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The handle http://hdl.handle.net/1887/60210 holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

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Title: Propaganda Art from the 20th to the 21st Century
Issue Date: 2018-01-25

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As we discussed in the second chapter, propaganda art consists of what it makes visible and invisible at the same time: while it shows one thing, it conceals another. What are the scales and stakes of art's role as propaganda as we move from the modern to the contemporary?

In the context of Modernist Propaganda Art, the abstract expressionists aimed to create images that transcended traditional artistic representation. But at the same time, abstract expressionism – as we have shown – was highly figurative as propaganda art. In the context of Europe, it represented American freedom, a liberation from figurative representation that contrasted with the aesthetic regime of Soviet socialist realism. This effect of abstract expressionism as propaganda art was not limited to the object of the painting, but was mediated through a larger technological interface: from newspaper articles to television reportages and Greenberg's speeches on the Voice of America radio. We thus came to understand modern propaganda art not just as an object, but as a larger body of mediation through which the performance of power as art, was manifested.

At the same time, we have seen how Avant-Garde Propaganda Art during the early Russian revolution aimed at overcoming these processes of concealment. Rodchenko's productivist art aimed at making the means of production of propaganda – the substructures of power – visible through his work. He followed Lenin's paradigm of a propaganda for a revolutionary modernism as part of mass education and emancipation. Furthermore, Rodchenko fully abandoned the separation of his work as "art" from the larger aims of industrialization: he aimed for his work to be part of it, to mobilize its capacities, and to imagine a new world – and a new art – through it. Rodchenko consciously expanded the notion of art through the industrial and technological interface. His work was art, architecture, design, worker's club, library, radio station, conference room: none of which excluded another. From capitalist modernity's Modernist Propaganda Art to revolutionary modernity's Avant-Garde Propaganda Art we face two radically different propagandas and thus two different forms of propaganda art: the first conceals the larger interface of technology and industry to maintain the idea of a Greenbergian "autonomous art," whereas the second includes the interface of technology and industry, declaring it part of an expanded revolutionary art practice.

In the previous chapter on Contemporary Propaganda, we have come to understand the further acceleration of technological society in the 21st century as a heritage of the Cold War and the nuclear-industrial complex. The technological interface of propaganda has broadened, and as such, the propaganda filters defined by Chomsky and Herman in the late 1980s have increased their capacity to construct reality

after the interests of dominant monopolies of power. At the same time, we expanded the propaganda model through what we proposed as an "inverted propaganda model": one that was not merely focused on dominant structures, but on emergent structures of power or unrecognized forms of power, such as popular mass movements and stateless peoples. As a result, we have been able to articulate three different actors that define the conflictual arena of the contemporary in the form of the War on Terror, popular mass movements, and stateless peoples, each of which bring about their own particular structures of power and propaganda: *War on Terror Propaganda* (which we analyze through the propaganda model), and *Popular Propaganda* and *Stateless Propaganda* (which we analyze through the inverted propaganda model). Through a close reading of the work of Masco, Butler, and Ould Slahi, we already grasp some of the cultural – even artistic – dimensions of the process in which these different propagandas aim to construct reality. We discussed the *imaginative* dimensions of the War on Terror (Masco), the *performative* stagings in popular mass movements (Butler), and the desperate *cultural* output of a stateless prisoner of war (Ould Slahi).

Masco, Butler, and Ould Slahi thus contributed to our final endeavor, namely to define *Contemporary Propaganda Art*, and the expanded definitions of the concept of "art" that it puts forward. Our aim will be to define the performance of power in the domain of art as *War on Terror Propaganda Art*, *Popular Propaganda Art,* and *Stateless Propaganda Art*. Within each of these categories of contemporary propaganda art, we will try to define the expanded histories of art that brought them about, the artistic styles and practices that they instituted, the artists and artworks they realized within these categories, and their overall role in constructing reality for the interests of their proprietors (War on Terror Propaganda Art) or the collective demands of their constituencies (Popular Propaganda Art, Stateless Propaganda Art).

We will do so by highlighting, in each different category, *the relation between art and the structure of power at hand, the process in which power is performed as art,* and *the reality that this performance of power aims to construct*. As War on Terror Propaganda, Popular Propaganda, and Stateless Propaganda each have their own art histories, styles, and categories, the structure of each section will be different, but this basic methodology, which could be summarized as propaganda = *power+performance,* will form our continuous guideline. Different from the previous chapters, in which we attempted to define the general framework of modern propaganda, modern propaganda art, and contemporary propaganda, we will also provide additional details on a variety of contemporary works of propaganda art to understand how our historical exploration of propaganda shapes our present-day reality.

As we discussed in the second chapter, what we call "art" is a product of historical processes, in which the changing nature of power structures impact the nature of art. In our contemporary age of accelerated technology and expanded interconnected industries described by Masco, this is more than ever before the case. We will observe this in particular with regard to the media of art privileged by contemporary propaganda. Dominant monopolies of power – such as those at work in War on Terror Propaganda – have largely abandoned the *beaux arts* that we inherited from the French Revolution. Different from the Nazi regime or the United States during the Cold War, fine art is no longer the dominant tool with which to communicate cultural superiority and civilizational legitimacy to the masses. Instead, we will observe that in the case of *War on Terror Propaganda Art* a variety of new cultural forms have been included in the expanded definition of art in propaganda. Next to more traditional forms of theater, visual art, and film, we encounter (video) games and completely new visual forms such as abstract "voids" that conceal archives and even whole territories and peoples from the public eye: a contemporary abstraction that represents the power of the expanded state in controlling the very visibility of the reality it constructs.

In the context of emerging structures of power this is different, because the access to large technological infrastructures is far more limited. Whereas we will still encounter new media in the form of video and film in both Popular Propaganda Art and Stateless Propaganda Art, we will note that we will only encounter the traditional media of painting and sculpture in the context of the latter. Whereas for a long time, fine arts were the exclusive property of ruling power, they might now have become the most accessible and – paradoxically – *democratic* of available media. The counterpoint to this is also that their reach tends to be far more limited, compared to the enormous technological interfaces and industries available to War on Terror Propaganda Art – although that does not by definition mean they are ineffective or incapable of playing a role in large-scale mobilization.

Let us now begin to explore the history, styles, artists, and artworks that belong to the first category of contemporary propaganda that we have defined as War on Terror Propaganda, in the form of War on Terror Propaganda Art.

4.1 WAR ON TERROR PROPAGANDA ART

In the previous chapter, we discussed through the work of Masco how the power structures of the expanded state have a *creative capacity* of some kind, something which the American curator Nato Thompson even describes as an actual "cultural turn" in the US military-industrial complex during the War on Terror.[1] In Masco's work we can thus find hints of something that we might be able to expand further into an "art history of the War on Terror," which will be the main aim of this section. We will explore Masco's different examples of the creative capacity of the expanded state, and build upon them to argue for a category of art proper: that of *War on Terror Propaganda Art*. We will explore the interdisciplinary character of this War on Terror Propaganda Art and try to map its institutions and its artists. We will do so by discussing and analyzing War on Terror Propaganda Art as comprising two distinct styles.

The first of these two styles is *expanded state realism*, which is essentially the practice through which the image of imminent societal destruction is created, staged, and witnessed. It is a realism that aims at constructing a concrete social reality, but it stands far from what we know in art history as "social realism."[2] For whereas social realism originated from the social struggles of lower-class people in order to mediate suffering and oppression that ruling classes ignored or even actively maintained, the mass theatrical and cinematic spectacles that engage American families in enacting or witnessing their own potential destruction are of an entirely different kind. It is a form of realism that largely benefits the interests of the state rather than its population, as it stages the threat necessary to institutionalize a dependency on specific industries, legitimizes a politics of secrecy, and promotes the inevitability of perpetual warfare. As such, the realism projected by the nuclear state is much closer to what we have discussed in the second chapter as *socialist realism* than to social realism, as it projects reality not from the perspective of struggling lower classes, but reality as it ought to be in the perspective of a specific elite. This notion of realism also shows

1 Thompson starts from US lieutenant general David Petraeus's rewriting of a "forgotten military document: the counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24." Thompson observes that in the revision of the document "gun toting shock and awe-style methods" were replaced by emphasis on "the transforming of popular perception as a supplement to straightforward killing," resulting in what Thompson calls a "cultural turn in the U.S. military." Nato Thompson, *Culture as Weapon: The Art of Influence in Everyday Life* (Brooklyn/London: Melville House, 2017), pp. 127–28. An earlier draft of Thompson's chapter that appeared as an essay in *e-flux journal* was criticized by Rijin Sahakian, former director of Sada in Baghdad, who argued that Thompson's focus on the cultural turn in the period of the Iraq invasion made "no mention of the massive cultural cleansing campaign that took place in Iraq during and after the occupation." Rijin Sahakian, "A Reply to Nato Thompson's "The Insurgents, Part I," *e-flux journal,* No. 48 (Oct. 2013).

2 The history of social realism, starting with the realists in the 19th century, will be further elaborated through the work of art historian Alice Guillermo in the section *Popular Propaganda Art*.

overlaps with what writer and theorist Mark Fisher has discussed as *capitalist realism*: the cultural output that normalizes the economic, social, and environmental disasters of contemporary capitalism as the only realistic order, co-opting all real social alternatives in its wake.[3]

We should therefore understand the type of realism produced by the Cold War as a form of state realism, and today, in the context of the War on Terror, as a form of expanded state realism, because it concerns a realism that is created to benefit the public–private infrastructures through which the War on Terror is waged. We will discuss the practice of expanded state realism in the domains of three of its dominant media, namely those of *theater, games,* and *television and cinema*, and its impact in the form of *extended performance*, in which all three come together through the perpetration of torture and warfare upon the bodies of those who are considered non-citizens.

The second style of War on Terror Propaganda is *expanded state abstraction*. With this term, we refer to the creation of blank spots and abstract voids in our political, economic, and legal system, but also in the domain of public knowledge in the form of libraries, the Internet, mainstream media and – as we will see – visual art. As we have discussed earlier, the War on Terror operates through classification, by turning public domain information into state secrets. This secrecy is manifested in abstractions: through black censorship rectangles and the disappearance of information what is present becomes absent. This abstract absence, in turn, strengthens expanded state realism, which gains the sole monopoly on the visualization of threat. When expanded state abstraction classifies our own history, what is taken from us is the chance to understand why the world is manifested – visualized – the way it is: whether in the form of a terrorist attack or the building of a war prison. Expanded state realism defines the image and reason behind imminent threats for us. As such, one could argue that in War on Terror Propaganda Art realism and abstraction exist in a state of *interdependence*. They structure one another in the creation of a new reality that benefit the expanded state.

Although such claims might come across as rather conspirational, we emphasize that we are not approaching the expanded state as a singular actor – as some kind of a "deep state" that has one common drive for domination. State and corporate agencies, while possibly sharing more interests in power monopolies than not, are not a homogeneous mass. In some cases, some parts of the state may be more consistent in addressing actual existential threats than others, for example the

3 In Fisher's words, "[c]apitalist realism […] entails subordinating oneself to a reality that is infinitely plastic, capable of reconfiguring itself at any moment." While capitalist realism claims its legitimacy by rejecting the so-called totalitarianism of past socialist and communist regimes, Fisher perceives a form of "market Stalinism" in its hyper-bureaucratic and target-oriented bureaucracy, opening up the possibility of comparisons between socialist realism and capitalist realism. See: Mark Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?* (Winchester/Washington: O Books, 2009), pp. 54, 42.

growing awareness of certain military agencies of the danger of climate change, something frighteningly ignored by the dominant political classes, which are more occupied with the next elections than long-term survival.[4] In other cases, governmental agencies might even oppose a government, for example in the case of the CIA's investigation of possible Russian ties of the present Trump administration.[5] Another example are private corporations that try to undermine instrumentalization by a state, for example by resisting access to their clients' user data demanded by governments in the name of national security.[6] In other words, the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state are conflictual among themselves, but that does not mean that in the context of the War on Terror they have not created dominant, reoccurring narratives in relation to the domain of art that we can trace. Defining such master narratives forms our key objective here – but we will keep in mind that arguing for the existence of such master narratives in the process in which the expanded state constructs reality is not the same as claiming that the expanded state is a homogeneous entity.[7]

Finally, when we use the term "art" in the context of War on Terror Propaganda Art, we refer back to the interdisciplinary nature of propaganda that we discussed in previous chapters. In the context of propaganda, the morphological and imaginative practice we term art, can never be understood in an isolated manner or as a single medium. For propaganda to construct reality through as many domains and media as possible, propaganda must by definition be interdisciplinary. We will try to show how visual art, cinema, games, theater, and so on, will have to be understood as interrelated. Although we will discuss different styles and media of War on Terror Propaganda Art in sequence, we will continue to emphasize their interconnected nature.

Let us now begin to discuss the practice of War on Terror Propaganda in the form of expanded state realism and its interdisciplinary output.

4 As noted by my colleague Younes Bouadi, who at my request attended the *Future Force Conference*, organized by the Dutch Ministry of Defense at the World Forum, The Hague, Feb. 9–10, 2017.

5 The cause of the conflict lies in the CIA investigation into Trump's campaign team for possible collusion with Russian secret services, as elaborated by Michael J. Morell, former deputy director of the CIA. See: Michael J. Morell, "Trump's Dangerous Anti-C.I.A. Crusade," *The New York Times*, Jan. 6, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/06/opinion/trumps-dangerous-anti-cia-crusade.html.

6 As a result of growing public pressure, massive corporate social media such as Facebook and Instagram have been adopting increasingly strict privacy policies. See: Sam Levin, "Facebook and Instagram Ban Developers from Using Data for Surveillance," *The Guardian*, Mar. 13, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/mar/13/facebook-instagram-surveillance-privacy-data.

7 In his analysis of spectacular Hollywood cinema in the period following the attacks of September 11, Terence McSweeney argues that "[e]ven if the traumatic event is highly contested, a master narrative soon emerges, which is a collective understanding of the incident. It is one that appears on the surface to be ideologically neutral, but is, in actual fact, highly politicized." Terence McSweeney, *The 'War on Terror' and American Film: 9/11 Frames Per Second* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016), p. 10.

EXPANDED STATE REALISM: THEATER

The first medium of War on Terror Propaganda Art that we will discuss is rooted in the cultural practices of the Cold War: the mass rehearsals of fictional nuclear detonations, evacuations of cities and duck-and-cover drills, which Joseph Masco describes as "detailed renderings of theatrically rehearsed mass violence," manifested in the form of "public spectacles."[8] The notion of the spectacle here will be important throughout our analysis of War on Terror Propaganda Art. Situationist writer Guy Debord famously defined the notion of the spectacle in his *Society of the Spectacle* (1967) as follows:

> The spectacle, grasped in its totality, is both the result and the project of the existing mode of production. It is not a supplement to the real world, an additional decoration. It is the heart of unrealism of the real society. In all its specific forms, as information or propaganda, as advertisement or direct entertainment consumption, the spectacle is the present model of socially dominant life. It is the omnipresent affirmation of the choice *already made* in production and its corollary consumption.[9]

This definition seems particularly appropriate to the theatrical spectacles that Masco discusses in the context of the Cold War, in which an imagined threat becomes the foundation for organizing a society. Theater historian Tracy C. Davis even emphasized the importance of such mass rehearsals as actual theater in her claim that the choreographic categories of "civil defense," "civil preparedness," and "emergency measures" that were central to these theatrical spectacles and were enacted in perfect synchronicity between "governing bodies, leaderships and chains of command, bureaucrats, public servants, technicians, laborers, and families,"[10] defined this cultural heritage of the Cold War as "the proper provenance of a theatre historian."[11]

Just as the Cold War created the foundations for the War on Terror, the Cold War's state realism created the foundations for expanded state realism. This shift was also characterized by a changing economic reality. For example, in 1967 Debord still wrote that "[t]he generalized cleavage of the spectacle is inseparable from the modern *State*, namely from the general form of cleavage within society, the product of the

8 Masco, *Theater of Operations*, p. 47.
9 Guy Debord, *Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black & Red, 2005), §6.
10 Tracy C. Davis, "Between History and Event: Rehearsing Nuclear War Survival," *The Drama Review*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (Winter 2002): pp. 11–45, at p. 14.
11 Ibid., p. 38.

division of social labor and the organ of class domination."[12] But as we discussed earlier, the expanded state is defined through public–private ownership under the doctrine of neoliberalism – it is not just the state alone that holds power, but its expanded infrastructures controlled by the realm of private capital as well.

Lütticken claims that the contemporary spectacle under the doctrine of neoliberalism should rather be redefined as "performative spectacle."[13] For under the "regime of immaterial labor" of post-Fordist neoliberalism, the worker has become a service provider working under flexible contracts, which turn the worker himself into a "living commodity"[14] forced to live in a condition of "perpetual performance."[15] So whereas the notion of the spectacle is suitable for the condition of the Cold War state, the performative spectacle suits the expanded state of the War on Terror. Human life is the raw performative capital imported into War on Terror Propaganda Art to make its imaginaries of imminent societal destruction into a new reality. Or, in other words, citizens in the expanded states are forced to provide their performative labor to uphold the reality of the War on Terror. They "work" for the expanded state, without contracts and, of course, without actual payment.

Masco traces how the spectacular theater of the Cold War has been translated into new contemporary forms. He discusses, among others, the post-September 11 two-yearly exercises organized by TOPOFF (Top Officials), consisting of contemporary mass theatrical spectacles focused on attack scenarios involving so-called weapons of mass destruction used by supposed terrorist agents: "[I]n 2003, a dirty bomb was imaginatively detonated in Seattle and a biological weapon used in Chicago; in 2005, a car bombing, a chemical attack, and an unknown biological warfare agent were acted out in New Jersey and Connecticut; and in 2007, nuclear materials were theatrically detonated in Portland, Phoenix and Guam."[16] The first TOPOFF spectacle had already taken place in 2000, in Denver and Portsmouth, but its importance and scale were amplified after the attacks of September 11.[17] The TOPOFF 2 spectacle involved eight thousand participants in Seattle and Chicago and was the first in the post-September 11 era. The choice for Seattle was not coincidental. The city that had witnessed the massive anti-globalist protests of 1999, also known as the "Battle of Seattle," and had been the site of arrest of Ahmed Ressam, an Algerian

12 Debord, *Society of the Spectacle*, §24.
13 Lütticken, *Idols of the Market*, p. 169.
14 Ibid.
15 Lütticken, *History in Motion*, p. 189.
16 Ibid., p. 165.
17 US Department of State, "Top Officials" (TOPOFF) information page, http://2001-2009.state.gov/s/ct/about/c16661.htm.

al-Qaeda member who formed one of the key protagonists in the failed Millennium Plot. It was a city whose identity was characterized by a confrontation with what many consider a form of "leftist terrorism" as well as a near-September 11 experience, both of which provided additional legitimacy for the city council to wholeheartedly embrace TOPOFF 2.[18]

Performance theoretician Michelle Dent witnessed TOPOFF 2 directly as a writer and spectator, describing how the scenario began with a fictional Middle-Eastern terrorist network known as GLODO (Group for the Liberation of Orangeland and the Destruction of Others) enacting a large scale radiological attack.[19] Dent notes that very different from the mass spectacles staged in the Cold War, TOPOFF 2 was marked by the fact that the attack for which participants were supposed to prepare themselves had essentially already happened, as, "TopOff2 was performed in the shadow of 9/11."[20] Simultaneously, the TOPOFF 2 spectacle happened to take place simultaneously to the bombing of the American embassy in Riyadh, Saudi-Arabia, bringing actual officials to raise the terror alert in real time while officials participating as actors in TOPOFF 2 were raising the terror alert as part of their spectacular theater in defense against GLODO. The parallel presence of these different events and non-events – the Millennium Plot that did not happen; September 11 that did happen; TOPOFF 2 as exercise; the Riyadh bombings in real time – are connected in the theatrical spectacle. TOPOFF 2 becomes a site where realities and fictions merge. For how much is TOPOFF 2 about exercise, and how much is it about constructing a new reality altogether through spectacular performance?

Dent notes that during the performance of TOPOFF 2's two-hundred-page script within the dramatic decors of scenery production house Production Support Services, officials leading the spectacle continuously told journalists assembled at the TOPOFF 2 Venue Control Center "that everything is going smoothly, that all the players are doing an outstanding job, that there have not been too many mistakes, and that the citizens of Seattle need not worry that terrorists will use this information against them."[21] The journalists present were supposed to enact a dual role: they were to photograph and document the decors of a destroyed city to show the terrifyingly real threat of a terrorist attack through weapons of mass destruction, thus legitimizing

18 Michelle Dent, "Staging Disaster: Reporting Live (Sort of) from Seattle," *The Drama Review*, Vol. 48, No. 4 (Winter 2004): pp. 109–34, at pp. 128–30.
19 Ibid., p. 109.
20 Ibid., p. 114.
21 Ibid., p. 123.

the Bush administration's expansion of the government's reach, but they were also supposed to show the government as a trustworthy partner in regulating the ruins of society after the act. Dent rightly asks who in this staging of reality through spectacular theater is actually the audience: "the virtual citizens of Seattle? The government officials in-play? The real-time media? The would-be terrorists?"[22] The answer, located in this spectacular theater of expanded state realism, seems to be *all at the same time*, but they are not only spectators, but actors as well – they are "spect-actors" as the progressive Brazilian theorist and theater maker Augusto Boal termed it.[23] In the process of collectively enacting and witnessing one's own destruction the new reality of the War or Terror are established. We witness in TOPOFF 2 a spectacle so extreme and detailed, and so inclusive of all segments of society, that it literally transforms an existing reality into a new one through a totalizing spectacular theater – through *art*. In this performative spectacle of War on Terror Propaganda Art's expanded state realism, all of society labors in a perpetual performance.

To summarize, in the case of spectacular theater in the style of expanded state realism, we observe how War on Terror Propaganda consists of a performative spectacle, in which citizens and officials collectively enact the fantasy of their own imminent destruction and possibility of survival. Citizens literally act themselves, but in a new reality whose outcomes benefits the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state. We define performance in this context as the physical theatrical enactment of scripts with the aim to construct reality after the interests of the expanded state.

EXPANDED STATE REALISM: GAMES

A second spectacular form of War on Terror Propaganda Art discussed by Masco are games. While these also call upon the performative involvement of their players, they concern much smaller groups than spectacular theater. Whereas a game can of course be played by many different people at the same time – even in the millions in the case of

22 Ibid., p. 126.
23 The concept of "spect-actor" is theorized by Boal as part of his famous concept of the *Theater of the Oppressed* (1974). The central idea is that participants stage their own external and internalized conditions of oppression, acting out their oppression, while being spectators to it at the same time. As Boal writes: "The members of the audience must become the Character: possess him, take his place – not obey him, but guide him, show him the path they think right. In this way the Spectator becoming Spect-Actor is democratically opposed to the other members of the audience, free to invade the scene and appropriate the power of the actor." Boal thus proposes his methodology as a transgressive theater practice, which in the context of War on Terror Propaganda is radically perverted. Here spect-actors are supposed to enact a disaster and witness its impact to transpose their agency to that of the expanded state, rather than to claim this agency themselves. See: Augusto Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. xxi.

multiplayer online video game platforms – the experience of the game is a more individual one. We will look at so-called scenario exercises and tabletop games – expansions of the board game – but also at the rise of the virtual game and video game industry.

Masco claims that the increased scale and professionalization of spectacular theater and spectacular games have their origins in the Cold War. He discusses games as elaborate theatrical means for preparing for nuclear disaster, and how they were developed by the RAND Corporation, an American nonprofit global policy think tank founded in 1948 to provide research to the United States Army.[24] RAND Corporation pioneered political war games, which Cold War historian Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi describes as "role-playing crisis games and man-machine simulations,"[25] aimed at the "cadres of the military, defense industry, universities and opinion makers."[26] The role-playing crisis games were staged in seminar rooms. One such scenario from the late forties enacted the consequences of Stalin's looming death.[27] The man–machine simulations consisted of far more elaborate simulations, staged in the early fifties in exact replicas of the Tacoma air defense radar station.[28] The essence of these various scenarios was always rooted in potential geopolitical shifts in the Cold War that could lead to nuclear disaster. According to Masco, RAND Corporation games were focused on "tested outcomes and modeled tactics in an effort to give leaders more options in a time of nuclear crisis."[29]

The character of these games in the context of the War on Terror changed due to the acceleration of threat production. The Soviets were no longer the only more or less contained enemy, now Them – the terrorist or the microbe, or a terrifying combination of the two – had become the basis of ever-multiplying forms of possible danger and destruction. In that light, Masco discusses the *Atlantic Storm* game, which was staged by the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center in 2005 as a ministerial table-top exercise.[30] *Atlantic Storm* took as its starting point "a terrorist use of smallpox on multiple

24 R. Kent Weaver notes that "[t]he Rand Corporation […] is essentially a contract researcher for the Department of Defense, although it does some research for other government agencies and for foundations." R. Kent Weaver, "The Changing World of Think Tanks," *Political Science and Politics*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Sep. 1989): pp. 563–78, at p. 566. Currently, the RAND Corporation presents itself as "widely respected for operating independent of political and commercial pressures. […] RAND's research is commissioned by a global clientele that includes government agencies, foundations, and private-sector firms." http://www.rand.org/about/history.html.

25 Sharon Ghamari-Tabrizi, "Simulating the Unthinkable: Gaming Future War in the 1950s and 1960s," *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 30, No. 2 (Apr. 2000): pp. 163–223, at p. 169.

26 Ibid., p. 170.

27 Ibid., p. 173.

28 Ibid., p. 179.

29 Masco, *Theater of Operations*, p. 175.

30 Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, "Atlantic Storm" information page, http://www.upmchealthsecurity.org/our-work/events/2005_atlantic_storm/flash/index.html.

nations during a summit meeting in Washington D.C."[31] Current or former senior government leaders played the role of heads of state assembled at the summit when the terrorist attack is first reported, with former United States secretary Madeleine Albright playing the President of the United States, and former Foreign Minister of Canada Barbara McDougall playing the Prime Minister of Canada.[32] Gathered around a large oval mock-summit table, an LCD screen is placed in front of the leaders, displaying a newsflash of the fictional global news channel *GNN*. A news anchor going by the name of Peter Elliott announces the first victims of the attack in Europe, and historicizes the smallpox disease as having caused three hundred million deaths in the twentieth century, noting that "[t]hat is more than twice the number of military and civilians killed in all the wars of the past century."[33] The message of the game scenario, manifested in summit props and mock news is clear: the combination of disease and terrorism poses a threat greater than all the wars of the past century combined. After having played the high-tension game of unfolding disaster in real time from 9:00 to 16:00, Sir Nigel Broomfield, a former English ambassador who played the role of Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, concluded that "[i]n the world that's coming up […] we will need such organizations [as the World Health Organization] which have pre-allocated powers and responsibilities".[34] In other words, the staged threat of bioterrorism in the *Atlantic Storm* game successfully embedded the World Health Organization in a new, real frontline of the War on Terror.

The difference, Masco notes, between the war games in the Cold War and the War on Terror, is that the *Atlantic Storm* scenario had no possible good outcome. There was no scenario in *Atlantic Storm* in which the unfolding global disaster could in any way be contained, and as such it was "designed to demonstrate the contemporary limits of federal governance and to create a productive panic among security professionals charged with preempting collective dangers."[35] This "productive panic" is a result of the experiences of the Bush Administration in the direct aftermath of the attacks on September 11, which we discussed above. Rather than aiming at rational governance or diplomacy, the *Atlantic Storm* game cultivates a scenario in which only the most drastic responses are imaginable: radical securitization,

31 Masco, *Theater of Operations*, p. 173.

32 Bradley T. Smith et al., "Navigating the Storm: Report and Recommendations from the Atlantic Storm Exercise," *Biosecurity and Bioterrorism: Biodefense Strategy, Practice, and Science*, Vol. 3, No. 3 (2005), pp. 256–76, at p. 258, http://www.upmchealthsecurity.org/our-work/events/2005_atlantic_storm/pdf/Atlantic%20Storm%20After-Action.pdf.

33 See the video reconstruction of the "Atlantic Storm" exercise, including the full *GNN* item, on the *UPMC Center for Biosecurity* website, http://www.upmchealthsecurity.org/our-work/events/2005_atlantic_storm/flash/flash.htm.

34 Smith et al, "Navigating the Storm," p. 263.

35 Masco, *Theater of Operations*, p. 175.

a disregard of any previously existing law, militarization of public health infrastructures, unlimited patriotism and nationalism to protect at least part of one's own population. In other words, from the perspective of *Atlantic Storm* the world is no longer governable. Destruction is imminent and absolute, and that means that a proper response is one of immediate defense, which by definition must bypass the morals and rules of the old world. And because destruction is imminent, Butler's resurrected sovereignty must be also made imminent, to make survival – not governance – possible.

