

cinema & aesthetics of refusal

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seminar zine >>>>

WS 2021/2022

**Universität Potsdam**  
**Department of English and American Studies**

Seminar: Cinema and Aesthetics of Refusal (WS 21/22)

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***„TO USE AN  
IMAGE IS TO  
ENTER  
FICTION...”***

*- Trinh Thi Minh Ha*

## a. *visiBILITY*

a. visibility

b. community and collectivity

c. monstrous cinema I

d. monstrous cinema II

e. memes and circulation

f. ownership

g. fractured identities

h. storytelling

i. solidarity

j. lost stories and hypervisibility

k. ecologies

HITO STEYLER'S  
*HOW NOT TO BE SEEN: FUCKING DIDACTIC  
EDUCATIONAL.MOV* FILE, 2013



**Quote: "I am not a spokesperson. I'm an artist."**

**Collage Work by Annika Ebert**

Ocean Vuong at internationales literaturfestival berlin

Access via <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s2SgM1S7t1c> (1:15:34)

Please note: All the following titles are descriptive titles made up by me.

white person next to empty chairs

KaDeWe catalogue autumn 2018

model wearing a black body & Francesca Harper dancing

Vogue Germany 03/2019

ballroom culture

<https://www.rollingstone.com/culture/culture-features/striking-a-pose-a-brief-history-of-ball-culture-629280/> [11.11.2021]

people sitting on chairs

[http://peterhujararchive.com/images/eph\\_1225a-1/](http://peterhujararchive.com/images/eph_1225a-1/) [11.11.2021]

woman and a mirror

<https://elephant.art/reflecting-the-self-mirrors-in-contemporary-art/> [11.11.2021]

gay Indian Erotica

<https://elephant.art/how-this-gay-indian-erotica-helped-me-escape-the-sexual-shame-i-grew-up-with-02112021/> [11.11.2021]

art installation Isaac Julien

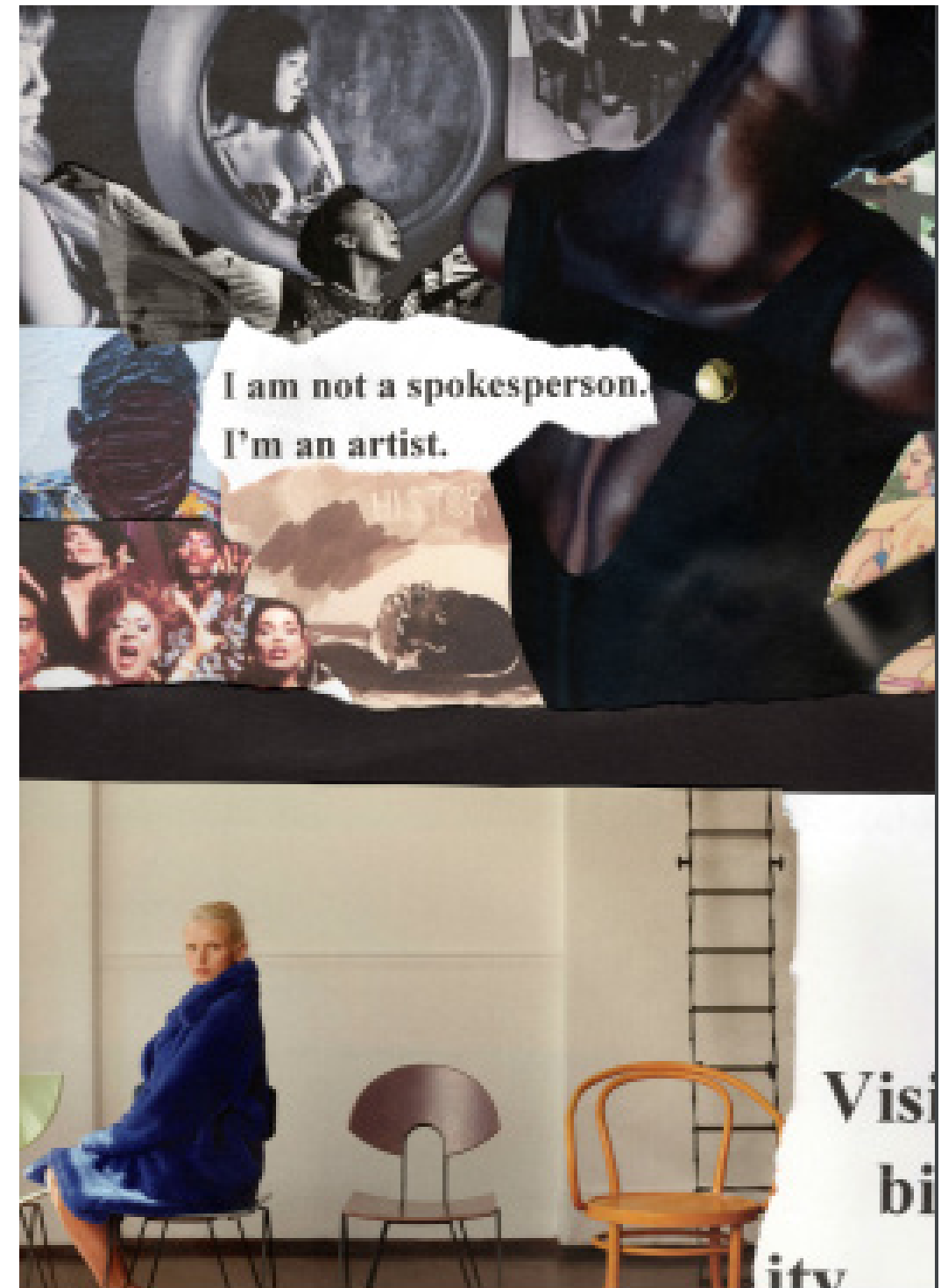
[https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1382/installation\\_images/9081](https://www.moma.org/calendar/exhibitions/1382/installation_images/9081)  
[11.11.2021]

painting of a man Shaina McCoy

<https://shainamccoy.com/rappers-delight> [11.11.2021]


painting woman / history Kara Walker

<https://www.culturetype.com/2020/03/26/kara-walker-has-opened-her-personal-archive-showing-nearly-270-drawings/> [11.11.2021]





## b. community and collectivity



Sometimes at night when I listen to the  
sound of your breath, I imagine that it  
is the sea and the bed is a boat.  
You are the ocean caring me far away  
from this place

## Quote:

“Sometimes at night when I listen to the sound of your breath, I imagine that it is the sea and the bed is a boat. You are the ocean caring me far away from this place”

albamschmitt on Instagram via <https://www.instagram.com/p/BYiWNXWFuo7/>

Please note that the following titles are descriptive titles made up by me

Background ocean: <https://ak.picdn.net/shutterstock/videos/3716165/thumb/1.jpg> [08.02.2022]

Bed and Blankets: <https://www.instagram.com/p/BYiWNXWFuo7/> [08.02.2022]

Boat and swimsuits <https://www.pinterest.de/>

Lavender shadows <https://www.pinterest.de/pin/362328732529540356/> [08.02.2022]

Sky in the evening: taken by me Sky with airplane: taken by me

## Reflections on Oceanic Feeling and Communist Affect by Jackie Wang

Writing this paper, I tried to remember my first association with the term oceanic feeling when I read it in the syllabus. Without any further context, oceanic feeling had a dark, menacing sound to me, originating from the image of being out on the wide, dark blue sea. As I started reading a bit more about the topic my association with the term changed or rather split into different, yet connected, associations. It was quite interesting to find all the different takes on the term in Jackie Wangs “Oceanic feeling and Communist Affect”.

My initial thought on the term oceanic feeling probably correlates most with Rollands description, stating that oceanic feeling is something “infantile, dissociated”. I believe that this feeling, as the term suggests, is something many people feel when they are in the ocean. Floating on the surface of the water, looking into the sky, and feeling the motion of the sea beneath you, creates such a connection to the nature, that can’t be found in many other places. It is a mixture of feeling lost, free, and very connected at the same time; a feeling that I was never able to put into words when I experienced it, but is probably what Freud meant when he described it as a “limitlessness” marking “the return to the infantile [...] mode of being”. It also correlates with the way Julia Kristeva describes oceanic feeling as “depressive denial”, as this combined feeling of being lost and free at the same time can be rather scary. Just like Jackie Wang did, all three definitions combined are probably the best way to describe such a contrary phenomenon like oceanic feeling.

It is a feeling that consists of opposites, a feeling which is “joyful” and “depressing”, “connected” and dissociated”, all at the same time.

In the seminar discussion we talked whether it is desirable to achieve the state of oceanic feeling, and, if so, how to achieve it. For me, the fact that oceanic feeling is described as something infantile, is very important while thinking about these questions. I believe that I definitely experienced oceanic feeling as a child, when I was at the sea (as described above) or in the garden, just lying around and watching the clouds pass by. In those moment I simply existed and had nothing else in mind but being in that exact moment. I also fear that it is very hard to get into that state now, as an adult. There always seems to be something to do, to watch, to read or to plan, which makes it difficult to clear the mind and just exist for a while.

That has most likely something to do with the “communist affect” Jackie Wang mentioned. As we live in a society where everything is about competition and being useful it is hard to relax and just exist. Because we lost the “affective and imaginative resources to envision modes of existence centred on connectedness” it is hardly possible for adults to simply exist in the moment. But by using yoga, mediation or just some free-time in the nature we can try to get a little closer to experience the infantile state of the oceanic feeling again.

Lina Marie Ramm



## Diving

When I first heard of the term 'oceanic feeling' and thought about what that could mean, my first impulse was thinking about the ocean. In particular scuba diving in the ocean. And after learning about its meaning of feeling limitlessness, I thought about if I ever had an experience coming close to that. This is my experience with the 'oceanic feeling'.

