of a global character."[331] In the catalog introduction, the curators define populism as "not only rhetorical but also a refusal to accept the complexity of public affairs."[332] The scope of the exhibition aimed not merely to categorize contemporary populist movements in Europe, but also to explore the potentially complex forms and imaginary spaces of populism as such.[333]

Henry VIII's Wives created three new pieces for the exhibition, including a new three-channel video installation, *Mr. Hysteria*. In preparation for the latter, the artist collective asked friends for personal recollections of situations of mass hysteria. A couple gave accounts of the fall of the Berlin Wall, for example, or their experience at the massive Glastonbury outdoor rock festival. These statements, once more, were reorganized for *Mr. Hysteria*'s script, and the resulting three-screen "conversation" takes place in four different locations, among four different pairs of actors.

These locations are a police station in Vilnius, as well as the inside of the stock exchange, a newspaper archive, and a hospital maternity ward in Berlin. According to the Wives, each place is where reality is negotiated; they are all transitional spaces. The police station, for example, represents a site where opposing perspectives encounter each other, where cases are resolved between different versions of a story. One Wife has aptly described the police as "detectors of mismatched realities." The stock exchange negotiates fluctuating monetary values, as both concrete and abstract realities, and the newspaper archive is a site for collected stories, official and unofficial narratives that are negotiated on a daily basis. As inspiration for the piece,

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[331] Lars Bang Larsen, Cristina Ricupero, and Nicolaus Schafhausen, eds., *The Populism Catalogue* (New York: Lukas & Sternberg, 2005), 16.
[332] Ibid., 16.
[333] Curator Nicolas Trembley included a documentary in the show of Thomas Hirschhorn's *Swiss-Swiss Democracy* (2004-5).

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Henry VIII's Wives also looked to histories of the controversial medical diagnosis of hysteria itself, a discourse that extends from Hippocrates to the present, and which peaked in intensity during the nineteenth century. Notably, the womb was considered the cause of hysteria in the nineteenth century (hence the maternity ward in the video), as a neurosis unequivocally particular to women and gendered as female, which the title *Mr. Hysteria* playfully upends. The locations, however, besides spaces of "negotiated reality," also represent Foucauldian sites of institutionalized power and social control. Bodies are increasingly managed and administered through rationalizing systems that operate evermore pervasively in society. The emotional reverberation of hysteria is here paralleled with the social instrumentalization of bodies. Both operate and propagate via a particular indeterminacy and all-pervasiveness.

Another of Henry VIII's Wives' pieces in *Populism*, *The lowest note on an organ = the length of a human fingernail grown since 1730 = 8HZ/subsonic* also suggests this bodily connection. The sculpture, an organ pipe displayed only in Vilnius due to its massive size (made by the workshop filmed in *The Returning Officer*), plays a note so low that it is virtually inaudible to the human ear, supposedly only perceptible after time through vibrations caused in the body. According to the artist collective, such pipes were used during the Middle Ages to "induce the experience of physical hysteria or elation during religious ceremonies" (this piece was installed in a quasi-church-like space with long, stained-glass windows), and apparently the "staff at the museum complained of nausea for the duration of the show." The Wives link traditional Christian ideology to a body-based, almost imperceptible populist discourse over historical time – the length of the pipe being equal to "a human fingernail grown since 1730." Hysteria, rumor, social reverberation through populist ideology, religion, or disciplinary

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structures – by whatever category here – must always be connected back to physical bodies and subjectivities, despite their apparent imperceptibility or indeterminacy.

As Bhabha insists, if the circulation of populist ideology relies on speed and anonymity, its "intersubjective, communal adhesiveness [nevertheless] lies in its enunciative aspect."[334] *Mr. Hysteria* mimics this enunciative indeterminacy, in the form of "rumor." Footage begins in the womb, so-to-speak, displaying a newborn baby at the maternity ward. The nurses, and then a younger man and woman in the police station, repeatedly voice a certain anxiety about crowds and a need for temporal quickness. In the police station, the man and woman stand in front of a cell, speaking casually, yet precisely and slowly in a Brechtian manner, as officers move prisoners in the background:

> Polieman: People and people and people.
>
> Police woman: It's charged, shouting, the noise gets louder and stronger, the sound. And it feels like pressure.
>
> Policeman: Too many people. No way back. Moving forward. This might be it. I'm running. I'll just make the train.

After the police station scene, the young man's voice carries over into a new location – the newspaper archive. There his words are picked up by yet another man, who in a moment is revealed to be standing in the space of the archive.

The scene switchover also marks a crossover and an acceleration in the time of the "conversation." In the newspaper archive, two more voices of a different man and woman begin to overlap and confuse what is being said, or in what sequence. The discussion shifts to one of concrete objects: "You can use it for many, many things;" "It's a rope;" "It has been knotted tightly;" "Heavy and rough;" but maintains a certain anxiety about it:

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[334] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 200.

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Journalist #2: It makes me nervous.

Journalist #1: Is it a real one?

#2: And…what's the word?

#1: Insecure. (pause.) It is dangerous. And it makes me nervous.

#2: It makes me nervous.

#1: …and that's all.

#2: It feels heavy in my hand.

Following the archive, two locations are then montaged together. On the left- and right-hand screens, the young woman and man from the police stand, respectively, while in the center screen, another young woman and man mimic their positions and dialogue in the stock exchange. The couples act as body doubles, and their voices overlap more and more. The installation ends with shots of the stock exchange, police station, and archive – suddenly vacant of the actors – but still narrated by their voices. A reiterative theme of anxiety and speed ("It's strong!") builds to a crescendo with several simultaneous voices asserting at the very end, "It's like frozen time;" "It's a flash in time."

Mr. Hysteria represents a chain of communication, a type of contagious rumor that is "born" in one location and time and quickly accelerates through anonymous, everyday voices until it pervades all spheres of activity. The circulated rhetoric of anxiety or fear effectively transforms into an indeterminate social panic or hysteria in a temporal "flash." This process, moreover, transpires through the mediating apparatus of video screens, suggesting a connection between socially-constructed fears and the mass media.

Harun Farocki's *Videograms of a Revolution* (1992) offers a compelling parallel in this regard, documenting the populist uprising against Nicolae Ceauçescu and the role or work of the camera during the revolution. Like *Mr. Hysteria*, the film also begins in a hospital, but rather than giving birth, the woman on screen is wounded from gunshots, and calls for revolution

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against Ceauçescu's regime. She testifies as a witness to the government crackdown in Timisoara, where popular anti-communist demonstrations soon led to rioting and violence. Several days later, graphic images of mass graves near Timisoara were aired internationally but not domestically.[335] Information about the riots and deaths reached citizens via word-of-mouth and through these external media sources, and speculation about the number of casualties varied greatly. It soon became apparent that the corpses may not have been linked directly to the uprising, but as film historian Benjamin Young highlights, the circulated images and casualty estimates reverberated with a real and imagined terror in Romania, the numbers attesting to "the amplified paranoia and sense of loss that accompanied" the fall of Ceauçescu's one-party rule.[336] As Bhabha would attest, the force of rumor did have a revolutionary impact. Similar to *Videograms*, *Mr. Hysteria* attempts to display the communicative base of this mass collectivizing impulse, this unquantifiable spreading of fear, rumor, panic, and/or information by and for "the people." Yet whereas *Videograms* depicts this communicative chain in a specific historical instance, *Mr. Hysteria* attempts to expose the very underlying structure of such populist rhetoric.

4.2.1   Resignifying an Iconotype: *Tatlin's Tower and the World*

Whereas *Mr. Hysteria* and *The lowest note on an organ* attempt to represent the uneasy, resonant character of populist communication, the collective's third piece included in *Populism*, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, has set out to employ it. The project is an ongoing campaign to construct the entirety of Vladimir Tatlin's proposed *Monument to the Third International* (1919,

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[335] Benjamin Young, "On Media and Democratic Politics: Videograms of a Revolution," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines*, ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 245.
[336] Ibid., 258.

unrealized) in fragments throughout the world, and the *Populism* exhibition debuted the group's

proposal with the launch of a website (www.tatlinstowerandtheworld.net).[337] As of 2011, the

Wives have erected one actual piece of the tower in Belgrade, Serbia, and they have participated

in several other shows around Europe focusing on the possibility of its construction.