We find the civil equivalent of *Atlantic Storm* in the enormous contemporary industry of videogames, in which the United States military itself has become stakeholder, particularly in a domain that Roger Stahl calls "militainment."[36] A 2016 budget request by the United States Department of Defense asks for fifty-five million dollars in the domain or war gaming, including that of videogames, stating:

> Recognizing the immense value that war gaming has historically had in strengthening our force in times of strategic, operational, and technological transition – such as during the interwar years between World War I and World War II, when air, land, and naval war gamers developed innovative approaches in areas like tank warfare and carrier aviation – this budget makes significant new investments to reinvigorate and expand war gaming efforts across the Defense Department.[37]

One of the most telling products of this policy is *America's Army* (2002), a free multi-player shooter game conceived by Colonel Casey Wardynski, and developed as a recruiting and training platform for the army, followed by several sequels, up until its latest iteration *America's Army: Proving Grounds* (2013).[38] Tapping into the approximately three hundred and fifty million gamers that existed by the time of the release of its third chapter.[39] The game requires players to log in through the army's recruitment website and places them in wartime scenarios based on actual – although sanitized – experience of soldiers in war zones of Afghanistan and Iraq, reconstructed into fictional regions such as the country of Czervenia.[40] Different from games developed by the Hezbollah organization, such as *Special Force* (2003) and *Special Force 2: Tale of the Truthful Pledge* (2006), in which the killing of Israeli soldiers is graphically depicted, the enemy in *America's Army* is rather abstract, wearing non-descriptive black uniforms resulting in "faceless enemy avatars" upon which the player can project any possible future enemy of the US.[41] The success of *America's Army* has been enormous: "By the summer of 2013, over thirteen million people had played the game, accumulating around 260 million hours of combined gameplay."[42] A study from 2008 showed that "30 percent of all Americans age 16 to 24 had a more positive impression of the Army because of the game and, even more amazingly, the game had more impact on recruits than all other forms of Army advertising combined."[43]

Exploited commercially through the Microsoft *X-Box* game system and other game consoles and mobile carriers, *America's Army* became internationally successful in promoting its "honor system": different from popular games such as *Grand Theft Auto,* which award criminal behavior, players in *America's Army* get more points through cooperation with their team, and an indefinite online ban is imposed when killing another player through "friendly fire" – essentially transposing an instant military tribunal into the digital sphere.[44] The game is emblematic for the militarization of the game industry, turning the massive constituency of gamers into potential army recruits, while projecting a positive image of the United States Army honor system abroad. And, vice versa, the military industrial complex learned from the game industry as well. Unmanned flying vehicles such as drones are often operated through game-like consoles, and digital training spans much further than *America's Army* alone; the army developed games to train not only drone pilots and soldiers, but also to practice the removal of mines, train the prevention of sexual harassment and abuse, and to provide therapeutic support of veterans with post-traumatic stress syndrome.[45] What is presented by the United States Army as free entertainment is actually a site of concrete propaganda labor of its users, which provide recruits and familiarizes masses of civilians, both in the

36 P.W. Singer, "MEET THE SIMS … and Shoot Them," *Foreign Policy*, No. 178 (Mar./Apr. 2010): pp. 91–95, at p. 92.
37 Secretary of Defense Ash Carter, "Submitted Statement – House Appropriations Committee-Defense (FY 2017 Budget Request)," Washington, DC, Feb. 25, 2016, http://www.defense.gov/News/Speeches/Speech-View/Article/672855/submitted-statement-house-appropriations-committee-defense-fy-2017-budget-reque.
38 *America's Army*, https://www.americasarmy.com/.
39 P.W. Singer, "MEET THE SIMS … and Shoot Them," p. 92.
40 The creation of these types of inexistent countries in *America's Army*, which nonetheless sounds particularly real and invoke actual conflicts past and present, goes hand in hand with a similarly abstract *and* recognizable enemy. Robertson Allen notes that, in order for the army not to come across as prejudice or racist, it was crucial to design an abstract enemy figure, without too many specific ethnical, physical, or external features: "The unreal enemy is an enemy with minimal cultural, linguistic, or ethnic indicators and therefore one which is simultaneously anonymous yet potentially anyone. Everywhere and nowhere at once, the unreal enemy is a tabula rasa on which any enemy can be extrapolated." See: Robertson Allen, "The Unreal Enemy of America's Army," *Games and Culture*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (2011): pp. 38–60, at p. 52.
41 Marcus Schulzke, "America's Army," in Pat Harrigan and Matthew G. Kirschenbaum (eds.), *Zones of Control: Perspectives on War Gaming* (Cambridge/London: MIT Press, 2016), p. 307.
42 Ibid, p. 303.
43 Singer, "MEET THE SIMS … and Shoot Them," p. 93.
44 Ibid. Another form of punishment described by Schulzke is that "[p]layers who attack civilians or teammates are penalized and repeat offenders can be sent to a virtual prison cell in Leavenworth." See: Schulzke, "America's Army," in *Zones of Control*, p. 304.
45 Singer, "MEET THE SIMS … and Shoot Them," pp. 94–95.

United States and abroad, with the honor system of the military.

The fact that the United States Army is an actual stakeholder in the video game industry allows it to deal with its more prominent competitors, such as the *Call of Duty* franchise published by Activision Blizzard. When *Call of Duty* game developer Dave Anthony left the company, he was contacted by former Pentagon official Steve Grundman, who was impressed by the depiction of a "second Cold War conflict in 2025" set in *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2* (2012), which was based on a scenario in which "the conflict is defined not by mutually assured destruction via nuclear missiles, but rather by system-crashing cyber-attacks, capable of toppling the Stock Exchange or turning a fleet of drones against their own country."[46] Consequently, Anthony was offered an unpaid fellowship at the neoconservative Washington think tank Atlantic Council. The game designer describes his task as "to advise outside-the-box thinking on the nature of future threats, and propose proactive solutions to mitigate against them."[47] This professional switch from imagining future warfare for the game industry to imagining future warfare for the United States Army is not surprising. Anthony had already gained direct help from military advisers in developing *Call of Duty: Black Ops 2*, praising them for "[t]heir wisdom and experience" which "added a great deal of authenticity to the games."[48] Explaining his mission as an artist working for Atlantic Council, he explains:

> As a director and writer, my job is to break expectations and established thinking without fear of failure in order to create new and fresh ideas. […] It's timely as the threats we face today don't play by established rules. Our enemies are starting to use our own technologies and systems faster and more efficiently than we are.[49]

The switch from game developer to government advisor is potentially as small as the one between a gamer and a soldier. The relation between the war industry and the game industry is one of interdependency rather than antagonism, making it easy to imagine how a virtual user of *America's Army* would end up in what is known as the "Sandbox," a physical reconstruction of an Iraqi province in the Mojave Desert in California. Here, the spectacular video game switches to a spectacular theater, with an elaborate set consisting of townspeople "portrayed by Arabic-speaking Iraqi expatriates from Detroit, San Diego, and other

46 Simon Parkin, "Call of Duty: Gaming's Role in the military-Entertainment Complex," *The Guardian*, Oct. 22, 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/oct/22/call-of-duty-gaming-role-military-entertainment-complex.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.

cities with established Middle Eastern American populations" who provide the setting for soldiers to exercise in "guerilla combat, convoy ambushes, IED (improvised explosive device) encounters, and televised beheadings."[50] From there, the step to an actual battlefield has become imperceptibly small.

The practice of War on Terror Propaganda in the style of expanded state realism – through the spectacular theater or the game – shows a constant alternation of reality: staged wars run parallel to real wars. This proves that the War on Terror constructs a new reality, rather than that it repeats an existing one.

To summarize, in the case of *spectacular games* in the style of expanded state realism, we observe how War on Terror Propaganda consists of a performative spectacle, in which citizens and policy makers reenact themselves in simulations staging imminent destruction. Citizens act themselves, but in the form of virtual identities in a new reality whose outcomes benefit the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state. We define performance in this context as the virtual enactment of scripts with the aim to construct reality after the interests of the expanded state.

EXPANDED STATE REALISM: TELEVISION AND CINEMA

A third form of War on Terror Propaganda, also discussed by Masco, is cinema, in particular the spectacular Hollywood disaster blockbuster, to which we will add some case studies of televized spectacles. Just like the spectacular theater and game, the spectacular cinema of War on Terror Propaganda is grounded in the heritage of Cold War cinema, which spectacularized nuclear disaster, embracing both the destruction of society and the strengthening of the nation in films such as *Duck and Cover* (dir. Anthony Rizzo, 1951) and the TV production *The Day After* (dir. Nicholas Meyer, 1983). The spectators of such televized spectacles were, paradoxically, also its actors, as they "watched from homes and apartments that were the explicit models for the test city, and saw mannequin families posed in casual everyday moments (at the kitchen table, on the couch, in bed – or watching TV) experience the atomic blast."[51]

Spectacular cinema in the War on Terror is not limited to a nuclear threat or all-out attack of the Soviets, but instead conceives of highly

50 Scott Magelssen, "Rehearsing the 'Warrior Ethos': 'Theatre Immersion' and the Simulation of Theatres of War," *The Drama Review*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (Spring, 2009): pp. 47–72, at p. 48.
51 Masco, *Theater of Operations*, p. 57.

realistic digital renderings of an endless series of "fearsome life-ending asteroids, alien invasions, earthquakes, floods, and wars" that continue to allow "Americans to rehearse the destruction of their nation-state much as their parents and grandparents did in the 1950s and 1980s."[52] The theatrical element of the rehearsal here lies in either the mass collective witnessing of one's own destruction in the cinema, or within the family unit at home. The creation of the spect-actor succeeds only when the closest possible proximity between those watching and those watched is established: when the civilian on-screen becomes the full embodiment of the one off-screen.

Masco invokes pre-September 11 disaster cinema such as *Armageddon* (dr. Michael Bay, 1998) and *Deep Impact* (dir. Mimi Leder, 1998), in which gigantic asteroids threaten all life on earth. In both scenarios, nuclear weapons prove to be the only means to protect the earth, thus replacing the Soviet threat with a natural one that can only be overcome by the benevolent use of American nuclear force. Both scenarios also made sure that some smaller asteroids manage to hit the earth, in the case of *Deep Impact* resulting in gigantic tidal waves that destroy the whole of New York City. In these instances, digital technology allows for a heightened visual realism to showcase the detailed destruction and death resulting from the natural disaster. In such spectacular films, disaster helps society to overcome dysfunctional families and broken communities, while simultaneously forcing them into dependency on the state. Family conflicts or race divisions seemingly become futile when the whole planet is faced with destruction, and only the expanded state has the means to sustain survival. At the same time, scientists, doctors, and average citizens turn into heroes and instant recruits of the state as they contribute their knowledge and bravery as civil defense. The spectacular disaster film thus simultaneously destroys society and rebuilds it in the interest of the state, through a state of emergency.[53]

This continuous imaginative rehearsal of destruction of Western civilization from the Cold War to our present day has provided absurdly

52 Ibid., p. 69.

53 With regard to the changing politics displayed in disaster films from the Cold War to the present, Despina Kakoudaki observes a shift from negotiable threats to un-negotiable ones: "If negotiation is possible, in the case of a human enemy, a purposeful aggressor or a sentient and reasonable alien, for example, then the disaster premise highlights issues of responsibility both for the enemy, for threatening or causing the disaster, and for the human negotiators, for working to avert it. This is the primary modality of nuclear threat films of the 1950s and 1960s, in which the threat of destruction is translated into narratives of political choice, ethical obligation, and public and private responsibility. If, on the other hand, the agent of the disaster appears to be non-sentient, a non-sentient alien, a zombie, an insect or a natural force such as a comet, earthquake or volcano, then the focus shifts to questions of response: since there is no way to negotiate with the agent of the disaster or to avoid the destruction altogether, all we can do in these stories is launch a merely reactive counter-attack." Despina Kakoudaki, "Representing Politics in Disaster Films," *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, Vol. 7, No.3 (2011): pp. 349–56, at p. 351.

detailed images of catastrophes. Indeed Masco observes that "[i]f the September 2001 attacks on New York and Washington felt strangely familiar to many U.S. citizens, it was because American society has been imaginatively rehearsing the destruction of these cities for more than three generations."[54] Film director Roland Emmerich, creator of another pre-September 11 film, *Independence Day* (1996) – in which the Twin Towers are destroyed by aliens – questioned his own complicity when stating that "I had this feeling that there is some terrorist watching my movie in some cave and saying he should do it like the aliens."[55] But the disasters that have been rehearsed through theaters, games, and cinema before September 11 are far greater and far more detailed in their gruesome impact than the actual disasters of real life. Although the attacks of September 11 were documented through live television, compared to the cinematic splendor of disaster cinema the actual murder of thousands seemed rather modest. That did not stop disaster cinema from becoming even more spectacular after September 11. Think of the planet-wide high-resolution destruction of films such as Emmerich's *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and *2012* (2009), Michael Bay's *Transformers* franchise (2007–2017), or Zack Snyder's Superman film *Man of Steel* (2013) and subsequent *Batman Versus Superman: Dawn of Justice* (2016). By contrast, pre-September 11 disaster cinema – which seemed extreme compared to the actual terrorist attack in New York and Washington – has now been turned into the new normal. Expanded state realism's display of excessively detailed disaster in War on Terror Propaganda Art subsequently normalizes the War on Terror itself. Compared to the planetary state of exception displayed in spectacular disaster cinema, the indiscriminate employment of nuclear weapons by the expanded state and the selection of the fittest that have to rebuild the post-disaster world, the War on Terror itself seems like a rather modest, contained, and even rational endeavor. The excess of disaster that we rehearse and witness through spectacular cinema turns the actual disaster enacted in our name in the present into the negligible incidents of the new normal.

In his book *War, Politics and Superheroes* (2011), English and film scholar Marc Dipaolo discusses how "fictional heroes" in the realm of disaster films and superhero movies have "the potential to influence decisions made by real people in the real world."[56] A prominent

54 Masco, *Theater of Operations*, p. 73.

55 McSweeney, *The 'War on Terror' and American Film*, p. 7. It seems relevant to note both Emmerich's overestimation that everyone – including Al-Qa'ida militants – would want to watch his films, while simultaneously underestimating these militants in his presumption that terrorists live in caves. Goss's reference to the Orientalist framing – the terrorist as caveman – seems highly accurate in this regard.

56 Marc DiPaulo, *War, Politics and Superheroes* (North-Carolina: McFarland & Company, 2011), p. 200.

example in this case is the by now notorious figure of Counter Terrorism Unit agent Jack Bauer, played by Kiefer Sutherland in the eight seasons of the Fox TV series *24* (2001–2010) – the same *Fox* network that is part of Rupert Murdoch's media empire that supported the invasion in Iraq. By the end of this post-September 11 TV series, agent Bauer has "prevented the nuclear destruction of Los Angeles, halted the release of the deadly Cordilla virus, and stalled a neoconservative conspiracy to push the U.S. into a war with a country under false pretenses."[57] While it might seem that Bauer's effort to stop a conservative conspiracy for foreign invasion was *24*'s critique of the Bush administration's invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, the excess of state violence displayed in the series rather serves to display Bush's war as a modest and rational – even democratic – endeavor. The most important indication of this is that Bauer, to prevent the endless sequence of threats to the United States, relies on a great variety of torture techniques to acquire the necessary information to locate a given terrorist suspect.[58] More often than not, via caricatures of terrorists, depicted as Muslims and/or peoples of color.[59]

The excesses of Rumfeld's state-sanctioned torture in *24* in fact led the U.S. military to ask *24*'s producers to tone down their depictions in order not to inflict damage on the country's image abroad.[60] This request allowed the U.S. military to project itself as rather modest, compared to the exaggerated depiction in *24.* The torture employed in the War on Terror suddenly came across as measured compared to Bauer's extremist disregard of any law, foreign or domestic. Fiction blended with reality when a Canadian judge at a 2007 law conference in Ottawa voiced criticism at the figure of Bauer and the kind of legal disregard he embodies, when none other than the late Supreme Court

57 Ibid., p. 196.

58 Mike Dillon notes that "Bauer's ability to withstand torture becomes one of the program's key methods of distinguishing 'America' from enemy entities that always prove less resistant to physical pain. This, I argue, helps to establish categorical distinctions between good and evil, moral superiority and inferiority, that mirror neoconservative discourses around the moral stakes of torture. Jack Bauer's body is an integral object for understanding the life-affirming and life-denying valuations that underwrite *24*." See: Mike Dillon, "Bauer Power: 24 and the Making of an American," *Reconstruction,* Vol. 11, No. 4 (2011), http://reconstruction.eserver.org/Issues/114/Dillon.shtml.

59 Parvin Sultana, "Essentialising the Other: Representing Muslims in media post 9/11," *The Indian Journal of Media Studies*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1–2 (2013): pp. 63–71.

60 A *New Yorker* article describes how US Army Brigadier General Patrick Finnegan, dean of the United States Military Academy at West Point, flew to Southern California to meet with the team of *24* to "voice their concern that the show's central political premise—that the letter of American law must be sacrificed for the country's security—was having a toxic effect. In their view, the show promoted unethical and illegal behavior and had adversely affected the training and performance of real American soldiers." See: Jane Mayer, "Whatever It Takes: The Politics of the Man behind '24,'" *The New Yorker*, Feb. 19, 2007, http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2007/02/19/whatever-it-takes. Finnegan's meeting with Hollywood producers has been documented by human rights advocate David Danzig in his article "Countering the Jack Bauer Effect: An Examination of How to Limit the Influence of TV's Most Popular, and Most Brutal Hero," in *Screening Torture: Media Representations of State Terror and Political Domination,* pp. 21–33 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).

Justice Antonin Scalia came to Bauer's rescue, saying:

> Jack Bauer saved Los Angeles [...]. He saved hundreds of thousands of lives [...]. Are you going to convict Jack Bauer? Say that criminal law is against him? [...] Is any jury going to convict Jack Bauer? I don't think so.[61]

Similar but more subtle TV series would be developed in the wake of *24*, such as *Homeland* (2011–ongoing). In *Homeland,* protagonist Carrie Mathison, a CIA agent with bipolar disorder, uncovers internal plots in her agency. Although the series seems to strike a more critical tone towards the expanded state, the madness of its narrative is that it takes a rogue bipolar agent to uncover terrorist plots and agency conspiracies. *Homeland*'s more "liberal" setup, including "good" American Muslims working for the CIA dedicating themselves to foreign interventions, extralegal abductions, and drone killings, might have been the reason for former president Barack Obama's praise.[62] But its core narrative is not a critique of the system through which the War on Terror is waged, but rather that an even more extreme "bipolar" policy is necessary to increase its brutal efficiency.

Bauer and Mathison were not the only figures who formed the bizarre new avant-garde of fictional protagonists promoting excessive forms of legalized state violence. DiPaolo observes a whole variety of superheroes who began to embrace torture and radicalization of the policies of the War on Terror in the post-September 11 era. While the universes of comic book heroes from *DC* to *Marvel* are filled with moralistic insertions of family values and enduring friendship, DiPaolo notes that "very few American superheroes *consistently* stood firm against the excesses of the Bush administration, passionately opposing torture, the Iraq invasion, the Patriot Act, and even Bush's disastrous environmental policy."[63] At the heart of this, DiPaolo notes, lies the fact that a variety of American superheroes were conceived in the period of the fight against the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, as all

61 DiPaulo, *War, Politics and Superheroes*, p. 198. Mike Dillon further describes broad and prominent support for Bauer: "In November, 2006, conservative commentator Laura Ingraham argued on Fox News' *The O'Reilly Factor* that the popularity of the hit series *24* (also on Fox) was sufficient evidence that the average American approved using torture on terror suspects if it assured victory in the War on Terror. [...] [O]ther prominent conservatives – including former Fox host John Gibson, former CNN and Fox host Glenn Beck – have similarly invoked *24*'s frequent representations of 'justifiable' torture as indicative of the need for an aggressive foreign policy that cannot, *must* not, waver in saving American lives. Conservative economist Stephen Moore has insisted that 'Jack Bauer justice' is both what the country demands and what policymakers should implement." See: Dillon, "Bauer Power."

62 Michael D. Shear, "Obama's TV Picks: Anything Edgy, With Hints of Reality," *The New York Times,* Dec. 29, 2013, http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/30/us/obamas-tv-picks-anything-edgy-with-hints-of-reality.html?_r=0

63 DiPaulo, *War, Politics and Superheroes*, p. 205.

American super-soldiers that would contribute to the war endeavor. Figures such as Tony Stark, the hero of Marvel's *Iron Man* franchise, conceived his first battle suit to escape from a Communist prison camp in South-Vietnam,[64] and returned in the post-September 11 age to become President Bush's Secretary of Defense in the comic book *Iron Man: The Best Defense* (2004). He was then rebooted in the realm of post-September 11 cinema as a supporter of American forces by successfully pacifying an insurgence in Afghanistan, with no civil casualties – "collateral damage" – as a result.[65] Similarly, the figure of Batman returned to shape the post-September 11 consciousness through a series of films directed by Christopher Nolan, *Batman Begins* (2005), *The Dark Knight* (2008), and *The Dark Knight Rises* (2012). The films depict multi-billionaire Bruce Wayne enacting rogue law, dressed up in a bat-shaped high-tech outfit. He fights against the Arab members of the League of Shadows – who writer David S. Goyer stated were modeled after Osama Bin Laden[66] – who threaten to decimate Gotham City with weapons of mass destruction. All the while, Batman applies torture methods far beyond the limits of enhanced interrogation techniques against his nemesis, the anarchist terrorist Joker.[67]

As former journalist David L. Robb argues in his extensively documented *Operation Hollywood* (2004), the interdependency between the expanded state and the production of spectacular disaster and torture television and cinema is not only ideological, but also material in nature. From state-produced war cinema such as the World War II film series *Why We Fight* (dir. Frank Capra, 1942–45) or Vietnam cinema such as *The Green Berets* (dir. Ray Kellogg, John Wayne, and Mervyn LeRoy, 1968), there is a long history in which Hollywood supported and promoted the war effort. The national post-Vietnam trauma and the critical films emerging from it formed a brief period of exception that would be quickly overcome through Tony Scott's *Top Gun* (1986), featuring Tom Cruise as a handsome all-American fighter pilot. Cinemas screening *Top Gun* also installed recruiting booths of the American military resulting to Air Force enlistment to grow five hundred percent.[68] The involvement of the Pentagon in the production of films

64 Ibid., p. 12.
65 Ibid., p. 57.
66 McSweeney, *The 'War on Terror' and American Film*, p. 117.
67 Slavoj Žižek discusses the paradox of the scene in which Batman (rogue law) tortures the Joker (the anarcho-terrorist), arguing that the Joker is actually not wearing a mask, whereas Batman is. The latter tries to use violence upon the former, only to affirm the schizophrenic character of his own being. In this reading, the torture reflects the truth of Batman, not the Joker: "He [the Joker] is not a man without a mask, but, on the contrary, a man fully identified with his mask, a man who *is* his mask – there is nothing, no 'ordinary guy,' beneath it. This is why the Joker has no back-story and lacks any clear motivation: he tells different people different stories about his scars, mocking the idea that some deep-rooted trauma drives him." See: Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, p. 60.
68 DiPaulo, *War, Politics and Superheroes*, p. 182.

that benefit its aims is carefully orchestrated in order not to disrupt the democratic ideal of film directors' freedom of expression. Instead, as Robb shows, the Film Liaison Unit at the Pentagon, with offices in the Pentagon and Los Angeles, can be contacted voluntarily by film directors that are in need of military arsenal. Their scripts are subsequently reviewed based on the terms and conditions laid out in *A Producer's Guide to U.S. Army Cooperation with the Entertainment Industry*:

> Millions of dollars can be shaved off a film's budget if the military agrees to lend its equipment and assistance. And all a producer has to do to get that assistance is submit five copies of the script to the Pentagon for approval; make whatever script changes the Pentagon suggests; film the script exactly as approved by the Pentagon; and prescreen the finished product for Pentagon officials before it's shown to the public.[69]

Essentially, the Film Liaison Unit "lends" its materials but only when the military is represented in a way they consider accurate. As Phil Strub, entertainment liaison at the Department of Defense since 1989, states: "We're after military portrayal and they're after our equipment."[70] Critical Vietnam War films, such as Francis Ford Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* (1979) and Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986) were denied support. In Strub's words, these films were unrealistic, for "every time soldiers and marines went out into the field, they murdered officers, massacred civilians, they took drugs," leading to what he claims to be a "quite inaccurate portrayal."[71]

The Pentagon is not the only government organization engaged in such revisionist processes as Tricia Jenkins points out in *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes the Movies* 2012), in which she highlights the work of the CIA's entertainment liaison. As the CIA does not have the same material means available to "sponsor" script changes, the agency focuses instead on getting involved in the early stages of script writing, and in return for "accurate portrayal" offers access to its campus and officers – otherwise considered as classified.[72] An

69 David L. Robb, *Operation Hollywood: How the Pentagon Shapes and Censors the Movies* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 2004), p. 25.
70 Chapter 4, noot 70 moet zijn: Al Jazeera Empire reportage "Hollywood and the War Machine," Aug. 9, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/empire/2010/12/201012168134536793.html. Phil Strub's filmography on the IMDb database brims with spectacular cinema favoring the US military, such as *Deep Impact, Day After Tomorrow, Transformers, Iron Man*, and *Man of Stee*l. See Phil Strub's complete filmography on IMDb: http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0835243/.

71 Robb, *Operation Hollywood*, p. 25.
72 Tricia Jenkins, *The CIA in Hollywood: How the Agency Shapes Film and Television* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012), p. 134.

important example of its impact is Mike Nichols *Charlie Wilson's War* (2007), which tells the story of the CIA operation that engaged the Afghan mujahedin in fighting the Soviets. Crucial script interventions of the CIA's entertainment liaison had scenes that effectively linked the support to the mujahedin to the September 11 attacks and the subsequent War on Terror removed.[73] Isolating the earlier American involvement in the Soviet–Afghan war is a form of historical censorship that prevents a vehicle of entertainment from portraying causal relations between past and present, and thus shows the power of the CIA as co-director of Hollywood cinema.

It might be telling for the future of spectacular cinema's implication in governmental policy that the campaign of Donald Trump in 2016 offered free screenings to Iowans of Michael Bay's *13 Hours* (2016), a dramatic and action-ridden interpretation of the attacks on two United States military facilities in Benghazi, Libya, that resulted in two American deaths.[74] Republicans and alt-right supporters of Trump had used the event continuously to criticize then Secretary of Foreign Affairs Hillary Clinton for severe negligence in the protection of American troops, which made the timing of the film exceptionally fruitful for Trump.[75] Heavily influenced by his former campaign manager and White House chief strategist Steve Bannon, who is himself a former producer and filmmaker of apocalyptic documentaries such as *Generation Zero* (2010) and *Occupy Unmasked* (2012), the future of government-subsidized spectacular cinema under Trump is unsure.[76] But as the president has quickly let go of his isolationist "America First" doctrine through military interventions in Syria and Afghanistan and sparking conflict with North-Korea, the continuous construction of reality through expanded state realism in the face of an ever-multiplying Them will inevitably prove detrimental as he inherits and accelerates the War on Terror on his own terms. Bannon's films, developed in what he terms as his own brand of "kinetic" cinema inspired by the work of

73 Matthew Alford's research mentions the film's downplaying of the CIA's support for Afghan militants due to its focus on "moderate" rebels, which was absent in the original script. He also mentions the CIA's request to remove the final scene in which Wilson hears the explosion of Al-Qa'ida's attack on the Twin Towers, clearly emphasizing the historical link between US involvement in the Soviet–Afghan War and the beginning of the War on Terror. See: Matthew Alford, *Reel Power: Hollywood Cinema and American Supremacy* (London: Pluto Press, 2010), pp. 69–73.

74 Eliana Dockterman, "Donald Trump Offers Iowans a Free Screening of Benghazi Movie 13 Hours," *TIME*, Jan. 15, 2016, http://time.com/4182281/donald-trump-benghazi-13-hours-movie-iowa-screening/.

75 Different from Bay's earlier films, *13 Hours* was made without support from either the Pentagon or the CIA due to its depiction of a rather unfavorable event for the military. As such, the choice of its screening is characteristic of Trump's clash with several government agencies, especially the secret agencies.

76 Ann Hornaday, "We Can Learn a lot about Steve Bannon by Watching the Films He Made," *Independent*, Jan. 6, 2017, http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/films/features/steve-bannon-films-hollywood-executive-producer-nsc-donald-trump-us-president-a7565501.html.

Sergei Eisenstein, Leni Riefenstahl, and Michael Moore, possibly can shed some light upon the Trumpist Propaganda Art to come.[77]

Bannon's most recent film, *Torchbearer* (2016), is shot as a documentary that introduces a revisionist history presented by the extremely religious conservative republican Phil Robertson, who gained notoriety as a participant in the reality show *Duck Dynasty* and through a series of aggressively homophobic and anti-abortion statements, made among others during a heavily mediatized keynote lecture at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in 2015. *Torchbearer*'s core narrative is American political and religious exceptionalism, presenting the United States as the first country not founded on the desire for conquest, but by the desire of prosecuted Christians of Europe to create a nation of religious worship *and* democratic human rights. Bannon claims that the Christian-democratic nation has suffered increasing corruption in the past decades by secular progressives, lower-class people of color terrorizing inner cities, and Islamic fundamentalist sleeper cells, and he argues that a great clash of civilizations is about to emerge. Accompanied by a threatening film score, a collage is presented to us of torture and executions perpetrated by the Islamic State and other fundamentalist groups, suggesting an ultimate confrontation between what the film frames as democratic American Christians and Islamic terrorism. In Robertson's words: "[A]nother worldview gains ground, one rooted in dominance and submission: a death cult. [..] Violence, decadence, political anarchy: welcome to the city of man."

Although it's hard to believe that Trump is in any way the example of the devout Christian-democratic leader that would head Bannon's crusade, support for Trump among Christian-conservatives and evangelicals has been exceptionally high. Bannon's mission to narrate an inevitable clash of civilizations and introduce Trump as the Christian-democratic warrior to fight it has proven successful, despite the fact that he no longer occupies a position in the Wghite House Bannon's own cinematography seems to fully correspond with the conditions of spectacular cinema and television as we have discussed so far. It displays an image of imminent destruction by Islamic fundamentalists to forge a Christian-democratic nation under the growing authoritarianism of Trump. Bannon's artistic construction of reality is the one we see emerging in politics under the name of Trumpism today.

77 With this kinetic style Bannon aims to "almost overwhelm an audience" by to sheer density of material and content. See: Ted Johnson, "Docmakers Get Right to the Point," *Variety*, Jun. 18, 2011, http://variety.com/2011/film/news/docmakers-get-right-to-the-point-1118038731/. Bannon discusses his influences in an interview from the same year, in which he explains: "I'm a student of Michael Moore's films, of Eisenstein, Riefenstahl. Leave the politics aside, you have to learn from those past masters on how they were trying to communicate their ideas." See: Anthony Kaufman, "Sarah Palin, Movie Star?," *The Wall Street Journal*, Jul. 13, 2011, https://blogs.wsj.com/speakeasy/2011/07/13/the-undefeated-sarah-palin-movie-star/.