I have been scuba diving for eleven years and diving has always been a very special experience to me. It is not comparable to anything else I have experienced and there is a special part about it that I want to talk about in this response paper because to me it is directly connected to what Jackie Wang talked about in her Podcast. In the first few minutes of every dive you have to concentrate on a lot of things, checking your equipment and making sure that your group isn't having any problems either. It can be stressful and requires a lot of concentration and expertise.

But after these first few minutes are over, you start experiencing the world around you, which is so very different from your normal world. It's nothing like the other side of the water surface. It's peaceful and quiet and makes you look at your surroundings completely differently. The feeling of (almost) weightlessness makes the experience even more surreal. You start to relax your whole body, your mind starts to clear up, as if the water itself is washing the thoughts out of your brain. Under the water you don't have to worry about anything that you normally worry about, you can leave all your problems behind,

even if it is just for the time being underwater. The longer you dive with this feeling the more intense it becomes. It feels as if you are floating around in another world and can experience it differently than you would experience things in your 'normal world'. When you dive alongside fish or other marine animals you feel as if you become one with them, the water surrounding you and the external world as a whole.

An experience that has especially stuck to me is when I saw manta rays at a so called 'cleaning station'. It is their place to get cleaned by little shrimps, meaning that they stay there for quite some time and relax. Seeing these majestic creatures just floating around as if it were nothing makes you forget about yourself. You just sit there admiring them, completely forgetting that anything outside of this scene exists, forgetting that you exist. That feeling only stayed for a few minutes, but it stuck with me, because it felt so surreal to come back to yourself thinking 'oh right, I'm here too'. It felt as if I wasn't even there and the thought might be hard to understand, but it felt good to 'not be there' and to experience something in an objective way as if it wasn't from your point of view.

This is my experience with the 'oceanic feeling' from my understanding and I hope to be able to experience it again someday.

Mandy Mollenschott

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## The depth of our psyche

The video “Jackie Wang: Oceanic Feeling and Communist Affect” with Jackie Wang continued to occupy my mind for hours and days after listening to the talk as I am generally very interested in psychological topics, for example the subconsciousness, and was fascinated by Freud’s approach to „oceanic feeling“ as a feeling of infinity and as access to the infantile. At first I felt a little uncomfortable because of the topic, which also touched on the subject of „trauma“. Because in general, I see myself as a person that has a great respect for the subconscious and the psyche. Through various experiences and stories of my friends, I have become aware that there are parts of the human psyche that one may not be able to consciously control oneself under certain circumstances. This can be frightening, especially if one is afraid of losing control or is mentally unstable. I personally see dangers, for example, in the fact that the oceanic feeling seems very ego-centred. If someone who represses a lot and rarely consciously analyses such issues, deals with it, it can be very frightening and threatening, as it can also involve coming to terms with personal trauma.

The infantile has a completely different consciousness and cannot distinguish itself from its mother, for example. Rolland responded to Freud’s letters with his own definition of the „oceanic feeling“: it is a „mystical feeling that enables one to commune with the universe“ (RIBOCA, 00:02:01-00:02:07). Thus Rolland interpreted it more from a theological perspective, in which the experiencer gains access to an expanded, mystical world. The material motivated me to look further into psychoanalytical terms and themes. For example, I am also interested in the concept of „trauma bonding“, which was addressed in the talk. It caught my attention because it provides an explanatory approach for, now sadly commonplace, problems such as staying in abusive and toxic relationships. Trauma bonding describes the emotional dependence of a victim on his or her perpetrator. This bond can be created through traumatic experiences that were lived through together. Since

psychology is a fairly young science, I think that in the coming years and decades much more will be discovered about the human psyche and the subconscious and this will lead to new insights for the psychological science and therefore let ordinary people elaborate and improve their relationships.

To create a community and build trust and relation, certain structures need to be removed, as Halberstam states (2013). According to Halberstam, this leads to gaining a better vision and starting a new sense of being (2013). Similarly, he brings up the example of Max from the film “Where The Wild Things Are” from 1963 by Maurice Sandak. Max creates a second world in his mind that is an alternative to his reality (Halberstam, 2013). The thought world nevertheless contained themes from his reality, or from Max’s past (Halberstam, 2013). This connects to the oceanic feeling, because Max also enters another world and there seems to return to his infantile phase. But the author emphasises that this world is not abstruse, but works through his reality in „its own unregulated wildness“ (Halberstam, 2013, p. 7). Brunner and Raunig also deal with the concept of community and questions of how one can create a higher power by coming together with others (2015). This also fits in with the concept of oceanic feeling with a higher power and infinity. The oceanic feeling can also offer the society hope in collectivity: negative feelings, when transported through the oceanic feeling, can lead to no longer having to face these bad feelings alone. For example, the feeling of fear, can be perceived in a very negative way: However, if one as an individual knows that everyone else in society also is aware of the feeling of fear, it could get rid of this bad feeling around fear through the oceanic feeling, as it has been normalised.

One thing I missed in the interview with Jackie Wang was the background and (personal) experiences or experiments that led Freud to the concept of „oceanic feeling“. Unfortunately, this background information was not really illuminated, but only the definition of the feeling from Freud’s point of view was presented and then Wang worked with the concept. That is why I would be interested in the following question: Through what research or experiences did Freud come up with the definition of „oceanic feeling“?



In summary, the talk under the topic “Dreams” with the specific example of Freud’s „oceanic feeling“ provided a good insight and introduction to psychoanalysis. Wang also touched on other psychological topics such as trauma bonding and the collectivity of shared experience in the course of the video. So after watching the video, one has new approaches and impressions from which one can research further on psychoanalysis.

Amelie John

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Halberstam, Jack. “The Wild Beyond: With and For the Undercommons” *Intro to The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, Harney, Stefano, and Fred Moten. *Minor Compositions*, 2013, pp. 5-12.  
RIBOCA. “Jackie Wang “Oceanic Feeling and Communist Affect”.” Youtube, interview by Sofia Lemos, 23 July 2020.

**b.**

**MONS  
TROUS**

**CINEM  
A**

## **Are cinemas losing their magical charm or are we blaming Covid-19 for our cultural laziness?**

When I was young, (and I'm only 22 years old), I remember going to the movies with friends and family. It was something quite remarkable, especially for a youngster; planning the film you wanted to watch, commenting on the expectations of the movie and finally going to see it. The night reached its climax once you entered the theater and saw all those people, packed in their seats, eating some crunchy popcorn and impatiently waiting like you for the show to start.

It was an indisputable social event. It was a celebration of audiovisual culture in every sense of the word.

And then of course, some years later, Covid-19 happened. The whole world shut down. Cinemas and museums were temporarily closed, thousands of tours and concerts were canceled, cultural activity as we once knew it had gone through its worst crisis in a matter of weeks, one that would continue to this day. "In North America, box-office revenue dropped to its lowest level in two decades as audiences began to stay away", so The Guardian in an article published in 2020. However, art and culture can rescue the individual and society in the worst circumstances. We were all facing something unknown, we were all scared, but we also knew we had to update our lifestyles and continue. Streaming platforms like Netflix, HBO or Amazon Prime started to gain importance, and soon everyone had traded going-to-the-cinema plans on a Saturday night for staying home and streaming movies online. I am not pointing fingers, nor am I

looking for people to blame, I'm actually including myself. There was a time where going to the movies, to the museum or to a concert was really unfeasible. Coronaviruse and its triggered outbreaks were causing too great a risk to mankind. So no one and nobody was to blame for not going to watch a movie, but now that enough time has passed to deal and live with this virus, why is nobody interested in the idea of going to the movies? Have cinemas lost their charm and their magic in these past two or three years, because of Covid-19? The answer is easy: No. Cinemas, museums and small venues haven't lost their charm, they have lost their cultural relevance.

Once people started to realize that entertainment was available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, only by clicking on "Open a new tab" and opening a streaming platform, such as the ones I mentioned earlier, culture and its social celebration started slowly to fade away.

Entertainment was and is literally one click away. The fact that basically everything nowadays is a click away, came in really handy, the time where cinemas, museums and concerts were closed or canceled. But now that they are back open, with Covid-19 measures in regard, we still decide to stay at home and watch the new Marvel movie, rather than to go to the cinema and watch it with friends. The amount of economic loss in the cultural sector due to the pandemic is extremely shocking, especially if you look at statistics published by the Unesco, like the fact that "ten million jobs in creative industries worldwide were lost in 2020 as a result of the Covid pandemic."

Despite reading these devastating numbers, we continue to let the virus take over the culture we have been building up together for so many years. And even though the coronavirus has been the trigger for this cultural crisis, those who continue to exclusively use streaming platforms are only contributing to the extinction of cinemas.

I certainly don't want to establish the act of going to the movies as something mandatory and I naturally don't want to complain or mock the fear some people might experience when going to the movies due to health issues. Covid-19 and the aftereffects of its pandemic has been the main challenge of the 21st century. We still have to adapt to what looks like a lifestyle with more restrictions than limitlessness, but we cannot and should not forget what makes us humans, such as the culture that encourages what's social in us. The crisis triggered by the pandemic is compounded by gigantic, online streaming platforms, which, with excessive use, jeopardize the much romanticized and magical concept of "going to the cinema."

One thing is certain, we cannot blame the pandemic indefinitely for our cultural laziness.