Henry VIII's Wives staged another "tower" campaign earlier in their career. For *Nine*

Reasons to be an Optimist (1999), they invited representatives of official religious

denominations in Oslo, Norway to congregate at an airport control tower. Nine figures agreed to

meet at the air traffic control deck of a recently closed airport, Fornebu. There the religious

leaders participated in a photo shoot, creating one final picture – doctored from two – with nine

men and women standing in line, gazing out and away from one another in the tower. The ceiling

slightly misaligns, and a fragmentary shoulder of a non-present, ghostly tenth body jars the

continuity of the image. Though a certain idealism marks the title and image – of nine religious

leaders monumentally standing in an elevated space, united and watching over global traffic –

the resulting photograph from the experiment fragments, or at least highlights a crack, within the

utopian project. The tower and airport, after all, had just been retired from service. In 2011, the

shootings in Oslo by Breivik reveal just how precarious this constructed proximity and

reconciliation may be.

As evidenced by much of their past work, Henry VIII's Wives are committed to

unpacking and recoding iconic images and narratives. *Tatlin's Tower and the World* marks their

latest, sustained attempt at such an endeavor, this time geared toward an inspection not only of

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[337] The structure has served as inspiration for many artists, including, for instance, Norbert Kottmann, with his "Baut Tatlin" campaign in 1993 to have the tower constructed on the no-man's-land of Potsdamer Platz in Berlin, as a parliamentary building to house the "United Nations of Eurasia."[337] Henry VIII's Wives, additionally, interviewed members of the "Friends of Tatlin's Tower" group, which was founded by curator Harald Szeeman with the idea to construct the tower at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin.

icons, but also iconotypes. As Terry Smith, who coined the term, elaborates in his book

Architecture of Aftermath, an iconotype goes beyond an icon: it is "an image that, while it

represents a specific artifact, structure, person, or place, is also powerful enough to stand for a

category of human experience."[338] It is an image that is endlessly repeated, reproducing itself

innumerable times in a visual economy in a "bewildering variety of forms."[339] The most

powerful example he offers is the World Trade Center in New York. In a nutshell: "Its image

was recognized all over the world as the biggest, the most blatant, and the most brutal of the

skyscraper clusters that created the bristling skyline of the capital city of Western modernity."[340]

The Twin Towers became an iconotype of corporate American capitalism and arrogance, built

for sheer size and height – as well as bland economic efficiency – with minimal aesthetic

creativity or consideration for the local people in its surrounding urban environment. As such, for

Osama bin Laden among others, it became a prime target: a stripped-down, categorical symbol

for, and embodiment of U.S. imperialism and power. The Twin Towers, indeed, more than a

fixed icon, came to represent a whole ideology and way of life.

If Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International* had been built, it might have also

transformed into an iconotype during the Cold War, such as the Berlin Wall. The Russian

constructivist artist Vladimir Tatlin (1885-1953) proposed his *Monument* as the new

headquarters for the Third International in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg), following the

Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. Though never constructed, it was also conceived with a modernist

ethos, in a similar vein to the WTC: to raise the highest, largest, most technologically advanced

structure of its time. In 1917, more specifically, it was intended to outdo its rival (capitalist) icon,

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[338] Terry Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2006), 27.
[339] Ibid.
[340] Ibid., 120.

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the Eiffel Tower (324 m), as a 400-meter-high steel, glass, and iron double-helix tower. In

posters for the *Populism* exhibition, Henry VIII's Wives contrasted the height of the tower to the

Eiffel Tower, the Statue of Liberty, and the "Gherkin" skyscraper in London. Beyond comparing

it to these other architectural icons, the posters showcased this end game for height and phallic

dominance in the city skyline.

Besides monumentality, the tower would have become the ultimate template for

communist order, totality, hierarchy, and technological prowess. It was intended to rotate

kinetically with three segmented levels revolving at different speeds: the cube-shaped base

would turn once a year and would house the legislative assembly house; the pyramid-shaped

middle would host the politburo, or leadership, rotating once a month; and the top, a cylindrical

information center, issuing bulletins and propaganda via radio and telegraph, would circle once a

day. Its temporal and spatial organization would have been perfectly synchronized. Like its

contemporary cousin, the destroyed Twin Towers, it would have stood for bureaucratic

efficiency and control in the end, representing a "colossal indifference to heterogeneity."[341]

Why construct Tatlin's tower now, almost a hundred years after the fact? Henry VIII's

Wives will never actually build the tower: the campaign speaks, rather, to a present-day

circulation of iconotypes within the visual economy of icons, or "iconomy," another term coined

by Smith.[342] It is no coincidence that the Wives have adopted Tatlin's tower as an analogue to

the Twin Towers, which has become the most divisive, inflammatory cultural iconotype of the

twenty-first century. Similar to cultural stereotypes, or Otto Neurath's modernist project

ISOTYPE (as discussed in Chapter 1), iconotypes absorb a tremendous amount of contestatory

representations in the visual field. Architectural iconotypes such as the WTC crystallize broad

[341] Ibid., 121.
[342] Ibid., 1-2.

social discourses in contained symbols of power and conflict, leading to a starkly reduced world picture seized upon by radicals such as Osama bin Laden or Anders Behring Breivik. These assemblages are disseminated in all mass media, but particularly online through blogs and social accounts, spreading like wildfire with anonymity, indeterminacy, and above all, vast repetition. With the *Monument to the Third International*, Henry VIII's Wives have appropriated a utopian symbol of international, egalitarian leftist ideology at a time when extremist right-wing parties are commanding more and more social influence throughout the continent, influence specifically garnered by exaggerating and distorting fears concerning Muslims and "foreigners." These fears have proliferated tremendously since 9.01.11. Breivik's manifesto, notably, also included a call to vanquish "cultural Marxism" in Europe. Yet how might Henry VIII's Wives offer such a totalizing, hierarchizing image as the *Monument* as an effective counterexample for world-picturing? If successful, would their project not merely reinforce the reductive iconomy that already dominates a contemporary social-visual field?

The Wives ostensibly aim to morph Tatlin's tower into an iconotype itself, but one realistically tempered, subverted, and transformed through productive, collective engagement. As stated before, their campaign began in 2005 with the launch of a website to circulate the *Tower*'s image within the iconomy and to expose it to a broader public. The website is ordered by three different basic temporalities/links, mimicking the threefold division of the tower itself: "past," "present," and "future." The "past" page features an assortment of digital, text "clippings" piled haphazardly. Users may browse among them and come across explanatory cut-out messages such as this:

> If the ascending spirals of Tatlin's Tower exemplified and contained the processes of resolving conflicts and decisions, so too did its dynamic lean indicate a will to action. Here was a social alembic: the evolution of human history was to be determined here, and corporate will condensed, purified and transformed into

the energy of action. With its committees in session the tower would have comprised the nerve centre of

intended world government.

The "past" section, in other words, lays out the provocative history of the tower and its

concomitant, utopian aspirations for an "evolution of human history" and the consolidation of a

"corporate will." These quotations, however, are signaled as outdated – collected and archived –

and incongruously portrayed as HTML-based text "clippings."

The "future" and "present" pages map a different type of course for the online-based

campaign. The "future" page is quite minimal, depicting only a screen-sized megaphone with the

imperative, "Talk to us," and a link to email the group. According to one member, Henry VIII's

Wives receive emails as frequently as once or twice a day. The "present" page, on the other

hand, is more complex, offering many possible directions. It displays a brown cardboard box,

stuffed with quotidian objects. Clicking on these items, in turn, navigates the viewer to

descriptions of the Wives' various, subsequent exhibitions and initiatives for *Tatlin's Tower and*

the World. The box acts as a type of "hands-on" map to the larger, projected iconomy of the

campaign. This includes not only the exhibitions, but also actual examples of the emails that they

have received. An interior designer in London, who probably viewed a poster for Tatlin's tower

in the London Underground in 2005, writes:

> I've just been looking at the website and would like to know what stage you are at in the project, what kind
> of team you have at the moment and what skills you are missing. It's just that tower has always been so
> incredible to me and I really would like to be a part in its realisation, at any level.