Spectacular cinema has actually turned into reality, or we might even witness a moment in which reality has reached beyond the imagination of spectacular cinema.

To summarize: In the case of *spectacular cinema and television* in the style of expanded state realism, we observe how War on Terror Propaganda consists of a performative spectacle, in which citizens witness themselves being destroyed as family units (at home) or as a collective (in the cinema) while simultaneously rebuilding their nation in a reality that benefits the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state. We define performance in this context as the collective act of witnessing (watching) on the one hand, and in the enactment that is witnessed (actors simulating viewers) on the other, with the aim to construct reality after the interests of the expanded state.

We have discussed three domains of the dominant style of expanded state realism in War on Terror Propaganda Art: *theater, games,* and *television and cinema*. We have seen how each of these media are formed by an intricate web of military-industrial and cultural institutions, but also how they interact with one another. In the process, we have observed that the style of War on Terror Propaganda Art in the form of expanded state realism aims at creating a new reality, and that it does so by converting cultural industries into military ones, artists into policy makers, gamers into soldiers, and vice versa. Its theatrical, game, and cinematic spectacles might seem innocent at first due to their staged nature, but in actuality they form the foundation for the construction of reality. We thus conclude that the style of expanded state realism in War on Propaganda Art does not merely create art, it develops new forms of propaganda art and propaganda art institutions to establish a new reality that indefinitely separates itself from the previous one.

EXPANDED STATE REALISM: EXTENDED PERFORMANCE

So far, we limited our exploration of the performance of power in War on Terror Propaganda Art mainly to citizens considered to be part of Us. What we will now discuss is how the creation of Us through theater, games, and cinema, is also employed against the bodies of Them: the non-human, the terrorist. So far we discussed the micro-performative dimension of propaganda mainly in relation to the way that citizens in predominantly Western societies come to embody and enact its dominant narratives and value systems, but in the case of extended performance we will focus on the process in which the creation of reality through expanded state realism result in concrete violence imposed upon Them. And what other histories of art, apart from those

developed during the Cold War, can inform us about the consequences of War on Propaganda Art in the form of what we will now discuss as extended performance?

These questions go beyond the scope of our sketch of an art history in the War on Terror, but they are central to art historian Stephen F. Eisenman's 2007 book *The Abu Ghraib Effect*. Eisenman begins his analysis of the role of art in constructing the new reality of the War on Terror, with a series of photographs leaked from the Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, displaying the torture of women and men at the hands of US Army and CIA personnel, made by the torturers themselves. In the photos from Abu Ghraib we not only see the hooded prisoners placed in stress positions, covered in excrement, or forcefully composed in suggestive, erotic postures, but also the soldiers themselves, most infamously the soldier couple Charles Graner and Lynndie England, forcing the prisoners in degrading sexualized positions.

While the news of the Abu Ghraib torture was discussed widely, Eisenman observes how little this discussion actually altered the perception of the legitimacy of the War on Terror. During the 2004 Presidential campaign, the issue was hardly discussed, and did not prevent Bush from being re-elected: "While a Gallup Poll conducted immediately after the release of the Abu Ghraib photographs indicated that 54 per cent of Americans were 'bothered a great deal' by the revelations, a year later the number had declined to just 40 per cent."[78] Eisenman explains this lack of consternation as the result of "the long Western history of the representation of torture that has helped inscribe an oppressive ideology of master and slave on our bodies and brains, enabling (especially at times of fear) a moral forgetfulness or even paralysis to set in." He call this phenomenon the "Abu Ghraib Effect."[79] This means that Eisenman does not perceive the photographs of Abu Ghraib as an exceptional feature of an exceptional war, but as images standing in a long tradition.[80]

78 Stephen S. Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007), p. 8.
79 Ibid., p. 99.
80 Eisenman is far from the only thinker who engaged the domain of art to contextualize these images, although he specifically affirms his belief that the photos themselves are not art. Other prominent voices were Slavoj Žižek, who references the work of avant-garde artists and cinematographers when explaining that "*recording* the humiliation with a camera, with the perpetrators included in the picture, their faces stupidly smiling beside the twisted naked bodies of the prisoners, was an integral part of the process, in stark contrast with the secrecy of the Saddam tortures. The very positions and costumes of the prisoners suggest a theatrical staging, a kind of tableau vivant, which brings to mind American performance art, 'theatre of cruelty,' the photos of Mapplethorpe or the unnerving scenes in David Lynch's films." Slavoj Žižek, "What Rumsfeld Doesn't Know That He Knows About Abu Ghraib," *In These Times*, May 21, 2004, http://inthesetimes.com/article/747/. Through her extensive historical work on the photographic image, Susan Sontag wrote about the "artistic" nature of the production and dissemination of the images – referencing Andy Warhol and Piero Paolo Pasolini, among others: "Where once photographing war was the province of photojournalists, now the soldiers themselves are all photographers – recording their war, their fun, their observations of what they find picturesque, their atrocities – and swapping images among themselves and e-mailing them around the globe."

Eisenman's reference to "times of fear" is crucial to understand the conditions for the existence of these images. The staging of fear that legitimates relentless revenge and punishment on the bodies framed as Them has been the driving force behind resurrected sovereignty, emerging as a legitimate form of rogue law in the process of rehearsing our own destruction in the form of spectacular mass theater, games, and cinema. Eisenman considers this to be an inherent part of art history, with its own aesthetic imperative:

> The expressive suffering revealed in the greatest monuments of Hellenistic art marks the onset of an expressive, propagandistic tradition that would survive more than 2,000 years. Indeed, the Hellenistic aestheticizing, eroticizing and rationalizing of pain and suffering – the insistence upon the value and necessity of *basanos* [torture] – constitutes the beginning of an artistic pathos formula.[81]

Eisenman recognizes this manifestation of a "pathos formula" – the depiction of passionate suffering – throughout art history "from Athens, Pergamon, Renaissance, Florence and Baroque Rome," in which victims "were taking pleasure, or at least accepting the rationality of their own annihilation."[82] Possibly most telling in relation to the images of Abu Ghraib is Eisenman's analysis of Raphael's fresco *Battle of Ostia* (1514–17), a depiction inspired by the 849 naval battle between the Christian League of Papal, Neapolitan, and Gaetan ships on one side, and the Saracens (Muslims) on the other. Subjected Saracen captives are depicted kneeling, surrendering to Pope Leo IV who gazes to the heavens for Godly sanction of his subjection of the Muslim people. Eisenman considers this image to be the art-historical foundation of the Abu Ghraib photographs. In Raphael's fresco "[t]he origin of the Modern Western antagonism toward Islam is […] illustrated here by the Vatican, in a fresco commemorating 700 years of crusades, and in the image of a conquered and abject race."[83] Important here is the fact that this subjugation of a "conquered and abject race" is not merely an act deriving from a brute quest for power, but from a divinely sanctioned civilizational mission. In that sense, they are a historical equivalent to the crusades of the Bush administration aiming to bring

Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others," *The New York Times*, May 23, 2004, http://www.nytimes.com/2004/05/23/magazine/regarding-the-torture-of-others.html?_r=0. Film maker Errol Morris controversially challenged the question at what level the images from Abu Ghraib could operate as evidence at all, due to the very nature of photography, writing that: "What we see is not independent of our beliefs. Photographs provide evidence, but no shortcut to reality. Photographic evidence – like all evidence – needs to be seen in context. It needs to be evaluated. If seeing itself is belief-laden, then there is no seeing independent of believing, and the 'truism' has to be reversed. Believing is seeing and not the other way around." Errol Morris, "Will the Real Hooded Man Please Stand Up," *The New York Times,* Aug. 15, 2007, http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/08/15/will-the-real-hooded-man-please-stand-up/.

81 Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, p. 3.

82 Ibid., p. 79.

83 Ibid., p. 66.

democracy to Afghanistan and Iraq. Once the false gods Osama bin Laden or Saddam Hussein would be destroyed, the savage bodies they held in their power could become civilized. In this logic, violence, subjection, and torture become part of an arsenal representing divinely sanctioned liberation. Violence and subjection, in Raphael's aesthetic vocabulary, are essentially transformed into an act of mercy toward the "abject race." This is how the pathos formula operated in the century leading up to the *congregation de propaganda fide* that we discussed in the first chapter, and this is how it reappears through the resurrected sovereignty of the Bush administration in the 21st century.

In the context of Abu Ghraib, the process of inscribing an oppressive ideology of master and slave into our bodies and brains, and subsequently into the bodies and brains of the subjected Them, results in what Eisenman describes as an "intimate theater of cruelty."[84] This is not the conception of cruelty in transgressive theater described by playwright, actor, and poet Antonin Artaud in his *First Manifesto for a Theatre of Cruelty* (1931). For Artaud, the notion of cruelty did not entail the promotion of an act of violence against another person, but rather articulated an existential condition that, in all its meaninglessness and desperation, should be embraced and expressed collectively through the cathartic space that is the theater.[85] Abu Ghraib's cruelty is Artaud in reverse, by enacting unacknowledged, orientalizing violence upon another through a pathos formula that eroticizes suffering.

The photos of naked prisoners, sometimes covered with women's underwear, sometimes with the heads of one prisoner forcefully placed in direct contact with the genitals of another, sometimes in piles of suggestive orgies, depict the "supposed, perverse desires of Islamic detainees" from the perspective of the torturers.[86] The message is that while these Muslim bodies claim to strive for religious purity and fundamentalist devotion, their actual sexuality is not different from – or even more perverse than – Western subjects seeking pleasure in pornography and liberated sexual exchanges.[87] The master narrative is thus

84 Ibid., p. 101.

85 In Artaud's words: "The theater will never find itself again – i.e., constitute a means of true illusion – except by furnishing the spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusory, but interior." Antonin Artaud, *The Theater and its Double* (New York: Grove Press, 1958), p. 92.

86 Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, p. 101.

87 It is also in this light that we should see the media obsession with the "discovery" of Osama bin Laden's collection of pornography, presented as some form of evidence that the actual frustrated desires of Islamist militants would be the same as those of citizens in the "liberal" West. See: Spencer Ackerman, "Osama bin Laden's Pornography Stash to Remain under Wraps, US Decides," *The Guardian*, May 20, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/may/20/osama-bin-laden-porn-stash-remain-under-wraps-us-intelligence-decides. A similar case concerns current UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson,who implied that pornography found in the possession of Islamic State militants would explain their violence as an expression of the suppression of sexual frustration, different from the liberal West that would already have overcome such "backward" repression. See: Frances Perraudin and Shiv Malik, "Boris Johnson:

that the acts depicted in the Abu Ghraib photographs are not torture, but a process of "emancipating" the prisoners into embracing their actual desires through the benevolence of the crusaders. Simultaneously, these desires are also criminalized, for homosexual in nature: the sexual desire of the Muslim captive body is thus not to enjoy the same sexuality as the crusader, but a supposedly oppressed kind of sexuality, which continues to be problematic in various ways within the US military itself.[88]

But not only the supposedly oppressed desire of the prisoner is at play here. There are also the "actual, un-repressed desires of the US prison guards who freely wield guns, fists, handcuffs, dogs and leashes" at their prisoners.[89] The supposed bestiality of their prisoners grants the guards the right – in the light of Raphael's *Battle of Ostia*, even the *divine task* – to shame them, and thus to affirm their own "feeling of national and racial superiority"[90] and the "naturalness and inevitability of [a] political, economic and cultural system – continuously under threat by nations on the periphery or semi-periphery – whereby the United States occupies the core of a global order."[91] At best, the prisoners of Abu Ghraib – following Ould Slahi's writings – can gain redemption as slaves in their master's house, for no torture method in the world could ever elevate them to the level of actual equality with the torturer. We thus see how the new reality of expanded state realism in the West are enacted by Us as cruel and divine mercy upon the bodies of those declared non-human in the war prisons of Guantánamo Bay and Abu Ghraib.

Different from the theatrical spectacles discussed earlier, the intimate theater of cruelty staged by the guards in Abu Ghraib was never meant to become public. But once it did, its underlying logic was not challenged, but normalized. Popular Fox talk-show host Rush Limbaugh didn't consider torture at Abu Ghraib to be any different from "a Skull and Bones initiation."[92] This proves that the intimate theater of cruelty thus can be easily incorporated in the performative spectacle characteristic of expanded state realism. Enacted at home first, the new reality of expanded state realism is subsequently inscribed upon the bodies of others, and the images resulting from this extended per-

Jihadis are Porn-Watching 'Wankers'," *The Guardian*, Jan. 30, 2015, http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2015/jan/30/boris-johnson-jihadis-are-porn-watching-wankers.

88 Katie Miller and Andrew Clay, "The Battles that Remain: Military Service and LGBT Equality," *Center for American Progress*, Sep. 20, 2013, https://cdn.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/LGBTmilitary-11.pdf.

89 Eisenman, *The Abu Ghraib Effect*, p. 101.

90 Ibid., p. 98.

91 Ibid., p. 99.

92 A radio interview even quoted him saying "I'm talking about people having a good time! […] We have these pictures of homoeroticism that look like standard good-old American pornography." Ibid., p. 98.

formance finally return to become part of the spectacle at home.

The transformation of the public spectacle of expanded state realism into the intimate theater of cruelty and back again is discussed in the book-project *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (2008) by performance artist Coco Fusco. Fusco expands the analysis of Eisenman by showing how expanded performance does not only destroy the bodies of Them, but strategically includes the destruction of emancipatory feminist and LGBTQI+ heritage at the same time by effectively introducing this heritage as part of torture and war techniques.

Similar to Eisenman, Fusco recognizes in Abu Ghraib a "theater of cruelty,"[93] which manifests itself in the form of an "intercultural theater imposed upon an unwilling audience of one."[94] Carefully avoiding the idea that using the notion of theater could be interpreted as a way of softening the reality of torture, Fusco emphasizes that "torture is painfully real," but that this indisputable reality does not change the fact that "theater and performance are crucial to make it work."[95] An important part of Fusco's analysis of the mechanisms of the intimate theater of cruelty, is the use of female bodies in the process of torturing prisoners. When a woman enacts torture, the act becomes framed through motherhood and care, while it could even simultaneously be codified as a sexual act. It replaces the brutal image of the male torturer by "young and naïve white women," constituting a new sexualized category of women in the form of "torture chicks."[96] Torture perpetrated by a woman can by definition not be torture, it is suggested, because the nature of women is incapable of torture as such.[97] Rather, a prisoner should be delighted with free stripteases and BDSM-type subjection. Women become military leaders, soldiers, and torturers – suggesting the realization of feminist demands by showing them as equals to men in the war effort – but the way in which the stereotypes of their gender are employed shows that this formal equality is structured on the inequalities of the past.[98]

93 Coco Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2008), p. 51.

94 Ibid., p. 68.

95 Ibid. On the relation between torture, art, and performance, see further: Wafaa Bilal, *Shoot an Iraqi* (San Francisco: City Lights Publishers, 2008); Sandra Johnson, *Beyond a Reasonable Doubt: An Investigation of Doubt, Risk and Testimony Through Performance Art Processes in Relation to Systems of Legal Justice* (Zurich/Münster: Lit, 2014).

96 Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, p. 20.

97 With regard to the use of women torturers at Abu Ghraib, Zillah Eisenstein notes: "These women should be held responsible and accountable; but they also are gender decoys. As decoys they create confusion by participating in the very sexual humiliation that their gender is usually victim to. This gender swapping and switching leaves masculinist/racialized gender in place. Just the sex has changed; the uniform remains the same. Male or female can be a masculinized commander, or imperial collaborator while white women look like masculinist empire builders and brown men look like women and homos." Zillah Eisenstein, "Sexual Humiliation, Gender Confusion and the Horrors at Abu Ghraib," *Znet*, Jun. 22, 2004, https://zcomm.org/znetarticle/sexual-humiliation-gender-confusion-and-the-horrors-at-abu-ghraib-by-zillah-eisenstein/.

98 Lindsey German, for example, notes that while first ladies Laura Bush and Cherie Blair actively campaigned for the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq as a form of women's liberation

Enlisting herself and her students in a so-called Survival, Evasion, Resistance and Escape (SERE) training, Fusco attempts not just to analyze the employment of women as instruments of war and torture in the War on Terror, but also to learn to embody and enact the scripts in which they are implicated.[99] During a 2007 symposium in the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) entitled "The Feminist Future," Fusco appeared in full army uniform, acting as a United States Army representative addressing the importance of women in the War on Terror. Claiming she has for months been informing the civil population on the issue, Fusco introduces the importance of women and their "use of sexual innuendo as a crucial weapon in the fight against global terrorism."[100] Bypassing any use of covert language, Fusco continues:

> We exploit the vulnerability that is common in Islamic fundamentalists in order to get them to cooperate with us. The sexual freedom women gained in the twentieth century has turned out to be a highly effective means of disarming our enemies.[101]

In the course of her speech, Fusco does not merely over-identify the role of a United State army representative. She slowly but surely begins to name the ties between the military world and the world of arts. "Many of us in the military feel kinship with those of you in the arts," she continues, "[m]ilitary intelligence involves the careful study of culture, and like you, we seek to understand people's beliefs and learn how to shape them."[102] Comparing the role of the interrogator to that of the performance artist, Fusco turns to the infrastructural composition of both the military and art institution, observing that "[b]oth institutions are guardians of this country's sacred freedoms,"[103] and both "maintain amicable and productive relations with multinational corporations, and our operations run best when unsavory details re-

from patriarchal Islamist rule, equal rights at home were not granted: "[T]he US has failed to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to its constitution and […] this particular president has repeatedly supported attacks on abortion rights and choice, as well as cutting off funding to international family planning organizations that were involved in abortion advice or counselling, the high-minded aims of liberating Afghan women by bombing them has also failed in its own terms." Lindsey German, "Women and the War on Terror," *Feminist Review*, No. 88: War (2008): pp. 140–49, at p. 143.

99 Fusco's book includes a series of pictures illustrating sixteen torture techniques actively used in Abu Ghraib and later in Guantánamo Bay, such as "Dietary Manipulation," "Use of Loud Music," and "Sleep Management." But Fusco's book project also includes specific torture techniques that are scripted specifically for women, such as "Mild Non-Injurous Physical Contact," illustrated by a female interrogator touching the face of a prisoner with what is supposedly her underwear; "Stress Position," which – rather than imposing durational stress on the muscles of a prisoner – is depicted here as sexualized contact with a woman's body, moving in an eroticized striptease-like manner upon the prisoner; and "Fear Up Harsh," in which a woman interrogator smears the face of a prisoner with fake menstrual blood, retrieved from her vaginal area. The use of the female torturer here is supposed to impact the prisoner in an amplified way, following the presumption that Muslims have a cultural phobia for liberal sexuality and the very idea of a woman-master, while simultaneously secretly desiring her at the same time.

100 Fusco, *A Field Guide for Female Interrogators*, p. 97.

101 Ibid.

102 Ibid., p. 98.

103 Ibid., p. 97.

main far from the public view."[104] Ending with six proposals to actively continue the instrumentalization of feminist history as a weapon of cultural warfare, Fusco lays bare the intimate theater of cruelty: not as a site of violent excess, but as a site where macro-politics is performed on a micro-political scale. The use of female torturers is part of a recuperation of the emancipatory gestures of the feminist and LGBTQI+ movements, transformed into symbols of Western civilization and exceptionalism, and thus into effective weapons in a new crusade that is essentially antithetical to everything these movements stood for.

Through the work of Eisenman and Fusco we see how the aesthetic category of a pathos formula that eroticizes suffering is enacted through extended performance in the intimate theater of cruelty, based on dehumanizing depictions of Them created through spectacular theater, games, and cinema of expanded state realism. We further note that this category of Them is preliminarily focused on the body of the so-called terrorist, but can further instrumentally include other dissident and critical emancipatory heritage such as that of feminist and LGBTQI+ movements. Engaging them as torturers or as torture instruments not only tortures the body of a prisoner that represents Them, but also tortures a culture of emancipation.

Expanded state realism thus creates performative spectacles in the domains of theater, games, and cinema to establish a new reality. We observe how War on Terror Propaganda consists of an extended performance in which this reality is transposed onto bodies of those whom we do not define as citizens. The image of imminent destruction and survival is now enacted in real time, in the form of war and torture, establishing an imagined reality as a material one that benefits the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state. We define performance here as a part of the final act through which an imagined reality is constructed into a material one, in the form of intimate theaters of cruelty in the interest of the expanded state.

To finish our inquiry of War on Terror Propaganda Art, let us now turn to the second dominant style of expanded state abstraction, and see in what way it connects to and supports what we have so far discussed as expanded state realism.

EXPANDED STATE ABSTRACTION: VOIDS AND VISUAL ART

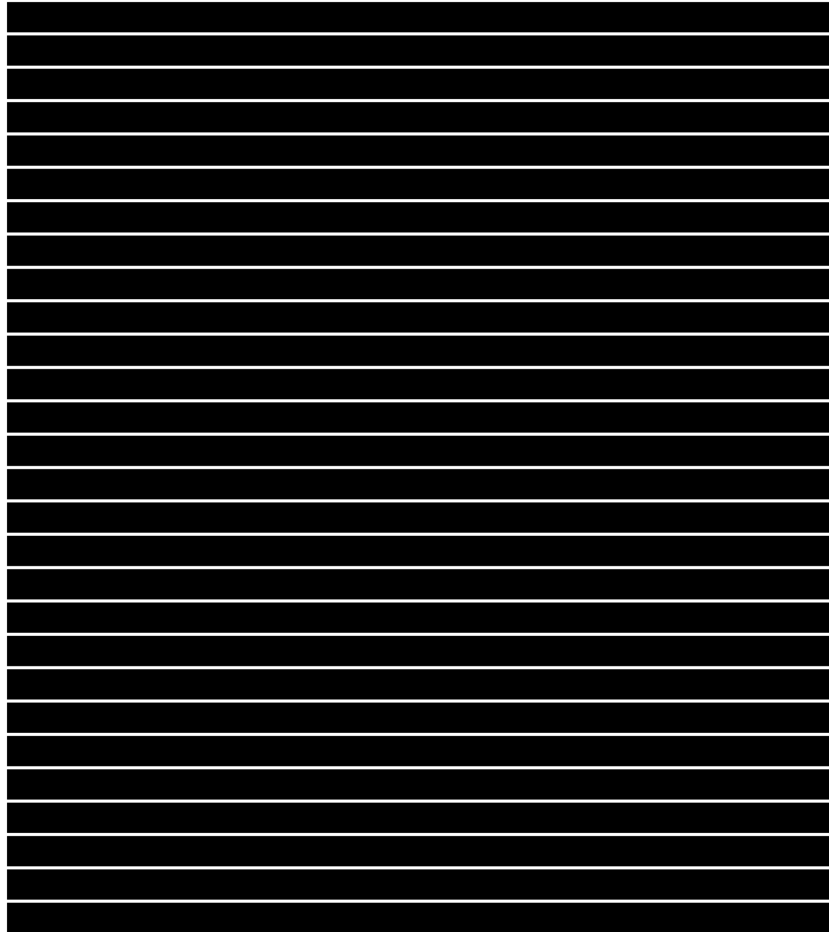
As we mentioned above, expanded state realism is but one of two interrelated styles; the other is what we propose as expanded state abs-

104 Ibid., p. 99.

traction. It is an abstraction that takes the form of the black censorship rectangles on Mohamedou Ould Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary*. By blocking our understanding of the world an abstraction emerges, which is then substituted by the images of imminent societal destruction and an ever-threatening Them through the style of expanded state realism. In this section, we will discuss case studies of this aesthetics of expanded abstraction, to understand how its style relates to expanded state realism and even makes it possible.

In Mohamedou Ould Slahi's *Guantánamo Diary*, there is a passage in which the author contrasts the subtlety of Arab music and poetry to what he perceives as the violence and rudeness of American culture. To prove his point, Ould Slahi adds a poem of his own, which did not pass the censorship regime of Guantánamo Bay. It reads as follows:

One of my poems went



—by Salahi, GTMO[105]

While we could consider Ould Slahi's Stateless Propaganda as a form of contemporary social realist literature, it is here confronted with the subtractive art of expanded state abstraction. Two very different forms of contemporary propaganda work against one another on the same pages. The erasure of Ould Slahi's poem shows us the iconoclastic production of an abstract image that represents the sheer power of the expanded state.[106] This practice of expanded state abstraction knows many forms. It manifests itself in government documents that areappear fully censored, containing nothing more than black rectangles on a white sheet of paper. It manifests itself in the disappearance of entire public archives that leave us behind with the blank spots of absent histories. It manifests itself in the erasure of actual humans, which, declared non-human, can be assassinated through drone warfare or destroyed by torture. What fuels the emergence of this expanded state abstraction is the notion of secrecy cultivated in an unprecedented manner and scale by the expanded state in the War on Terror, described by Masco as the "theatrical performance of secrecy as a means to power."[107]

One of the most prominent researchers of the culture of secrecy and

105 Ould Slahi, *Guantánamo Diary*, pp. 359–61.
106 This notion of iconoclasm as not only the destruction of an image, but also its simultaneous creation, thus interrogating the very question of what constitutes an image as such, is theorized and problematized by Sven Lütticken, who clarifies that what appears as image sometimes forms its mere abstraction. This is the case with the symbol of the Twin Towers, which Lütticken describes as a "double abstract effigy," an abstraction of capital in the form of hyper-modernist architecture "as much beyond representation as a monotheistic deity." Thus, the "iconoclastic" event of September 11 was not a creation of a void, but an event that made an existing void (the abstraction of capitalism) visible. See: Lütticken, *Idols of the Market*, pp. 125–26. See also Lütticken's exhibition *Art of Iconoclasm*, BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht/Centraal Museum Utrecht, Nov. 30, 2008–Mar. 1, 2009.
107 Masco, *The Theater of Operations*, p. 124.

its practice of expanded state abstraction is artist and geographer Trevor Paglen. It is in his double role that Paglen has attempted to map what "military and intelligence insiders call the 'black world.'"[108] Mapping in this case means both making the infrastructures of the expanded state – in Paglen's words, the "secret state" [109] – as well as the visual output generated by these very same structures visible. The former relate to how the expanded state operates outside of public view in the form of secret sites, classified aircraft and corporate offices, whereas the second relates to how the expanded state wants to be known – how it wants its *secrets to be visible* – to the public in the form of expanded state abstraction. The difference between the infrastructure and the visual output is that the first is a secret that is to remain secret, whereas the second is a secret that is supposed to be publicly known as secret.[110]

Geography, Paglen explains, finds its origins "in Renaissance exploration and the imperial mapmakers of royal courts," while contemporary geography "accommodates a wide range of research methods and topics all united by the axiom that everything happens somewhere, that all human and natural phenomena have [...] a geography."[111] The complexity of mapping the expanded state in the War on Terror is that its infrastructures are by definition conceived as a "secret geography," one that is not merely hidden by the state, but "designed to exist outside the law."[112] Paglen writes in this regard:

> The black world has sculpted the United States in numerous ways. Creating secret geographies has meant erasing parts of the Constitution, creating blank spots in the law, institutionalizing dishonesty in the halls of government, handing sovereign powers – what used to be the unlimited powers of monarchs over their subjects and territories – to the executive branch, making the nation's economy dependent upon military spending, and turning our own history into a state secret.[113]

So how does one fill in the blank spots on the map of a secret geography that is aimed at turning our own histories into a state secret? Weary of his work being implicated in the domain of conspiracy theory,

108 Trevor Paglen, *Blank Spots on the Map: The Dark Geography of the Pentagon's Secret World* (London: New American Library, 2010), p. 4.
109 Ibid., p. 5.
110 This is not exactly the same as what Lütticken describes as "the public sphere as a structural conspiracy," with which he refers to the "silence and selectiveness in the mass media" and the "aversion to investigating the neoconservatives' plan to wage war in Iraq, which existed even before 9/11." In that sense, the notion of the public sphere a structural conspiracy comes closer to what Chomsky and Herman describe as the effect of the anti-communist filter in the propaganda model, which indeed structurally "conspires" against questioning the conditions of normative reality. See: Sven Lütticken, *Secret Publicity* (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2005), pp. 194–95.
111 Paglen, *Blank Spots on the Map*, p. 8.
112 Ibid., p. 140.
113 Ibid., p. 275.

Paglen's approach is to keep "[i]nsisting on the black world's materiality,"[114] which translates into a vast body of field work building concrete evidence of the secret geography's existence, of the people it impacts and the sites it creates. For even a site designated as a nowhere, Paglen argues, "must exist somewhere."[115] For a large part, Paglen's research relies on the work of activists and amateur investigators who have in one way or another been confronted with the expanded state. One example is native American activist Carrie Dann, whose native claim to the land Newe Sogobia failed because its history was classified as it was turned into a military test site. Another example is amateur astronomer Ted Molczan, who came across spy satellites, and began to map their behaviors. Finally, there are the families of engineer Robert Palya and sheet metal worker Walter Kaszka, both of whom died due to government negligence during their work in classified government operations, and whose cause of death became a secret. In other words, Paglen allies himself with people who have observed, lived, or even became part of the abstractions produced by the expanded state: bodies, sites, even skies turning into voids – into abstractions.

Paglen essentially juxtaposes this material evidence with the blank spots in military budgets. His main focus here is on what is known as the "black budgets," the covert funding structures that are meant to keep the infrastructures of the expanded state afloat.[116] Taking the public 2007–2009 Air Force budget of research, development, testing, and evaluation programs as a starting point, Paglen maps items with either cryptic indications such as "COBRA BALL" or "FOREST GREEN," or items with non-descript indications such as "Special Activities" or simply "Classified Programs," of which allocated budgets are not mentioned. But taking the whole of the expenditure indicated in the document, the blind spots of the total budget translate into a concrete sum:

> By adding up all of the individual items in the various parts of the defense budget and comparing that number to the published total, one can derive a basic sketch of the black budget's scale. For the fiscal year 2009 RDT&E budget, for example, the sum of all the line items is about $64,091,301,000. The published total is $79,615,941,000. The difference between the two numbers is the total cost of unacknowledged programs: about $15,524,640,000.