Pedro Riera Hipp

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[or-with-10m-jobs-lost-due-to-pandemic](https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/feb/08/unesco-warns-of-crisis-in-creative-sect)

<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/mar/16/coronavirus-cinema-audiences-decline-fi>

[lm-industry](https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/mar/16/coronavirus-cinema-audiences-decline-fi)

## ***Reflections on „Week 4: Monstrous Cinema I“***

The thing I keep wondering about as I read the articles for this seminar is this: Is there any hope left once we start theorizing? I find the ideas intriguing, I think I can understand them, and I think I have an idea where they are coming from, but I sometimes ask myself where they will lead us. I know that by asking this, I am somewhat reductionist. Still, I keep thinking that the ideas of oceanic feeling or a cinema of attraction must only be possible within Marxism - and yet these ideas arose in a capitalist world order. Every week, as I read the texts, I return to this thought: how does capitalism come into play - how does Marxism? Can you actually - as Kodwo Eshun proposes - move away from narrative in film? If you think about how all culture might (or: must) be regarded as commodity in the 21st century, there really is no way of side-stepping narrative...right?

Every cultural object feeds into a bigger narrative and in turn must be understood within this narrative. The video The Cinema of Attraction mentioned YouTube as the 'new' cinema of attraction, and I think about TikTok as, perhaps, the new equivalent of it. It might be true that these videos themselves are not narrative driven in the sense of the Western literary canon, but still, they only ever work as a part of a larger narrative. So where exactly does narrative start and where does it end? Would it make sense to extract these videos from their larger narratives to then arrive once again at a cinema of attraction? I feel like it would not.

What I also keep thinking about is how film differs in these regards from other artforms. Literature, painting, or music are Art – probably no one in the Western world would genuinely argue against that.



However, movies were declared to be a business in the U.S.A. in the early 20th century, which has not only largely influenced their modes of production but also makes them almost imperatively a commodity.

I wonder if a cinema of attraction is still possible (even only momentarily) in the Western world. And I keep asking myself if we are losing any hope for something like it, any time we start theorizing about it. Kodwo Eshun mentions the “cruel optimism of cinema” (In: Akomfrah). Is the term borrowed from Lauren Berlant? If so, focussing on affect theory might help me answering my questions. But then again, I land in a whirlwind of temporal disorder because affect always precedes. And theorizing always comes after art, and thus affect, doesn’t it?

Annika Frieda Ebert

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## *Marvel Universe and the 4th Wall*

Mainstream movies are all created with certain recipes, peers who study film industry can foresee entire movies by the first 5 minutes, and even I as a normal consumer am slowly getting bored. It seems as if every movie that makes it into our big commercial cinemas has been produced to narrate a story that has been told thousands of times. Personally, this is the reason why I have stopped going to big cinemas and have instead swerved to small indie cinemas.

There is a certain type of franchise and area of the movie industry that I do succumb to – Marvel movies. And yes, these movies do clearly resemble each other in how they tell their story, but there have been some very interesting developments. Breaking the 4th wall is something that has existed in comics and manga for a long time. While it may have been lost in movies, recently through comic adaptations it has been “revived” for mainstream movies. A great example for this is the Marvel movie *Deadpool* (2012). In both the first and second movie the 4th wall is broken multiple times as the character communicates with the viewer. Another example is the MCU series “*What if...*” (2021). This story retells the stories of superheroes and -heroines and how their lives could have gone if a small detail in their story changed.

In one of the episodes, “*The Watcher*” is revealed, a higher entity that has been watching over the characters of the series. A character, Natasha Romanoff, is shocked by his role; she asks him whether he was watching and eating popcorn while her friends died in battle. To me, this was a direct reference to us functioning as *The Watcher*. And even

though the characters do not directly communicate to the viewers, we can relate to The Watcher's position.

For context: „What If...“ is a Marvel series that explores alternate universes of the MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) as we know it. In this particular episode, called „What If... The Watcher Broke His Oath?“, all heroes as we know them are defeated and only the Black Widow survives. Thus, she gives up and The Watcher, who was the only one with the power to change their fate, tells her that he could not interfere. What we see in this short video is Romanoffs reaction to this. (I wouldn't want to spoil the rest, if you ever do decide to watch it.)

The Watcher: And then there was one.

Natasha: I won't go back there. My world is... (BREATHES DEEPLY) gone. You won, but I lost.

The Watcher: I cannot in...

Natasha: Interfere? Yeah, I know. We're just stories to you. We're not real. You watch us fight, win, lose. Tell me, did you make popcorn while Ultron murdered my friends and burned my world to the ground?

The Watcher: You are more than that to me.

Natasha: Are we?

The Watcher: You, your stories, they are everything to me.

Natasha: Then fix my world.

The Watcher: I can't, Natasha.

„What If... The Watcher Broke His Oath?“. Marvel Studios, 2021.

In this particular scene that I've used, from the 9th episode of the Marvel show „What If...“ (2021) the character Natasha Romanoff (Black Widow) somewhat gains awareness of her role as a character, that is simply there for the enjoyment of the viewer. The other character, The Watcher, an omniscient being, kind of embodies us as the viewers.

Tabea Hahn

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- What if.... Directed by Bryan Andrews, performances by Chadwick Boseman, Hayley Atwell, and Jeffrey Wright, Marvel Studios, 2021.

## Reflections on Sondra Perry's Typhoon coming on

Sondra Perry is an artist who works with video, computer-based media and performance to explore the digital abstraction of identity. Her work *Typhoon coming on* was an exhibition shown at Serpentine Sackler Gallery London. Her Work revolves around blackness and black American history and also ways in which technology shapes identity, her work is often her own personal history. Very interesting are the workstations she has created in her exhibition, like her Avatar workstation which gives 3D images of Perry with connection to her family. Furthermore there are Bike workstations and Rowing machines which do not just appear as art projects but also as exercise machines in order to make the body better and keep people healthy. She combines physical materials and visibility.

Her main piece of this exhibition is “Typhoon coming on” it goes from an ocean image to an image revisiting a painting of Turner’s, which she connected to 21st century technology. The image of the ocean is created by ocean modifiers, which then can be animated. So what viewers can see is a rendered image of the Turner painting and then a purple ocean which signifies that in her program there is a missing texture, the color scheme is therefore supposed to give a warning. And the Turner painting was chosen to be in this art project of hers, because of the diaspora. The original work of Turners depicts the drowning of 133 slaves by the captain of the British slave ship *Zong*. Perry created a space in which imagining is possible and where blackness is agil.

Deana Kennedy





- Post-cinema: in the last century, cinema was the dominant form of media, now it is slowly being replaced by more modern forms of media-consumption (1)
- The question of what role cinema will take now remains (1)
- Being black, British and from the UK comes with certain stigma in the cinematic world
  - There are unspoken expectations of a black British film to tell an untold story of black Britain (1)
- Post-cinema opens up other narrative dimensions, it changes the way how Blackness in cinema is framed (2)
- The post-cinematic calls into question the norms that exist around black cinema – that takes courage (3)
  - Moving into the post-cinematic comes with the opportunity to experiment with new cinematic languages, such as multiplying screens, frames within frames, or monologues that do not fit within narrative norms (4)
- Another aspect would be to frame elements that do not seem to be important to the storytelling, because the telling of a story in art is very human-centric ( 7)
- It is an active effort to decentre to role of humans in order to start paying attention to other, non-human things (7)

Handout by Jonathan Affeldt, Anna Koux, Alexander Zscheyg, Source: Akomfrah, John und THE OTOLITH GROUP. „Blackness and Post-Cinema: John Akomfrah and the Otolith Group in Conversation“. Frieze, 30. September 2000, [www.frieze.com/article/blackness-and-post-cinema-john-akomfrah-and-otolith-groupconversation](http://www.frieze.com/article/blackness-and-post-cinema-john-akomfrah-and-otolith-groupconversation).

## Reflections on Hito Steyerl's In Defense of the Poor Image

After reading the text by Hito Steyerl “In Defense of the Poor Image,” I had a couple of thoughts. In my opinion, these visual materials of low quality – poor images – contribute a lot to our (cinematic) culture. Showing new perspectives or creating a whole new section for cinematic pleasure, it is sad to see that the visual quality of an art piece decides its destiny. It simply highlights the way how capitalism is capable to marginalize art. This is such a tragedy as we limit our own culture by supporting the visuals who can afford big campaigns and high quality. Even though, I am not a big fan of pirate copies, it sure has its advantages. With spreading the low images in an “underground community” these art pieces are able to draw attention or even being recognised by bigger companies. On the other hand, I am not sure if the original creator will receive the proper credit they deserve.

Additionally, I want to share my thoughts about the paragraph “Low Resolution”. At a certain point I was not sure if the poor image was the subject Steyerl wanted to write about. I had the feeling this paragraph also expressed how non-white people were represented in visual art – out of focus. “Focus is identified as a class position, a position of ease and privilege, while being out of focus lowers one’s value as an image” – this sentence stood out to me. My connection surely is very wild but that’s the impression I had. It reminded me of the theatrical period where blackfacing was a common thing. They refused to let non-white people participate in theatre culture but instead created this racist trait.

All in all, this text was very interesting as it states how quality influences the image. Moreover, Steyerl highlighted the effect of capitalism in connection to art and which advantages pirating can have to give poor images a chance to reach a certain audience.

Aileen Kaube

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## Reflecting on: Memes and Circulation

After reading Aria Dean’s “Poor Meme, Rich Meme” I truly feel like I have learned something I should have been aware of since the very beginning. I have been on social media platforms for around 10 years now and have come across millions of memes during that time. Dean’s argument of memes sustaining individuality and leading to deindividuation really made me rethink my approach when looking at content online. I would say that in a lot of situations, especially when I’m wasting time on Twitter or Instagram, I see these memes and people’s opinions and reactions to certain events and maybe laugh a little or like the picture because it is relatable to me. But I also think that because the likes and retweets matter and show you how relatable or how funny your joke was, not agreeing with a certain popular “take” can make you feel like an outsider even if it is just on a social media platform.