Another woman offers constructive advice for attracting capital and interest:

> Surely for such an innovative idea, you could make the site more appealing to artists, people interested in
> the background of the project, and investors? Overall, this is a good and curious concept that appears to be
> so badly executed I fear it will fail. You can do better than this. Promote yourselves with clearer
> information which is well channeled and well designed!

Jono Podmore, a British composer, sound engineer, and Professor of Popular Music at the Cologne University of Music, for example, also wrote to offer his services for the project and then sent Henry VIII's Wives an unsolicited composition, which the Wives have used subsequently as an "anthem" for the campaign. The website effectively launched the *Tower* into the mass social imaginary, recruiting strangers to help "build up" its public image.

Already built "into" its totalizing structure, however, is a degree of iconoclasm. If the *Monument* were to theoretically develop the kind of emotive, iconotypical charge that the Twin Towers and the Berlin Wall encapsulated, it would undoubtedly be targeted for destruction as well. As Smith suggests, after the fall of the Twin Towers and the cultural divisions that it exploded into the public's attention, the demolition of buildings has come to dominate the iconomy perhaps even more so now than their construction. The unyielding ideological models of "progress" that inspirited the development of the WTC or the desire for political containment in Berlin, ones that attempted to foreclose difference, would also unquestionably mark *Tatlin's Tower* for violence or erasure.

The one section of the *Monument* that has actually been erected signifies this iconoclastic impulse and creatively dispels it. In 2007 in Belgrade, Serbia, the Wives succeeded in fabricating a small piece from the middle of the original tower, which would also be its most vulnerable to attack (as witnessed with the Twin Towers). The section has substantial presence, however, weighing in at a sizeable eleven tons of steel and concrete, eight meters long and two meter wide. What makes it truly uncanny is its realignment from the original, proper axis of the tower. From an already unrecognizable puzzle piece from its midsection, the Wives tipped the odd block on its side, further dissimulating the tower's iconotypical status. It signals its own piecemeal destruction, but also parodically memorializes its fragmented creation with an official

plaque. Already "destroyed" in its first erection, in other words, the piece becomes a benign public art sculpture, its ideological current diffused.

Sitting on a green square between its host museum, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and the former headquarters of the Central Committee of the Yugoslav Communist Party (now the Ušće Business Centre), however, the sculpture also pointedly speaks to the specific local environment and history of that area. According to curator Branislav Dimitrijević, former Yugoslavian president Slobodan Milošević and his wife used the latter building in the 1990s as a type of political/informational media headquarters; NATO bombed it heavily in 1999 but failed to destroy it completely.[343] Milošević himself gained power through a 1988-89 "anti-bureaucratic revolution," a populist, "grassroots" movement that ousted the former Communist Party leadership in Serbia and helped propel his political position as the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia soon dissolved into separate, warring states in the early 1990s. Though the Belgrade segment of *Tatlin's Tower* appears innocuous, tipped on its side and dissociated visually from its larger iconotype, its local siting still evokes the tragic history surrounding the populist rise of Milošević, ultimately indicted for crimes against humanity and ethnic genocide. Rather than an empty, unrecognizable signifier for the *Monument*, it might just as well resemble a piece of concrete debris from the bombed Yugoslav Community Party headquarters.

For another iteration of the campaign at the Bern Kunsthalle in 2006, the group reconceived the "propaganda section" of Tatlin's tower, or the top third that rotated once a day and continually disseminated communist ideology. The installation included campaign posters and t-shirts hung on the wall; a computer to access the Internet; an answering machine to take messages from viewers calling into the installation's own private line; search lights to mimic

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[343] Ibid., 16.

those that would have been placed on top of Tatlin's tower; and a radio channel broadcasting "propaganda." The group rented the radio frequency, 106.8 MHz (a playful reference to Henry VIII's six wives), for the duration of the show, which was able to transmit ten kilometers towards the parliament building from an antenna attached to an unused, Kunsthalle flag post.

Radio Tatlin combined a paradoxical layering of Jono Podmore's "anthem," or atonal, instrumental music; spoken dialogue with Bern residents on the Bundesplatz concerning the possible construction of a tower segment on the square; and a radio voice (in both German and Swiss dialect) describing Tatlin's unrealized *Monument*, asking listeners to call in with opinions, and repeating the phrase, "Tatlin's Tower: Yes or No." The interview material was collected by asking random passersby on the street to comment on a computer-generated image of a fully constructed tower in front of the Swiss parliament building in Bern. The postcard image is jarring: a monolithic, spiraling piece of metal frame stands squarely on top of the central fountain, with people milling about below. According to the collective, public opinion about the project varied: "it would be nice," "too modern," or the economically-minded, "if the Bern tax payers have to pay, it's a bad idea, but if all Swiss pay for it, it's a good idea." The radio interviews and call-in option ("Tatlin's Tower: Yes or No") parodied the numerous popular referenda that operate in Switzerland's system of direct democracy, as well as the propaganda posters to vote "yes" or "no" to controversial issues such as citizenship or immigration.

Their parody was quite prescient, in terms of a popular referendum that banned the construction of minarets, or Islamic prayer towers, throughout Switzerland in 2009. 57.5% percent of participating voters could not imagine the construction of this type of tower amidst a

"Swiss" architectural horizon.[344] Of course this banning has more to do with growing fears and hostilities towards an Islamic way of life, perceived as counter to "Swiss" tradition, rather than the aesthetics or function of such towers in the urban landscape. When the referendum passed, there were only four minarets even existent in the country, hardly a threat to "Swiss" territory. As Smith insists, there needs to occur a process of Unbuilding such iconotypical perspectives in order to begin creating again after the "explosive event architecture of 9.11.01." With such negative energies inherent to the iconomy now, with every iconotype already slated for possible attack or ruin, there is an urgent need to reconceptualize their building, or rather, unbuilding. Smith cites Bhabha: "Neither construction or deconstruction, the Unbuilt is the creation of a form whose virtual absence raises the question of what it would mean to start again, in the same place, as if it were elsewhere, adjacent to the site of a historic disaster or a personal trauma."[345] There needs to be real work done in understanding the trauma of that symbolic rupture; this Unbuilding occurs not only by actors during the concrete aftermath of that event – the fire fighters, medical professionals, police, and so forth – but also must include all in the public who hope to create a more open, humane architecture in the aftermath of 9.11.01.

As part of the Bern installation, Henry VIII's Wives basically posed this question as the central theme of a conference. Entitled "Machbarkeit" ("Feasibility"), the conference foregrounded the issue of "negative space," asking what it would mean to construct another segment of the tower on Bern's central square. Invited speakers included a professor from MIT, Takehiko Nagakura, who leads the project "Unbuilt Monuments" in developing computer graphic visualizations of unrealized early modern architecture (including, of course, the

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[344] Nick Cumming-Bruce and Steven Erlanger, "Swiss Ban Building of Minarets on Mosques," *New York Times*, November 29, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/11/30/world/europe/30swiss.html.
[345] Homi Bhabha, "Reading 9-11-01," *Artforum* (Nov 2001): 36, as cited in Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath*, 152.

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Monument for the Third International); the writer Zoë Strachan, who wrote a fictional novel,

Negative Space; the architectural blogger Geoff Manaugh, who posts for BLDGBLOG; as well

as recorded interviews with members of the "Friends of Tatlin's Tower" group: gallerist Rudolf

Springer, actor Hans Zischler, and photographer Folke Hanfeld.[346] "Feasability" focused not so

much on the actual, physical possibility of erecting a piece of the tower on the central plaza, but

instead, on the tower as viewers could envision it. What would it mean to the public to begin

construction of such an ideologically-vested symbol right at the heart of their city? How could

they build it ethically and openly, without alienating whole segments of society, and transform it

into something beyond a reductive iconotype? Whereas the Wives' black-or-white, yes-or-no

polling on the streets of Bern solicited simplistic, unengaged reactions, their conference attended

to the problem of the Unbuilt with a much more complex, interdisciplinary discursive platform.