114 Ibid., p. 36.
115 Ibid., p. 253.
116 See also Marieke de Goede's detailed study of on terrorist and counter-terrorist finance in the War on Terror: Marieke de Goede, *Speculative Security: The Politics of Pursuing Terrorist Monies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012.

> This number is the black budget's cornerstone, but is only a part of the overall black budget.[117]

This secret geography funded by the black budget and operated by four million people with security clearances, Paglen argues, represents an industry of public–private character that is essentially larger than the civil servants operating in the "white" world: "The black world, then, is much more than an archipelago of secret bases," for "[i]t is a secret *basis* underlying much of the American economy."[118] But what is invisible in this budget can be made visible by constructing, step by step, a parallel budget that shows what is designated as non-existent is actually materially existent. This in turn provides leads for further fieldwork.

In his book project *I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have to Be Destroyed By Me* (2008), Paglen further showcases the aesthetics of expanded state abstraction. The project is essentially a catalogue of badges produced by the Pentagon to be worn by operatives involved in classified missions which display a wide array of symbols, such as magicians, dragons, eagles, aliens, swords, geometrical patterns, skulls, panthers, satellites, planets, and aircraft, accompanied by short titles such as "A LIFETIME OF SILENCE BEHIND THE GREEN DOOR," or "ALONE AND UNAFRAID." Paglen considers these badges to be a "language" with its own "grammar," whose "number of stars on an image might represent a unit number or an operating location; the symbols on a patch could be clues to the purpose of a hidden program or a cover story designed to divert attention away from the program."[119] Even a classified program and its members must be recognizable in some way, at least among themselves. The badges thus serve both an internal and an external function. Internally, they provide the badge holder with a mystical symbolism of a secret society, which counters what Paglen calls the "hopeless banality" of the concrete, everyday functioning of the infrastructures of the expanded state.[120] Externally, they communicate an image of mystical and impenetrable power that aims at keeping the likes of Paglen and his alliance of amateur geographers and activists at a distance. These badges show us how the expanded state wishes to understand its own power internally and externally

117 Paglen, *Blank Spots on the Map*, p. 181.
118 Ibid., p. 277.
119 Trevor Paglen, *I Could Tell You But Then You Would Have to Be Destroyed by Me* (New York: Melville House Publishing, 2010), p. 7.
120 Paglen, *Blank Spots on the Map*, p. 275. Inevitably this provokes a reference to Hannah Arendt's notion of the "banality of evil" from her reports of the Eichmann process in Jerusalem, in which she described the unbearable contradiction between the theatrical staging of Eichmann as an embodiment of Nazi evil, and the rather dull and bureaucratic – banal – presence and logic of Eichmann himself.

through codified visual symbols. These are symbols that, in the hands of Paglen, become recognized as a *form of art* and can be analyzed as such, just as we have come to understand how other cultural elements of War on Terror Propaganda, from games to television, can be understood as part of an expanded definition of art in the context of contemporary propaganda.

The badges collected by Paglen suggest that the aesthetic theory of expanded state abstraction essentially aims at visualizing what is engineered to be invisible. It represents a paradoxical visible invisibility.[121] But the visible invisibility of expanded state abstraction in the work of Paglen is more than an object of research, for it simultaneously structures his own aesthetic output in the form of artworks. Sometimes Paglen's artworks consist of collected materials – found footage such as the badges – but in other cases, Paglen displays images that he has taken to document the infrastructures of the expanded state. A project such as *The Other Night Sky*, takes the research of amateur astronomers as its starting point. A work such as *STSS-1 and Two Unidentified Spacecraft over Carson City (Space Tracking and Surveillance System; USA 205)* from 2010 consists of seemingly abstract photographic prints showcasing neat red whirlpools of light. Another work, *PAN (Unknown; USA-207)* from 2010–11, displays a diagonal set of bright rays set against a sky of shaded blues. Through their titles these artworks indicate the presumed presence of a classified aircraft or satellite, but the images essentially contains no information at all – not more than the badges of classified operations that Paglen collects. Something similar is at stake in *Limit Telephotography*, in which Paglen shows images resulting from his attempt to photograph classified military bases and installations, varying from a blurred image of what seems to be a rectangular building (*Open Hangar, Cactus Flats, NV, Distance ~ 18 miles, 10:04 a.m*, 2007) to an image of a horizontal string of faraway lights at night (*Detachment 3, Air Force Flight Test Center #2, Groom Lake, NV, Distance ~26 Miles,* 2008).[122]

Despite Paglen's crucial deconstruction of the impenetrable and mystical projection of expanded state abstraction, these artworks seem

121 Somewhat equivalent to the notion of visible invisibility is Lütticken's conception of "opaque transparency," which he describes as the conscious staging of the secret by a given regime: "What if those who kidnap and torture today depend on public exposure and visibility as part and parcel of what they do? In other words, what if these things can go on today because they are too clearly visible, broad-cast live, entirely predictable – in fact, they have been announced outright in advance?" See: Sven Lütticken, "Secrets of the See-Through Factory," *Open*, No. 22 (2011): pp. 100–24, at p. 104.
122 Thomas Keenan accurately observes that in Paglen's visual work we are not so much confronted with singular evidence, but rather with what he terms "evidence of evidence." Paglen makes "an effort simply to establish the possibility that some of these things might exist in the public realm." Thomas Keenan, "Disappearances: On the Photographs of Trevor Paglen," in Meg McLagan and Yates McKee, *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), p. 47.

to re-instate exactly this mysticism, a sublimation of the language of secrecy in expanded state abstraction. There seems to be a pleasure at play here, of Paglen himself having become somehow part of the secret geography he claims to map, his own work fetishizing the language of expanded state abstraction that he simultaneously aims to decode. Few stakeholders in the secret geography of the expanded state would object to these abstract photographs, which actually further amplify the cult of secrecy and encryption to which Paglen even adds *elegance* by means of his language of high-conceptual aesthetics. Expanded state abstraction even manages to reproduce itself through the artist that claims to critically research its aesthetics. This makes Paglen paradoxically both a critical researcher of War on Terror Propaganda, and a War on Terror Propaganda artist at the same time.

What the expanded state wants us to know needs to remain unknown. In that sense, former US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld's notion of the "known unknowns" as the aesthetic paradigm of War on Terror Propaganda, holds for both expanded state abstraction and expanded state realism. In the case of expanded state realism, the known unknown takes the form of an endless variety of threat projections and imaginaries, in the case of the expanded state abstraction it takes the form of blank spots and cryptic badges.

To summarize, in the case of the second dominant style of War on Terror Propaganda Art, expanded state abstraction, we observe the creation of voids, classifications, and symbols that turn our histories, territories, and even bodies, into abstractions. We define the role of performance here as the process through which the expanded state enacts its own symbols of secrecy (the visible invisible) with the aim to construct reality after the interests of the expanded state.

WAR ON TERROR PROPAGANDA ART: SUMMARY

Before we continue to discuss the second category of contemporary propaganda art in the form of *Popular Propaganda Art*, let us formulate our observations on the manifold dimensions of War on Terror Propaganda Art in the following conclusions:

- War on Terror Propaganda Art is a contemporary propaganda art developed through the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state that produces images of imminent societal destruction and survival through the Us/Them dichotomy;
- War on Terror Propaganda Art manifests itself in the two interdependent styles of expanded state realism and expanded state abstraction. The latter is directed at erasing public history, territories, and bodies, so that the former can replace it with the image of imminent destruction and future survival;

- War on Terror Propaganda Art aims at transforming a staged reality into a material one. In its final phase, this takes the shape of extended performance, resulting in the discrediting of emancipatory political–cultural heritage and the torture or destruction of others;
- War on Terror Propaganda Art aims at transforming an imaginary reality into a material one, to strengthen the public–private infrastructures of the expanded state.

4.2 POPULAR PROPAGANDA ART

Through Butler's *Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly* we already touched upon aspects of popular mass movements that relate directly to the sphere of the artistic, through her use of the concept of "performance." In her work, we come across a range of terms that relate directly to the domain of the artistic, such as "assemblage," the "theatrical" dimension of the assembly, and the "morphology" of its social forms.[123] So, while popular mass movements are not art in and of themselves, there seems to be a role that art plays within these movements.

There are voices that argue the contrary, such as Yates McKee, an activist and historian who wrote a history of art as it emerged during and after the Occupy movement. Yates claims that "Occupy as a totality – rather than just this or that phenomena within it – can itself arguably be considered an artistic project in its own right, assuming we reimagine our sense of what art is or can be."[124] We will examine this claim in some more detail below. For now, we will start from the idea that popular mass movements themselves are not works of art, but that art nevertheless plays a continuous role in the overall manifestation of these movements. On the one hand, because there are aspects of popular mass movements that we can analyze through artistic terminology, as Butler has done, and on the other, because there are artists involved and actively working within these popular mass movements.

Evidently, this observation is not exclusive to the 21st century. Throughout this section, we will refer to historical examples of artists joining precarious constituents in popular mass movements, ranging from the civil rights and black power movements in the United States, antiwar movements, feminist and LGBTQI+ activists, as well as environmental organizations. But we do so with the aim of employing these historical examples to conceptualize Popular Propaganda Art as a *contemporary* practice, and to understand how it operates as a category in relation or in opposition to what we have previously discussed as War on Terror Propaganda Art.

123 Judith Butler, *Towards a Performative Theory of Assembly*, pp. 68, 85, 87. Whereas the term "morphology" today has significance in different domains such as linguistics, biology, and mathematics, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is considered to have defined the term in relation to the study of plants, rejecting examinations of plant organisms in the tradition of Linnaean taxonomy: "The close proximity of Goethe's perception of art and his study of nature suggests that the choice of the same methods for both fields is based on similar intentions. In several essays, Goethe wrote about his aims as a scientist […]. His intensive visual examination of natural phenomena, his efforts to objectify empirical observations, to use comparisons, and to establish series of observations, formed the basis for his project of morphology. Goethe defined morphology as 'the science of form (*Gestalt*), formation (*Bildung*) and transformation (*Umbildung*) of organic bodies.' Morphology was based on careful examination of forms and their modifications under different external circumstances, as well as on intuition in order to find archetypes (*Typen*, *Urphänomene*) and fundamental rules of their (trans)formation." Johannes Grave, "Ideal and History: Johann Wolfgang Goethe's Collection of Prints and Drawings," *Artibus et Historiae* Vol. 27, No. 53 (2006): pp. 175-186, at p. 183.

124 Yates McKee, *Strike Art* (London/New York: Verso, 2016), p. 27.

The notion of the "popular" in Popular Propaganda emerges through the collective demands of widely diverse precarious groups. We have begun to explore these demands through the inverted Chomsky and Herman propaganda model and its five filters of *democratization, grass roots mobilization, public knowledge, transparency,* and *collectivity*. It is through the performance of these collective demands – performance being, as Butler argues, the main "power" of the precariat – that a composition or assemblage emerges, to which we can refer as a "people." This composition of a people emerges through the performance of the popular and through the precarious infrastructures that propose alternative institutions and models of (self)governance operating as the life-support for what we will discuss as a "people-in-the-making." Important in Butler's definition is that the concept of a "people" can only and always be in the making; just like the popular mass movement – through its various demands – is continuously in the making. As such, the process of composing a people through the popular mass movement confronts the conditions of the Us/Them dichotomy central to War on Terror Propaganda Art. What we come to define as "Us" is redefined through a new alliance, a new composition, of precarious people. A people not as a fixed or universalized category but as a transitory one.

Popular Propaganda Art plays a role in both the *performance of the popular* and the *composition of a people*. Our aim will be to understand how the work of artists has been shaped through their engagement with popular mass movements, how they have contributed to their precarious infrastructures, mobilization, and the composition of a people resulting from them. By means of the work of different historians we will begin by articulating a *Popular Art History,* narrating the intersection between popular mass movements and art. We will observe that a reoccurring aim of Popular Propaganda Art is to construct a form of *Popular Realism,* which is not so much a "style" but should rather be understood as an *objective*. We can understand this objective as the construction of reality structured by the demands of popular mass movements.

Subsequently, we will break down the practice of Popular Propaganda Art into three organizational components. The first one is *Assemblism*. This is essentially the practice of performative assembly discussed by Butler, which is characterized by and can partly be analyzed through an artistic vocabulary, but is not meant to be art as such. The second and third organizational models of Popular Propaganda Art are the direct result of artistic practices, namely *Embedded Art* and *Organizational Art*. With Embedded Art, we refer to artists who work directly within existing popular mass movements, political organizations, parties, and unions. With Organizational Art we refer to artists who establish their own alternative models of "artist organizations" in direct relation to popular mass movements, with the dual aim of exploring the artist organization as an artwork in and of itself, while simultaneously aiming to use this organization-as-artwork to bring about social change.

To understand what Popular Propaganda Art is or could be, we must first engage with the work of those who have tried to narrate alternative histories of art that emphasize the intersection between emerging forms of power and art, so that we can arrive at a more precise understanding of the political conditions that allow us to articulate Popular Propaganda Art as a contemporary practice. It is important here to emphasize that we will sometimes retrospectively apply this term to specific artistic practices within popular mass movements of the past, which themselves might not have used it. We will thus *assemble* the term Popular Propaganda Art through these different case studies to define its contemporary manifestation and practice.

POPULAR ART HISTORY

Popular Propaganda Art, despite what its name might suggest, is not exactly popular; it is far from common practice within the institution of art at large. As artist and key proponent of the movement of Institutional Critique Andrea Fraser argued in her essay "L'1%, C'est Moi" (2011), the art market thrived throughout the period of the 2007–8 economic crisis rather than collapsed like many other sectors did.[125] The so-called 1%, a term coined during the 2011 international Occupy movement designating the contemporary global class that owns the means of production, forms the dominant segment of shareholders in the infrastructure of contemporary art.[126] This brings Fraser to

125 Institutional Critique manifested itself in the 1960s and '70s parallel to the growing revolts against normative historiographies and their institutional embedding, with the aim of interrogating the conditions of production of art itself. Central questions of Institutional Critique were directed at the political, economic, and ideological investments made in the context of the institution that we call "art" – the museum, the contemporary art institution, the gallery, the public or private funder, the collector – and how these conditions impact the artist and the work of art. Artists involved in the "first wave" of Institutional Critique in the 1960s and '70s, such as Hans Haacke, developed artworks that were essentially embodiments of Émile Zola's infamous declaration "*J'accuse…!,*" directed at the museum. "Second-wave" Institutional Critique from the '80s and '90s, such as the work of Fraser, instead began pointing out that the artist is equally an embodiment of the institution of art: "Every time we speak of the 'institution' as other than 'us,' we disavow our role in the creation and perpetuation of its conditions. We avoid responsibility for, or action against, the everyday complicities, compromises, and censorship – above all, self-censorship – which are driven by our own interests in the field and the benefits we derive from it." See: Andrea Fraser, "From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique," *Artforum* Vol. 44, No. 1, (September 2005): pp. 100-106, at p. 105.

126 The term "1%" is the inverse of the original Occupy Wall Street slogan "We Are the 99%," which referred to the majority of population that is structurally excluded from the power and wealth of the "1%." Anarchist and anthropologist David Graeber is usually referenced as either inspiration if not inventor of the slogan. See: Stuart Jeffries, "David Graeber Interview:

the conclusion that, while she herself is a relatively precarious cultural worker, the outcomes of her work, if anything, only benefit the "1%," and thus concludes: "the 1% is me":

> Any claim that we represent a progressive social force while our activities are directly subsidized by the engines of inequality can only contribute to the justification of that inequality – the (not so) new legitimation function of art museums. The only "alternative" today is to recognize our participation in that economy and confront it in a direct and immediate way in all of our institutions, including museums, and galleries, and publications. Despite the radical political rhetoric that abounds in the art world, censorship and self-censorship reign when it comes to confronting its economic conditions, except in marginalized (often self-marginalized) arenas where there is nothing to lose – and little to gain – in speaking truth to power.[127]

While art is often presented as the ultimate civilizational proof of enlightened and supposedly civilized liberal democratic regimes, the access, validation, and circulation of art is to a large extent concentrated in the hands of a well-off elite. Protests of contemporary artists whose work has been collected by the daughter of President Donald Trump, Ivanka Trump, may seem progressive signals of the art world unwilling to legitimize the deeply racist and dangerous Trump regime, but it is important to pose the question how Ivanka Trump acquired these artworks in the first place.[128] Donald Trump's racism and sexism were well known before his election, and so were his daughter's ties to his business empire. To discuss the role of art in the context of Popular Propaganda Art also means to acknowledge that even though the vast majority of the infrastructures of contemporary art provides lip service to emancipatory politics, it is at its core organized along the neoliberal doctrine. As Fraser argued, it may even be considered an avant-garde of neoliberalism. The minority of artists that do engage with popular mass movements often do so in a compromised condition, which does not by definition mean that their work cannot be effective or that their

'So Many People Spend Their Working Lives Doing Jobs They Think Are Unnecessary," *The Guardian*, Mar. 21, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2015/mar/21/books-interview-david-graeber-the-utopia-of-rules?paging=off

127 Andrea Fraser, "L'1%, C'est Moi," *Texte Zur Kunst,* No. 83 (Sep. 2011): pp. 114–27, at p. 124.

128 See: Randy Kennedy, "Artists Lay Their Fears at Ivanka Trump's Door," *New York Times,* Nov. 28, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/28/arts/design/artists-lay-their-fears-at-ivanka-trumps-door.html?_r=0; Ben Kentish, "'Get My Work Off Your Walls': 'Embarrassed' Artists Tell Ivanka Trump to Take Their Work Down," *Independent*, Dec. 23, 2016, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/artists-ivanka-trump-new-york-halt-action-group-donald-trump-paintings-a7491391.html.

motivations are never genuine, but they are certainly not by definition an "opposite" force to neoliberalism. They work with, within, and through the increasingly global neoliberal condition. This is important to understand that Popular Propaganda Art, certainly in our contemporary condition, operates on a vastly smaller and more precarious scale than most of the art infrastructure. It also means that artists engaged in popular mass movements are continuously forced to work "in between worlds." They have side jobs or they try to benefit as much as possible from the art market, even though they might oppose the conditions of both, in order to invest these means in their practice of making an alternative social order possible.

Let us begin to explore examples of what we could term "popular art history" through the work of Upton Sinclair in relation to the international socialist uprisings in the 1920s, followed by the work of Lucy Lippard, who discussed art as propaganda from the perspective of the feminist movement in the 1970s and '80s, and the work of Alice Guillermo, who understands propaganda art as a form of "revolutionary realism" in the more than a century-long struggle of the Filipino underground resistance movement. We will then continue with additional, contemporary examples of art-historical writings that analyze artistic production parallel to popular mass movements in the work of Claudia Mesh and Claire Bishop. Finally, we will turn to an artistic engagement with a politicized art history through the work of Andrea Fraser, an artist–historian who opens up the possibility of a Popular Art History for the present day.

In the second chapter we already encountered the work of Sinclair and his book *Mammonart*, an attempt to write an alternative art history from the perspective of class struggle. We remember Sinclair's radical claim that "all art is propaganda," arguing that "from the dawn of human history, the path to honor and success in the arts has been through the service and glorification of the ruling classes; entertaining them, making them pleasant to themselves, and teaching their subjects and slaves to stand in awe of them."[129] In essence, Sinclair does not focus on what the artist makes, but what makes the artist: which structures of power define the conditions of their practice. This Marxist approach, a predecessor to Fraser's argument, first of all attempts to analyze the economic basis of society, to understand how art is constituted as part of the superstructure. Rather than serving the ruling classes, Sinclair claims that the "true purpose of art is to alter reality" – a concept, which, as we have seen in the previous section, is equally true for War

129 Sinclair, *MammonArt*, p. 7.

on Terror Propaganda Art.[130] Sinclair argues that the artist needs to reject the conditions set by the basis of society – the means of production owned by the ruling classes – in order to alter that basis, thus altering reality and changing the production, meaning, and ownership of art as such.

Introducing himself as a writer "that has for twenty-one years been carrying on a propaganda for Socialism,"[131] he discusses the work of French writer Honoré de Balzac and his literary exposés of the mores of high society of the early 19th century, which he describes as the "most perfect type of the predatory artist that has existed in human history; the art for art's sake ideal incarnate; genius devoid of conscience."[132] Sinclair counter-poses Balzac's work against the work of French writer Victor Hugo, who "sought remedies" to social inequality rather than just describing them, and "became a convert to revolutionary ideals,"[133] manifested most famously in his political novel *Les misérables* (1862). Sinclair reserves more nuanced descriptions for the Russian poet Nikolai Gogol, who on the one hand was valued by the czar, but simultaneously attempted to use his position of relative privilege to tell of the "misery of the serfs, and the incompetence and futility of the landlords."[134] In other words, it is not so easy to make an absolute division between reactionary and revolutionary art and culture, because works of art realized in compromised political conditions may still hold a political potential that manifests itself in less obvious ways, or in a time different from when they were initially created.

As Lütticken argues, "for Sinclair, the entire history of art was prehistorical,"[135] and throughout *MammonArt* he attempts to lay the foundation for a possible socialist history of art to come. In 1924, Sinclair sees a series of revolutions sweeping across Europe and Russia. He witnesses, in other words, the performance of the popular in the emergence of the growing self-consciousness of the proletariat – or in our time, the people-in-the-making we have discussed as the precariat in the previous chapter. And thus, Sinclair ends his exposé not with a historical conclusion, but by calling upon the artists of his world to collaborate on a new future history:

> The artists of our time are like men hypnotized, repeating over and

130 Ibid., p. 9.
131 Ibid., p. 11.
132 Ibid., p. 191.
133 Ibid., p. 194.
134 Ibid., p. 262.
135 Sven Lütticken, *Cultural Revolution: Aesthetic Practice After Autonomy* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), p. 128.

> over a dreary formula of futility. And I say: Break this evil spell, young comrade; go out and meet the new dawning life, take your part in the battle, and put it into a new art; do this service for a new public, which you yourselves will make. […] That your creative gift shall not be content to make art works, but shall at the same time make a world; shall make new souls, moved by a new ideal of fellowship, a new impulse of love, and faith – and not merely hope, but determination.[136]

Sinclair's attempt to challenge the ownership of art history and articulate a partisan Popular Art History through the rise of popular mass movements is taken up in the work of the American art critic, activist, and curator Lucy Lippard under the title *To the Third Power: Feminism, Art and Class Consciousness* (1984), and in particular her essay "Some Propaganda for Propaganda." Greenbergian art theory, Lippard argues, has created a taboo of what she calls "literary art," which "calls up content more specific and pointed than that promulgated by modernist doctrines."[137] But the concept of propaganda, she continues, should essentially be understood as nothing but education, which makes it possible that "art itself might escape from the ivory tower, from the clutches of the ruling/corporate class that releases and interprets it to the rest of the world."[138] Feminists, in Lippard's reading, should be capable of challenging the taboo of re-inventing art as education, as "Women artists' historical isolation has prepared them to resist taboos. Our lives have not been separate from our arts, as they are in the dominant culture."[139]

Criticizing the work of Jacques Ellul for the reduction of propaganda to a form of totalitarianism that can only result in enforced homogeneity through collective beliefs, Lippard is convinced that feminists can reinvent propaganda as an artistic practice able to challenge patriarchal, ruling-class historiography. This is what she describes as a "good propaganda" in the form of a "socially and esthetically aware provocation,"[140] whereas a "bad propaganda" is characterized by an "exploitative and oppressive economic control mechanism."[141] Although the links between Sinclair and Lippard are evident, she breaks with the male bias that is so prominent in his historiography. As part of a feminist propaganda of education Lippard specifically considers "fe-

136 Sinclair, *MammonArt*, p. 386.
137 Lucy Lippard, *To the Third Power: Feminism, Art, and Class Consciousness* (New York: Dutton, 1984), p. 114.
138 Ibid.
139 Ibid., p. 115.
140 Ibid., p. 116.
141 Ibid., pp. 116–17.

minist influence on the art of the seventies" as manifested in what she describes as "the prevalence of art open to dialogue – performance, video, film, music, poetry readings, panels and even *meetings*."[142] This, in her words, shows an alternative understanding of an "intimate kind of propaganda," one that is "inherently feminist" in the manner in which it introduced personal and intersocial relationships as part of our larger understanding and construction of reality:

> The spoken word is connected with the things most people focus on almost exclusively: the stuff of daily life and the kind of personal relationships everyone longs for in an alienated society. It takes place *between* people, with eye contact, human confusion and pictures (memory). It takes place in dialogues with friends, family, acquaintances, day after day. So one's intake of spoken propaganda is, in fact, the sum of daily communication.[143]

We can observe a relevant link between Butler's theory of performative assembly and Lippard's call for an "intimate propaganda," which should not, however, be interpreted as a marginal activity. Lippard agrees with Ellul that an ineffective propaganda – a propaganda that does not address the masses – is simply not propaganda. Performativity, and its manifestation in what Lippard calls "meetings," becomes a key term to relate the domains of the artistic and the political. Lippard nonetheless such practices as part of a feminist propaganda art still in the making, claiming that "[n]o one on the Left would deny the importance of propaganda. Yet it is a rare left-wing feminist who is interested in or even aware of the resources visual artists could bring to the struggle."[144] This, Lippard argues, is the result of the "current lack of sparks between art and propaganda […] due to a fundamental polarity that is in the best interests of those who decide things for us."[145] That fundamental polarity is of course the Greenbergian doctrine: art, in order to be defined as such, stands either beyond power, or is reduced to a second-degree literal art of politicized or even *feminized* propaganda, not considered to be worthy of the grand patriarchal canon. Instead, Lippard counters this doctrine with a feminist, intimate propaganda art, which she posits as the possibility of a "useful art" – a term that will re-occur in some contemporary writings that we will explore below.[146]

An example that connects Sinclair and Lippard is Filipino art historian Alice Guillermo's *Social Realism in the Philippines* (1987) and her major work *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines* (2001).[147] In Guillermo's discussion of protest and revolutionary art, two political and cultural movements are crucial when it comes to articulating the relation between aesthetic theory and popular mass movements. The first is that of (social-)realist art, as it developed in parallel to revolutionary movements in Europe; and the second is the role of Maoist cultural theory, as it impacted a variety of liberational and revolutionary movements throughout Asia, such as the one in the Philippines.[148] Through their intersection we can come to an understanding of protest and revolutionary art in the Philippines and the connection between Sinclair and Lippard.

The type of realism at stake is exemplified by Courbet in 19th-century France, who was involved in the uprisings of the Paris Commune and who called himself a "partisan of revolution" and "a realist."[149] Guillermo thus understands realism and, subsequently, social realism as art that aims to construct an emancipatory consciousness. It does not just depict what is real in the present, but what could become real once we confront the material reality of the present differently.[150] Guillermo intersects realism and social realism with the cultural theory laid out by Mao Zedong in the guerilla zone of Yenan, two years before seizing power, known today as the *Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art* (1948). Mao promotes the idea of expanding the artist's

142 Ibid., p. 117.
143 Ibid.
144 Ibid., p. 123.
145 Ibid.
146 Ibid., p. 121.

147 The revolutionary dimension of art discussed by Guillermo specifically relates to what is known as the "National Democratic Movement of the Philippines," which consists of a variety of underground movements and (semi-)legal political parties and organizations with a strong leftist, Maoist signature that have been active in the country ever since its armed resistance against the Marcos dictatorship. See: Jose Maria Sison and Jonas Staal (eds.), *Towards a People's Culture* (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2013).
148 The revolutionary strategy of Maoism is to base its constituency on a broad assembly of peasants, workers, but also petty bourgeoisie. It rejects the proletarian factory worker as its main constituency, starting instead from the material reality of so-called Third World Countries where peasants form a majority of the worker population, and industrialization has hardly been realized. Different from the Chinese People's Republic, the National Democratic Movement of the Philippines also included the mass involvement of activist factions in the Catholic Church. From the 1990s it recognized gay marriage and began to actively ally with the LGBTQI+ community. See: Coni Ledesma, "The New Revolutionary Proletariat of the Philippines: Building a Just and Democratic Society," lecture at the *4th New World Summit*, Royal Flemish Theater, Brussels, Sep. 20, 2014,
https://vimeo.com/120105215.
149 Alice G. Guillermo, *Social Realism in the Philippines* (Manila: Asphodel, 1987), p. 21. Courbet prominently displayed workers and peasants of the lower classes in his paintings – on formats similar to the ones used for kings and queens – thus introducing parts of society to the public imaginary that had essentially been existentially censored by the ruling aesthetic doctrines. At the same time, Courbet's own political orientation shows that his realism aimed to make the concrete struggles of lower classes visible. The workers or peasants turn into from a backdrop into the principal subject of art and manifest themselves in a new history, in which they become the historical agents.
150 Guillermo traces these ideals set forth by the French realists through the work of geographically dispersed movements, varying from German expressionists such as George Grosz and Otto Dix to American social realists such as Ben Shahn and the work of the Mexican muralists, such as Diego Rivera, José Clemente Orozco, and David Alfaro Siqueiros – each of whom were highly politicized through the labor struggles, anti-dictatorship resistance, and revolutions of their times, situating their work in direct relation to or even within concrete political struggles. Ibid., pp. 21-43.

competences by having them learn from the struggle of peasants and workers. This results in what he terms a "struggle on two fronts," form and content:

> We should esteem the specialists, for they are very valuable to our cause. But we should tell them that no revolutionary writer or artist can do any meaningful work unless he is closely linked with the masses, gives expression to their thoughts and feelings, and serves them as a loyal spokesman. Only by speaking for the masses can he educate them and only by being their pupil can he be their teacher. If he regards himself as their master, as an aristocrat who lords it over the "lower orders," then, no matter how talented he may be, he will not be needed by the masses and his work will have no future.[151]

The category that emerges from the overlap of social realism and Maoist cultural theory is what Guillermo terms "revolutionary realism," an art that aims at popularizing revolutionary ideals through the broad dissemination of art and culture, and whose knowledge in the form of aesthetic praxis derives from the concrete exchange and involvement within the day-to-day struggle of peasants and workers in the Philippines.[152] One could say that the notion of a people *becomes an aesthetic category in and of itself.* It is composed, assembled, and created through a montage of artistic means. This relates to Popular Propaganda Art's objective to compose a people, and we can term this the process in which art contributes to a people-in-the-making. In Guillermo's words:

> Because of its link to the revolution, aesthetic theory is necessarily affected by the immediacy and urgency of the people's struggle. As theory takes on the cogency of the revolution which is the praxis, the dialectical relationship between theory and praxis becomes vital.[153]

As a consequence, revolutionary realism developed its own particular traditions of "excellence" in the form of murals, theatrical interventions, and protest puppetry.[154] One example we find in the work of

151 Mao Tse Tung, "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," in Sison and Staal, *Towards a People's Culture*, p. 57.
152 Luis Jalandoni, "Cultural Imperialism vs People's Culture," lecture at the New World Academy, Nov. 15, 2013, https://vimeo.com/90777555.
153 Alice G. Guillermo, *Protest/Revolutionary Art in the Philippines 1970–1990* (Quezon City: University of Philippines Press, 2001) p. 28.
154 The popularization of revolutionary realism throughout the Philippines has taken the form of "posters, illustrations and comic books," which, Guillermo emphasizes, should not be considered as "low" art. Each carries "their own standards of excellence and significant art can be created of them." Ibid., p. 38.

contemporary groups such as the UGATLahi Artist Collective, which develop "effigies" (protest puppetry) used in mass demonstrations against the ruling governments. Figures of ruling Philippine presidents or foreign US aggressors are sculpted in the form of enormous puppets, and are carried by thousands of members belonging to labor unions, progressive political parties, and sometimes clandestine underground movements through the streets of Manila as a counter-act to the yearly State of the Nation Address (SONA) of the president in power. The puppets are used as targets for scorn, while the protesters give speeches addressing injustices in the country: essentially accusing the puppet in the form of a public people's trial.[155] At the end, the puppets are set on fire, as a theatrical act of justice staged against the aggressor. The enemy is identified through a sculptural and satirical visual language, the public is informed of its crimes through hours of theatrical speeches, and justice is enacted by burning.