So, for me there is not only the “loss of individuality” when looking at online content, but once you missed out on one thing it gives you the feeling of suddenly being that one person at a party that just keeps to themselves and looks at all the other people having fun together. I think it was Tiziana Terranova who talked about cultural flows being born in capitalism, which truly is something I have always found strange. Since I spend a lot of time on the internet and am weirdly invested in this internet pop culture, I’m familiar with publicity stunts and big companies using this relatability that comes from memes or “being in on the joke” to their advantage. I think that whilst it is often mentioned that Generation Z is the “woke” generation, a lot of times people really



do change their mind on a company or a brand because of said company's good social media team. When it comes to the relation between blackness and memes, I really never thought about this originality problem that a lot of people of colour have to face. Not only are stereotypes constantly used in memes, but it also reminds me of the way media treats black people in general. More often than not I turn on a show on Netflix and see that the best friend of the main character is this sassy black girl who only really serves as the comedic relief and never gets her own original story. I'm glad that we live at a time where things are finally changing and more people of colour are able to tell their stories on their own accord and spread awareness on big platforms.

The only way to go into the future is by destigmatizing and portraying and creating forms of media that tell stories that need to be heard without relying on stereotypes, but creating real personalities instead.

Maria Neeße

IMAGE: Memes and Circulation Poster by Maria Neeße

A probably incorrect Bibliography:  
Note: Names of the pictures were mostly given by me

“Not a spokesperson” Osinoiki, Olumide. “Not a Spokesperson”. BBC, 4 February 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-bristol-46736393>.  
“Diamond Reynolds Newspaper” Jimenez, Angela. “Diamond Reynolds Newspaper“. Angela Jimenez Photography, 8 July 2016, <http://www.angelajimenezphotography.com/blog/2016/7/8/diamond-reynolds-and-the-philando-castile-shooting-for-nytimes>.  
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“Gru Meme Template” “Gru’s Plan Meme”. Img Flip, <https://imgflip.com/memegenerator/Grus-Plan>.  
“Squidward Meme Template” “Squidward’s Lounge Chair”. Meming Wiki, [https://en.meming.world/wiki/Squidward%27s\\_Lounge\\_Chair](https://en.meming.world/wiki/Squidward%27s_Lounge_Chair)

I created the text in both memes, the message is inspired by Aria Dean’s “Poor Meme, Rich Meme”.





## Reflections on Hito Steyerl's "The Wretched of the Screen"

As a person who is using digital media and especially social media such as Instagram, TikTok etc. quite frequently, I am confronted with image spam on a daily basis. Adverts are around nearly every corner and especially on social media quite aggressive. Reading Steyerl's text about image spam has therefore made me think a lot about image spam on social media and made me pay a lot more attention on its presence in the past days.

I believe that Steyerl made a lot of great points in her essay I agree with. Right in the beginning, she mentions that image spam advertises an unrealistic image of a perfect human being and it makes "people want to become like the products represented in them" (Steyerl 165). Looking at my Instagram feed, I am instantly confronted with pictures of bodybuilders or models in perfect shape or people posing in front of luxurious cars. Images of "normal" people are a rare sight and usually not present. This overflowing of rich and athletic people in our feeds gives the impression, that this is the standard in our society and anything below that is not worth the attention. Looking at Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, social needs and esteem needs are two important factors for people's minds (Cf. [thoughtco.com](https://www.thoughtco.com/maslows-hierarchy-of-needs-4582571)). A lot of them seek the fulfilment of these need in social media. But since most people are not bodybuilders or millionaires, they try everything they can to at least look like them. This "ends up creating a culture stretched between bulimia, steroid

overdose, and personal bankruptcy" (Steyerl 165) since people would try everything they can to look like the people represented through image spam.

Steyerl also mentions another group of people doing the exact opposite, people who do not want to be monitored constantly through social media and want to be "invisible" (Steyerl 168) by avoiding cameras at all costs. Whereas a lot of people try becoming popular and want to be seen in social media, other people do not want the attention or see the risks of seeking this form of attention. I would count myself in to the latter. Being photographed has never been something I enjoyed, most of the time I even offered taking the picture to not be a part in it. And the reason for that is well-explained by Steyerl: images can be quite "dangerous devices of capture" (Steyerl 168). By that I do not only mean possible embarrassing moments which could remain on the internet forever, but also the fact that the more we show ourselves online, the less is left of us in real life. People start doing things just to post it online and not for the fun of it. Fake smiles, fake happiness and fake lives are created just to be popular online, to be just like them, the ones shown through image spam.

Christoph Freytag

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Alexander Zscheyge: This is an example of a poor image. I have screenshotted a picture of my recent vacation over a hundred times. The resolution was decreased with every screenshot. This visual work shows that digital pictures lose quality just like real pictures over time if people “care” about the picture. The real picture got cracks and lost paint because people cared about this picture and gave it from generation to generation causing it to lose quality. Digital pictures that are interesting to others are screenshotted and therefore lose quality.

Sources: Kavalli, Leo. Clock icon on transparent background. Shutterstock. <https://www.shutterstock.com/de/image-vector/clock-icon-on-transparent-background1165710016>.



# Digital Blackface

This topic has helped me to further my research and knowledge on the problematic use of Black bodies and culture in memes. Admittedly i must say for quite some time i was ignorant and blind to terms like digital blackface and used expressions that originate from AAVE as a non-Black person.

Digital Blackface is the visual appropriation of Black bodies in the virtual space (Sand). For instance, when a white or non-Black person continues to use memes, involving Black bodies or involving cultural signs associated with Black culture, regularly.

According to Aria Dean, Memes are images with ability for identification and relatability and help to sustain cohesion of the collective being (Dean 8). Dean notes that this cohesion is only necessary as it makes Black consciousness visible to non-Black people(Dean 8).

The most popular memes, tiktoks, twitter threads etc. on twitter, instragram, tiktok are starring Black people or are originally created by black people. Those images associated with blackness in viral internet content “circulate independently from actual black people” (Dean) and usually don’t credit black creators.

This depersonalization be seen in language, through use of African American Vernacular English (AAVE). Terms and expressions from AAVE are very popular in virtual spaces and are also used by non-black people that fail to recognize that they are using/appropriating AAVE. For example, celebrities like Billie Eilish, Akwafina the list goes on, that were caught using AAVE and blaccent to appear funny or more relatable

etc. The trend of AAVE being appropriated by nonblack users continues to grow, be it in the context of “Internet English” or in the context of white LGBTQ+ culture that fail to see that expressions like “Y’all”, “slay”, etc. originate from AAVE and are not “2021 most popular LGBTQ + expressions”.

“Memes not only contain components of Black language, (but also) gravitate towards a Black way of speaking (Dean 7)”.

Using the example of how nonblack celebrities use AAVE can show how appropriation of black bodies and AAVE can fuel racist ideologies. AAVE and black bodies are a pedestal for non- black people to appear more relatable, funny, unserious etc. For instance, in a nonprofessional setting Billie Eilish, Akwafina and other offenders will use AAVE. But if they want to appear professional and be taken seriously (for example at an event like the Oscars etc.) they will switch back to their normal expressions and speech. This ultimately harms black communities because their bodies are fixed as unprofessional, and other negative associations or assumptions. White and non-black people can “turn off” appropriating black culture, whereas black people must face the harmful consequences and violence because of their blackness.

The portrayal of black bodies, in memes, is often trope-filled, and harmful to PoC. Aria Dean describes that in viral memes “black death and black joy are pinned to each other by the white gaze ( Dean7)”. Looking at the most popular memes on social media one can see memes of black people in heightened emotional states, a crying black man next to a



black person dancing. In the use of how non black people use memes depicting black people and AAVE we also see how those depictions are then tied to unprofessionally, humor etc. Memes that circulate independently from black people depersonalize them ascribe wrong (often negative) traits (Dean7).

Dean concludes that “The problem with memes in regard of blackness and the poor image: - are created to go viral, which often leads to appropriation - there is this cycle of production, appropriation, consumption, and reappropriation.”(Dean13).

This research highlights the importance of being aware of what virtual content and memes one shares as a non-Black person and how even seemingly “harmless” memes uphold racist ideologies.

Geogia Sacher

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S T O  
R Y T E  
L L  
I  
N G



Visual work – Genia Kratzert

## To use an image is to enter fiction

I do not intend to speak about; just speak nearby.'

- Trinh T. Minh-ha

<https://www.frieze.com/article/there-no-such-thing-documentary-interview-trinh-t-minh-ha> [27.3.22]

Any descriptions are made up by me

Islands in a blue ocean, ship with orange sails

<http://wallpapercave.com/wp/wp1835782.jpg> [27.3.22]

Trinh T. Minh-ha, in color

<https://i0.wp.com/literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/trinhdvcam4-4r.jpg?w=445&h=312&ssl=1> [27.3.22]

Woman in front of a red background, hands held high

<https://i0.wp.com/literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/minh-ha05-1024x757.jpg?resize=700%2C517&ssl=1> [27.3.22]

Woman in front of a red background, hands in front of her Face

[https://i1.wp.com/literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/trin\\_min\\_beitragsbild.jpg?ssl=1](https://i1.wp.com/literariness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/trin_min_beitragsbild.jpg?ssl=1) [27.3.22]

Woman with oil lamp, black and white

<https://static.frieze.com/files/inline-images/sv01womanlamp.jpeg> [27.3.22]  
memory of vast origin

<https://static.frieze.com/files/inline-images/2.-fvn-vast-origins-cmyk.jpeg> [27.3.22]

sound of a memory

<https://static.frieze.com/files/inline-images/7.-fvn-sound-memory-cmyk.jpeg> [27.3.22]

## A different way of watching documentaries

In this reflection paper, I will discuss my thought process on the concept of authenticity of documentations based on the interview with Trinh Thi Minh Ha named “there is no such thing as a documentary”. Trinh Thi Minh Ha is, among other things, a filmmaker who sets out to tackle issues of identity and authenticity in modern filmmaking with her work. Her films are not meant to conform with colonial work, but to deconstruct existing colonial or patriarchal claims. For that reason, Trinh Thi Minh Ha creates her films not in a, as some might call it, conventional way, because she does not want to abide to the industries standards, but rather as a “interacting movement”, in which the categories of genre overlap to create something unique. In the interview she states that “there is no such thing as a documentary” because true authenticity cannot exist.