In 2008-9, the artist collective explored another piece of the *Monument* at the

Whitechapel Gallery in London, this time from a ground-up rather than top-down perspective:

they constructed the "lobby" of the tower. Rather than create the lobby themselves, however,

Henry VIII's Wives commissioned it. Almost every item in its sleek yet bland, modernist,

corporate-looking space was specially ordered, and the layout itself was designed by a

professional.[347] Tatlin-themed cocktails were even served at the gallery opening. Gallery

attendants operated the "concierge desk," donning tower-shaped felt hats and posing next to a

Monument-shaped concierge bell (notably ordered from the Whitechapel Bell Foundry, the same

company that produced the iconic Liberty Bell and Big Ben) as well as a tower-themed bouquet

of flowers, arranged by a local florist. The space included two fake elevator doors, and Jono

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[346] Curator Harald Szeeman organized this group with the hope of constructing Tatlin's *Monument* at Tempelhof Airport in Berlin.
[347] The only non-commissioned item was a framed photograph of a maquette of the Belgrade sculpture, dramatically unveiled by actors at the state theater in Belgrade.

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Podmore's "anthem" once again set the tone. In the center of the area, visitors could rest on a Batik-upholsterd sofa, which complemented the gallery attendants' Batik-designed uniforms, stitched by a Batik dressmaker in the Spitalfields market around the corner. The specially-commissioned fabric, however, displaying a recurring pattern of the tower's spiraling image juxtaposed next to Tatlin's portrait, was actually produced by a cloth designer in Italy. The artist collective is not unaware of the global trade politics of Batik fabric, spotlighted by artists from Gauguin to Yinka Shonibare, and they purposefully signaled its uneasy, complicated commodity status here.

Henry VIII's Wives also commissioned a tea set for the lobby from a woman in China. Whereas they attempted to fabricate their own set for an earlier exhibition in Berlin, here they requested Zhang Ling Yun to manufacture a new unit. In their specific instructions, the primary aim was to "illustrate the idea of the Tower in pieces," mimicking again the overall aspiration for *Tatlin's Tower and the World*. On the one hand, in a proper Constructivist sense, the tea set represents an object that can be mass produced for everyday, popular use, serving both aesthetically and functionally. Tatlin himself designed ceramics, though never in the shape of the tower. On the other hand, the Wives's "china" set follows a European convention from the eighteenth century on of commissioning made-to-order ceramics from the East Asian country, known today as *Chine de commande*. Artist Ni Haifeng, for instance – in the same *Unpacking Europe* (2001-2) exhibition that featured Shonibare's Batik-parody of Fragonard's *The Swing* – poignantly displayed photographs of his "Chinese" body inscribed with porcelain designs for a Dutch market. His series *Self Portrait as Part of the Porcelain Export History* not only revisits

an earlier history of European imperial exploitation, but also questions the current trade in "foreign" bodies, legal and illegal, in the Netherlands and Amsterdam, where the artist lives.[348]

The point is that beneath the smooth veneer of the professionally-designed, corporate-like lobby installation, one quite near the financial heart of London, the Wives uncannily connected a number of raw, cultural and economic histories regarding past imperial trade routes to present-day processes of globalization. The exhibition occurred as part of Whitechapel's year-long *Street* series, and the *Lobby* specifically invoked its location on Wentworth Street – with its local market attracting diverse groups of Jewish, African, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi peoples for exchange. In some sense, London's business world is deeply imbricated not only in the global economy, vis-à-vis its ex-colonies and imperial past, but also in this quite local yet international market, as the Wives' commission and production of the *Lobby* highlights. How long will it be until redevelopment overtakes the eclectic neighborhood and transforms it with profitable "renewal"? As Smith carefully lays out in his analysis of the WTC, part of its notoriety as an iconotype accrued from its earliest erasures of the local environment in Manhattan.[349] Before the demolition of twelve blocks in the late 1960s for the tower's foundation, there existed a quite active, internationally-known bazaar in the "Syrian Quarter"; it brought together immigrant communities, for instance, from Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine. Also affected by the razing was Radio Row, a lively cluster of blocks dedicated to the manufacture and retail of electronics, textiles, garments, and dry goods.[350] There is a striking parallel here with London's East End, home to a tremendous diversity of international immigrants and a famous textile industry, but also becoming attractive to commercial investors for its cheaper, waterfront land. This is the type

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[348] Salah Hassan and Iftikhar Dadi, eds., *Unpacking Europe: Towards a Critical Reading* (Rotterdam: NAi, 2001), 332-7.
[349] Smith, *The Architecture of Aftermath*, 99.
[350] Ibid.

of culturally-heterogeneous, "glocal" community that must live and work peacefully together on a day-to-day basis, which the corporate transnationalism of a "World Trade Center" or a Third International *Monument* would threaten to stamp out.

Henry VIII's Wives had originally proposed to stamp a "footprint" of the full-sized *Monument* in the neighborhood, with the gallery/lobby sited where it would actually fit within the one-to-one scale realization. The artist collective proposed to drill bronze studs into the pavement in order to mark the footprint, but not surprisingly, they were not able to acquire permission from the city planning commission. They also wished to cast manhole sewage covers with images of the tower, but again, the local authorities rejected their request. Their proposals clearly evoke the tremendously difficult and sensitive project of reconceiving "Ground Zero" in Manhattan. For all of the varying ideas for a new building, each design has consecrated the Twin Towers' exact footprint.[351] As Smith suggests, this threatens to "quarantine" two large sections of the site and arbitrarily foreclose possibilities for more organic urban growth. The footprint of the *Monument* in London, however, marked by bronze studs in the pavement and manhole covers, would not impede such interaction. Rather, it would function similarly to the present-day demarcation of the fallen Berlin Wall, signaled by a double row of cobblestones and bronze plaques inscribed with "Berliner Mauer 1961-1989" in the streets along its past route. If Henry VIII's Wives had succeeded in stamping the footprint of the tower in the East End, they would have not only "memorialized" the *Monument* before its construction – once again signifying its inherent, ideological charge as an iconotype – but as part of that remembrance, would have also insisted upon its "Unbuilding" as an act of street-level, open human exchange and encounter.

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[351] Ibid., 181.

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This is the fundamental social contract that *Tatlin's Tower and the World* espouses. For the past six years, *Tatlin's Tower and the World* has worked to transform a totalizing, iconotypical image/narrative of the *Monument to the Third Internationl* into a collectivizing platform for engaged, self-reflexive discourse among strangers, parodying a populist strategy so prevalent in Europe today and simultaneously recalibrating it – whether via the Internet, as a piece of concrete-and-steel debris, a "propaganda" headquarters, or a corporate lobby. As political theorist Margaret Canovan suggests, populism is defined, above all, by its sheer vagueness and emotional resonance, be it catalyzed vis-à-vis religious faith, economic inequality, or cultural identity. Images in the mass media today have tremendous power as vehicles of populist, affective and affiliative persuasion. *Tatlin's Tower* is a campaign to not only critique an iconotypical visual field exploited by demagogues in order to propagate a "clash of civilizations" mentality and spread fears of immigrants and Muslims: the spectacularized images of the falling Twin Towers, indeed, signaled an explosion of this type of fear-mongering discourse. Rather, the project has also been a campaign to harness such visualized, mass media forms of communication in order to challenge them constructively, to reimagine an iconotype, for example, not as an empty sign of belonging, but as the unifying basis for an ethical, open, creative world-picturing that relates global strangers in a vernacular yet cosmopolitical way.