The work of the UGATLahi Artist Collective allows us to articulate the practice of Guillermo's definition of revolutionary realism very clearly. First, the UGATlahi collective produces within *precarious infrastructures* a protest puppet through collaborative practice, representing, through their conditions of labor, an ideal of collectivity they themselves wish to bring about. Second, the protest puppet becomes part of the process of *performing the popular.* It is dragged along and scorned by thousands of people, which, through the symbolism of the puppet, come to identify their *common* oppressor and *demand* an alternative governmentality. Third, the puppet is burned collectively, destroying the artwork but strengthening the collective that conquered its oppressor symbolically, as such contributing to assembling the present-day Philippine precariat into a new *composition of a people*. This revolutionary realism is therefore a form of Popular Realism: the articulation of a new reality through the enactment of the demands of a popular mass movement.

Lippard's and Guillermo's works are crucial and rare voices that attempt to initiate alternative historiographies and practices of art willing to engage propaganda on different terms. But while the term propaganda art is largely out of use – more common are references to "public relations," "advertisement," and Adorno's concept of the "culture industry" – this does not mean that contemporary historians have not attempted to articulate alternative historiographies that show the rela-

155 The history of effigies in the National Democratic Movement of the Philippines has been extensively documented and analyzed by Filipino art historian Lisa Ito. See: Lisa Ito, "Protest Puppetry: An
Update on the Aesthetics and Production of Effigy-Making, 2005–2012," in Sison and Staal, *Towards a People's Culture*, pp. 127–50.

tion between popular mass movements and art. One such historiography that we can discuss in the context of Sinclair's and Lippard's work is offered by the American art historian Claudia Mesh in her *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945* (2013). The work follows what has been termed "New Art History" in the 1970s, which Mesh describes as "art historical studies that demanded that the discipline acknowledge the assumptions at work in how it bestowed aesthetic value on some artists and not on others," leading to "a new interest in marginalized cultures and artists within modernism."[156] For example, Mesh discusses second-wave feminism in relation to artist Judy Chicago and her attempt to introduce a "revisionist herstory,"[157] challenging the gendered term "his-" in "history." We see something similar in the case of artist Carolee Schneemann's concept of "art istory" which removes the gendered terms "his" and "her" altogether.[158]

Mesh traces alternative art-historical narrations through a variety of mass movements of the 20th century. For example, she discusses the reoccurring concept of "negritude" as originally theorized in Paris during the early 1930s "by the exiled Caribbean writers Aime Cesaire and Leon Damas and the Senegalese poet and statesman Leopold Sedar Senghor beginning in 1934,"[159] which introduced the idea, in the words of Vijay Prashad, "that a new self had to be crafted out of the harshly dismissed cultural resources of Africa and a new self-confidence in being black in the world needed to drive one's visions."[160] Other case studies include the impact of the anti-war movements in the period of the Vietnam War that brought about the Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG), staging its protest actions not only in public spaces, but also in museums.[161] Mesh also names the emergence of Queer Art, in the form of the Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP) campaign, which attempted to combat the AIDS virus, while simultaneously confronting the censorship of the Reagan administration of the devastating impact of AIDS on the lives of the gay community.

156 Claudia Mesh, *Art and Politics: A Small History of Art for Social Change Since 1945* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2013), p. 146.
157 Ibid., p. 105.
158 Ibid., p. 113.
159 Ibid., p. 48.
160 Vijay Prashad, *The Darker Nations: A People's History of the Third World* (New York/London: The New Press, 2007), p. 81.
161 Mesh particularly refers to GAAG's piece *Blood Bath (A Call for the Immediate Resignation of All the Rockefellers from the Board of Trustees of the Museum of Modern Art)* (1969), which was staged in the lobby of MoMA in New York. She describes how "[g]roup members Jon Hendricks, Jean Toche, Poppy Johnson, and Silvianna (Silvia Goldsmith) entered each museum and threw a text of their demands, dated November 10, 1969, into the air. They began ripping at each other's own clothing, which released containers of animal blood they had concealed there, in a simulation of the horrors brought about by the violence of war. As this occurred, they screamed gibberish phrases, that included the word "rape." They then fell to the floor, lying still. After a time, they silently rose and left the museum, without speaking to museum officials." Ibid., p. 79. GAAG, *GAAG: The Guerilla Art Action Group 1969-1976 A Selection* (New York: Printed Matter, 1978), section "Number 3".

The ACT UP campaign included artists who effectively politicized high-modernist visual language, most famously through the use of the pink triangle: once the symbol the Nazis used to designate gay and lesbian people, now a symbol of pride, while simultaneously a reminder of the ongoing criminalization and existential censorship of the victims of AIDS. One such iconic image is the famous 1986 black poster with a pink triangle, with the sentence "SILENCE = DEATH," typeset in white sans-serif capitals. While created two years before the ACT UP campaign began, it was adopted in the process as a key part of its visualized identity; a socialized form of minimalist art able to transcend the world of art into a popular mass movement of AIDS awareness.[162] These are but a few of Mesh's examples, as she reads the history of art through the lens of an enormous variety of popular mass movements, further including Climate Justice activism and the alter-globalization movement. Although Mesh's writing is focused on individual art works by artists who in some cases seem "inspired" rather than directly implicated in popular mass movements, her *Art and Politics* is something of a handbook to think specific works of art through a highly politicized history, and as such does a service to what we are trying to articulate as a Popular Art History, which takes the intersections of popular mass movements and art as their point of departure.

This, as we will see in our next case, is a constant and important tension in what we are defining as Popular Art History. For what exactly is it that we discuss as art or the work of art, when taking popular mass movements as a point of departure? Is the revolution, in which art might be merged, the total work of art? Or do we retain the idea that, although art can certainly be part of popular mass movements, it still articulates a reality that might not be fully conflated with its political demands? Exactly this tension is central to the thoroughly researched alternative history of art and social upheaval discussed in art historian Claire Bishop's *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (2016). In her work, the focus is on the concept of "participation art" and its relation to specific structures of power in the 20th and 21st century. Bishop specifically connects French psychotherapist Félix Guattari's notion of transversality, which he describes

162 Jason Baumann, who is credited as the designer of the poster – although he rejects such claims of singular authorship – notes on the design: "We realized any single photographic image would be exclusionary in terms of race, gender and class and opted instead to activate the LGBTQ audience through queer iconography. So we reviewed the symbols already in use. We felt the rainbow flag lacked gravitas. The Labrys [a double-sided axe, often reoccurring in lesbian communities] might not be discernible to gay men. The Lambda had class connotations. And while we initially rejected the pink triangle because of its links to the Nazi concentration camps, we eventually returned to it for the same reason, inverting the triangle as a gesture of a disavowal of victimhood." See: Jason Baumann, "The Silence=Death Poster," *New York Public Library*, Nov. 22, 2013, https://www.nypl.org/blog/2013/11/22/silence-equals-death-poster.

as a "militant, social, undisciplined activity"[163] to French philosopher Jacques Rancière's theory of the emancipated spectator, in which he claims that it is not the work of art that is autonomous, but the *aesthetic experience* of a spectator as such.[164] These two thinkers offer Bishop "alternative frameworks for thinking the artistic and the social simultaneously," as she argues that "for both, art and the social are not to be reconciled, but sustained in continual tension."[165] Bishop historicizes this continuous tension between art and the social and the impact this tension has had on various understandings of what "participation" in the realm of art signifies through three particular moments. The first two are characterized by "revolutionary upheaval," namely 1917 "in which artistic production was brought into line with Bolshevik collectivism," and 1968 "in which artistic production lent its weight to a critique of authority, oppression and alienation."[166] The third moment is the year 1989 which "marks the fall of real existing socialism."[167]

With great precision, Bishop reconstructs the emergence of participation as part of the changing definitions of art by the historical avant-garde, which, as we discussed in the second chapter in relation to the Russian Revolution, aimed in various ways to overcome the distinction between art and life. This task of the historical avant-garde echoes throughout the history of the 20th century up to the present, in what Bishop considers a near doctrinal "binary of active/passive."[168] With the binary of active/passive, Bishop refers on the one hand to art practices that involve their spectators as agents in creating the work of art as a means of social or revolutionary change (active), while a more traditional reflection upon the artwork as object stands for a regressive bourgeois contemplative and docile counterpart (passive). The risk of maintaining this dichotomy, Bishop argues, is that political outcome stands above all other validations, disregarding specific artistic competence, among which those in the realm of the aesthetic.[169]

163 Guattari, quoted in Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London/New York: Verso, 2012), p. 273.
164 In Rancière's words: "Like researchers, artists construct the stages where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators." Jacques Rancière, *The Emancipated Spectator* (London/New York: Verso, 2011), p. 22.
165 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 278.
166 Ibid., p. 193.
167 Ibid.
168 Ibid., p. 38.
169 We encounter this problem concretely in *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (2005) by the Austrian philosopher and art theoretician Gerald Raunig. Raunig seeks historical moments of "daily insurrection, of continual resistance, of constituent power" that give way to "micropolitical practices that practice resistance in heterogenous ways against specific partial aspects of an increasingly global command and control" – a line of thinking similar in continuation of Guattari's definition of the transversal. But Raunig's alternative history of art in relation to revolutionary practice seems to be plagued throughout by the fact that he would rather consider a history of revolution without any art at all – with the exception of the short-lived performances and political song evenings of the Austrian anti-fascist anarcho-Brechtian Volxtheater. Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e) , 2007), p. 46.

Instead, Bishop is invested in a variety of art practices, which, while not denying their relation to popular mass movements, nonetheless continue to interrogate and challenge this relation in the process. While some historical examples, such as the Proletkult movement in the Soviet Union, appear a variety of alternative art histories – a kind of parallel canon in and of itself[170] – Bishop is committed to introducing undertheorized case studies. In the context of the Russian revolution she discusses the work of the radical Proletkult composer Arsenii Avraamov and his *Hooter Symphonies*, which replaced traditional musical instruments with the sounds of industrial and military machinery.[171] In the context of General Juan Carolos Onganía's 1966 coup in Argentina, Bishop puts attention to the introduction of the use of "people as material" in the work of Argentinian avant-garde art movements, for example in Oscar Bony's 1968 exhibition of an actual worker's family on a gallery pedestal.[172] Whereas Avraamov is at the vanguard of the Russian revolution, Bony operates within a more institutional framework in the margins of the dictatorship. But, as Bishop argues, to theorize the artistic in relation to the political does not always demand a radical revolutionary condition, but rather conditions in which artists maintain a capacity to critically interrogate the relation and differences between the two – both in content and form. Although it would be hard to argue Bishop is a Maoist, she most certainly problematizes and actualizes Mao's struggle on two fronts.

A substantial part of *Artificial Hells* deals with the notion of participation in so-called "community art" and its co-optation by neoliberal regimes in the 1990s as "the commodification of human bodies in a service economy."[173] More relevant to our present study are the contemporary artists that Bishop discusses who engage in models of participation that seem able to distance themselves from such co-optation, such as the work *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (2002–2009) by Cuban

170 Apart from Bishop and Raunig for whom Proletkult forms a key case study, another contemporary example is the work of Wark, *Molecular Red: Theory for the Anthropocene*, cited in the second chapter.
171 Avraamov's work found its spectacular culmination in 1922 when on the occasion of a celebration of the revolution in the Baku harbor in St. Petersburg he composed a work with "sirens and whistles from navy ships and steamers, as well as dockside shunting engines, a 'choir' of bus and car horns, and a machine gun battery." See: Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 65.
172 Ibid., p. 121.
173 Ibid., p. 277. The architectural collective BAVO (Gideon Boie and Matthias Pauwels) turned their critique of community art practices at the service of neoliberal state interests into a core part of their own cultural practice. A good example is their *Bureau for Artist Participation* (2010), which they proposed as a municipal agency that would operate like an employment agency, delivering artists that would provide participatory solutions for social and political issues. See: BAVO, *Too Active To Act: Cultureel activisme na het einde van de geschiedenis* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2010).

artist Tania Bruguera. The project essentially comprises an alternative art school in the form of a two-year course embedded in the Instituto Superior de Arte (ISA) in Havana, which could *also* be considered as "an art school conceived as a work of art,"[174] not just because the students participating in the Cátedra Arte de Conducta produced radical works of art or because the school organized their exhibition, but because Bruguera's approach to the model of the school as a compository model in and of itself challenges both the existing structure of the art school and the relation between art and the social realm at large. By introducing categories of studies such as "Jurisdiction" or "Trafficking Information" and including teachers from the field of art as well as lawyers and journalists, the school enacts a societal composition that structurally reads art through the social and vice versa, a form of practice Bruguera terms as "useful art." Bishop, following Lippard's work, explains this as "art that is both symbolic *and* useful, refuting the Western assumption that art is useless or without function.[175]

The overall difficulty in Bishop's attempt to write an alternative art history lies in her choice of "participation" as the main criterion for connecting different historiographies. It is a term that works only insofar as avant-garde movements, anti-dictatorship art collectives, or alternative schools-as-art-projects are connected directly to popular mass movements. But because Bishop also includes practices of community art, or artists involved in what is known as "relational aesthetics" – a form of participation for the sake of participation, without much of a political signature[176] – her writing runs the risk of conflating artistic practices that are basically incommensurable. An artist attempting to mobilize spectators as fellow revolutionaries evidently aims for a different mode of participation than an artist funded by a government agency to provide cultural solace to disenfranchised communities. The risk is that what could be a politicized history of art becomes de-politicized by an undifferentiated gaze on participation as a category in and of itself.

Even though Bishop is unwilling to discuss her case studies in the context of a Popular Propaganda Art because she considers propaganda as the equivalent of "conversion"[177] – a rather reductive and uninformed reading of the term from which many art historians suffer – her important contribution lies in exactly those moments in which she analyzes the proximity of popular mass movements and art, and attempts to excavate from them new "paradoxical criteria" that go beyond propaganda art as a mere political instrument.[178] Her final, rather explicitly political, statement reads as follows: "[T]he task today is to produce a viable international alignment of leftist political movements and a reassertion of art's inventive forms of negation as valuable in their own right."[179] Essentially, this links to previous examples of Lippard and Guillermo as well. While evidently Popular Propaganda Art is informed, driven, and shaped through its direct implication in popular mass movements, this does not imply that it cannot contribute its own critical capacity and competence to it. We can understand this precisely through the Maoist–Bishopian struggle on two fronts.

174 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 246.
175 Ibid., p. 249.
176 Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du reel, 2002).
177 Bishop, *Artificial Hells*, p. 282.

Through the work of Sinclair, Lippard, Guillermo, Mesh, and Bishop, we have engaged a series of alternative historiographies that take the relation between popular mass movements and artists as a starting point of what we have termed Popular Art History. We have discussed Popular Propaganda as a performance of the popular and composition of a people with the aim of constructing Popular Realism: the transformation of reality based on the demands of popular mass movements. Based on our analysis of their work, we can make the following observations:

- Popular Art History narrates the influence of popular mass movements on the conditions of production, dissemination, and validation of popular propaganda art practices, materially and ideologically;
- Popular Art History simultaneously narrates the role and influence of art on popular mass movements in the process of performing the popular, composing a people and constructing Popular Realism;
- Popular Art History contributes to the politicization of art and thus to the creation of Popular Propaganda Art. From Sinclair to Guillermo, we observe not simply an attempt to record art history, but an articulation of the possibility of new forms of artistic practice through this narration.

Our next endeavor will be to understand more concretely the different practical and organizational models through which Popular Propaganda Art manifested itself, the first of which we will discuss as *Assemblism*.

ASSEMBLISM

The first organizational model of Popular Propaganda Art is Assem-

178 Ibid., p. 279.
179 Ibid., p. 284.

blism, a term we use here following our study of Butler above, to describe the *practice* of performative assembly. Of particular interest to us is the fact that Butler analyzes performative assembly through terms that derive from an artistic vocabulary, ranging from the "theatrical" to the "assemblage" and the "morphological." Butler uses these terms to describe the impressive physical gatherings of bodies on squares and the visual collages of tents, signs, and banners that result from them. Visual signs indeed evoke links to visual art, and although these are indeed sometimes created *by artists,* in many cases they can also be visual expressions that do not directly have an artistic intention. Rather, they are part of the collective creativity that manifests itself through the particular popular mass movement, its performance of the popular, and attempts to ally a widely diverse precariat as a composition of a people. Following Guillermo, we can thus witness within the practice of Assemblism the articulation of an *aesthetic* vocabulary through political struggle, even though an aesthetic expression is not necessarily an "artwork." But the dividing lines, as we will see, can be very thin.

Our task here will be to explore the aesthetic dimension of Assemblism in the work of artists and non-artists alike. We will do so by connecting Butler's ideas to those of art historian and activist Yates McKee, theorist Athena Athanasiou, and organizer and activist Alicia Garza. We will begin by challenging McKee's claim that we referenced earlier, namely that popular mass movements such as Occupy Wall Street can themselves be considered an art project. Subsequently, we will focus on the role of choreography, theatricality, and spatial aesthetics that emerge as part of Assemblism in relation to The Outraged in Greece (Athanasiou) and Black Lives Matter (Garza). We will thus move from rebutting the claim to *Assemblism as a form of art* to an understanding of *aesthetic expressions as part of Assemblism*.

Yates McKee's work *Strike Art* (2016) is a detailed narration of a history of art and cultural work that emerged within and parallel to the Occupy Movement, its aftermath, and the newly emerging popular mass movements that he claims stand in a certain dialogical relationship with Occupy, such as the Black Lives Matters and Climate Justice movements. In the process, McKee, who regularly refers to Butler's writings on performative assembly, walks a fine line between proposing Occupy as a new definition of an "art project" as such, and discussing the role of art and a broader notion of aesthetics within this movement.

McKee's claim to a reading of Occupy as an "art project" starts from the mass movement's first manifestation in New York in 2011. McKee recalls how Occupy Wall Street had been planned and strategized through meetings at the alternative artistic platform known as the 16 Beaver Group, an artist-run space located near the Wall Street

district, where since 1999 – the year the alter-globalization movement emerged[180] – weekly meetings between artists, activists, educators, and thinkers had been organized to rethink alternative pathways for the practice of art and culture in the broader public realm. The imagery of Occupy as a movement-to-come had been designed by the art collective Adbusters, who created a now famous poster featuring an image of *Charging Bull* (1989), a three-ton bronze sculpture of an agitated bull created by Italian artist Arturo Di Modica. In an early manifestation of what would become known as "guerrilla art," Di Modica had placed the object without permission in front of the New York stock exchange as a symbol of the resilience of the American people throughout the 1987 stock market crash.[181] In the Adbusters poster a ballerina is positioned on top of *Charging Bull*, with protesters emerging in clouds of smoke in the background, headed by the phrase "What is our one demand?," followed by the hashtag "#occupywallstreet" and the call to "bring [a] tent."[182]

The preliminary meetings of the 16 Beaver Group and the Adbusters poster would lead to the first founding assembly of the Occupy movement, which began as a rather conventional series of talks on the economic crisis in Bowling Green Park, but would later adopt the circular form of a gathering practiced in popular mass movements in Spain and Greece known as the general assembly. In the period following the founding assembly, the movement would grow to thousands of people in the nearby Zuccotti Park, formerly known as "Liberty Plaza," a semi-public space better equipped to house the emerging movement. Occupy Wall Street, according to McKee, was thus initiated through a precarious, self-organized art infrastructure (16 Beaver Group) and first visualized through a poster by an art collective (Adbusters) referencing an early form of interventionist "political art" (the *Charging Bull* sculpture). McKee thus claims:

180 The alter-globalization movement emerged in the late 1990s in opposition to economic globalization and in support of cooperative democracy, indigenous rights, environmental protection, as famously narrated by Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (1999). Many of the sources referenced in this chapter, such as the work of Raunig, McKee, and Thompson, either originate from or put additional emphasis on the importance of the alter-globalization movement as the birthplace of new forms of artistic and cultural activism in the 21st century.

181 Having become a major success among Wall Street workers, citizens and tourists, the sculpture, after initially having been removed, was kept and placed on the nearby location of Bowling Green Park. McKee, *Strike Art,* p. 86.

182 The iconographic status of this poster has been amplified by several other recent historiographies of art in relation to popular mass movements that referenced it. Nato Thompson, for example, refers to the Adbusters poster as part of the foundational moment of Occupy Wall Street. See: Thompson, *Seeing Power,* p. 151. While Thompson speaks of it in progressive terms, the poster is equally prominently displayed by filmmaker and Trump chief strategist Steve Bannon in his documentary–pamphlet *Occupy Unmasked* (2012), which argues that the Occupy movement was strategized and sinisterly run by professional activists and campaigners with the aim to overthrow the US government.

> Like the camp itself that would be set up in the following month, the founding assembly might be understood as a kind of embodied collage, transposing an alien political form into both the ossified landscape of the New York Left and the symbolic heart of global capital itself.[183]

The notion of the assembly as an "embodied collage" reflects Butler's description of performative assembly as "assemblage," describing the process of a people-in-the-making. The question here is if the resonance of these terms – collage, assemblage – with artistic discourse is enough reason to discuss them *as art*. In this respect, it is important to take note of an article written by the collective of artists, theorists, and activists called Not An Alternative, who themselves were highly active in the Occupy movement and argue that people's response to the Adbusters poster was not at all accidental, but the result of the previous manifestations of the Arab Spring and especially the M15/Los Indignados Movement in Spain, Catalunya, and the Basque Country. Because the possibility of such a manifestation was already engrained in the collective consciousness, the poster could have such a mobilizing effect. "[T]he idea already made sense to them" because "[t]he form of Occupy wasn't created – it was given."[184]

Not An Alternative emphasized that Occupy Wall Street gained momentum because of this pre-existing mobilization, and not necessarily because of the involvement of artists within it. Similarly, the 16 Beaver Group had been shaped strongly by the alterglobalization movement. This does not mean that the artistic efforts mentioned by McKee are unimportant, but that following Not An Alternative we should consider them as only one artistic component within a larger aesthetic manifestation that made Occupy Wall Street a reality. It is not just artists who shape the popular mass movement, it is the popular mass movement and its own particular aesthetics that *forms the artist* just as much. This is a core feature of Assemblism: the artistic imaginary is part of the larger aesthetic and social "collage" or "assemblage" through which the popular is performed and the composition of a people takes shape.

More important than McKee's provocative claim of Occupy as a new definition of an "artistic project" are his considerations of the process through which the popular mass movement forms artists, resulting in what he describes as the "*unmaking* of art as it exists within the discourses, economies, and institutions of the contemporary art

183 McKee, *Strike Art*, p. 93.
184 Not an Alternative, "Counter-Power as Common Power: Beyond Horizontalism," *Journal of Aesthetics & Protest*, Issue 9 (Summer 2014), https://www.joaap.org/issue9/notanalternative.htm.

system," while on the other aiming for the "*reinvention* of art as direct action, collective affect, and political subjectivization embedded in radical movements working to reconstruct the commons in the face of both localized injustices and systemic crises that characterize the contemporary capitalist order."[185] What we can take from his arguments is that the precarious infrastructures arising from the emerging powers of the assembling precariat challenged the role and definition of art and aesthetics to the point that we could indeed think of the popular mass movement in terms of Assemblism: not as an art work or "art project" itself, but as an emerging power within which art plays a continuous role as part of a larger aesthetic vocabulary of the popular mass movement.

In Butler's work, two concrete examples stand out that are relevant for understanding the aesthetic component of Assemblism in terms of its scripting, choreography, performativity, and theatrical staging, namely the hunger strike and the aforementioned "general assembly." In the first case, we are dealing with a form of Assemblism enacted by bodies that cannot occupy the same space due to the prison regiment. When prisoners engage in common hunger strikes, albeit each in their own cells, their simultaneous choreography re-affirms that no matter how much the prison divides them physically, they continue to collectively enact a script, a series of planned gestures. They continue to compose themselves as a people.

This is a different morphology from the one enacted by bodies that have the relative privilege of gathering in public in the general assemblies of movements like Los Indignados, Occupy, or Gezi Park – although all three have also been confronted with different levels of police violence. What connects these examples of Assemblism is the imaginary that they invoke: the surplus of presence they bring into being. Encountering one prisoner in a hunger strike while knowing that others are performing similar gestures creates the re-enforced experience of an unlimited number of people standing with a single individual. The synchronicity of the gestures in this form of Assemblism allows for a larger sense of collectivity to be invoked. Something similar happens in the circular assembly on the square. The people who call themselves the "99%" are factually a minority, but they act *as if they were a majority*. Assemblism, in this case, lays the foundation of a people yet to recognize itself: they are a people-in-the-making. The collective imaginary of this people-in-the-making is the result of Assemblism. And as we saw with both of Butler's examples, while an artistic vocabulary can help to clarify the aesthetic dimensions of its

185 McKee, *Strike Art*, pp. 5–6.

manifestation, this does not mean that they are artworks as such.

The aesthetic dimensions of Assemblism is what Butler and the Greek theorist Athena Athanasiou discuss in their book *Dispossession: The Performative in the Political* (2013) as "self-poietics." "Poietics" borrows the ancient Greek term for "creation," which, Athanasiou explains, "emerges as a performative occasion in an ongoing process of socially regulatory self-formation, whereby under different circumstances the self struggles within and against the norms through which it is constituted; and such struggles are only waged through and with others."[186] In other words, the precariat, assembled in a popular mass movement because of a collective threat to its systems of life support, articulate in Assemblism an understanding of the self that can only be an "interrelated self" that is articulated, supported, and sustained through the presence and the acts of the bodies of others. Athanasiou discusses embodied performance – the "intimate propaganda" that Lippard spoke of – as being sustained through "corporeal standing," a recurrent choreographical dimension of Assemblism that manifests itself through the "ordinary and rather undramatic practice of standing, rather than a miraculously extraordinary disruption, that actualizes here the living register of the event" and subsequently creates "both a space of reflection and a space for revolt, but also an affective comportment of standing and standpoint."[187] So the choreography of collective standing in Assemblism – that which Occupy calls "occupation" – also implies a spatial dimension, or better, it articulates a new space overruling an existing one. This becomes very concrete in one of Athanasiou's examples where she discusses the movement of The Outraged in Athens, which planned to surround the Greek parliament to stop a five-year austerity plan, resulting in the police fortifying the entire parliament building:

> The image of the blockaded parliament, defended against the people's demand for accountability, manifested nothing less than the sovereign gesture of closing the space of dissent by delegating the dissenters to a provisional outside.[188]

We witness how an existing order of power responds to the practice of Assemblism in the form of the surrounding – the bringing into presence of precarious bodies seeking for a composition not through a counter-assembly, but through a *fortification*: an enactment of a state's sovereign monopoly on the police. Athanasiou's "self-poietics," the choreography and spatial motives enacted through Assemblism, does not only perform the popular, the emerging power of the precariat. It also forces an existing power to articulate itself as its *opposing force*. A very theatrical example of this is the "book block," which Athanasiou describes in the context of a variety of different popular mass movements. The book block consists of shields carried by protestors in the form of enlarged hand-painted book covers, which feature works of writers and philosophers such as Theodor Adorno, Samuel Beckett, and even Butler. When Athanasiou describes a photo of "a policeman [who] raises his baton against a protestor who carries a book shield of Derrida's *Specters of Marx*,"[189] we again encounter two radically conflicting performativities made visible through the practice of Assemblism: books as symbols of knowledge and social transformation carried by the assembled precariat to *protect* themselves versus the baton as a symbol of monopolized violence carried by the police to *attack* others. Here, spatiality does not only relate to the placement of the bodies of the assembled precariat, but also to the space that they are creating through Assemblism: their bodies and book blocks articulate a different domain of knowledge and being, beyond the one represented by the regime of the baton. They embody an emerging power, performed through a people-in-the-making.