I had to think a lot about this statement, because it was difficult to detach myself from the standards of genre which I am used to when it comes to my media consumption. Firstly, it helped me to distinguish that when she mentions documentaries, Trinh Thi Minh Ha is solely talking about work which features humans and societies in some capacity. In my opinion, her argumentation on documentations excludes works on natural phenomena or animals for example, which there are plenty of. Trinh Thi Minh Ha instead creates ethnographic films, which are films focussing on non-western people, so her argumentation on the topic works best when one is to only focus on such films, or in broader terms, films featuring human societies. But even when I took that into consideration, I was still left to wonder on how a documentary, which in

essence is meant to be informative, can lack authenticity? How can an image, created by a machine without any bias, be still a product of colonial or patriarchal claims? But when I re-read the interview with those questions in mind, I stumbled upon a sentence which helped me tremendously in understanding her point of view: “To use an image is to enter fiction, there exists no such thing as neutrality”. This sentence showed me how what the picture or the scene shows is less important than how it is framed, because while the picture itself is made by a machine, the framing is done by humans, and every human will insert some of his or her bias into the image, regardless of it is done consciously or subconsciously. This practice is unavoidable and not necessarily problematic if addressed correctly. Trinh Thi Minh Ha herself creates films which might be categorized broadly as documentaries, but she has found a way to work around this, by making the active decision of speaking nearby instead of speaking about. She states that by acknowledging the gap between the filmmaker and the subjects of the film, she gives the subjects space which they can film themselves. Not only do I find this method very interesting, but the interview might have changed the way how I consume and think about documentaries in the future.

Jonathan Affeldt

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### „To use an image is to enter fiction“

Quote: “To use an image is to enter fiction [...]”

Balsom, Erika. “‘There is No Such Thing as Documentary’: An Interview with Trinh T. Minh-ha”. FRIEZE, interview by Erika Balsom, 01.11.2018,

<https://www.frieze.com/article/there-no-such-thing-documentary-interview-trinh-t-minh-ha>

<https://www.frieze.com/article/there-no-such-thing-documentary-interview-trinh-t-minh-ha>

The image was taken by me in september of 2021 in Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia.

## Hypervisibility: Ru Paul's DRAG RACE

In 2019 Alex Young voiced his opinion on Ru Paul's latest season of Ru Paul's Drag Race and Young's perception of the problematic hypervisibility it brings to the Drag community. His main problem with the show is Ru Paul's commercializing a creative subculture to fit it into a capitalist system. Bottom line, Young accuses every participant and every Drag Racer to be a sell-out for not embodying the values the drag community should present.

In my opinion, Drag is first and foremost a performative and highly creative form of art that has deep roots in the queer community. Ru Paul's Drag Race has been exceptionally successful in its American tv show format. It has over ten seasons and multiple international spin-offs, including a worldwide fanbase. Beyond that, it still represents a lot of queer topics in different forms beyond just being a Drag show. It helps to put queer voices in the spotlight and be heard, as they often get ignored. Drag can be nothing more than a creative outlet, and it gives people the room to free themselves from the bindings of gender and social expectation. A close friend of mine uses Drag to feel like the gender they dream of being one day without the fear of having to out themselves to their family.

The big problem I see in Ru Paul's commercializing is the inevitably following creation of a stereotype of what a drag queen is supposed to be like. My friend, who religiously watches every Drag Race, brought something called the Gay Twink Phenomenon to my attention. It occurs when a slim young white gay man competes in the Drag Race and is based on those characteristics automatically in favor of winning the competition. He is marketable. He



is the wanted stereotype to capitalize on the whole subculture. Many famous and successful Queens fall fit those characteristics, like Trixi Mattel and Katya, who have their own Netflix shows. The Drag scene first started with the commitment of people of color, which we often ignore in this conversation. The popularisation of the subculture and the different stereotypes caused the exclusion of the founders.

After reading the article by Young, I felt many puzzle pieces clinks into place. All the discussions with my friend over their disappointment that their favorite queen got eliminated for not fitting a mold made sense. Ru Paul has done fabulous things with his show over the years, but he let the creative aspect of the show become more and more exchanged by unnecessary drama to please the spectacle-hungry viewer. By doing that, he betrays the virtues of the so much-needed queer representation.

Genia Kratzert

## Snippets of Thoughts: Drag Culture and the Mainstream

In my opinion, it is not possible to avoid all the disadvantages without interfering with the freedom of expression of everyone. We cannot keep people with an anti-LGBTQI+ mindset from expressing their opinion, no matter how accepting and progressive our society may become. There will always be hatred and disapproval from certain members of society. In addition to that, appropriation of drag slang by non-LGBTQI+ people, as well as straight cis-gender people expressing themselves through drag, cannot be prevented as drag becomes more popular. In my opinion, it is difficult to decide whether it is even desirable to prevent the latter: members from the existing drag community may argue that drag belongs to the LGBTQI+ community and should not be practiced by others, while some hold the opinion that drag is for each and every person that has interest in doing it. As Gossett et al. explained in their 2017 publication „Trap Door“ that visibility always comes with disadvantages that cannot be avoided.

Over the last years, drag has become a well-known and reasonably accepted part of western pop culture. What used to be a form of self-expression and entertainment for and by members of the LGBTQI+ community has developed into a fruitful business and widely enjoyed form of entertainment. The popularization of drag with help of the popular TV-show “RuPaul’s Drag Race” and the ever growing acceptance of the LGBTQI+ community in mainstream society has enabled drag performers to become famous for their art and has

Jung, E. Alex: Drag Race Inc.: What’s Lost When a Subculture Goes Pop?. June 11, 2019  
<https://www.vulture.com/2019/06/drag-race-inc-whats-lost-when-a-subculture-goes-pop.html>

made the drag community more visible to the public eye. Next to the positive aspects of the popularization of drag, the negative effects on the community are just as present: visibility does not prevent hatred and violence against the drag and LGBTQI+ community. In addition to that, drag, as it becomes a part of pop culture, becomes more vulnerable to exploitation. One could now ask the question, whether it is desirable to be vulnerable to exploitation by the society that previously oppressed and excluded. This would require further research, which would go beyond the scope of this paper. Still, the analysis presented here indicates that, although there are advantages of a subculture becoming mainstream, the disadvantages may not be overlooked. With the popularization of drag, not everyone belonging to the community will be able to make use of the advantages: with the every-growing popularity of “RuPaul’s Drag Race”, drag performers that do not participate in the show have fewer possibilities in mainstream society and suffer from the negative effects that come with the popularization.

Until this point, it is crucial that the members of the drag community look out for each other so that no one gets left behind, as drag adapts more and more to the straight cis-gender mainstream. Anyone from outside of the community, who is aware of the negative effects of drags switch to pop culture, needs to advertise against these disadvantages and make others aware of them in order to support the drag and LGBTQI+ community in their ongoing fight for equality.

Hannah Brunner

## **Hypervisibility, Anti-Capitalism and Counterculture**

First, I would like to start with the definition of hypervisibility. ‘Hyper’ means extreme – and very rarely anything extreme means a good thing. Extreme visibility of the drag queens community in the show ‘RuPaul: Drag Race’ has its advantages for normalizing being queer. However, when the counterculture becomes mainstream, what stays the counterculture? What is lost? And why becoming a part of the neoliberal system is not necessarily a good thing?

Drag queens and other queer communities existed because of the urgent need of having exactly that - a community. In a queerphobic world, a sense of belonging was the basis of surviving. It was the counterculture, a place to meet, a family, a ‘safe space’. What E. Alex Jung is mentioning in her article, ‘Drag Race’ gaining a huge public became a part of a market – a product you can sell. There are many examples like Queens that participated in the show are now playing in McDonald’s and Starbucks’s commercials.

It reminds of a 'pink-washing' or 'rainbow-washing' phenomenon. Businesses started to use the rainbow Pride colors to claim themselves as supportive of the LGBTIQ+ community while not actually putting any effort to fight for queer rights! Suddenly a symbol of rainbow became a product. I have to admit, being a part of the queer community, I also took the bait a few times. Now I know that you can buy a rainbow flag, bag, or pins on NGO's website to actually support their actions instead of supporting capitalism.

I am not sure if I can find an answer to what is a modern counterculture. I would say or actually I would wish it to be an anti-capitalism movement and actively standing up against big corporates (if you are privileged enough to do that.) Definitely not Drag Queens playing in advertisements. I personally think what is lost with hypervisibility is the courage to fight against the system.

Teresa Kurowska

1. What are consequences of representations of Asian-American identity like in the Farewell? How could it effect their sense of identity?

2. What do you think Jiayang Fan meant when she said she felt "aspirationally white" (p. 5)?

3. Have you ever noticed how little POC are represented on television and when they are represented it is mostly only as racist stereotypes? / When was the first time you ever noticed how little POC are represented on television and when they are represented it is mostly only as certain stereotypes?

4. What are consequences of the underrepresentation of POC for POC? How could it effect their sense of identity?

Discussion Questions by Deana-Tara Kennedy, Lisa Piekarz, Georgia Sacher, Niclas Staritz based on

Kong, Alex. "Asian Americans Deserve Better Than 'The Farewell'" Arts, 13 January 2020.