4.2.2 Conclusion

Injuries to the mass body, such as 9.11.01 or the train bombings in London and Madrid, threaten to inflame passions and fears and once again yield reductive, sharply-divided ideologies: the mass media has a critical role to play in channeling such discourses. Perhaps most striking in the death of the contemporary "divorced wife," – the "people's princess" – was the prominence of

the media during and after the event, not only in relation to the paparazzi's complicity in her car crash, but also with the specific increase in Internet coverage during this time. Because of the sweeping public attention to her death and funeral, for example, BBC News for the first time established a full online news service only a few months later.[352] The UK's criminal investigation of the case did not officially end until ten years later, moreover, partly due to conspiracy theories spread by tabloids such as the *Daily Mirror*. Many people believed the tale that Princess Diana's "accident" was designed by intelligence services because of her new relationship with Egyptian Dodi Fayed, also killed in the crash. This included Fayed's father, Mohamed el-Fayed, who vehemently claimed that "Britain's racist establishment found their relationship utterly unacceptable." Passions concerning royal tradition, "Englishness," and multiculturalism were all inflamed through the media's sensationalized representation of the disaster. What kind of mass-mediated subjectivity arose through the death of the Princess of Wales, the public's embodiment of the "people-as-one"?

Since their formation in 1997, the Wives have consistently attempted to reveal popular narratives, icons, and symbols as complexly mediated and negotiated in the broader social-visual field. As W.J.T Mitchell suggests, the "power of idols over the human mind resides in their silence, their spectacular impassiveness, their dumb insistence on repeating the same message (as in the baleful cliché of 'terrorism')…"[353] Instead, Mitchell advocates a "sounding" of the idols as a way of "playing upon them," retuning and "transforming [the idol's] hollowness into an echo

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[352] Matt Rhodes, "Major events influenced BBC's news online," FreshNetworks blog, June 5, 2008, accessed September 9, 2011, http://www.freshnetworks.com/blog/2008/06/major-events-influenced-bbcs-news-online/, no page numbers.
[353] Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2010), 26-27.

chamber for human thought."[354] From their series *Iconic Moments of the 20th Century* to *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, Henry VIII's Wives have attempted to do precisely this – to reconceive how such idols, icons, symbols, and popular narratives may productively shape processes of cultural and political affiliation. *Mr. Hysteria*, on the one hand, displays the worst-case scenario for collective identification – where an accelerating time and homogenizing space across all media creates empty rumor or panic: different actors merge into the same anxiety-driven types, speaking the same vacuous words. *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, however, restructures the connective strategies of populist communication to allow heterogeneity and fragmentation within a still-unifying model for "the people." Rather than focus on retrieving an innumerable quantity of lost voices, representations, and histories – a critical though impossible task – the Wives disassemble and restructure the channels that represent and create such hollowed-out idols in the first place, rebuilding them into an "echo chamber" for thoughtful reflection.

Today the issue at hand is the increasing influence of populist right-wing leaders such as Marine Le Pen or Geert Wilders who also attempt to stand in for "the people" vis-à-vis the demonization of immigrants and "foreigners." They play on fears of the declining welfare state, job insecurity, crime, and cultural differences, which all become hyped in the mass media through distortion, misinformation, editing, and reductive rhetoric. As Daniel Cohn-Bendit, co-president of the Green bloc in the European Parliament, states about Breivik's most recent manifesto, "2083: A European Declaration of Independence," disseminated via Twitter and Facebook: "So much of what he wrote could have been said by any right-wing politician."[355] Many political leaders initially championed Breivik's actions, such as the National Front

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[354] Ibid., 27.

[355] Nicholas Kulish, "Shift in Europe Seen in Debate on Immigrants," *New York Times*, July 27, 2011, accessed September 6, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/world/europe/28europe.html?emc=eta, 1.

member Jacques Coutela, who called Breivik an "icon" (and later changed his note to denounce him), or Erik Hellsborn, a nationalist Sweden Democrat who wrote in his blog that "in a Norwegian Norway this tragedy would never have happened."[356] Debates in Europe have sprung up about whether to monitor online chat groups more stringently, but experts believe that this would be nearly impossible.[357] Instead, the mass public must become aware of the role the media plays in repetitiously spreading vague and indeterminate fears. Henry VIIIs' Wives attempt to expose the hollowness behind such a reductive visual discourse and popularized, populist communicative methods. On a continent where sharply-ideological, xeno-racist rhetoric and violence has propagated to a dangerous degree, at stake in such a project is the possibility of creating a more positive, pluralistic mass subjectivity.

[356] Ibid.
[357] Ibid., 2.

5.0   CONCLUSION: FROM FEAR TO AFFILIATION, FROM INSECURITY TO COLLECTIVITY

5.1   THE EURO ZONE AND GLOBALIZATION

In early December 2011, a mail bomb was delivered to another set of twin towers – those of the Deutsche Bank in Frankfurt, Germany. It was personally addressed to Swiss banker Josef Ackerman, Deutsche Bank's chief executive and one of the most controversial figures in European banking today. Since 2002, he has been at the helm of the Deutsche Bank, which operates in more than seventy countries, and he also chairs the Institute of International Finance, which is an association of the world's largest banks, including Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley, and Citigroup. In other words, his name has become synonymous with an industry whose credibility has plummeted since 2008 with the financial collapse of Wall Street. The letter bomb, apparently sent by an Italian anarchist group, was a missive launched at a top icon of this banking milieu in Europe, at a time when the European Union threatens to unravel under the pressure of tremendous financial instability and austerity measures.[358]

Indeed, perhaps the most pressing issue for continued European unification at the beginning of 2012, which this dissertation so far has only tangentially addressed, remains

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[358] Nicholas Kulish, "Letter Bomb Sent to German Bank Chief," *New York Times*, December 8, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/09/world/europe/letter-bomb-sent-to-german-bank-chief.html?_r=1&emc=eta1, no page numbers.

economic uncertainty. Josef Ackermann has been an instrumental figure in this regard, advising politicians such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel concerning the debt crisis in Greece, the increasing fiscal gulf separating countries such as Germany and Portugal or Italy, and the possible breakdown or stricter regulation in the seventeen-member euro zone.[359] He was pivotal, for instance, in advocating a type of Greek "Marshall Plan."[360] Yet Ackermann has also been labeled as "one of the most dangerous bankers in the world" by the former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, Simon Johnson, for his pushing Deutsche Bank to earn a twenty-five percent annual return on equity, before taxes.[361] Johnson maintains that such a goal encourages too much risk-taking and leveraging by its employees, that such substantial returns are only possible for banks "too big to fail," or ones that would certainly be rescued if such leveraging, instead, led to extreme losses. The Deutsche Bank has been reprimanded and even brought to court for some of its actions during the American mortgage bubble.[362]

The letter bomb to Ackermann, furthermore, eerily recalls an earlier bomb explosion in Frankfurt in 1989, which, also in early December, succeeded in killing the Deutsche Bank's chief executive, Alfred Herrhausen.[363] It was a car bomb devised by the Red Army Faction, a terrorist organization aimed at crippling West Germany's military-industrial complex and political system. Though it was a domestic terrorist act, it targeted, again, one of the key figures in Europe's economic integration and Deutsche Bank's global expansion. Herrhausen had worked energetically to transform the Deutsche Bank into both a pan-European and international

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[359] Jack Ewing and Liz Alderman, "Deutsche Bank's Chief Casts Long Shadow in Europe," *New York Times*, June 11, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/12/business/12bank.html?adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1323446764-MEFLXrDmxEw+8t+xFYdAzA, 1.
[360] Ibid., 2.
[361] Ibid., 3-4.
[362] Ibid., 3.
[363] Ferdinand Protzman, "Head of Top West German Bank Is Killed in Bombing by Terrorists," *New York Times*, December 1, 1989, http://www.nytimes.com/1989/12/01/world/head-of-top-west-german-bank-is-killed-in-bombing-by-terrorists.html.

powerhouse, buying banks in Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, and several in Asia.[364] Also

a confidant of the German Chancellor at the time, Helmut Kohl, the German media would even

refer to him as "Almighty Supreme Being."[365] Only one month after the fall of the Berlin Wall,

Herrhausen was posed to play an even more urgent role in German and European unification.