186 Butler and Athanasiou, *Dispossession*, p. 68.
187 Ibid., p. 150–51.
188 Ibid., p. 151.

Such Assemblist articulations are strongly present in the popular mass movement known as Black Lives Matter. The movement was founded by Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi in the form of a social media hashtag "#BlackLivesMatter," in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for murdering the unarmed black seventeen-year-old Trevor Martin. Black Lives Matter quickly developed into a movement on its own right, following the historical aims of the civil rights and black power movements, currently counting "more than 45 chapters around the world."[190] Garza speaks of the movement specifically in terms of a "herstory," connecting the struggle of black women's liberation movements to a wide spectrum of precarious constituents in the black community. She argues that "Black Lives Matter affirms the lives of Black queer and trans folks, disabled folks, Black-undocumented folks, folks with records, women and all Black lives along the gender spectrum."[191] The structural racism, mass incarceration, and police violence disproportionately affecting black

189 Ibid., p. 189.
190 Alicia Garza, "Under Siege," transcript from a keynote lecture at *Creative Time Summit: Occupy the Future*, Washington DC, Oct. 14, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUNzJ-DKmrE.
191 Alicia Garza, "A Herstory of the #BlackLivesMatter Movement," *The Feminist Wire*, Oct. 7, 2014,
http://www.thefeministwire.com/2014/10/blacklivesmatter-2/

communities, both in the US and internationally, thus forms the basis for a broad intersectional alliance. While Garza emphasizes the role of art within the movement when she speaks of the "cultural workers, artists, designers and techies [who] offered their labor and love to expand #BlackLivesMatter beyond a social media hashtag,"[192] an important assemblist dimension of Black Lives Matter resides in the public manifestation of the movement; the specificity of its name and slogans through which the performance of the popular is articulated:

> What happens to a community under siege, a nation under siege, a diaspora under siege, is that those people will and must fight back. And this is where we hear "Hands Up, Don't Shoot," "I Can't breathe," and "Black Lives Matter."[193]

These slogans emerged directly from murders of black people in the wake of the killing of Trevor Martin. "Hands up, don't shoot" resulted from the 2014 killing of Michael Brown, who had robbed a convenience store and was reportedly shot by a police officer – despite the fact that he had already stood still with his hands in the air. Mass protests and riots followed in Ferguson, with banners reading these supposedly last words of Brown, and masses of people chanting them – their hands up in the air –while approaching police battalions. "I can't breathe" relates to the murder in the same year of Eric Gardner , who was supposedly illegally selling cigarettes, and held in a chokehold by police officers who arrested him. Gardner's last words – "I can't breathe" – were similarly appropriated by Black Lives Matter protestors on signs and in collective chants.

Although its seems more appropriate to discuss the movement in the tradition of the civil rights and black power movements, McKee discusses the Black Lives Matter movement as part of the "post-occupy condition," emphasizing the importance of what Garza calls the "visibilization of black life," which he perceives as a way of highlighting "the aesthetic dimension of the struggle."[194] Obviously, the slogans and collective chants of Black Lives Matter were not conceived as poetry or artistic performance, but derived directly from the brutal murder and radical precarization of black communities. Nevertheless, these Assemblist practices of a popular mass movement indeed embody McKee's "poetic figures" or Athanasiou's "self-poietics," emerging through the Assemblist actions and gatherings of the movement.[195] The collective chanting of "I can't breathe" results into such a poetic figure of "breathing in common": a collective acknowledgement of precarious life by translating the loss of life of one to the possible loss of life of all inside a

192 Ibid.
193 Garza, "Under Siege"
194 McKee, *Strike Art*, p. 185.
195 Ibid., p. 188.

"white supremacist capitalist system."[196] In the face of the increasingly militarized police in the US, the casually dressed protestors, their hands in the air, chanting "Hands up, don't shoot" and "I can't breathe" articulate strength through a display of collective vulnerability while the militarized police across from them becomes the embodiment of those who murdered and suffocated those commemorated in the slogans.[197] Again, we encounter a practice of Assemblism whose choreography, performativity, and spatial designation articulate a domain in opposition to the militarized and segregated domain embodied by the military police. As in the case of Occupy and the hunger strike, the Outraged in Greece and Black Lives Matter, Assemblist practice invokes a new political space through the enactment of popular demands: Popular Realism that constructs a reality beyond dispossession, austerity, indebtment, police violence, structural racism, and murder.

Through a reading of Butler, McKee, Athanasiou, and Garza we have come to understand Assemblism as an aesthetic manifestation – sometimes including artistic components – that results from the performance of the popular and the process of composing a people.

To summarize, Assemblism is defined by the process through which a diverse precariat assembles and begins to form a social montage, collage, or assemblage that articulates what we have defined as a people-in-the-making. Art plays a role in this process of composition, but only as one component of the social and aesthetic texture of the popular mass movement as a whole. In the case of Assemblism, performance, the term through which we both define the power of the precariat as well as its enactments in the form of scripted, choreographed, and theatrical stagings consisting of corporeal standing, chanting, and the strategic use of objects such as the book block or the banner to designate an alternative spatial and ideological configuration. The self-poietics and poetic figures of emerging power that are created in the process provoke established powers to engage in often violent counter-performances, further articulating the spatial and ideological configuration of the mass movement. If successful, the outcome of this antagonistic process is the construction of a Popular Realism: a designation of a spatial and ideological configuration of a reality organized on the collective demands of the popular mass movement.

By discussing the practice of performative assembly in the form of Assemblism we have already touched slightly on visual elements that play a role in the composing of a people. The book block seems a per-

196 Ibid., p. 188.
197 The performativity of vulnerability as an assemblist strength is elaborated by several authors, including Butler and Athanasiou. See: Judith Butler, Zeynep Gambetti, and Leticia Sabsay (eds.), *Vulnerability in Resistance* (Durham/London: Duke University Press, 2016).

fect example of an aesthetic component with artistic resonance – the visualization of knowledge as that what is threatened by austerity, while also forming a literal and mental shield for those trying to protect this knowledge – which cannot be embodied, but needs an additional sign of sorts. The book block, as discussed, also operates as a spatial designation, as a highly visible cultural frontline of Assemblism articulating the opposition between emerging and established power even more clearly. The capacity of such visual components touch upon what we will now discuss as the artistic component that *overlaps* with Assemblism in the form of *Embedded Art*.

EMBEDDED ART

With the term Embedded Art, we mean to focus on the role of artists as well as art groups and collectives that operate within popular mass movements. In the process, we will see how their work often overlaps with that of Assemblism, contributing to the artistic component of the larger aesthetics that result from Assemblism's practice. In the case of Embedded Art, we are dealing with artists who, as McKee writes, attempt to disentangle art from its present embedding in regimes of oppressive power, and to re-invent it through the emerging power and precarious infrastructures of popular mass movements.

In the context of popular mass movements, creating an artwork in and of itself is not the aim. Rather, we are dealing here, following Athanasiou's use of the notion of self-poietics, with a reinvention of art as a practice that emerges through the interrelation of precarious bodies and the enactment of their demands. Guillermo described this as aesthetic practice emerging from the immediacy and urgency of struggle. Embedded art similarly emerges through artists situating themselves directly within the precarious infrastructures of popular mass movements and its aesthetic vocabulary. This means that traditional notions of autonomy have to be challenged. Rather than trying to achieve artistic autonomy, artists situate themselves within a popular mass movement that aims to gain political autonomy, not just for art but for a variety of segments of the precariat – from workers to the undocumented. And although art is not the exclusive property of artists within popular mass movements, we will see how artists contribute, through specific knowledges and competences, to their manifestations and Assemblist practices. With the demand of democratization in a popular mass movement, also comes the democratization of art as such.

Popular Propaganda Art's practice of Embedded Art brings with it many challenges. Due to their own precarious conditions, popular mass movements generally do not pay artists – the demand for the

redistribution of capital is still in the making – and to gain recognition as an artist and thus achieve something of a viable income, the institution of art – from the museum to the art market – is one of the few options that make it possible to maintain one's profession. This can easily bring on criticism from both sides; namely the abuse of art for political means, or the abuse of popular mass movements for artistic means.[198] The artist thus risks becoming an agent who, rather than politicizing a popular mass movement, commodifies it through the realm of art by selling banners and photos of protests in the white cube of art to gain the financial means to keep up their work within the popular mass movement. This defines the particular precarity of artists, which is both a *material* and an *ideological* precarity. Artists have the capacity to imagine and visualize power differently, but – apart from a small elite of global artist-brands such as Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst – they do not necessarily have power themselves. Sinclair called upon artists to "make a world," but artists in popular mass movements are essentially "between worlds": between the world as it is, and the one that is emerging; between established power and emerging power. The notion of "embeddedness" in Embedded Art should thus be understood as taking place within different institutionalities at the same time, *established* ones that they aim to change and *emerging* ones that they wish to help construct and gain power.

In the previous chapters we have already touched upon such historical practices of Embedded Art, from the writers implicated in popular mass movements discussed by Sinclair to the work of feminist artists through which Lippard proposed an intimate propaganda art; from the artists involved in the ACT UP campaign analyzed by Mesh to the work of art collectives in the Filipino underground; from the radical Proletkult musical practices discussed by Bishop to the artists and designers that contributed to the Assemblist practices of the Occupy movement. Our aim now will be to expand these case studies with contemporary practices of Embedded Art, which highlight the concrete competences that artists contribute to popular mass movements and Assemblist practices, and the ways they deal with operating between worlds.

In this context, we will discuss four examples of Embedded Art, each of which operates within or in direct relation to popular mass movements. We will focus on artist Hito Steyerl in relation to the al-

198 A dilemma addressed by Thompson when discussing the concept of socially engaged art: "So it isn't art, and it isn't activism. It's something else. What is that something else? Socially engaged art projects that do not receive outright hostile reactions tend to receive this classic dismissal: that they are neither art nor activism. By being outside of both categories, works that toe the line between didacticism and ambiguity are discarded into critical purgatory." Thompson, *Seeing Power*, p. 34.

ter-globalization, Gezi Park, and Kurdish resistance movements; the collective Not An Alternative in relation to the Occupy movement and climate change activism in the United States; the work of artist Matthijs de Bruijne in relation to labor unions and the mobilization of domestic workers; and the work of Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR) in relation to popular mass movements in Palestine in the past, present, and *future*. Nonetheless, we will observe also many differences between these practices resulting from their specific relations to the specific coalitions of precarious peoples in different geographic, political, and cultural contexts. We thus aim to explore four different artistic *proximities* in relation to popular mass movements, resulting in four different understandings and outcomes of artists' embeddedness.

Following the movement of Institutional Critique earlier exemplified by Fraser, German artist Hito Steyerl further radicalizes its premise when she states provocatively: "If contemporary art is the answer, the question is, how can capitalism be made more beautiful?" She elaborates by explaining: "Contemporary art feeds on the crumbs of a massive and widespread redistribution of wealth from the poor to the rich, conducted by means of an ongoing class struggle from above."[199] Like Fraser, she emphasizes how the "intrinsic conditions of the art field, as well as the blatant corruption within it [...] is a taboo even on the agenda of most artists who consider themselves political."[200] As a result, Steyerl's practice radically expanded the analysis of, and engagement with, the art institution so as to encompass technology, the military-industrial complex, and practice of warfare, but also its relation to popular mass movements and revolutionary organizations. This is explicitly the case in her work *Is the Museum a Battlefield?* (2013), a video recorded as a lecture–performance, presented for the first time in the midst of the tumultuous 13th Istanbul Biennial. This art manifestation took place parallel to the emergence of a popular mass movement in the city, known as the Gezi Park protests.[201] In her lecture–performance, Steyerl begins with the story of her friend Andrea Wolf who joined the women's section of the formerly Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan

199 Hito Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012), p. 93.
200 Ibid., p. 98.
201 The public space of Gezi Park was threatened by massive government-sanctioned real estate development, and civil protests quickly grew into a broad popular movement against the increasingly authoritarian and corrupt Erdoğan regime. The protestors were subsequently faced with brutal government crackdowns, with many deaths as a result. See: Amnesty International, *Gezi Park Protests: Brutal Denial of the Right to Peaceful Assembly in Turkey* (London: Amnesty International Ltd, 2013), https://www.amnestyusa.org/sites/default/files/eur440222013en.pdf. For further reading see: Bülent Gökay and Ilia Xypolia, *Reflections on Taksim: Gezi Park Protests in Turkey* (Keele: A Journal of Global Faultlines, 2013). A unique narration of the Gezi Park protests is written by Raşel Meseri in the form of a children's story illustrated by Sanne Karssenberg. The story revolves around Pen the Penguin, who became a symbol of the Gezi Park protests after the Turkish television aired a documentary on penguins instead of covering the protests. See: Raşel Meseri and Sanne Karssenberg, *Pen in the Park: A Resistance Fairytale* (Tirana/The Hague: Uitgeverij, 2014).

Worker's Party (PKK) under her *nom de guerre* "Ronahî."[202] Wolf was reportedly captured in 1998 in the Van region by Turkish special forces together with thirty others, beaten and extra-judicially executed after which her breasts were cut from her body. There was never an official investigation and the bodies of Wolf and her fellow fighters were never found.[203]

Thirteen years later, Steyerl returned to the site. There, the artist retrieves ammunition and rockets shelves from the battlefield, of which she begins to trace the origins, which lead her to weapon manufacturers such as the American General Dynamics company, the German Heckler & Koch, and the British Lockheed Martin, all with headquarters in Western metropoles. These headquarters, Steyerl realized, were all designed by some of the most highbrow "starchitects" in the world. Lockheed Martin's headquarters in Berlin was developed by Frank Gehry, the creator of several of the most iconic art museums of the world, such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao.[204] And not only does Gehry's starchitecture provide Lockheed Martin with its cultural front, the building itself, Steyerl observes, seems to be modeled after the shape of the gun shells she collected on the battlefield:

> So this is when I realized that missiles, once they are fired, they can suddenly change their form. They suddenly transform in midflight into a piece of cutting-edge starchitecture designed by Frank Gehry [...]. So how is this possible? In this case, it's quite easy to understand, because the software that Gehry's studio uses to produce these nicely rounded organic shapes is actually a version of the same software on which some of the Cobra helicopters [that fired the missiles in Van] were developed.[205]

The design of contemporary architecture and contemporary weapons seems to arise from the same "creative" software, suggesting an intricate resonance between military and cultural infrastructures not evident to most, as we discussed earlier on this chapter in the context of War

202 Since its founding in 1978, the PKK has waged an ongoing guerrilla war in the south-eastern part of Turkey, known as North Kurdistan or Bakûr, against the Turkish regime. We will further discuss this history in the final part of this chapter, "Stateless Propaganda Art."
203 Felix Kurz and Georg Mascolo, "Besonders mutige Kämpfer," *Der Spiegel*, Sep. 11, 1998, http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-8030503.html. Wolf would appear in several of Steyerl's works, such as *November* (2004) and *Lovely Andrea* (2007). Pablo Lafuente puts additional emphasis on the construction of the "popular" in these particular works. See: Pablo Lafuente, "For a Populist Cinema: On Hito Steyerl's November and Lovely Andrea," *Afterall*, No. 19 (Autumn/Winter 2008), https://www.afterall.org/journal/issue.19/populist.cinema.hito.steyerls.november.and.lovely.
204 Davide Ponzini, Michele Nastasi, *Starchitecture: Scenes, Actors and Spectacles in Contemporary Cities* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 2016)
205 Hito Steyerl, "Is the Museum a Battlefield?," transcript of lecture performance during the public program of the *13th Istanbul Biennial*, 2013, https://vimeo.com/76011774.

on Terror Propaganda Art. The turning point in Steyerl's lecture-performance takes place when, while trying to trace the origin of the bullets from the battlefield, she visits The Art Institute of Chicago, an institution strongly supported by a member of the General Dynamics founding family.[206] There, Steyerl encounters her own work: a video she shot while doing her fieldwork in Van, with the caption "This is a shot." The encounter links the shooting of the weapon that killed Wolf to the video shooting of Steyerl trying to reconstruct who killed her, bringing her to the question "did I shoot the bullet that I found on the battlefield myself?[207] By tracing the overlapping of military and cultural industries, the artist's claim that the museum is a battlefield takes shape. For, Steyerl argues, museums have been "torture chambers, sites of war crimes, civil war, and also revolution."[208] The storming of the Winter Palace was simultaneously the storming of the Hermitage Museum, located on its premises; and the Louvre, as we saw in the second chapter, was declared a public museum through the French Revolution, and, as Steyerl narrates, stormed and occupied another five times in order for it to remain a public museum.[209] The history of the museum has been that of its revolutions, or, today, of its military-industrial sponsors. Through Steyerl's attempts to trace a bullet, the military-industrial complex turns into a cultural complex and vice versa, like a strange, continuous feedback loop. This brings her to a militant conclusion: "It seems if we are stuck in that loop, we may have to go back in this point in time and storm the museum again."[210] This statement was not without risk, as Steyerl was claiming the art institution as the extension of the site of the Gezi Park protests happening right outside its doors.[211]

While Steyerl's work takes the form of pamphlets, books, essays, lecture–performances, and videos interconnecting the institution of art and popular mass movements, the work of collective Not An Alternative, founded by artists and activists in the aftermath of the alter-globalization movement, puts an even greater emphasis on the scope and scale of embedded art practice.[212] Their prominent theoretical work is strongly influenced by the work of philosopher Jodi Dean, a member

206 Ibid.
207 Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Hito Steyerl, "Is the Museum a Battlefield?," transcript of lecture at the *Creative Time Summit: Confronting Inequity*, New York, Oct. 12, 2012, http://creativetime.org/summit/2012/10/12/hito-steyerl/.
210 Ibid.
211 Following Butler's "assemblage" and McKee's "collage" in relation to the composition of popular mass movements, Steyerl discusses the relation of art to the popular movement in terms of the "montage": "What kind of movements of political montage would result in oppositional articulations, instead of a mere addition of elements for the sake of reproducing the status quo?" Steyerl, *The Wretched of the Screen*, p. 90.
212 Current members Beka Economopoulos and Jason Jones, and former members Ian Hart and Winnie Fung created *Not An Alternative* in the 2000s, in the aftermath of the alter-globalization movement.

of Not An Alternative and author of *The Communist Horizon* (2012) and *Crowds and Party* (2016). For Dean, the popular mass movement in and of itself does not provide an answer to conditions of precarity and exploitation, unless it is connected to an organizational infrastructure – such as the Communist Party – in order to translate its demands into a durable infrastructure.[213] This militant left position informs the name of the collective, which rejects the very notion of the need of an "alternative" to current crises, but rather emphasizes a need for a more radical if not revolutionary change in the political and economic order.

When it comes to the domain of art, Not An Alternative refers to its work as "projects" each of which consist of a series of "tools," emphasizing the importance of their approach to the artistic domain through concrete instruments to be used in the context of political mobilization and action. Occupy New York is again a primary example, specifically their tool *Occupy Tape* (2011) part of project "Occupy." It consists of a yellow and black striped tape, normally used to seal off foreclosed homes, which in this case reads "Occupy." Freely distributed among protesters, the tape became used by the Occupy Wall Street movement, as well as other Occupy offshoots around the country, in encampments and in city interventions. Together with posters reading: "Foreclose on banks, not on people," the tape was used to seal off financial institutions that had played a role in the financial crisis. A similar strategy is used in *Occupy Police Blocks* (2012), an intervention created a few days before the anniversary of the Occupy Movement. Anticipating a resurgence of protests, police blocked the entry to Zuccotti Park by placing large cement blocks reading "NYPD." Not An Alternative crafted a series of foam blocks entitled *Occupy Police Blocks*, looking exactly like the cement blocks used by the authorities, but which read "OWS" (Occupy Wall Street) instead, followed by the sentence "Protecting the People from the Powerful." Again, we witness an act of appropriation of visual signifiers normally used exclusively by ruling powers, but now turned against them. Not An Alternative shows that power has a "compository" dimension, and is manifested through visual markers that provide institutional legitimacy; signs that order and engineer our daily life, but that can also be turned against themselves.

In some sense, Not An Alternative operates as the "branding" agency of the popular mass movement, without being officially commissioned, providing additional and highly professional looking signs for a

213 Jodi Dean's work on the concept of the "crowd" overlaps in some respects with the assemblies of the precariat discussed by Butler. However, Dean takes a more militant approach. In her perspective it is only through an organizational structure like the Community Party that the crowd can emerge as a people. See Dean's lecture "If You're Not Against Us, You're With Us," *Former West Public Editorial Meeting*, Hungary, May 13, 2015, https://vimeo.com/136578092.

demarcation of an emerging power. Different from the quickly painted covers of the book blocks, the projects and tools of Not An Alternative play out a professional and sometimes corporate language for other means. But this investment is not limited to appearance alone, but also related to strengthening the precarious infrastructure of the Occupy movement. This is the case with their *Occupy Shelter* (2011), a building block consisting of panels through which different structures could be build, such as tables, backdrops, benches and shelters with the aim of "fortifying the physical infrastructure" of the rather fragile set-up of tents.[214] Like the tape and blocks, *Occupy Shelter* could be used well beyond the confines of a protest camp to reclaim a diversity of public spaces, abandoned or foreclosed houses, and buildings. The visual literacy and organizational capacity that Not An Alternative contributes to the popular mass movement therefore aims to reach beyond the rather spontaneous patchwork of tents and signs that are characteristic of the protest encampment. Instead, Not An Alternative looks at these emerging social forms as pre-figurative institutions: the possibility to re-imagine and establish new models of civil forms of governance and representation. We can consider their work as both an act of commitment and as a critique of the organizational and infrastructural limitations of the popular mass movement. In that light, Occupy's ideal of spontaneous self-governance, similar to that of the spontaneous camp, is challenged by the collective when Jodi Dean and Jason Jones claim that Occupy cannot transcend models of political representation:

> It reinvents representation as the active, self-authorizing assertion of division in relation to the appearance of antagonism. Occupy unleashes practices and incites actions, linking them together via the hole in Wall Street. In its new politics of representation, division isn't effaced or overcome. It's asserted and linked to capitalism's fundamental antagonism, class struggle.[215]

In these writings a more militant politicized approach to the camp is articulated; not as a space of spontaneous political consensus, but a site of struggle where the 99% – those who claim the right to speak for a popular majority through assemblist practice – assert a fundamental division between ruling power and the precariat. Or, as Jones and Dean phrase it, "[a]sserting division, it represents possibility."[216]

214 Retrieved from the "Project" section of Not An Alternative's website, http://notanalternative.org/projects/.
215 Jason Jones and Jodi Dean, "Occupy Wall Street and the Politics of Representation," *Chto Delat*, No. 34: In Defense of Representation (Mar. 2012).
216 Ibid.

The real work of Occupy and related popular mass movements, so the authors claim, happens outside the domain of consensus, in the form of direct organization and action with the aim of constructing a long-term and durable alternative form of institutionality and emancipatory governance:

> There is nothing about democracy that necessarily goes against capitalism. Democratic processes have been coextensive with the capitalist mode of production and accumulation. The position that represents the threat to global capitalism is the one that refuses capitalism outright and insists on universal egalitarian emancipation.[217]

The importance of a clearly formulated political position, the organization and maintenance of infrastructure, counter-branding, and seizing power from existing institutions is expressed in Not An Alternative's project *The Natural History Museum* (2014–ongoing), a newly declared institution that "offers exhibitions, expeditions, educational workshops, and public programming" through "existing institutions, [...] its 15-passenger mobile museum bus, and online."[218] Different from the existing Natural History Museum, Not An Alternative's version focuses on the impact of humans on climate change, the role of fossil fuel industries and their influence on museums, as well as the political system at large. Like a 21st-century propaganda train, Not An Alternative's mobile museum is capable of setting up instant pop-up displays adorned with the colorful child-friendly imagery that we associate with the Natural History Museum, but deeply politicized through slogans such as "Cut Ties to the Fossil Fuel Industry: Stand Up for Science." *The Natural History Museum* is thus presented as a new politicized form of institution. Different from previously self-funded interventions it was financially supported by "art and social justice foundation grants."[219] Its aim is to partly operate through existing institutions and partly through its own channels of communication, and to force directors as well as visitors not merely to be informed on climate change, but to recognize their own implication within it and take a position in relationship to it.

In a 2015 op-ed in *The Guardian*, Not An Alternative members Steve Lyons and Beka Economopoulos pushed the Natural History Museum's agenda by issuing a series of public demands: "[W]e are asking museums of science and natural history to drop climate science deniers from their boards, cancel sponsorships from the fossil fuel

217 Not An Alternative, "Counter-Power as Common Power: Beyond Horizontalism".
218 Retrieved from the "Project" section of Not An Alternative's website, http://notanalternative.org/projects/.
219 E-mail exchange with Not An Alternative member Jason Jones, Mar. 1, 2017.

industry, and divest financial portfolios from fossil fuels."[220] This is an important aspect of the process in which Not An Alternative operates "between worlds" – between the popular mass movement and the artistic–cultural institution – reclaiming common resources through a variety of sites of struggle, and effectively overcoming the divide of being "inside" or "outside" a given system. They effectively enact Steyerl's call to occupy and seize the institution as part of the battlefield:

> [I]nstitutional liberation isn't about making institutions better, more inclusive, more participatory. It's about establishing politicized base camps from which ever more coordinated, elaborate, and effective campaigns against the capitalist state in all its racist, exploitative, extractivist, and colonizing dimensions can be carried out. This takeover will not happen overnight. But it is happening now at an international scale, accumulating force and momentum with every repetition of a common name and image, every iteration of associated acts: red lines, red squares, arrayed tents, money drops, blockades, occupations.[221]

Similar to Not An Alternative, the work of Dutch artist Matthijs de Bruijne takes the form of projects and tools developed in direct relation to popular mass movements, in this case with the Federation of Dutch Labor Unions (FNV) at its core. De Bruijne, different from Not An Alternative, is directly funded by the FNV itself, and although he continues to involve the art institution, this is a nearly marginal dimension of his overall practice. It was particularly his work with the Argentinian *cartoneros* – people who make their living from collecting, organizing, and re-selling waste in the form of cardboard, metal, and glass – that brought the FNV to contact the artist for a series of ongoing collaborations in the context of their campaign *Schoon genoeg!*[222] which means roughly "enough already," but can also be read differently: the word *schoon* also means "clean." The history of the FNV has a particular tradition of art and culture of its own,[223] but De Bruijne

220 Steve Lyons and Beka Economopoulos, "Museums Must Take a Stand and Cut Ties to Fossil Fuels," *The Guardian*, May 7, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/may/07/museums-must-take-a-stand-and-cut-ties-to-fossil-fuels.

221 Not An Alternative, "Institutional Liberation," *e-flux journal,* No. 77 (Nov. 2016).

222 De Bruijne recorded and wrote down the stories of the *cartoneros*, and published these together with images of the collected waste on the website *Liquidacion.org* (2002) where online visitors could also purchase the objects. A crucial model from which he developed his own artistic methodology was the *Tucumán Arde* (*Tucumán Burns*), a 1968 exhibition in Buenos Aires and Rosario organized by the Grupo de Artistas de Vanguardia (Group of Avant-Garde Artists) in collaboration with other cultural workers, sociologists, and journalists with the aim of highlighting the disastrous working conditions in Tucumán city, located in the north-western part of the country. See also: Sven Lütticken, "Matthijs de Bruijne," *Witte Raaf,* No. 107 (Jan.–Feb. 2004), https://www.dewitteraaf.be/artikel/detail/nl/2758.

223 De Bruijne often references the "Burght" – "the fortress" – built in 1899–1900 as a monument to the labor movement and headquarters of the union that was designed by architect Hendrik Petrus Berlage and decorated with murals depicting the rise of the worker movement by artist Richard Roland Holst.

observed that this deep connection "between the arts and the union has disappeared since WW2,"[224] and that the FNV instead has "evolved from a political movement to an insurance company" with an equally "corporate identity."[225] 2010, however, saw a resurgence of organizing capacity of the cleaner's union resulting in a successful three-month strike to demand less work pressure, a 2% promised increase of their salary, and paid sick leave. It was the largest and longest strike in the Netherlands since 1933.

The commemoration of their successful strike was to become the moment for the cleaner's union to solidify their newly gained successes. Developing his insights from Argentina, De Bruijne created a project called the *Trash Museum* (2011), a mobile museum that would display a diversity of objects found by cleaners in their workplaces – from train to airport – which publicly demonstrated their often difficult working conditions. Following the decision-making structure of the cleaner's union, De Bruijne presented his proposal to the "Parliament of Cleaners," which agreed to its realization and financing.[226] The *Trash Museum* was first presented in the hall of the Utrecht Central Station, a major transit point for thousands of commuters, before going on tour to four other Dutch cities.[227] In collaboration with design group Detour, consisting of Marnix de Klerk and Nina Mathijsen, De Bruijne erected yellow walls mimicking the colors of the yellow gloves and yellow cloth used by the cleaners in the central hall of the station. Plastic zip-lock bags were attached to the wall, each containing objects found by cleaners: from toys and drug needles to sex toys. A sign was placed next to every object, providing the background story of the cleaner who found it, testimonies collected by De Bruijne. The yellow flags of the union, and its by now famous symbol of a clenched fist in a yellow rubber glove, surrounded the walls, marking the spatial claim of the museum in the middle of the train station. Thousands of visitors came by to see the objects, discuss the demands of the cleaners with the union's members, and take promotional materials presented on a nearby table. Instead of

224 Matthijs de Bruijne, "Museum of the People," lecture at the *New World Academy,* BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, Utrecht, Nov. 15, 2013, https://vimeo.com/90675280.