Jiayang Fang. "How to Watch 'Crazy Rich Asians' Like an Asian-American" Daily Comment, 13 August 2015.

Chan Is Missing. Produced by Wayne Wang, 24 April 1992.



## **“Fractured identities” by Georgia Sacher**

Rechenzentrum Potsdam

see my works in an exhibition from April 1st till March 8th in Rechenzentrum Potsdam (Room 134b).

description of visual works:  
Mixed-Media: Pigments and charcoal on cardboard and canvas

Bibliography:

Kong, Alex. “Asian Americans Deserve Better Than “The Farewell” ”Arts, 13 January 2020.

Fan, Jiayang. “How to Watch “Crazy Rich Asians” Like an Asian-American” Daily Comment, 13 August. 2015.

Chan Is Missing. Produced by Wayne Wang, 24 April 1892.

## **Reflections on Representation and Fractured Identities**

I have read the critique on the movies “The Farewell” and “Crazy Rich Asians”. It reminds me of “the burden of representation”. In Hollywood, there are not a lot of movies starring (mostly) Asians. Obviously, a lot of people hope that if a movie is produced in Hollywood or becomes famous, that it represents them or at least that it does not make their culture seem silly or dull. The authors of the texts that I have read were clearly unhappy with how they were represented.

I can totally understand Alex Kong. People from other countries always have it harder if they want to live in another country. He wishes that the movie used its chance and showed the world the burden of “Asian-Americans”. But the authors should understand that it is probably impossible to properly represent any culture if the producer plans to create a “big” movie. Hollywood movies are created for the majority of people; therefore it must be easy to understand. Culture has many facets and showing all or most of them, will most likely cause the movie to be boring for most people.

Today, western society loves “Asian” culture, or at least what they believe Asian culture is. Anime, sushi and kpop. Those things (and maybe a few others that I am not aware of) are only a small fraction of “Asian” culture. Besides the fact that there is not one Asian culture but many different ones, western media is completely misrepresenting Asia. There is definitely an Asia hype, which big companies use to profit. This only adds to the problem. Asia is seen as colourful and flashy, consisting of Japan and South Korea (and sometimes China). What about all those other Asian countries? We are undermining



their existence. I think it is not okay to let those three countries represent a whole continent. If Americans say I am travelling to Europe, or I ate European food, a lot of Europeans feel attacked, and are joking about the “uneducated” Americans who think that Europe is a country. But at the same time they eat Asian food. If I eat pelmeni, I am eating Asian food. Asian food does not equal noodles and chicken sweet and sour. Every Asian country is different, and this difference should be appreciated.

Besides that, it is not possible to truly represent any culture in a movie, Kong is part of the problem in my opinion. He claims that Asian Americans deserve better, but actually he means Chinese, Korean and Japan Americans deserve better. The struggles of Chinese Americans are different to the ones of a Pakistani-American. By portraying Asia as such a place of happiness it causes people to forget how bad people have it in the rest of Asia. Overall, Asia is not very modern. There aren't robots everywhere. This is Japan but not Asia. Most people in Asia are likely farmers. He complains about the burdens of Asians who moved to America and is mad that they are not addressed. What he forgets is that these people are actually very privileged to have the chance to move to America. He should rather be mad about the fact that the burden of the other billions of Asian people who do not have access to internet, to media or proper healthcare are not represented.

Alexander Zschehyge

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Fan, J. (2018). How to Watch “Crazy Rich Asians” Like an Asian-American..

## Muñoz' Brownness and Solidarity

To me Muñoz' way of explaining Brown commonality seems like a general definition of marginalized groups. And that's perfectly fine because “Browns” are also marginalized. The same thing goes for his concept of the Brown commons as well.

That's why when I first read the handout on the topic I didn't really get which exact marginalized group he was actually talking about until he actually explained what he meant by being brown. I guess the explanations being so general makes them good definitions when trying to explain the concept of marginalized groups to a new learning of English or someone who just had never heard of it before.

When he talked about the Brown commons being a queer ecology I was really confused because I only knew the “new” meaning. But after I did what the discussion question asked us to do and looked up the different definitions of queer in a dictionary the usage of queer in this context started to make sense to me.

What came up in our Group discussion was that queer was often used as a slur and that in a way Muñoz using it in his explanations is a way of changing how the word is being used and also to reclaim its association with something positive. The concept of singular plurals sounded like another way of explaining stereotyping since it entails that the image of the group is always projected onto the individual that belongs to said group. That's why the discussion question of whether or not it is necessary to work against it seems a lot like the questions concerning stereotypes. The topic of stereotype is actually a very interesting topic since it is a

way in which the human mind tries to categorize people in order to better interact with them. And I think that that is important to avoid danger even if we often times falsely change our way of approaching people. If it keeps us out of harm's way even once in return I think it's more than worth it. We can also just adapt our behavior after talking to the person and getting to know them so there is basically no downside to it. What is important though is that we still have to engage in conversation with the people we are stereotyping and not forget that the individual before us is unique and different from everyone else and has their own personality and history.

Kevin Weiland





Melanie Kappel  
An incorrect bibliography  
Please note: The following titles are partly descriptive titles made up by me.  
slaysian  
<https://asamnews.com/2020/05/04/artists-on-the-lam-jenny-lam-showcases-32-asianamerican-artists-from-the-midwest/> [28.03.2022]  
women with fractured face  
<https://www.refinery29.com/en-us/2018/08/207008/crazy-rich-asians-asian-americanrepresentation>  
[28.03.2022]  
race and identity: Asian America, Chuan Ming Ong  
<https://www.behance.net/gallery/41853087/Race-and-Identity-Asian-America>  
[28.03.2022]  
„StripeTease“, Tam Tran  
<https://www.voanews.com/a/asian-american-artists-explore-their-identity--130422658/145645.html> [28.03.2022]  
“Eyes” Rachel Chen  
<https://www.baystatebanner.com/2020/09/02/new-narratives-explores-diverse-asianamerican-experiences/>  
[28.03.2022]  
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<https://www.baltimoremagazine.com/section/community/how-to-support-the-asianamerican-community-in-baltimore/> [28.03.2022]  
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# Reflections on Fractured Identities Asian representation in cinema

Jiayang Fan’s 2018 article “How to Watch ‘Crazy Rich Asians’ Like an Asian-American” concerns the movie “Crazy Rich Asians” and Asian representation in American cinema.

There, she also mentions how people with Asian background often do not feel represented in cinema or even identify themselves with white people instead of Asians due to various reasons.

As an Asian-European myself, I felt quite affected by the article as she mentioned some points I can relate to and even have experienced myself or on others. Especially growing up watching mostly movies from the USA or Europe, recognizing Asian people in them was a rarity. Just like Fan describes, seeing “faces like mine on the big screen” (Fan 2) was quite uncommon. Most of the time, Asians played minor parts of a show or movie and had little to no screen time. Still, whenever I saw another Asian, I got excited and was hoping for them to play a deeper role in the plot and not just being a superficial character who was just there to meet a certain quota.

Fan later talks about the assimilation of Asian-Americans and the influence of pop-culture. Especially the discussion around the “self-loathing Asian” (Fan 4) struck my eye. Looking at the quote “[Asians] represent the type of man your family wishes you would bring home” (Fan 4), I feel like this is still common in today’s Asian families.

Even though most of my Asian friends do not mind their significant other to be either Asian or European, some of them mentioned that their parents prefer their partner to be of Asian descent. Another reason mentioned for the “self-loathing Asian” was the desire to be assimilated by “marry[ing] into the dominant race” (Fan 4). Personally, I would have to disagree with this point. Speaking for Germany at least, I believe that most migrants already feel assimilated and I have not experienced that someone felt obligated to be together with a German in order to be a part of the German society.

The impression Fan got through media, that “Asians were too different to ever be representatively American” (Fan 4) is a point I have to disagree with. Looking at my own family, I can see cultural differences between my German father and Filipino mother. As a first-generation migrant living in Germany, my mother lives “Asian”. She, for example, celebrates Asian holidays such as Chinese New Year or used to visit a Filipino church. In that regard, I can understand why most Americans/Europeans would not feel represented by her. Nonetheless, the longer one lives somewhere, the more they also adapt to the local culture. The same goes for my mother, who also lives “German” and could also represent this culture.

Also, in a more and more globalized world, cultures mix up and one cannot set fixed values for a society. In a society with increasingly mixing cultures one race ultimately cannot represent the whole. There are lots of multiracial people living like “traditional” Americans/Europeans that are not represented. In conclusion, I believe that to a certain

extent, Asians can represent Americans and so do people of other descents as well.

In sum, Jiayang Fan’s article gives a great insight to what it feels like watching movies as an Asian-American.

Mandy Mollenschott

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## Reflections on Post-Cinema: Tom Gunning's Cinema of Attraction

In the following, I am going to reflect on the video "The cinema of attraction by Tom Gunning which concerns our session's topic on Post-Cinema. Two concepts are discussed here: the so-called "cinema of attraction" and the "narrative cinema". The video engages with the period of early film production, dating back to 1910 and beyond, in contrast to recent entertainment industry.

Based on Tom Gunning's conception of early cinema, the „cinema of attractions" is defined as "a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator" (Gunning 382). By this period, early film production was concerned with fantastical, exotic, and erotic image creation. It is important to mention here that the audience was in focus, as early cinema was directly addressing the viewers. In other words, the "first film-makers were more aware of their audience" (Valkyrist 00:16-00:20). There was, as the narrator of the video puts it, "a decisive shift towards theatrical storytelling" (Valkyrist 00:29-00:32) after the year 1910. However, narrative cinema on the other hand, puts the viewer in the position of the observer.