The link between terrorism and global finance is not a coincidental one, according to

social-cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai. They both crystallize as cellular networks arising

in conjunction with historical processes of globalization. In *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on

the Geography of Anger* (2006), Appadurai makes this distinction between cellular and

vertebrate models of organization:

> …a new world has emerged as we move into the twenty-first century. We still have the vertebrate world,
>
> organized through the central spinal system of international balances of power, military treaties, economic
>
> alliances, and institutions of cooperation. But alongside this exists the cellular world, whose parts multiply
>
> by association and opportunity rather than by legislation or by design. It is also a product of globalization –
>
> of the new information technologies, of the speed of finance and the velocity of the news, of the movement
>
> of capital and the circulation of refugees.[366]

As is clearly evident with the case of the European Union, the 1980s and 1990s witnessed

tremendous structural changes globally. The "vertebrate," autonomous national economy and

polity did not disappear, but it transformed simultaneously with newer cellular organizations of

capital.[367] It is precisely this simultaneity, the mixture of both models of organization and

attachment, according to Appardurai, that has created such worldwide social uncertainty and

political instability, leading for instance to terror not only at the state level, but in everyday

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[364] Steven Greenhouse, "Deutsche Bank's Bigger Reach," *New York Times*, July 30, 1989,
http://www.nytimes.com/1989/07/30/business/deutsche-bank-s-bigger-reach.html?src=pm, 1.
[365] Ibid.
[366] Arjun Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (Durham, NC: Duke University
Press, 2006), 129.
[367] Ibid., 21-31.

spheres of life.[368] Terrorism blurs the distinction between the enemies outside and the enemies within, between military and civilian spaces.[369] The nation-state is no longer "natural guarantor and container" of traditional social order.[370]

With this in mind, it is no surprise that the bomb sent to Ackermann came in the old-fashioned form of a letter. It marks a profound tension between, on the one hand, cellular networks of terrorists, the high-speed circulation of information, and ostensibly immaterial financial transactions such as derivatives and credit default swaps; and on the other hand, handheld explosives, traditional figures of national authority, and still-operational older forms of communication. In 2010, a slew of package bombs from Greece were mailed not only to Angela Merkel, French President Nicolas Sarkozy, and Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, but also to the embassies of Germany, Switzerland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Bulgaria, Chile, Mexico, and Russia – probably in connection to the controversial Greek bailout and imposed austerity measures.[371] A vertebrate system of heads of state and embassies was targeted, and with an arguably outdated form of circulation, but the terrorist action still moved transnationally and through the air. Car bombs such as in the case of Herrhausen's death have largely been replaced with more spectacular instances of airplanes crashing into skyscrapers, biological agents such as anthrax sent through airmail, and intangible cybernetic warfare. Ironically, in another instance of

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[368] Ibid., 103-104.
[369] Ibid., 92, 109.
[370] Ibid., 33.
[371] Michael Slackman, "German Letter Bomb is Found After Athens Blasts," *New York Times*, November 2, 2010, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/03/world/europe/03greece.html?scp=2&sq=merkel%20letter%20bomb&st=cse, no page numbers.

increasingly fluid business borders, Deutsche Bank just acquired the national mail carrier

Deutche Postbank in 2010.[372]

5.2   A FEAR OF SMALL NUMBERS

This simultaneity of structural models, vertebrate and cellular, and the alarming disjunctures that

it often creates, is by now largely acknowledged in political and economic analyses of

globalization. What Appadurai's investigation offers here is insight into concomitant social

changes spurred on by a "fear of small numbers" – not only the fear of technocratic/wealthy

elites or fundamentalist terrorists, but also minorities. Minorities are still classic objects of fear

and rage in the twenty-first century: "Why kill, torture, or ghettoize the weak?"[373] According to

Appadurai, processes of minoritization are historically tied to modernity, arising side-by-side

with the nation-state through the development of statistics, censuses, representational democracy,

and territorial classification.[374] Farocki's silent films, *Respite* and *In-Formation*, spotlight such

processes of demographic enumeration and ordering in Germany during World War II and after,

emphasizing dangerous slippages between the classification and control, or the representation

and objectification (or complete de-humanization) of a circumscribed "people." The birth of the

United Nations in 1945 was meant to ensure the safeguarding of such human rights against the

backdrop of minority denationalization and mass deportations.

So what makes the pathologization of minorities different in a post-1989, hybrid

vertebrate-and-cellular world? Appadurai states:

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[372] Jack Ewing and Liz Alderman, "Deutsche Bank's Chief Casts Long Shadow in Europe," 4.
[373] Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, 49.
[374] Ibid., 50.

Given the systematic compromise of national economic sovereignty that is built into the logic of

globalization, and given the increasing strain this puts on states to behave as trustees of the interests of a

territorially defined and confined 'people,' minorities are the major site for displacing the anxieties of many

states about their own minority or marginality (real or imagined) in a world of a few megastates, of unruly

economic flows and compromised sovereignties. Minorities, in a word, are metaphors and reminders of the

betrayal of the classical national project.[375]

It is precisely because of the uncertain admixture of vertebrate and cellular global systems that

minorities have become objects of heightened fear once again. Paradoxically, they come to stand

for the marginality of the nation on the globalized stage – nations which are often coerced or

pressured into opening up their markets to foreign capital and neoliberal policies.

How will the increased fear and anger over economic liberalization and transnational

capital in Europe play out in individual countries? Right now Greece, for instance, seems to be

caught in a "debt trap."[376] Further austerity measures will only depress the economy, reduce tax

revenues, and make it more difficult for the country to repay its debt. If Greece were to exit the

euro zone, however, and hyperinflation claimed the drachma as the country attempted to

establish order again (as it would be predicted), would minorities escape further scapegoating

and violence?[377] Would news coverage shift from embassy letter bombs to mass rioting and hate

crimes? The Greek austerity plan recently led to the downfall of the Socialist government, and

the new center-right coalition now works with the radical right-wing party, the Popular Orthodox

Rally (LAOS). Right-wing extremism is already believed to be responsible for a recent wave of

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[375] Ibid., 43.

[376] Rachel Donadio, "Greek Turmoil Raises Fears of Instability Around Europe," *New York Times*, June 16, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/06/17/world/europe/17greece.html?pagewanted=1&sq=greek%20right-wing&st=cse&scp=4, 2.

[377] Thomas Landon, Jr., "Pondering a Dire Day: Leaving the Euro," *New York Times*, December 12, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/13/business/global/a-greek-what-if-draws-concern-dropping-the-euro.html?scp=1&sq=greece%20drachma&st=cse, 1-2.

attacks on immigrants – stabbings and firebombs thrown into a temporary mosque in Athens.[378] Only in the last year, additionally, the Greece-Turkey border has transformed into a major crossing point for immigrants, and Greek officials are unable to handle the influx.[379] Either way, those most marginalized culturally – the "foreigners" in Greece – will probably bear much hostility in the country.

To be sure, state insecurities and civilian uncertainties have become deeply imbricated today. Terrorism is the most spectacular instance of this intertwinement, but it also manifests clearly as broader violence against "outsiders." The pressure to defend a "sense of national boundaries, national sovereignty, and the purity of the national ethnos" threatens to concretize once again around a question of minorities and majorities.[380] Majorities can be led to believe that they will become minor, and minorities major – and globalizing processes intensify such possibilities.[381] The neighborhood of Bijlmer, for example, as discussed in Chapter Two, was "ghettoized" in a broader Dutch public as criminal and dangerous. In 2008, Thomas Hirschhorn worked to create a type of "counterpublic" in this marginalized *banlieue* of Amsterdam in order to debunk the stereotyping minoritization of a tremendously diverse group of residents. Fear of cultural "foreignness" has largely become a fear of fellow national (often ex-colonial) citizens in the Netherlands and throughout Europe, championed by right-wing extremists such as Geert Wilders, because they do not fit a purist national image. This is especially problematic in the heart of traditional Western Europe with its recent histories of imperialism and broad swaths of immigrants and guest workers from the global south.

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[378] Suzanne Daley, "Greece Tries to Shut a Back Door to Europe," *New York Times*, January 31, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/01/world/europe/01greece.html?scp=5&sq=greek%20right-wing&st=cse, no page numbers.
[379] Ibid.
[380] Appadurai, *Fear of Small Numbers*, 65.
[381] Ibid., 83.