225 Lara Staal and Wouter Hillaert, "Centraal staat het werk," *rekto:verso* No. 69: Dossier Zwart-Wit (Dec. 2015–Jan. 2016), https://www.rektoverso.be/artikel/centraal-staat-het-werk. Original quote in Dutch: "De Nederlandse bond is van een politieke beweging geëvolueerd naar een verzekeringsmaatschappij. De bijhorende *corporate identity*-mentaliteit is mee overgenomen."

226 According to De Bruijne, the Parliament of Cleaners is not an executive branch of the union but created by the cleaners themselves. Due to prominent members of the Parliament of Cleaners – such as *Khadija* Thahiri, president of the Cleaner's Union – many of its decisions are honored nonetheless. One could say the Parliament of Cleaners operates in a form of dual power within the union as a whole. Noted from telephone conversation with De Bruijne on Feb. 11, 2017.

227 The *Trash Museum* afterwards toured to the Burght, Amsterdam (Oct. 24–25, 2011), the town hall of The Hague (Jan. 4–26, 2012), the library of Groningen (Jan. 30–Feb. 5, 2012), and the town hall of Heerlen (Feb. 14–21, 2012).

injecting the message of a popular mass movement into the museum, De Bruijne proposed to institute the museum as part of and created in collaboration with the popular mass movement itself.

This initial collaborative project of De Bruijne and the cleaner's union brought him into contact with the domestic worker's union, which represents a severely under-recognized segment of the Dutch labor force: "Most of the Domestic Workers in the Netherlands, especially in the big cities, are undocumented. We talk about thousands and most of them come from the Philippines, Indonesia, Latin America and Ghana, and officially they don't exist."[228] One of the artworks that De Bruijne developed with the Domestic Worker's Union was an enactment of their slogan "Never Ever Invisible." It consisted of a shadow play in the form of video titled *No Work, No Pay!* (2012), which was realized for a screening in The Hague at the Dutch parliament. The work was part of the union's campaign to bring the Netherlands to ratify the International Labour Organization (ILO) convention 189 in recognition of the rights of domestic workers.[229] De Bruijne explains the shadow play as "a form of theatre, originally from Asia that is also common here in the Netherlands because of our colonial history." He thus connected an aesthetics that relates both to the history of the Netherlands and many migrant domestic workers, allowing us to consider a neo-colonial dimension of the use of cheap labour in the form of migrant domestic work.[230] The shadow plays are realized by domestic workers and actors standing behind a screen, with a strong backlight. Therefore, the medium allows the domestic workers to be *present* in silhouette without being *recognized.* This is a crucial protection, due to the risk of the identification of undocumented workers by the authorities. The medium of the shadow play through which the migrant workers share their stories is thus simultaneously an expression of the specific *condition* of the protagonists themselves. We could consider this a radical variation of what we have discussed in War on Terror Propaganda Art as "visible invisibility," in this case repurposed and enacted by the dispossessed.

Whereas De Bruijne works with diaspora communities in the labor

228 Matthijs de Bruijne, "Solidarity and Unionising," lecture at the *Artist Organizations International,* HAU Theater, Berlin, Jan. 11, 2015, https://vimeo.com/119233427. The struggle of undocumented domestic workers gave rise to the campaign *100,000 Families Trust Us*, which called for a recognition of domestic work on par with any other sector, and for the recognition of around 70,000 undocumented domestic workers in the Netherlands. The campaign generated its very own lexicon relevant both for union members and outsiders to gain understanding of their specific conditions of struggle. As such, the publication is both a handbook and a documentation of the work and successes of the union so far. See: Matthijs de Bruijne and Cecilia Vallejos, *Werkwoorden – Words of Labor* (FNV Schoonmaak, 2017).

229 International Labour Organization, C189 – Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), http://www.ilo.org/dyn/normlex/en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:12100:0::NO::p12100_instrument_id:2551460.

230 De Bruijne, "Museum of the People."

union, many of which have fled neocolonial oppression in their countries of origin, a final example of Embedded Art that we will discuss relates to the direct context of such oppression itself. This concerns the work of Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), an institution founded in 2008 by Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman – from Italy, Palestine, and Israel respectively, and each with a background in architecture – located in Beit Sahour, a Palestinian town east of Bethlehem under the administration of the Palestinian National Authority. DAAR combines an architectural studio and a residency program, and has involved a multidisciplinary group of local and international participants in their program – from artists, designers, architects to philosophers, writers, and activists – with the aim to "use spatial practice as a form of political intervention."[231] Spatial practice here relates directly to the conflictual and contested region of Palestine, its colonization and monitoring by the Israeli occupation, and the prominent role that architecture plays in the process of reclaiming one's native land.[232]

DAAR's focus lies on understanding the changing conceptions of space and property through the occupation of Palestine, and operates in close proximity with some of the popular movements that continue to struggle for their right to return to their lands of origin. But, as mentioned earlier, while DAAR affirms its solidarity with "the full implementation of the right of return," it simultaneously acts as a critical agent within the conflict by stating that "we do not believe that return can offer a solution to the condition of refugeeness by simply reversing the trajectory of time."[233] Instead, they explore the political potential of the spaces that arise between a site of origin and a site of exile with the potential of bringing forward the project of decolonization, explained by the group as follows:

> "Decolonization" [...] is not bound as a concept, nor is it bound in space or in time: it is an ongoing practice of deactivation and reorientation understood both in its presence and its endlessness. In the context of Palestine, it is not bound within the 1967 occupied

231 Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman, *Architecture After Revolution* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2013), p. 28.

232 Weizman, who is also co-conceiver of the Centre of Research Architecture (CRA) with Thomas Keenan and Susan Schuppli at Goldsmiths University in London, speaks in this regard of Israel's settlement architecture as a form of destruction by design: "[T]echniques of destruction become a kind of de facto urban planning." In this context the CRA investigates what it calls "forensic architecture" as an alternative take on the reconstruction of evidence. See: Yates McKee and Meg McLagan in conversation with Eyal Weizman, "Forensic Architecture: An Interview with Eyal Weizman," in Meg McLagan and Yates McKee (eds.), *Sensible Politics: The Visual Culture of Nongovernmental Activism* (New York: Zone Books, 2012), p. 445. See also: Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London/New York: Verso, 2007).

233 Alessandro Petti et al., *Architecture After Revolution*, p. 39.

> territories. Decolonization, in our understanding, seeks to unleash a process of open-ended transformation toward visions of equality and justice. The return of refugees, which we interpret as entailing the right to move and settle within the complete borders of Israel–Palestine [...] is a fundamental stage in decolonization.[234]

DAAR makes this question of decolonization concrete by focusing its work on the infrastructures of colonization – refugee camps, the remainders of Israeli settlements, or "public" spaces – that were never desired by the Palestinian people in the first place. Should one hold onto the right of return as a "return in time" as the only possible trajectory in relation to the condition of exile, or is there a third option imaginable in the form of what DAAR explains as "a subversion of the originally intended use [of such infrastructures], repurposing it for other ends"?[235] This is at the core of what DAAR describes as an "Architecture After Revolution," the title of their 2013 publication: not maintaining the exile/return dichotomy, but investing in a transformative third option that re-contexualizes the right to return in new future scenarios and re-composes people and state anew through a process that seeks "to decolonize a system rather than establish a State."[236] The possibility to establish what DAAR calls a "future extraterritorial polity" will be of crucial importance to understand their practice.[237]

DAAR's project *Returns* (2009) is an architectural proposal for the village of Miska, colonized by Israel in 1948, and the Palestinian refugee camp Dheisheh, established south of Bethlehem in the West Bank in the same year, and housing more than three thousand refugees. The infrastructure of the camp evidently was not desired and should not be considered as any kind of solution, but its historical role in facilitating popular mass movements such as the resistance groups Fatah and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), demonstrates that it also cannot be reduced to a symbol of mere victimhood, because "the camp continuously develops and rearticulates the self-conception of refugeehood in a way that maintains its vanguard political status. Rather than enacting normalization these constructions became potential agents of decolonization."[238] *Returns* takes the form of two circles of the same width, one to be realized in Miska, one in Dheisheh: an intervention on the site of origin that mirrors the one in exile. But whereas DAAR proposes the circle

234 Ibid., p. 18.
235 Ibid., p. 21.
236 Ibid., p. 32.
237 Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman, "The Morning After: Profaning Colonial Architecture," in McLagan and McKee, *Sensible Politics*, p. 467.
238 Alessandro Petti et al., *Architecture After Revolution*, p. 50.

in Dheisheh to become emptied from any construction, turning it into a public space in the crowded refugee camp, the circle in Miska would house a solid building.[239] As such, the intervention articulates the reality of a third option: acknowledging Miska as the "site of origin" parallel to the Dheisheh as the "site of exile" as the beginning of the refugee community.[240] While *Returns* is yet to be realized, another project entitled *Concrete Tent* (2015), commissioned by the related organization Campus in Camps, realizes part of the proposal.[241] The project is situated in Dheisheh and consists of a model of a refugee tent that is cast in concrete, operating as a space of meeting and assembly. The structure represents a condition of permanent exile. Dheisheh thus becomes something between the site of exile and a space, which due to its long history, inevitably has become something of a "home." *Concrete Tent* thus acknowledges the history of Dheisheh while never giving in to the idea that this could ever be the site of arrival: "the re-creation of a tent made of concrete today is an attempt to preserve the cultural and symbolic importance of this archetype for the narration of the Nakba, but at the same time to engage the present political condition of exile."[242]

As we saw in the case of both *Returns* and *Concrete Tent*, DAAR's projects are speculative and literally concrete at the same time, constructing infrastructures in the present while speculating on their future iterations as part of a third path; the dialectical outcome of origin and exile. Another relevant example in this regard is DAAR's complex research project on the lines that formed the divided territories of Israel and Palestine in the decades following the Nakba.[243] The lines that formed DAAR's point of departure were the ones drawn upon a map dividing the West Bank in the early 1990s, as part of the so-called Oslo Accords in Norway. DAAR notes that "[b]ecause the documents signed were printed hard copies in which the lines were just over a millimeter wide, in real space the line acquired a width of about five meters,"[244] and it was this space – the space articulated through the thickness of the line – which after the collapse of the Oslo Accords would remain

239 In the case of Miska, the structure was modeled after the al-Feniq program, a cultural center established in Dheisheh, projecting the common cultural project emerging from the camp into a foundation of a future return. As such, the first building block of the return to Miska would be the common infrastructure that emerged from decades in exile in the camp, as DAAR argues that "the veritable revolution of return is fundamentally a revolution in relation to property." Ibid., p. 59.
240 Ibid., p. 54.
241 Whereas DAAR is the architectural outcome of Petti, Hilal and Weizman's collaboration, Campus in Camps is considered to be the "pedagogical wing," led by Petti and Hilal. Cited from e-mail exchange with Allessandro Petti, Feb. 8, 2017.
242 Retrieved from the "Dheisheh" project section of the website of Campus in Camps, http://www.decolonizing.ps/site/concrete-tent/.
243 The point of departure was formed by historian and former deputy mayor of Jerusalem Meron Benvenisti, who, in relation to the 1949 cease-fire lines drawn by military commanders Moshe Dayan and Abdullah al-Tal, asked the question "who owns the 'width of the line'?" Petti, Hillal, and Weizman, *Architecture After Revolution*, p. 151.
244 Ibid., p. 153.

"[w]ithout legal definition."[245]

This example leads to the most important and challenging example of this research, the *Common Assembly* (2011) project, which deals with the Palestinian Legislative Council building. Constructed in 1996 at the height of enthusiasm about the Oslo accords, the now abandoned parliament was challenged by three spatial realities at the same time. One part belongs to the Israeli occupation, one part belongs to the Palestinian authorities, and a third part, defined by the thickness of the line, belongs to no one. The work of DAAR consisted in tracing the exact location of the line through the parliament, which they swept and polished clean. A photograph of the space shows how the line is now visible in the middle of the parliament, adding a new spatial level to the architecture and implicating the construction as part of a new extraterritorial reality – the material and spatial reality of the line itself. It was this line in which DAAR claimed to "identify a space that could host and embody decolonization."[246] For it is in this space, in this third option, that a radically new model of assembly emerges – an assembly of an architecture after the revolution:

> It is in the heart of these unlegislated spaces that a sense of communality beyond state institutions can be re-imagined. It is by re-using these present political ruins – parliaments and borders – that a common extraterritorial assembly may emerge.[247]

Let us try to summarize the practices of Steyerl, Not An Alternative, De Bruijne, and DAAR in the context of Embedded Art, as well as their overall relation to Popular Propaganda Art and the performance of the popular, composition of a people, and construction of Popular Realism.

The embeddedness in the popular mass movement is articulated differently in all four practices. In the case of Steyerl, the museum is identified as a battlefield which includes popular mass movements such as the Kurds and the Gezi Park protests. As a result, her embeddedness in the museum expands into her embeddedness in the popular mass movement. In the case of Not An Alternative, members of the group are already embedded either in the field of activism or that of art. The result is a parallel embeddedness, repurposing means from the institution of art for the popular mass movement, sometimes leading to completely new institutional models. In the case of De Bruijne, his

245 Ibid., p. 155.
246 Ibid., p. 171.
247 Ibid., p. 185.

embeddedness is primarily within the labor union and its decision-making structures, and although his link to the institute of art is not severed completely, he institutes the role of art within the movement itself. In the case of DAAR, its members are embedded within civil and refugee movements in the present, but aim to articulate a third option of a "people-in-the-making" that defines its aim for a future embeddedness which the present does not yet allow for. In many of these cases, we observed that we are dealing with a engaged *and* critical embeddedness, whether it concerns Not An Alternative's critique of the model of general assembly in Occupy, or DAAR's refusal to commit to the existing dichotomy of exile/return. Embeddedness as such is not the equivalent of a passive acceptance of political doctrine, but relates to the effort of actively shaping the popular mass movement while being fully part of it at the same time.

The performance of emerging power, central to the practice of Popular Propaganda Art, manifests itself differently depending on the form of embeddedness. Steyerl's work impacts the performance of the popular and composition of a people directly by enlarging the institution of art as battlefield and employing art to re-compose – or in her case, "edit" – a people by assembling the viewer with the protestor. In Steyerl's work, we can define Popular Realism as a construction of reality that emerges through a complete erasure of the boundaries between the institution of art, the military-industrial complex, and the popular mass movement. Not An Alternative's projects clearly contribute to mobilization and civic action in the context of the performance of the popular, but try to widen them at the same time by moving beyond the spontaneous dimension of protest toward a more structured claim to new forms of institutional power. Not An Alternative contributes to the formation of new identities through its conceptual appropriation of branding to contribute to the composition of a people. The form of Popular Realism they try to invoke throughout these works is one in which institutions – whether in the form of public space or a museum – are radically reclaimed, repurposed, and redistributed – or even re-instituted – among popular majorities. De Bruijne's work effectively mobilizes broad constituents, both within the union and outside of it, from commuters moving in train stations, to political parties that see his screenings. His work further contributes to the composition of a people by proposing a new visual identity of the Dutch working class. The form of Popular Realism that de Bruijne attempts to initiate is articulated through the demands of a broad coalition of documented and undocumented workers, with a strengthening and expansion of the union as a result. DAAR's work acknowledges and supports the right to return of Palestinian refugees, but simultaneously aims to open

a third option around which a people-in-the-making has yet to emerge. Its projects contribute to a broad involvement of its own members, residents to their program, as well as the governing structures of Palestinian municipalities and refugee camps, and as such contribute to the performance of the popular, albeit on the very specific terms of what they describe as a third option. In the process, DAAR effectively contributes to the formation of new compositions of identity through strategies of decolonization and political claims to extraterritoriality as a potential space of "common assembly." The form of Popular Realism they try to invoke is described through their concept of a third path, a conception of the popular that emerges beyond a dialectic of the origin/exile dichotomy into a new extraterritorial reality.

In our analysis of Embedded Art, we have already touched slightly on the final organizational model of Popular Propaganda Art that we will discuss, *Organizational Art*. In the case of Not An Alternative as well as DAAR, we are dealing with collectives and organizations founded by artists, encompassing certain artistic dimensions of their own. Not An Alternative is something of a militant slogan in its own right, whereas DAAR contains a futuristic dimension by being an art residency of an extraterritorial domain of political and artistic practice yet in the making. But in neither case could we say that the organizations are themselves works of art. This is different with Organizational Art, which maintains a direct relation to the popular mass movement, but is itself also an artistic composition of sorts.

ORGANIZATIONAL ART

With the term Organizational Art we mean to focus on artists who work indirectly with popular mass movements, through artist organizations they have founded. The artist organization is not the same as an artist collective, because the former considers the very notion of an organization as the material an artwork is made of: the organization is created in compository, artistic, and aesthetic terms.[248]

In the case of artist collectives, artist initiatives, or artist platforms such as Not An Alternative and DAAR we already saw how important the organizational dimension of artistic practice is in relation to the

248 In 2015, dramaturg Florian Malzacher, curator Joanna Warsza, and I initiated the three-day conference *Artist Organizations International* from January 9–11, in a first attempt to theorize Organizational Art through the observation that "[a]rtist organizations are founded by artists; artist organizations choose the form of the organization; artist organizations seek for structural engagement; artist organizations propose social/political agendas." These observations were debated by over twenty representatives of artist organizations worldwide. Congress statement and video registrations are archived at http://www.artistorganizations.org/, see also Andrea Liu, "Artists Organisations International" *Afterimage Journal,* Vol. 42, No. 6 (2015): pp. 2-3.; Ekaterina Degot, "The Artist as Director: 'Artist Organisations International' and its Contradictions," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry,* No. 40 (Autumn/Winter 2015): pp. 20–27.

performance of the popular and the composition of a people. We could say that the alliances of artists, activists, and theorists (Not An Alternative) or their diverse geographic and cultural backgrounds (DAAR) prefigure the aim of composing a people beyond the existing Us/Them divide imposed through War on Terror Propaganda. In the case of Organizational Art, this aspect is pushed even further. The composition of an artist organization is not only aimed at prefiguring a different composition of a people, it should also be understood and analyzed as an artwork in itself. We touched on the idea of the organization-as-artwork already in Claire Bishop's discussion of Tania Bruguera's *Cátedra Arte de Conducta*, and in this section, we will try to deepen our understanding of such practices by defining a practice of Organizational Art as part of Popular Propaganda Art. In the process, we will address three aspects of Organizational Art. The first relates to understanding an artist organization as an artwork. The second concerns the artist organization's relation to and impact on popular mass movements. The third is the infrastructure that the model of the artist organization provides to its founders and members, addressing not only the needs of popular mass movements, but also the precariat of artists and cultural workers themselves.

Whereas the practice of Embedded Art can be elucidated through a large variety of examples of artists involved in popular mass movements throughout history, the case of Organizational Art is more particular. An early example would be the work of Dutch anarchist-turned-fascist artist Erich Wichmann, who co-founded a political party in Amsterdam known as the Rapaille Partij (Rabble Party) in 1921. Wichmann was a staunch critic of parliamentary democracy and compulsory voting, and convinced that the presumption that uninformed citizens would be able to make proper decisions on issues regarding their own governance posed a grave danger.[249] To prove his point, the artist did not only produce an ongoing wave of curious pamphlets mocking citizenry as spineless "milk drinkers," but also ran with the Rapaille Partij for the Amsterdam municipal elections.[250] Leader of the party was famous homeless man and street musician Cornelis de Gelder a.k.a Hadjememaar (If-you-could-have-me), a ludic alcoholic that ran the political platform with an agenda co-authored by the artist, promising the citizens of Amsterdam jenever (gin) and beer for the prize of only 5 cents

249 Koen Vossen, *Vrij vissen in het Vondelpark: Kleine politieke partijen in Nederland 1918–1940* (Amsterdam: Wereldbibliotheek, 2003), pp. 143–44.

250 The pamphlet in question was titled "The White Danger: On Milk, Milk Use, Milk Abuse and Milk Gluttony," posing milk as the ultimate consumption of petty-bourgeois citizenry. See: Erich Wichmann, "Het witte gevaar: Over melk, melkgebruik, melkmisbruik en melkzucht," in Wim Zaal (ed.), *Erich Wichmann: Lenin stinkt en andere satirische geschriften gekozen door Wim Zaal* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij de Arbeiderspers, 1971).

and the possibility to fish and hunt in de Vondelpark, one of the main public parks of the city.[251] The party won 14,000 votes, amounting to two seats, strengthening Wichmann's conviction that parliamentary democracy operated on the basis of the control and manipulation of public information, driving him later in his life to Mussolini's Fascist Party and its sympathizing Futurist movement.[252] As a consequence, Wichmann and his Rapaille Partij became marginalized in the art-historical canon, although Wichmann undeniably had created one of the first models of the artist organization. The Rapaille Partij was not simply a collective of artists or a political party with artist members, but an organization conceived and operating as an artwork in its own right while achieving actual political results at the very same time.

A more contemporary example of the artist organization, including a similar flirt with authoritarianism, would be the Neue Slowenische Kunst (NSK), an artist organization founded in Yugoslavia in 1984. NSK consists of several "departments" formed by artist groups, among which the most prominent are the music group Laibach and the artist group IRWIN.[253] Created in the Eastern European block during the emergence of ethno-nationalist tensions running throughout Yugoslavia and the ongoing influence of the Soviet Union in the region, one could say the core work of NSK was focused on the performativity and morphology of totalitarianism.[254] NSK members presented themselves as a homogeneous collective. The Laibach music group dressed in what looked suspiciously like Nazi uniforms and accompanying hairstyles, and their manifestos were based on continuous claims on the necessity of unity, centralization, order, collectivism, and loyalty.[255]

251 Quoted from "De Raad," the official election newspaper of the Rapaille Party, original quotes in Dutch "De Jajem 5 cent, Bier ook 5 cent" and "Vrij visschen in het Vondelpark," see: F.J. Haffmans (ed.), *Geest, Koolzuur en Zijk: Briefwisseling van Erich Wichman* (Westervoort: Van Gruting, 1999), p. 69.

252 The work and writings of Italian futurist frontman Marinetti were an important influence on Wichmann. Just like Marinetti's proximity to Mussolini's Fascist Party, Wichmann sought to ally himself to Dutch Fascist movements. Nonetheless, Wichmann biographers Frans van Burkom and Hans Mulder have argued that, if it were not for his early death, the artist's anarchist sympathies would have proven irreconcilable with later Nazi-fascism. They argue that Wichmann was principally a "chaoot," a bringer of chaos. See: Frans van Burkom and Hans Mulder, *Erich Wichmann 1890–1929: Tussen idealisme en rancune* (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 1983), p. 108–9, 159

253 Other founding members were Theatre of the Sisters of Scipio Nasica, now the Cosmokinetic Cabinet Noordung, as well as the New Collectivism design department.

254 NSK member artist Miran Mohar mentions the disappointment of actual fascist groups attending NSK projects: "Interestingly, despite our iconography, we were not of much interest to ultranationalists in the long run. In fact, they were mostly quite disappointed and perplexed when they looked more closely at us. They attended the events of NSK and its groups because our iconography was apparently appealing to them, but its content did not meet their expectations and they did not know what to make of it." Miran Mohar, "Why Neue Slovenische Kunst in German?," *e-flux journal,* No. 57 (Sep. 2014).

255 The NSK's "Eternal Book of Laws" lays out the "Constitution of Membership and Basic Duties of NSK Members." It states, among others, that "[a] member of the NSK should be hardworking; he should respect the concepts of NSK and its history, be compliant and cooperative in carrying out joint decisions, and irreproachable in administering the general and secret statutory and moral norms of NSK." Such principles are organized around the belief of "the hierarchical principle and existence of the supreme substance (ICS – the immanent, consistent spirit)," which demands members to accept that "the association denies each member his own freedom of choice regarding his religious persuasion, and political and aesthetic affiliation." Neue Slowenische Kunst, *Neue Slowenische Kunst* (Los Angeles: AMOK Books, 1991), p. 4.

IRWIN produced posters and paintings with a strong *Blut und Boden* aesthetics, combining pagan symbols such as the deer with heroic workers and Germanic symbols. What remained absent, however, was an exact ideological declaration. NSK manifestos and interviews were full of rhetoric on anti-individualism and the need of absolute order, but never explain *why* this order was needed in the first place and *whom* this order would be benefiting. One could say that the NSK attempted to enact totalitarianism as something of a "pure form": mobilizing deep human desires for unity through theatrical staging, but bypassing violent action. This strategy, known as "over-identification," is essentially a critique of a political regime by adopting its form and rhetoric, but in such an excessive way that it ridicules and undermines it.[256] Nonetheless, as an artist organization, the NSK brought about semi-functioning political infrastructures, most famously when the NSK transformed into the "NSK State in Time," a new state founded in 1992 that issues actual passports, but does not exist as a physical territory, rather only as a geography of ideas.[257] The lack of territory however has not stopped 16,000 citizens from joining the State in Time.[258] In this context, one could see the 2015 concert of Laibach in North-Korea – the first international band to play in the highly secluded country – as real-time *international diplomacy* between the State in Time and the neo-Stalinist state.[259]

Taking these two examples into consideration, the artist organization can already be valued on two levels. First, as an *artistic composition* that challenges the deficit of existing political models. And second, in terms of *political effect* as they operate in an actual political reality of upheaval and social change, and potentially bring about new changes themselves. Whether these changes are desirable, such as in the case of Wichmann, or even in control of the artists themselves, such as in the case of Laibach, is of course yet another discussion.

While we could discuss several historical examples of artist organizations, we can observe a substantial rise of such organizational practi-

256 A term defined by Slavoj Žižek. See: Slavoj Žižek, "Why are Laibach and NSK not Fascists?," *M'ARS Casopis Moderne Galerije*, Vol. 3, No. 4 (1993): pp. 3-4. BAVO further expands the concept of over-identification in relation to the contemporary practices of Christoph Schlingensief and Atelier van Lieshout. See: BAVO, *Culture Activism Today: The Art of Over-Identification* (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007).

257 Documented in IRWIN, *State in Time* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 2014).

258 Information on the amount of NSK passport holders is retrieved from a post on http:/www.nsk-state.com, the official digital channel from the NSK State in Time, posted onJan. 11, 2016. The first NSK Citizen's Congress was organized Oct. 21–23, 2010 in Haus der Kulturen der Welt, Berlin. See: Alexei Monroe (ed.), *State of Emergence: A Documentary of the First NSK Citizen's Congress* (Leipzig/London: Poison Cabinet Press, 2011)

259 The event was scheduled as part of the "Laibach Liberation Tour." See: Oliver Hotham, "Laibach to Play Sound of Music covers at Pyongyang's First Rock Concert," *The Guardian*, Jul. 22, 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jul/22/north-korea-laibach-pyongyang-concert.

ces in the 21st century. The reason for this rise should be added as the third aspect of Organizational Art: the artist organization is not only an artistic composition or instrument to achieve a certain political effect, but also as *system of life support for artists* themselves. We should understand the rise of Organizational Art as a result of the growing precariat, of which artist and cultural workers form a substantial part. Whereas collectives such as the English Carrotworkers Collective or the German Haben und Brauchen are contemporary examples of artists and cultural workers who attempt to unionize in their struggle against unpaid labor and a general absence of social security in the art field,[260] the artist organization could be considered to be a similar response to a lack of infrastructure for the cultural precariat. It is far more effective to negotiate salaries and long-term funding when one presents one's practice as an organization rather than as an individual artist-entrepreneur. Nevertheless, the primary objective of artist organizations is not to secure better funding for the artistic precariat, but the exploration of the organization as artwork and the mobilization of the artist organization to achieve political effect, to which the structural funding and social protection of its initiators and members is inherent.

In the case of contemporary Organizational Art, we can think of artist organizations such as the International Institute of Political Murder (IIPM), The Laboratory of Insurrectionary Imagination (labofii), or Zentrum für Politische Schönheit (ZPS), each of which operates as an actual organization and provides income to its respective founders or members, while simultaneously exploring the organization as artistic composition and as a tool to achieve political change. IIPM was founded by the Swiss theater maker Milo Rau, and its main aim was to challenge the international judicial order through re-enacting historical trials and manifestos, exploring the theatrical and visual dimensions of evidence.[261] Labofii, founded by John Jordan and Isabelle Frémeaux, operates mainly from the French Zone A Défendre (ZAD) nearby Nantes in France: an autonomous communal camp of climate

260 The Carrotworkers Collective consists for a large part of interns and former interns in the cultural field, and organizes monthly assemblies, symposiums, workshops, and publications to weaponize cultural workers against exploitation. Being something between pamphlet, questionnaire and – surprisingly – photo-romances that narrate the struggles of female cultural workers, their guide *Surviving Internships* (2009) documents their analysis of precarious labor in the cultural realm. Carrot Workers Collective, *Surviving Internships: A Counter Guide to Free Labour in the Arts* (London: Hato Press, 2009). Haben und Brauchen focuses particularly on the city of Berlin, calling attention to working conditions of artists through pamphlets, petitions, debates, and lectures, while simultaneously calling for recognition of the unique alternative artistic and cultural sphere of the city in the face of gentrification and neoliberal politics.