At one point in human childhood, we usually all get introduced to cinema and movies early on. I think the visual spectacle and imagery shown at the post-cinema period may seem unfamiliar to many nowadays, especially to the younger generation. Cinema used to be the dominant medium but this has obviously changed fundamentally in the twentieth century. It is highlighted in the video that its role has evidently been replaced by other digital forms, such as television, YouTube or video games. Thus, as stated in the video, I therefore agree with YouTube being the new cinema

of attractions, whereby it should be noted that online videos are created to illicit a reaction from the viewer.

In our session, we discussed the role of cinema in the post-cinematic era. Not only has technology progressed but also has cinema lost its predominant role of entertainment in the last century. I also noticed that, today, cinema is slowly being replaced by the internet which became the more dominant media in the meantime. Hence, cinema is not predominantly the media that everyone feels attracted to anymore as most people mainly strive for entertainment, in the first place. Nowadays, most of us rather opt for a Netflix series instead of going to the cinema. Furthermore, what I would like to add is that our generation is accustomed to using streaming services where we have access to numerous series and movies with longer storylines. People find it entertaining and also appealing, as well as easily accessible.

Thus, streaming platforms with a cinematic content, like Netflix or Amazon Prime, became more popular in the meantime, with the goal of maintaining a leading role over the long term. Therefore, people partly stopped going to the cinema, especially during the pandemic. But nevertheless, there has been a drastic change anyway in my opinion. In addition, I would argue that media consumption on the internet has grown tremendously.

Moreover, we agreed that there are also many creators that try to imitate cinema with the topics they approach. As the field is open to everyone, it's not only for professionals that would like to show their message, but even possible for individuals to spread their message. I also started to notice a higher interest of viewers about social media platforms like Instagram or TikTok, where it is possible for individuals to upload short videos and to reach out to a broad(er) audience.



Ultimately, it can be left open in this case whether we already live in a post-cinematic era or not as there are many things that strive to be very much like cinema, even if they are not. In general, I find it a rather complicated topic to talk about because everyone's conception of cinema or post-cinematic eras seems to be quite different. Over the last decade, a lot of changes have happened in cinematic sector. I believe that we are in a paradigm shift when it comes to our media consumption and strive towards shorter content. Nevertheless, the role of cinema as a huge form of media consumption is still important when it comes to blockbusters. But even though there have been some changes, cinema still persists.

Melanie Kappel

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## Reflections on Wildness - A Fabulation

Preparing the text “Wildness: A Fabulation” for our group presentation was the first time I really thought about the term fabulation which I had heard before. The text has a great way of approaching the term, as it gives no real definition but rather leaves some room for the reader to come to an own definition and think of examples themselves.

An example that instantly came to my mind while reading about Wildness was the German film *Sowas von Da* by Jakob Lass. Similar to Wildness most of the story takes part at a party in Hamburg on New Years Eve. While the Silver Platter in Wildness is a bar that really exists, the club in *Sowas von Da* does not really exist. However, in both films, there is a whole character built around the place which creates “the fantasy of an immanent elsewhere”. Both places let the viewer escape from reality and go on a journey to somewhere else.

Apart from their setting, the two films have something more in common, which makes them both a fabulation. In *Sowas von Da* filmmaker Jakob Lass used the same technique as Wu Tsang to make the party in the film as authentic as possible – they threw real parties and let the cameras roll. As there is a book upon which *Sowas von Da* is based, there was a centre storyline that had to be followed. The actors knew their starting point, the content that was supposed to be delivered and the end of their storyline, but apart from that they were free to improvise. While they are improvising their lines to keep track of the story, the other

people (who were no professional actors) in the rest of the building are dancing, chatting, and drinking just like they would do at a real party.

This allows the film to create something that Tavia Nyong'o calls SOSM – Sense of something more. The viewer gets not only the feeling of really being part of the party but also senses that there is something going on somewhere that they are most likely going to miss. Still, they are aware that they are watching a film and are supposed to follow the story of the main character. This is very well described by the author as she states: "Enjoyment and spectating is not the same thing as participating and contributing". While this might be true, both Wildness and Sowas von da make it easy for their viewers to escape reality and leave their comfort zone without actually going to the party.

Lina Marie Ramm

## Stripping the Bones Clean for Profit

This reflection paper is about the topic "Ecologies", which mainly features a conversation between Simon Starling and Ferhat Taylan and a journal article by Jill H. Casid. Accompanied by two more articles found in The Guardian, the week fifteen's topic of "Ecologies" reflected on the Anthropocene, a widely debated geological epoch which is characterised by an overwhelming influence of humankind on ecosystems, and the exploitation of ecosystems for capitalist profit. I was very interested and captivated by the topic of "Ecologies" even before reading the necessary literature given to us in preparation for the course.

The preservation of our planet is becoming increasingly important, as politics seeks to exploit the planet's natural resources by destroying ecosystems and areas of cultural significance. The conversation between Starling and Taylan offers a very unique view on the interdependency of nature and politics, which I have been unaware of thus far. The interview argues that according to the concept of mesopolitics the realms of politics and nature have always coincided and overlapped with each other, making it impossible for nature to be socially untouched in this day and age

(Starling & Taylan, 2021). This idea is very valid in my opinion, especially when it is paired with the concept of the necrocene, which Casid (2019) describes as a system that accumulates capital but drives extinction. The necrocene, which has been created through colonial, industrious capitalism, has changed the planet in a way that no part of nature actually remains untouched. Both during the discussion in class and with my group in preparation for the course, we discussed

the possibility about the bottom of the ocean, if any place, being the last untouched part of nature. However, I am still not quite if I completely agree with this statement, as I see the entire scenario of global warming as a “necrotic”, human-made problem, which has enveloped our planet, thus leaving nothing untouched by default. However, the bigger discussion we had between the groups was the question of when the Anthropocene started. The Anthropocene is commonly said to have begun in the early 17th century, which some groups found too early and others too late. In my opinion, both groups gave very convincing arguments; so much so, that I prefer these to the commonly agreed to start date of the Anthropocene. One of the most compelling arguments for the start of the Anthropocene was to date it at the beginning of the industrialisation around the middle of the 18th century. The industrialisation marks the beginning of mass production of consumer goods in a society that is becoming increasingly materialistic, by exploiting natural resources in order to keep up with the demand. This exploitation of resources leads to the destruction of ecosystems and the pollution of the atmosphere, increasing global warming which now plagues the planet. This era of exploitation perfectly fits into the definitions of the necrocene and mesopolitics, as it was inherently destructive to natural order, but represents a societal and cultural shift within the history of humanity.

Unfortunately, the capitalist exploitation which dramatically increased during the industrialisation has remained an integral part of many cultures today. In an article featured in The Guardian, Taylor (2019) describes deep-sea mining as the new form of exploitation which is becoming increasingly popular in order to tap into untapped deposits of natural resources within

the ocean. This would not only lead to the destruction of more ecosystems, but it would also put culturally significant regions at risk as Scales (2021) mentions in his article in the The Guardian. Scales (2021) argues that deep-sea mining companies would destroy or occupy culturally significant regions and areas which could be monumentalized to remember the atrocities committed during the trans-Atlantic slave trade. The discussion between cultural, natural and capitalistic political priorities is exactly what is defined by mesopolitics, showing the importance of regarding these problems as overlapping and bi-, or even trilateral.

To conclude, the given literature provided me with unique new concepts of regarding interdependencies between politics, culture and nature. It has also become increasingly clear to me, that we still live in a time which values political capitalistic exploitation more than natural and cultural exploitation. Perhaps this destructive, or rather “necrotic” behaviour, can be reversed by teaching and spreading awareness about the scale of destruction humankind has witnessed through exploitation of our planet.

Sean-Brendan Collier

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**Necro** - A combining form meaning “the dead,” “corpse,” “dead tissue.

The article focuses on developing four scenes of doing things with being undone that approach the crisis of the Necrocene.

**Necrolandscaping** - Life lived in the shadows of mass extinctions amid mass incarceration and a state of near-permanent war.

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**Anthropocene** - The period of time during which human activities have had an environmental impact on the Earth regarded as constituting a distinct geological age.