Chapter Three also focused on this intersection between social-cultural uncertainty and political insecurity in Europe. A number of Henry VIII's Wives video installations, for instance, such as *Mr. Hysteria* and *The Returning Officer*, investigate an intentionally-constructed fear of outsiders that spreads repetitively and indeterminately through populist forms of communication. The group's ongoing campaign, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, in turn, has attempted to harness such forms in order to offer more positive, grassroots ways of living in an increasingly proximate world with strangers. The campaign acts as a response to reductive iconotypes such as the World Trade Center that have been exploited in a symbolic-visual realm by political leaders in order to purposefully scapegoat politically-unwanted groups, such as Muslims. A "fear of small numbers" in this case quickly morphed from a fear of Osama bin Laden and a small network of fundamentalist terrorists to a whole category of people.

5.3   CORE CONNECTIONS AMONG THE THREE ARTISTIC CASE STUDIES

At first glance, the artwork of Harun Farocki, Thomas Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives may appear dissimilar in form and content, yet this would be an inaccurate gloss of the deep, underlying connections among their oeuvres. Each negotiates the changing fears of minorities and "outsiders" at different historical registrations and nuances of the vertebrate/cellular, or national/global configuration in Europe since World War II. It is precisely this vague and indeterminate nexus of political instability and social uncertainty arising in response to globalizing processes that needs to be carefully disentangled with the greatest variety of examples and most complex forms of association. What is needed most of all in such circumstances is thick – not thin – description. The most pressing obstacles to deepened

unification in Europe today, after all, are symbolized paradoxically by traditional letter bombs to icons of global capital, or Twitter-disseminated, modernist manifestoes of "European" independence based upon the 400th anniversary of the Battle of Vienna. There has not been, and will not be a simple substitution by the European Union for the classical, liberal modern nation-state. Likewise, there will be diverse and multifarious manifestations of a "fear of small numbers" – of the violence against, or stigmatization of minorities – as the status of marginalized peoples changes within such a constellation of political, social, and economic factors. Through the case studies of Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives, this dissertation has attempted to demonstrate such web-like connections through the artists' use of numerous, intermediated forms – video, film, radio, posters, the Internet, and much more – and diverse, symbolic spaces in the public as well as private realms.

Furthermore, though invested in different symbolic forms and spaces, Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives have employed a number of similar strategies in their artistic careers. First of all, they each embrace a strategy of repetition with difference. They make the same kind of artworks over and over again, but each time with a slightly varied critical emphasis or different voices. Farocki, for instance, has produced innumerable films and video installations addressing the problematic of information gathering and surveillance. Though *Respite* focuses on a Dutch internment camp during WWII, *In-Formation* on post-WWII German immigration patterns, and *Deep Play* on the 2006 World Cup game, these artworks (like dozens of others by the artist), continually return to concerns of human de-subjectification. How are whole groups of humans documented, categorized, contained, and ultimately controlled like objects? Hirschhorn, in turn, repeatedly creates elaborate, makeshift cultural centers in largely immigrant-populated, economically-depressed neighborhoods on the peripheries of major

European cities. Though each engages with specific local and regional politics, these artworks all focus on problems of publicity and marginalization. What are the constraining social and political circumstances of representation in these *banlieues*? Lastly, Henry VIII's Wives have championed and adapted their multi-media populist campaign, *Tatlin's Tower and the World*, for six years now and plan to continue it. Each iteration of the project adds a new, vernacular dimension to the idea of mass subjectivity, or what a non-exclusivist, cosmopolitical project of the "people-as-one" could be. Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives do not offer totalizing, essentialist visions of what a collectivity should be, but rather, persistent, repeated images that make critical linkages in varying cultural contexts. Theirs is a durational (as opposed to permanent) type of art, insisting on key themes and values through diverse iterations, and marking the urgency of their messages precisely through such repetition with difference.

Second, these three case studies all demonstrate strategies of alienation or the *unheimlich* (uncanny or un-homely). Farocki works with a legacy of Brechtian distanciation techniques, most notably the socially-constructed *Gestus* and Epic Theater; Hirschhorn employs the "un-homely" for his massive, dystopian gallery installations such as *Swiss Swiss Democracy*; and Henry VIII's Wives employ tactics of estrangement for their re-scripted video installations, as well as parody and mimicry for manifestations of *Tatlin's Tower and the World*. Such critical tools as alienation, the *unheimlich*, and parody work to break down illusions about the status quo and to offer new and productive, if at first apparently "strange" perspectives. How does the "stranger" fit into the picture? How could a symbolic vision of an "Alien Nation" right at the heart of the European Union upend established prejudices and stereotypes? With these strategies, a fear of difference is restaged as a matter of plurality already within, as with the installation *Swiss Swiss Democracy*. Then a conventional, normativized category of "the people" may allow

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for change and different perspectives. Indeed, aesthetic strategies of alienation and the *unheimlich* are not novel, but they are particularly apposite for deconstructing reductive representations of cultural "foreignness." Moreover, they may become crucial, in Homi Bhabha's words, for a "global ethic of extending 'hospitality' to those who have been unhomed by historical trauma, injustice, genocide and death."[382] There must be a place extended for those suffering from the most extreme forms of "social death," or the excluded, marginalized, and dispossessed."[383] A strategy of defamiliarizing the status quo is critical for thinking beyond the current quagmire of social uncertainty and political insecurity, a dangerous configuration that has aggravated hostility towards those in Europe who do not immediately "fit" neatly within the standard picture.

Third and finally, these artists all aim to connect with an audience as large and diverse as possible, and this is where the reconstructive, positive side of their projects comes into play. If at first deconstructive in their use of the "alien," their artworks also intentionally seek to re-present a positive, non-exclusivist social imaginary. Thus it is the audience – a mass of strangers – that constitutes a crucial factor in their socially-oriented works. In Farocki's pieces, for example, there has been a shift in emphasis from an "artist-as-producer" pedagogy to more viewer responsibility and interpretation, to implicate the spectator not only as an "expert observer," but also as an ethnographic "observer-participant." Such a transition speaks to an overwhelming, data-inundated, contemporary screen culture that operates in terms of repetitive sound bites and manipulated images. For Farocki, there needs to be a collective shift in awareness and interpretation of the objectifying and dehumanizing images that often saturate the mass media

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[382] Homi Bhabha, "Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism: A Postcolonial Perspective," in *The Urgency of Theory (The State of the World)*, Antonio Pinto Ribeiro, ed. (Manchester, UK: Carcanet Press Ltd, 2008), 18.
[383] Ibid.

concerning cultural Others in Europe. Hirschhorn also insists that his works attempt to implicate as many different types of viewers as possible. It is a central problem for him: to not only draw the attention of a bourgeois art crowd that has the privilege of travel and leisure, but also those peoples most marginalized in European society, who do not necessarily have such resources or opportunities. The artwork, for him, needs these perspectives and voices: without such "counterpublicity," the artworks would fail. Finally, Henry VIII's Wives have initiated a type of populist, online and ground-level campaign to create a vast, motley network of actors in their project, *Tatlin's Tower*. The group has even attempted to induce audiences to take charge of it. They have repeatedly claimed that they do not wish to lead the campaign indefinitely: they hope that others will become motivated enough to modify and move it in new directions.

5.4   MODELING COLLECTIVITY FOR A NEW EUROPE

What these artistic case studies illuminate is an engagement with the notion of "collectivity" rather than "community," or any clearly delimited "people." Socially-oriented artistic production today, described variously by art historians, curators, and critics as "relational aesthetics," "relational antagonism," "dialogical art," and so forth, has generally shifted toward this cultural framework of collectivity, or some kind of "common world." The increasing formation of artist collectives over the last thirty years, such as Henry VIII's Wives, is only another example of this re-characterization. There are numerous possible explanations for this broader transition, but one of them certainly coincides with the fact of increasing technological and informational proximity in an age of globalization, where vertebrate organizations/attachments are being challenged and reworked into more cellular ones. Sociologists and political theorists describe grassroots efforts

such as "transnational activist networks" and NGOs as more positive models of cellularity in opposition to Al Qaeda or the International Monetary Fund, for instance. Yet art production also has a critical role to play in reimagining the symbolic-visual web of such affiliations. Farocki, Hirschhorn, and Henry VIII's Wives wish to have audiences imagine new, open forms of attachment to each other: bonds and relations built upon a recognition of mutual cultural heterogeneity – not delimited territory, ethnicity, language, race, or so on. Amidst such social uncertainty, nothing could be more crucial to foster human connection (rather than mere connectivity) than the acknowledgment and inclusion of cultural plurality. The "European community," after all, is only an abstract placeholder for a politically, economically, culturally, and legally-tied mass of over 500 million strangers.

What this dissertation attempts to offer is a set of in-depth analyses of artworks that insightfully deal with specific aspects of this problematic of imagining collectivities as it has evolved over the last half century in Europe. What it does not offer is a clear historical trajectory or definitive answers. Obviously no study could purport to unknot such a labyrinthine subject. In order to begin such an investigation, this dissertation has employed multiple analytical lenses. This includes insights from continental European writers, such as Hannah Arendt, Bertolt Brecht, and Walter Benjamin. And though not directly engaging with theories by Jürgen Habermas, his legacy on the public sphere, as it has been specifically redirected and honed by Michael Warner, has also been central to an idea of envisioning broader publics and mass identification. Furthermore, postcolonial scholarship deeply undergirds much of the analysis in the main chapters. Many of the problems of cultural, political, and economic exclusion in Europe today clearly find their roots in modernist histories of imperialism and the difficulties of post-WWII decolonization.

In a globalized era of letter bombs to the banking industry, the fall of the World Trade Center, and the fiscal crisis in Europe, economic issues are undoubtedly central in the twenty-first century. Hopefully the financial situation in Europe will move towards greater stabilization as the EU members currently negotiate a new treaty for more regulation and oversight of national budgets.[384] Greater economic centralization will again weaken national sovereignty, but the balance between vertebrate and cellular organizations may find more solid ground. Leaders in France and Germany have also advocated a financial transactions tax, or the "Robin Hood tax," which would levy a tax on the trading of stocks, bonds, and other kinds of securities.[385] It has been proposed in order to at least partially redistribute inordinate profits accrued by powerful, global financial players. The Occupy Wall Street movement, furthermore, now an international phenomenon, signals a decisive, popular shift against an economic inequality that has aggrandized excessively over the last few decades.

Yet such economic insecurity and doubt cut to the core of a much deeper problem, concerning who belongs, and how people identify with one another beyond their established communities. After World War II, many in Europe, such as Hannah Arendt, hoped for a transnational federation, in order to promote peaceful co-existence on the continent and to ensure universal human rights in the aftermath of racial genocide. Norway, for instance, after being occupied by the Nazis from 1940-45, has developed a reputation as a bastion of liberalism – actively promoting values of democracy and equality. Oslo is home to none other than the Nobel Peace Prize. However, with now more than eleven percent of the population born somewhere

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[384] Steven Erlanger and Stephen Castle, "German Vision Prevails as Leaders Agree on Fiscal Pact," *New York Times,* December 9, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/12/10/business/global/european-leaders-agree-on-fiscal-treaty.html?scp=2&sq=european%20euro%20treaty&st=cse, 1-2.
[385] Stephen Castle, "Europeans Planning for Less Unanimity," *New York Times*, January 2, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/03/world/europe/future-in-mind-europeans-plan-for-less-unanimity.html?scp=1&sq=european%20robin%20hood%20tax&st=cse, no page numbers.

else – Pakistan, Poland, Somalia, Eritrea, Iraq, and so forth – serious tensions are erupting as to who belongs and who does not.[386] Many label such foreigners as "welfare scroungers," but in comparison to the rest of Europe, Norway has fared relatively well in the financial storm, distanced from both the American crisis on Wall Street as well as the euro. Because of its oil wealth, Norway has the possibility to uphold one of the most comprehensive social welfare systems in the world.[387]

Still, backlash against immigrants in the country is rising. Thomas Hylland Eriksen, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Oslo, claims that a "quiet nationalism" exists, where "non-ethnic Norwegians are visible and still seen as out of place."[388] Also at the University of Oslo, sociologist Grete Brochmann suggests that Norwegians have historically had a "society of conformism," based upon "Janteloven," or Jante law – small-town Scandinavian norms that mold group behavior and encourage an exclusivist form of collectivism.[389] Undoubtedly there are a confluence of factors that have led to increased xenophobia in a country otherwise noted as an exemplar of liberal ideals. Nonetheless, its anti-immigrant Progress Party has steadily strengthened since 1997 and has been the second largest party in parliament since 2005. And violent figures such as Anders Behring Breivik have radicalized the debate to a shocking degree.

It is the hope now that people throughout Norway and Europe will collectively reject Breivik's inflammatory rhetoric and violent xeno-racism. Perhaps moving in this direction, the Progress Party suffered significant setbacks in the September 2011 local elections. After the massacre on Utoya, the Norwegian youth maintain that their belief in participatory politics and

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[386] Steven Erlanger and Michael Schwirtz, "In Norway, Consensus Cuts 2 Ways," *New York Times*, July 28, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/29/world/europe/29norway.html?scp=4&sq=norway%20immigrants%20eritrea&st=cse, 1.
[387] Ibid.
[388] Ibid., 2.
[389] Ibid., 1.

cultural openness has only strengthened, and that they will become even more politically engaged.[390] The youth wing of the social democratic Labor Party that was targeted on Utoya, AUF (Arbeidernes Ungdomsfylking, or Workers Youth League), was founded in 1927 and now boasts 10,000 members. It focuses on single issues such as fighting climate change and keeping Norway open to immigrants,[391] and the group was given Utoya island as a gift after World War II in recognition of young socialists' sacrifices in the fight against fascism.[392]

Ultimately, since the mid-twentieth century, the European landscape seems to have shifted broadly from a discourse concerning "purity of race" to one of "cultural security" (or "security culture"), from Nazi ideology to fears of "Muslim" terrorism. As Bhahba elaborates, "In the context of the world disorder in which we are mired, symbolic citizenship is now principally defined by a surveillant culture of 'security': how do we tell the good migrant from the bad migrant? Which cultures are safe? Which unsafe?"[393] Yet as this dissertation maintains, a discourse on "cultural security" today still often erupts in blatant declarations of cultural supremacy as well, from Thilo Sarrazin's book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (*Germany Does Away With Itself*, 2010) to Anders Behring Breivik's manifesto on "European Independence." Worst of all, xeno-racist discourse has entered the mainstream symbolic-visual realm, becoming acceptable in the last few decades as social uncertainty and political instability have propagated.

Against this, there must exist a "right to difference in equality," in Étienne Balibar's terms, in which groups are not configured according to some original or essentialist identity, and

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[390] Matthew Saltmarsh, "Young Survivors Find Their Faith in Norway's System Is Even Stronger," *New York Times*, July 27, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/28/world/europe/28iht-youth28.html?pagewanted=1&sq=norway%20youth&st=cse&scp=2, 1.
[391] Ibid.
[392] John Nichols, "Glenn Beck's 'Hitler Youth' Slur on Norway Victims Confuses WWII Sides," *Nation*, July 26, 2011, http://www.thenation.com/blog/162287/glenn-beckss-ignorance-socialism-and-history-generates-crudest-and-cruelest-response-mur, no page numbers.
[393] Bhabha, "Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism," 13.

where equality does not mean a neutralization of differences in the name of universal rights.[394] A "right to difference in equality" signals not only conventional aspects of citizenship (political, legal, and social), but also cultural and "symbolic citizenship."[395] Contemporary art in Europe today, particularly against a vast backdrop of reductive mass media coverage and political propaganda, has the potential to reinvest such a visual language with metaphorical richness, and to offer more ethically-minded models for an intercultural social imaginary. Such a project is crucial throughout the continent, in order to move from fear to affiliation, from insecurity to collectivity.

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[394] Étienne Balibar, *Masses, Classes, Ideas: Studies on Politics and Philosophy before and after Marx* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 56, as quoted in Bhabha, "Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism," 10-11.
[395] Bhabha, "Ethics and Aesthetics of Globalism," 12.

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