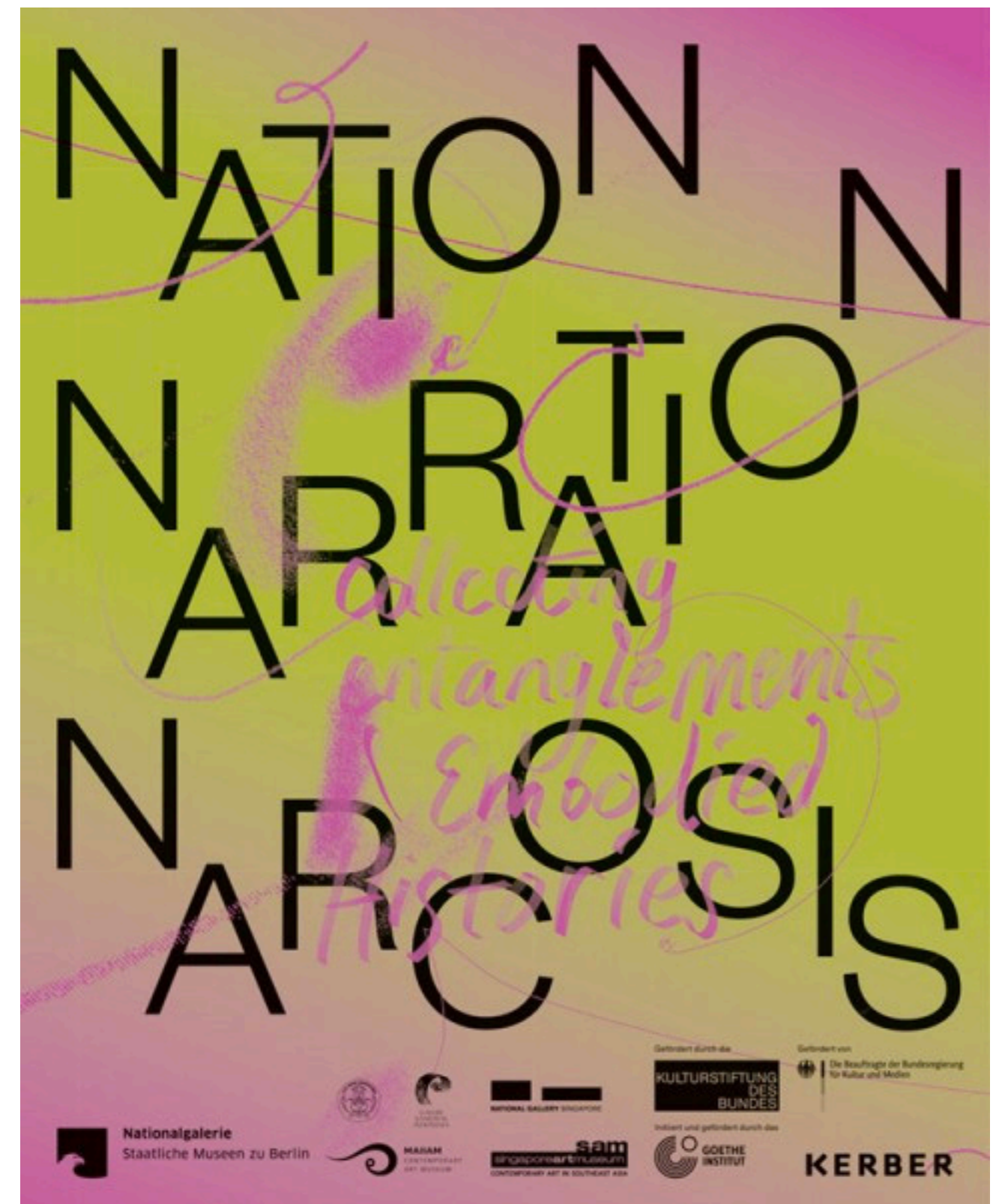
**Necrocene** - A system that not only accumulates capital, but drives extinction.

**Necropower** - Power from death.



“The term Necrocene was first coined by historian Justin McBrien (McBrien, 2016) to characterize the monstrous and necrotic character of capital as an extractive engine of waste.”

Casid, 2019, 32



Nation, Narration, Narcosis  
November 28, 2021–July 3, 2022

This exhibition addresses the relationship between art and political protest, historical trauma, and social narratives from the 19th century to now.

The works on display in Nation, Narration, Narcosis at Hamburger Bahnhof – Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin explore the effects of nation-building, colonialism or the Anthropocene on societies, their narratives, as well as the ecology of our planet. Departing from Beuys's concept of social sculpture, the exhibition confronts the notion of nation contained in the name "Nationalgalerie" with alternative concepts of connectivity, solidarity, and individuality. Nation, Narration, Narcosis brings artworks and documents from the collection of the Staatlichen Museen zu Berlin into dialogue with loans from Galeri Nasional Indonesia, MAIAM Contemporary Art Museum, and Singapore Art Museum among others. Shown are works from over 50 artists like Amanda Heng, Apichatpong Weerasethakul, Arahmaiani, Ho Tzu Nyen, Käthe Kollwitz, Kawita Vatanajyankur, Marina Abramović, Melati Suryodarmo, Tita Salina, Willem de Rooij and others.

(Source: <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/412603/nation-narration-narcosispara-sekutu-yang-tidak-bisa-berkata-tidak-the-acquiescent-allies/>)

Handout by Nasser Al-Zamquan, Teresa Kurowska, Anton Bernhard Tantow, Sean-Brendan Collier. Source: Casid, Jill H. "Doing things with being undone". Journal of Visual Culture 18.1 (2019), 30-52. Jan

## Reflections Nation, Narration, Narcosis: Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories at Hamburger Bahnhof

I visited the exhibition "Nation, Narration, Narcosis: Collecting Entanglements and Embodied Histories" in the Museum für Gegenwart Berlin on Sunday, the 20th of March 2022. The exhibition focuses on the role of art in the process of nation-building and the term "nation" itself. This international collaboration challenges linear national narratives and proposes post-national, polyphonic, and contradictory narratives.

This exhibition relates in more than one aspect to our seminar on "Cinema and Aesthetics of Refusal". Especially the topic of Ecologies is a huge theme that I saw. Examples of this topic are the works of Tita Salina (1001st Island – The Most Sustainable Island in Archipelago) and the Charles Lim (Sea State 9: proclamation (drag/drop/pour)).

These works reminded me of when we talked about Mesology, the study of the relationship between living creatures and their environment. Especially the work by Tita Salina relates to this since sustainability is something we as humans seek to achieve in our relationship with the earth we live on. Sustainability also includes the involvement of politics, since politics lays the basis on which we can act. In our seminar, we also



addressed that everything humans touch transforms a natural into a cultural environment. This was shown by the work of Klaus Staeck (Vietnamesische Vegetation nach der Berührung mit US-Kultur).

Even though I may not have understood every single piece of art in the exhibition, it still affected me. I don't believe that one should try to isolate the parts of this exhibition, but rather see them as a whole and I really felt the feelings of these artists many times. Visiting made me think about some topics like death in a wider and deeper sense, even today.

Annalena Hübner





The exhibition uses various media, like paintings, video-installations, and audio, to depict structures and problems of society. In our seminar, we did the same as we discussed issues like racism and the depiction of race, and other topics concerning society, in film, different texts and articles, memes, and so on. One of the exhibits that got me thinking a lot, was the video-installation of Tita Salina's „1001st Island - The Most Sustainable Island“. It critiques the way we have polluted our oceans with plastic in a very impressive way. Even though there is no dialogue, the viewer clearly understands what Salina is trying to show: our oceans are extremely polluted with plastic, which we will still have to deal with in the far future, as plastic is a material that degrades very slowly. This lead me to think about the title of the video: I think that "The Most Sustainable Island" might refer to the island made of plastic, which is shown in the end of the video, and also the fact, that many other island won't be around anymore by the time the plastic island will have degraded. It reminded me of the sources we discussed in class, as most of them also required a lot of extra thinking in order to truly understand them, even though their purpose may seem obvious in the beginning. The exhibited paintings from Bussaraporn Thongchai's series „Pieces from Berlin“ reminded me of our seminar session on „Fractured Identities“, where we discussed Asian- representation in western media. Especially the painting titled „A Domestic Worker from Southeast Asia“ got me thinking about the way Asian workers in western societies are portrayed. Society expects them to do extreme multitasking and puts a lot of pressure on them, without accurately representing them and paying them the respect that they deserve. The exhibits really required me to think about their meaning, which I enjoyed a lot. Still, quite a few of them left me a bit confused, as I had a hard time understanding their deeper meaning and connection to society. I think that a guided tour would have helped me understand the connections a bit better. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the exhibition. It was interesting to search for connections between our seminar topics, and the topics presented in there. And even though I was not able to discover as many connections as I would have hoped, the exhibition still helped me to understand the media we discussed in our seminar a bit better. I am sure that, as I dig deeper into the meaning of the exhibits, I will be able to understand their meanings and their connection to our seminar even better.

Hannah Brunner

Even though I unfortunately couldn't visit the exhibition with a fellow student as planned, the exchange with her about the installations left its traces in my head. The different exhibition parts tried to thematise everyday problems of our society, some of which were also the subject of our seminar, for example racism, identity, home, aesthetics and representation. Hannah and I talked about two installations in particular because they got her thinking about the contents of our seminar again. Firstly, Salina's "1001st Island- The Most Sustainable Island" which portrays the pollution of the ocean due to us humans. Since these pollutions are of longer duration, as they do not degrade as quickly, this problem will not only affect us and the previous generation, but will continue for many centuries and thousands of years to come. The further consequences that will result for the environment are not yet fully known, as we were concerned in the seminar. The second art installation were the paintings by Bussaraporn Thongchai called "Pieces from Berlin" that reminded her of our topic "Fractured Identities" where the representation of Asians in the western world was criticised. There was a painting called „A Domestic Worker from Southeast Asia“ which depicted a worker and was meant to make us think about the portrayal of these people in our media and our world in general. In our minds, we usually get the image of the workers, usually packed with many baskets, standing on a rice field and simply letting this hard work get the better of them. But does this really correspond to the real picture? Or is it just a compilation in our memory that puts together the images we have seen in the media during our lives? The small text for an exhibition section „Nation? Ideals, Solidarity and Humour“, which I received from my fellow student, also left room for thoughts. Through open questions such as „What is home?“ or „How does a feeling of belonging to a nation arise in the examining confrontation with its history?“ the reader is first asked to think about this and answer the questions for himself. Then the concept of home is explained in such a way that it brings together different ideas of the cultural nation, the leading culture and agrarian ideologies. Furthermore, this is brought in connection with the right of happiness in the Declaration of Independence, through an exhibited work „Are you happy?“ by Oyvind Falström. Also, it is precisely the connection of traditions and the highlighting of one's own and cultural identity that is one theme in the exhibition. In summary, I am very sad not to have visited the exhibition together with Hannah. If I could make it, I would definitely try to see the installations soon. But the exchange with her still helped me to visualise the different artworks and to exchange with her about the thoughts and also questions connected with them in my head. I enjoyed this contact very much. In general, I would also have been very happy if we could have gone to some other exhibitions together as a course during the semester, which unfortunately was not possible due to Corona. I hope that this will come into play in the next semesters, as I think it is a very good concept!

Amelie John