261 One of the most controversial examples in this regard is IIPM's production *Five Easy Pieces* (2016), in which child actors aged eight to thirteen narrate the story of the Belgian child molester and serial killer Marc Dutroux, as a form of public "evidence" of the changed Belgium national identity after the fact, while simultaneously forming "evidence" of the tricky ethics of Rau's own use of minors for his piece, described by Rau as "connecting the idea of, as an adult, working with children, and this crime against children." Kunstenfestivaldesarts, "Milo Rau / Five Easy Pieces / Interview," May 16, 2016, https://vimeo.com/166817332.

activists through which laboffi develops its public carnavalesque agitational actions against corporations they consider implicated in global climate crimes.[262] Lastly, the ZPS emerged from a large collective of German artists and political campaigners with the aim of developing high-profile media actions they call "aggressive humanism" related to the refugee crisis, such as their highly controversial proposal to bury the corpses of refugees that died at sea in cemeteries in the German capital.[263]

While the very names of these artist organizations hint at the utopian dimension of the endeavor of re-imagining what an organization is, could, or should be, they are simultaneously shaped and formed by popular mass movements and civil upheaval. In the case of IIPM in relation to social justice movements, in the case of laboffi in relation to climate activism, and in the case of the ZPS in relation to the struggle for refugee rights. Using the form of the organization here adds legitimacy, but also allows for long-term investments in specific crises by challenging the institution of art – and sometimes other structures capable of providing financial support, such as NGOs – to not just finance an artistic "project" with a social or political dimension, but to co-conceive fully functioning organizational infrastructures that provide income and the capacity of long-term engagement of its members.

The first of two detailed case studies that we will discuss in the context of contemporary Organizational Art as part of Popular Propaganda Art, will be related to the work of Tania Bruguera. We will begin by discussing her theoretical output on the notions of political art and her concept of "useful art" to understand how her practice of Organizational Art came into being.

In her 2010 article "Political Art Transforms the Audience into Citizens" Bruguera argues for a "difference in art between representing what is political and acting politically."[264] Political art, she continues, is not merely art that acts as an instrument of politics, which she considers – reductively – as a form of "art-propaganda."[265] Instead, Bruguera claims:

262 For example, labofii organized in 2016 a training day on the "Art of the Bloccade," engaging participants to imagine alternative forms of protecting the ZAD, which would simultaneously operate as visual canvasses and sculptural interventions of sorts. Laboffi also does practical propaganda work, for example by producing the English translation of the Mauvaise Troupe Collective's *Defending the Zad* (Paris: Editions de l'éclat, 2016).

263 *The Dead Are Coming* (2015) consisted of a campaign to bury migrants who had died in the Mediterranean Sea in Berlin, the capital of what ZPS regards as the "bureaucratic murderers" responsible for these deaths. Sanctioned by the relatives of the deceased, the first burial of a Syrian migrant took place on Jun. 16, 2015. Chairs placed with the names of thirty-eight invited German politicians remained empty. Henri Neuendorf, "Controversial German Art Collective Buries Deceased Migrants in Berlin," *Artnet,* Jun. 18, 2015, https://news.artnet.com/art-world/art-collective-bury-dead-migrants-berlin-308975.

264 Tania Bruguera, "Politische Kunst macht das Publikum zu Bürgern," *Texte Zur Kunst,* No. 80 (Dec. 2010): pp. 134–36, translation retrieved from taniabruguera.com, section "Texts", http://www.taniabruguera.com/cms/458-0-Political+art+transforms+the+audience+into+citizens.htm.

265 Ibid.

> Political art has doubts, not certainties; it has intentions, not programs; it shares with those who find it, not imposes on them; it is defined while it is done; it is an experience, not an image; it is something entering the field of emotions and that is more complex than a unit of thought.[266]

Over time, Bruguera has begun to rethink the notion of propaganda as a potentially progressive form of practice. Relevant in this particular text is the clarity with which Bruguera discusses the aims of what we have discussed so far as Popular Propaganda Art. For example when she writes that "[p]olitical art (which is not more artistic than it is political) is not comfortable because it speaks from a position of demand."[267] This relates directly to what we have discussed as the importance of "demands" in the formation of a Popular Mass Movement through the inverted propaganda model. This intersection between popular and artistic demand is the result of what Bruguera defines as a "new people's political language," similar to what we have discussed as the role of art in the process of composing a people, the aesthetic and morphological construction of a new collectivity in the making.[268]

In order for art to act politically, Bruguera confronts the question how exactly to define the "use" of art. Her answer comes in the form of her "Introduction to Useful Art" (2011) and "Reflexions on Arte Útil" (2012), in which she essentially focuses on art as a tool of politicized civil society, rather than an established political class. The difference lies between what she calls "art-propaganda" as a tool of the state, versus a useful art – what we term Popular Propaganda Art – as a tool of politicized civil society.[269] Different from Steyerl, Bruguera argues that "[w]e do not have to enter the Louvre or the castles, we have to enter people's houses, people's lives, this is where useful art is," indeed emphasizing the civic and not the statist as the political dimension of political art.[270] Starting from historical examples such as the "Manifesto de Arte Útil" (1969) written by Argentinean artist Eduardo Costa, Bruguera argues that the "utilitarian component" that she is seeking in the civic usages of art "does not aim to make something that is already

266 Ibid.

267 Tania Bruguera, "Political Art Statement," 2010, http://www.taniabruguera.com/cms/388-0-Political+Art+Statement.htm.

268 Ibid.

269 Stephen Wright, with whom Bruguera collaborated intensively to develop the implications of transforming the notion of spectatorship into usership, writes: "usership […] names not just a form of opportunity-dependent relationality, but a self-regulating mode of engagement and operation. Which makes usership itself a potentially powerful tool. In the same way that usership is all about repurposing available ways and means without seeking to possess them, it can itself be repurposed as a mode of leverage, a fulcrum, a shifter, and as such, a game-changer." Stephen Wright, *Toward a Lexicon of Usership* (Eindhoven: Van Abbemuseum, 2013), p. 68.

270 Tania Bruguera, "Introduction on Useful Art," transcript from a conversation on Useful Art at the Immigrant Movement International headquarters on Apr. 23, 2011, New York, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MKPPmmNVuAs.

useful more beautiful, but on the contrary aims to focus on the beauty of being useful."[271] Useful art, she argues, remains art insofar as "it is the elaboration of a proposal that does not yet exist in the real world and because it is made with the hope and belief that something may be done better, even when the conditions for it to happen may not be there yet," but it can only be termed as fully useful when it is capable of transforming "affection into effectiveness."[272]

To understand the concrete outcome of Bruguera's definition of political art and practice of useful art, we turn to her artist organization Immigrant Movement International (IMI), which resulted from Bruguera's collaboration with the New York-based public arts organization Creative Time and the Queens Museum.[273] Demanding nothing but minimum wage, Bruguera lived together with an immigrant family in the city, and opened a storefront in a former beauty salon in Corona, a neighborhood in Queens, from where numerous activities were organized: 'English lessons, classes on immigrants' rights and how to acquire legal documents, music lessons for children, […] workshops that sought to create a manifesto on behalf of migrants, and a workshop on what could be meant by useful art."[274]

This modest community center that ran for five years, had an agenda as pragmatic as it was radically imaginative. On the one hand, it operated as a practical space of empowerment and community building for immigrants, politicizing them by giving concrete insight in their juridical status and by unifying those often hidden in informal economies because fear of arrest or deportation. At the same time, Bruguera positioned this tiny space as the first building block of a radically new transnational organization, a movement of immigrants to be organized throughout worldwide community centers and undocumented political parties that claim the immigrant as a new "global citizen."[275]

This endeavor to challenge artistic authorship by turning into an "artist-initiator" or "artist-convener" who invites a broader coalition around an artist organization becomes most concrete in the 2011 IMI-issued *International Migrant Manifesto,* collectively written by "immigration academics, activists, politicians, and community members"

271 Ibid.

272 Tania Bruguera, "Reflexions on Arte Útil (Useful Art)," in Nick Aikens et al. (eds.), *What's the Use? Constellations of Art, History and Knowledge* (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2016), p. 316.

273 Bruguera first conceptualized IMI while in residence in Paris during the 2005 riots in the *banlieus,* articulating the notion of useful art and being-immigrant as part of the same paradigm: "It was at this time that I first identified as an immigrant. I felt impotent and realized I had no other resource but art to address this situation; therefore, art had to be useful." See: "Tania Bruguera," *Artforum*, Dec. 6, 2011, https://www.artforum.com/words/id=29724.

274 Thompson, *Seeing Power,* pp. 98–99.

275 "Tania Bruguera," *Artforum.*

at the IMI headquarters in Corona.[276] The manifesto claims migrants as global citizens and an "engine of change."[277] Rather than victimizing the figure of the migrant, the manifesto attempts to politicize them, claiming for immigrants "the same privileges as corporations and the international elite, as they have the freedom to travel and to establish themselves wherever they choose," while demanding that "the functionality of international borders should be re-imagined in the service of humanity."[278] The transnational dimension of IMI took the form of the short-lived *Migrant People Party (MPP)*, founded by Bruguera to participate in the 2012 elections in Mexico, not as an electable party, but as a party that organized public events and interventions in public space to put migrants rights' on the agenda of existing political parties. Bruguera's migrant as global citizen is the foundation of her particular strand of Popular Realism that emerges from her practice of Organizational Art.

The tension of IMI is located in the ambiguous nature of Organizational Art. On the one hand, IMI is a radical imaginative structure that attempts to redefine immigrants around the world as a vanguard of a new transnational world order to come. On the other, IMI is a real-time community center capable of providing modest support to its often highly precarious community, which – operating in the grey and black economy – face the daily threat of abuse, incarceration, and deportation. The outcome of IMI should be evaluated through this very duality, between the possible and the real. And while the artistic dimension is crucial here for opening up a radical imaginative capacity of what an organization could be, it is simultaneously the cause of IMI's fragility. Bruguera's capacity for gaining funding for her work is strongly connected to her name as an artist, and her projects operate for as long as she is able to allocate funds from the institution of art to her own artist organization. When financing comes to an end, projects such as IMI or the MPP are added to her project archive, with a reference of them being "courtesy" of the artist.

From that perspective, we can question to what extent existing immigrant rights organizations that are not conceived as artworks are not far more effective in their long-term work, and far less dependent on the investment of a single person. In the NGO world directors come and go, but the organization, in principle, lives on. While for art-world standards Bruguera's Organizational Art is long-term, from the perspective of NGOs and humanitarian work they are rather short-lived. In the meantime, Bruguera has continued to set up a variety of new institutions, such as the *The Hannah Arendt International Institute of Artivism* (2016–ongoing) and a campaign to participate as a presidential candidate in the next Cuban elections while calling upon fellow Cubans to do the same, all of which limit her capacity to continue the endeavor of IMI.[279] Artist James Bridle notes that we are dealing with what could be considered a progressive variation of the use of a "front organization," such as deployed by both intelligence agencies as well as blacklisted organizations.[280]

The trail of organizations founded by Bruguera seems to suggest that at the moment the artist, after a long-term investment, decides to move on, the feasibility of the infrastructure is put at risk. This touches on a paradox of the "usefulness" of useful art. While it most certainly has a concrete effect on a given community at the moment of its conception, its radical imaginative capacity seems to be its most durable and lasting outcome. While this might be hard to quantify, it is most certainly "useful," but possibly on slightly different and more paradoxical terms than the artist intends it to be.

The second case study that we discuss in the context of Organizational Art as part of Popular Propaganda Art, is related to the work of Turkish-Kurdish artist Ahmet Öğüt. We will briefly explore his ideas on the relation between the artistic and the political, and what he terms the "currency of collective consciousness," the role of art in articulating alternative models of validation that go beyond those of financial currencies.

Öğüt's explains the roots of his politicization in his essay «CCC: Currency of Collective Consciousness» (2015), in which he narrates his time growing up in the Turkish civil war, in a town patrolled by tanks where speaking one's mother tongue was in itself considered a crime: "I am coming from a place where I learned the importance of consciousness – more importantly, collective consciousness – when

276 Tania Bruguera et al., "Migrant Manifesto," *Immigrant Movement International*, Nov. 2011, http://immigrant-movement.us/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/IM-International-Migrant-Manifesto2.pdf
277 Ibid.
278 Ibid.

279 The Hannah Arendt Institute for Artivism (Instar) was conceived at the occasion of the re-opening of diplomatic relations between Cuba and the United States, with the aim to "create peaceful tools for policy change and civic literacy." The school is organized in four departments, "Useful Art," "Behavior Art," "Applied Arts," and "AEST-ethics." It operates through a three-step methodology: "Think Tank," focused on rethinking policy and constitutional transformation; "Do Tank," in which policy/constitutional performances are translated into popular public performances; and "Wish Tank," consisting of residencies of artists, activists, and others with a socially engaged practice that feeds back into the "Think" and "Do" Tanks. Retrieved from the "Mission" section of the Instar website, http://artivismo.org/english/#mission. Bruguera's presidential bid was announced on Oct. 16, 2016 by the artist during the three-day Creative Time Summit in Washington entitled "Occupy the Future." Victoria Burnett, "Artist Asks Cubans to Imagine They Are Running for President," *The New York Times*, Oct. 14, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/15/arts/design/tania-bruguera-cuba-creative-time-summit-video.html?_r=0.
280 From personal conversation with Bridle on the concept of the artist organization, Athens, Apr. 23.

one is isolated both culturally and politically."[281] Such collective consciousness, Öğüt argues, is a crucial currency to develop in the domain of politically engaged contemporary art, whose internal economy is plagued by corrupt finances and sponsors, as became evident in a variety of boycotts of large-scale art biennials in which Öğüt was involved.[282] What Öğüt claims is needed, are strategies of sabotage and para-sitic practice in order to break art's bonds to ruling corporate and political interests, so as not to abandon but repurpose the infrastructure of art with the aim of social transformation. Concretely this means that the artist becomes an "intervenor," an agent who challenges and rearticulates the relation between the institution of art and the larger social realm.

Although written as a proposal, Öğüt's "CCC: Currency of Collective Consciousness" should rather be understood as an artist manifesto after the act; he himself is the intervenor that institutes, in between worlds, the para-institutions that introduce new forms of currency of collective consciousness that we are theorizing as Organizational Art. This is most particularly the case in his Organizational Art practice, taking the form of *The Silent University* (SU, 2012–ongoing). Öğüt conceptualized the SU as part of a collaboration with the Tate Museum and the Delfina Foundation in London, as well as the political organizations Southwark Refugee Communities Forum, Migrants Resource Centre, and the United Migrant Workers Education Project. SU's aim was to create a para-institution that Öğüt called an "autonomous knowledge platform" in order to recruit "asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants with a professional background in their country of origin who, due to systemic social exclusion and discrimination, are unable to put their knowledge to professional use in the countries where they currently live."[283] A core focus lies on asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants with an academic background that are not recognized in their country of arrival, something the SU considers as a destruction of capital that can be countered by activating "the all too often unrecognized knowledge of refugees, asylum seekers, and migrants that have been condemned to silence in their new countries of residence."[284]

281 Ahmet Öğüt, "CCC: Currency of Collective Conciousness," *e-flux journal*, No. 62 (Feb. 2015).
282 Öğüt was one of five artists who began a widely mediated boycott of the 2014 19th Biennial of Sydney due to the role of Transfield Holdings, one of the event's main sponsors, which holds a contract with the Australian government to provide security and welfare services to asylum seeker detention centers on nearby islands. See: Joanna Warsza and Salzburg International Summer Academy of Fine Arts (eds.), *I Can't Work Like This: A Reader on Recent Boycotts and Contemporary Art* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2017), pp. 258–326.
283 Ceren Erdem (ed.), *Ahmet Öğüt: Tips and Tricks* (Milan: Mousse Publishing, 2014), p. 114.
284 Ahmet Öğüt, "The Pitfalls of Institutional Pedagogy," *World Policy*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (Winter 2016/17), http://www.worldpolicy.org/blog/2013/06/12/pitfalls-institutional-pedagogy. The notion of "silencing" is crucial in the name of the project, which refers to the work of writer and educator Anna Eliot Ticknor, who in 1873 initiated the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, a network in Boston that literary scholar Harriet F. Bergmann recently described as a "Silent University."

Today, the artist organization SU has been or continues to be active in London, Stockholm, Hamburg, Ruhr, Amman, and Athens, in each case originating from the same principle, to create a para-university through the domain of the arts providing recognition and work for asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants with a predominantly academic background, harboring their knowledge and skills in the society of arrival.

Although the point of departure remains the same, the implementation of the SU has been different depending on each context. In London, it was created through the financial support of two art institutions, and launched in Tate Modern with a series of presentations by the lecturers of the SU free for all to attend. These first presentations were delivered by "a pharmacist from Syria, an accountant from Congo, a marketing manager from Zimbabwe and a calligrapher from Iraq,"[285] some of which decided not to speak at all, such as the Eritrean Mulugeta Fikadu who delivered a lecture on transmittable sexual diseases in front of empty colored slides standing in total silence.[286] As such, the founding event of the Silent University was situated between artistic performance and an actual university. Knowledge was transferred, but in some cases an audience might be listening to information they had no necessary interest in, but remained in their seat to witness an *artwork* by Öğüt. And in some cases, silence itself became the knowledge transmitted as a way of forcing the audience to acknowledge the silencing of the SU lecturers as holders of knowledge. This theatrical use of silence in the SU also relates to the investment of this para-institution into new currencies of collective consciousness. Rather than asking attendees for payment, the SU instead aims for an exchange of knowledge and skills. Seeing that in the case of Fikadu this exchange had not yet taken place – only he was expected to deliver knowledge – staging silence was also a means of addressing this fundamental inequality between audience and speaker.

In other words, SU is not only a platform for the recognition of the skills and knowledge of asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants, it is also a structure that challenges the very idea of what a university is, could, or should be. The SU is free of charge on a monetary level, but attempts to reintroduce alternative currencies as a means of building common consciousness. In some cases, the use of such alternative currencies also solves the problem of members of the SU's faculty which are undocumented or in the process of asylum application, and as such

285 Ahmet Öğüt, "The Silent University," *Frieze* No. 149: New Schools: The Silent University (Sep. 2012): p. 139, at p. 139.
286 Florian Malzacher, Ahmet Öğüt, and Pelin Tan (eds.), *The Silent University: Towards a Transversal Pedagogy* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), p. 76.

not allowed to do any paid labor. Embracing alternative currencies obviously does not mean that the SU is not itself vulnerable to financial pressures within the existing system. In the case of the SU in London, after initial investments of Tate, Delfina, and a money prize in the form of the Visible Award, financial means were exhausted by 2014 after a final collaboration with the Oxford Migration Studies Society, the Refugee Centre at the University of Oxford, and The Showroom. Existing institutions did not "adopt" the para-institution within their own infrastructure.

According to the surprisingly self-critical publication *The Silent University: Towards a Transversal Pedagogy* (2016) issued by the SU, this lack of funding resulted in a question what to do with the assembled faculty of lecturers, consultants, and advisors as well as "students," comprising two hundred individuals registered through the SU website pledging more than a thousand hours in total in alternative currencies.[287] Increasingly infrequent gatherings of the SU faculty proposed the possibility of registering the SU as a charity to retrieve more structural funding – with the risk of the artist organization being forced into the organizational regiment of already existing NGOs. Another issue raised by the faculty dealt with their own sense of limited ownership over the SU. The latter point is rather crucial here, when it comes to the stated intention of Organizational Art to operate not only as an artwork that deals with the model of the organization as material, but equally invests in the concrete political outcomes and capacity of the organization to operate autonomously after its conception. In this case, the reoccurring question "Where is Ahmet?" among faculty indicates a difficulty of the SU's aim to move from an artist project to a fully operating institution,[288] in spite of Öğüt's own statement that "artistic pedagogical practices need to be emancipated from commonly used terminologies such as 'projects' and 'workshops' referencing them as 'tests' or 'short-term engagements.'"[289] This is an issue we also encountered with Bruguera's IMI. Funds can be repurposed only for as long as the artwork maintains a certain novelty, and the artist signature remains continuously present for the art institution to legitimize why it would invest in a body with such a clear political purpose. In other words, the institution of art is willing to finance Organizational Art for as long as it can clearly been described as *art* through the artists' authorship, leaving the possibility of a long-term organizational work in the hands of NGOs and the like.

287 Ibid., pp. 79–80.
288 Ibid., p. 81.
289 Öğüt, "The Pitfalls of Institutional Pedagogy."

In the case of subsequently established SU para-institutions, Öğüt attempted to counter this dilemma by negotiating long-term funding with partner institutions beforehand. This was most successfully the case in Öğüt's collaboration with Tensta Konsthall and the Worker's Educational Association (ABF) with whom the SU Stockholm was founded in 2013, and the artist's collaboration with Impulse Festival, Theaterhaus Ringlokschuppen Ruhr, and Urbane Künste Ruhr with whom the SU Ruhr was founded in 2015. Whereas in the case of the SU Stockholm the para-institution operates within the building of Tensta Konsthall, the SU Ruhr runs in a former shop unit in the center of Mülheim with a coordinator hired for a three-quarter position to make sure its activities are maintained on a structural level. It is worthwhile to note that the successes of SU Stockholm and Ruhr also led to abandoning the SU London's experiment with alternative currencies. The aim for a more solid university subsequentially impacted the more experimental artistic-pedagogical nature of the SU. Nevertheless, the SU has continued to be discussed, analyzed, and theorized in all of its artistic potentialities, especially at the SU Stockholm due to its integration in an existing art institution.[290] And while the alternative currencies might have lost their immediate priority, the day-to-day practice of the Silent University brought about new dimensions and aims, such as a parallel language school in Stockholm, which was not part of the original setup. The SU, in other words, started on the basis of principles but developed into new forms and modules in practice. Sometimes practice also meant the end or suspension of the artist organization, such as the case of SU Hamburg (2013), where existing universities started to provide similar services,[291] or in the case of SU Jordan (2015), where the faculty encountered difficulties to guarantee the security of its lecturers.[292] The most recent SU iteration in Athens (2016), founded by independent activists and cultural workers with support of the non-profit art institution State of Concept, is partly operational but struggles with the overall "drainage of resources by austerity measures and memoranda since 2012," which have turned Athens into the scenery of an ongoing "economic war."[293]

When compared to other artist organizations Öğüt's SU has an impressive track record with regard to the para-institution's scale and scope, but its different iterations also show a series of reoccurring di-

290 Director Maria Lindt pledges to continue to Silent University at least for the period of her directorship at Tensta Konsthall, and writes that the language café is currently taking place twice a week, with additional monthly excursions throughout Stockholm. From personal e-mail exchange with Lindt, Mar. 5, 2017.
291 Malzacher, Öğüt, and Tan, *The Silent University*, p. 105.
292 Ibid., pp. 122–23.
293 Ibid., p. 137.

lemmas, which are mainly related to the long-term funding and institutional back-up necessary to turn it into a durable reality. The difficulty of the artist organization model is that while it suggests the appearance of an organization proper – including logo, website, business cards, and the like – it does not have access to even a fragment of the financial resources that are normally attributed to actual universities. We encounter here again the duality of Organizational Art in the form of the real and the possible. The SU encompasses modest, sometimes more and sometimes less successful attempts to recognize the knowledge and capacities of asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants through conferences, lecture programs, and language cafes. At the same time, the SU claims the concept of a para-institution as a space where traditional currencies are abandoned, pedagogical hierarchies radically overthrown, all languages are spoken equally, silence is recognized as an alternative form of knowledge transfer, border politics are abolished, and extraterritoriality considered the given space of action. It is the SU's own thorough self-critique that makes it possible for us to identify Organizational Art's dilemma between what is real and what is possible more clearly, creating the possibility of overcoming its contradictions. In this regard Öğüt stands at the forefront of theorizing and establishing a practice of Organizational Art as a lasting para-institutional reality in the 21st century.

Let us try to summarize the practices of Bruguera and Öğüt in the context of Organizational Art as well as their overall relation to the performance of the popular, the composition of a people and the construction of Popular Realism.

The artist-organization's relationship to the popular mass movement is articulated similarly in the two different practices. In the case of Bruguera, IMI operates clearly in direct relation to popular mass movements, specifically in the realm of immigration rights and mobilization, connecting to local communities, civil organizations, and NGOs in the process of drafting its manifestos and programs. The relation to the institution of art is maintained, albeit by challenging it to invest in a parallel artist-run infrastructure in the form of the artist organization, proposing a long-term engagement beyond the usual temporary political art "project." In the case of Öğüt, the Silent University relates directly to popular mass movements in the form of struggles of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants, connecting to a variety of local communities, civil action and advocacy groups, but also to universities and other educational institutions. The relation to the institution of art is manifold and international, with a shifting focus on accepting temporary commissioned work (London) to a demand for long-term investment in the SU (Stockholm, Ruhr) to maintain and

expand its work.

The performance of emerging power, central to the practice of Popular Propaganda Art is similar in both practices as well. IMI's output is located between the real and the possible, between concrete labor in service of immigrant communities through the center that existed for five years, and an investment in a transnational campaign that posits the migrant as global citizen. IMI is therefore clearly invested in contributing to the performance of the popular through the work of its community center, while simultaneously investing its imaginative capacity in re-composing a transnational people through the politicization of the immigrant subject. IMI's Popular Realism is aimed at the construction of a possible reality based on this fundamental paradigm shift. Like Bruguera, the SU's output is located between the real and the possible: between concrete labor in service of the struggles of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants through the different incarnations of the para-institution, while investing in the possibility of developing alternative currencies and horizontal pedagogical models. The SU as such is clearly invested in contributing to the performance of the popular through the work of its various international iterations, while simultaneously using its imaginative capacity to recompose a people through the politicization of refugees, asylum seekers, and immigrants in the context of the radical pedagogy of the para-institution. The SU's Popular Realism is aimed at the construction of a possible reality through this process of politicization; creating a common knowledge in which citizens and non-citizens co-exist on a principle of fundamental equality.

Although we have seen that the political aims of Organizational Art in many ways overlap with those of Embedded Art, it differs in its investment in the concept of the organization as artwork. We can, however, observe a particular surge of artist organizations in the 21st century as a result of the precarious position of artists and the desire to invest in long-term engagement with popular mass movements.

POPULAR PROPAGANDA ART: SUMMARY

Before we continue to discuss the third and final category of contemporary propaganda art in the form of *Stateless Propaganda Art*, let us summarize our observations on the manifold dimensions of Popular Propaganda Propaganda Art through the following conclusions:

- Popular Propaganda Art is contemporary propaganda art that operates by means of the emerging precarious infrastructures of popular mass movements through which it aims to contribute

to the performance of the popular and the composition of a people;

- <u>Popular Propaganda Art</u> subverts the Us/Them dichotomy of War on Terror Propaganda by building alliances between a diverse precariat, identifying common oppressors and recomposing the notion of Us – a people-in-the-making;
- <u>Popular Propaganda Art</u> manifests itself through three different organizational models: Assemblism, Embedded Art, and Organizational Art. Assemblism as a practice of performative assembly includes artistic components and comprises an aesthetic vocabulary, but as a whole should not be considered art as such. Embedded and Organizational Art focus on the particular competence of artists within or in relation to popular mass movements: the former as individual artists or artist collectives and artist groups, the latter in the form of organizational models that operate politically, and simultaneously as artworks in their own right;
- <u>Popular Propaganda Art</u> aims at transforming the collective demands that emerge from popular mass movements through the performance of the popular and the composing of a people into the construction of Popular Realism: the transformation of reality after the interests of precarious popular mass movements.

4.3 STATELESS PROPAGANDA ART

The *stated* – those recognized, administered, and living in the sphere of relative protection provided by the state – cannot but observe the condition of statelessness. The *knowledge* inherent to statelessness can only be acquired by those who have been forced into the condition of living without or outside the state. In this final section, instead of merely analyzing the condition of statelessness, we will have to embark on a different endeavor, by trying to *learn* from the specific knowledge generated by the experience of statelessness.

This is what we have tried to do in the Stateless Propaganda section in the previous chapter vis-à-vis the work of Mohamedou Ould Slahi, who lived through a particular experience of statelessness in the lawless structures of the War on Terror. His book is an act of self-recognition of the stateless community while at the same time providing the stated the possibility of understanding how the very structures that define their relative privilege and protection simultaneously enforce the condition of statelessness upon others. In Ould Slahi's proposal to make the stated hear beyond what they are able to hear, an assembly between the stated and stateless, as embodied in his alliance with Hollander and Siems, becomes imaginable. We defined the dual outcomes of Ould Slahi's Stateless Propaganda as *self-recognition* and *recognition by others*.

In this final segment, rather than defining Stateless Propaganda Art, we will seek to draft a series of observations, based as much as possible from primary sources produced by the political and cultural practices of different stateless actors themselves.[294] At this point, *propaganda research* cannot be separated from my own implications in the domain of *propaganda work*. To draft a definition of Stateless Propaganda Art, I must return to the work of my own artist-organizations, the *New World Summit*, and its school, the *New World Academy*, which I mentioned in my introduction to this thesis. The particular examples in this chapter, namely refugee collective We Are Here in Amsterdam, the National Liberation Movement of Azawad in Northern-Mali and the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava in Northern-Syria, were collaborators in both of these organizations. Interviews that I conducted with its representatives referenced throughout this segment, are the result of field

294 Many of the cited sources are the result of my project *New World Academy* (2013–15), co-founded with BAK, basis voor actuele kunst in Utrecht, which I also referred to in my introduction. An art project in the form of a school, the *New World Academy* invited stateless and blacklisted organizations to teach artists and students about the role of art and culture in their political struggles. This gave me the opportunity to conduct field research and interviews in, among others, Azawad (northern Mali) and Rojava (northern Syria), and work with the Amsterdam-based refugee collective We Are Here. Transcripts of these interviews form the basis of a five-part reader series, which are also primary sources for this section on Stateless Propaganda Art.

work in stateless regions but also of *collaborations* taking place at the very same time. Prominent voices in Stateless Propaganda referenced here, such as Yoonis Osman Nuur (We Are Here), Moussa Ag Assarid and Mazou Ibrahim Touré (MNLA/Artist Association of Azawad), Abdullah Abdul (Tev-Çand) and Şêro Hindê and Diyar Hesso (Artist Association of Azawad), are not merely "sources" or "case studies" but collaborators and most of all, artists that are directly implicated in the struggle of *instituting* the very concept of Stateless Propaganda Art. In this context, my own propaganda work is both source *and* objective, defined by the process of narrating and creating alternative histories – and possibly future practices – of propaganda art.

We will expand on the notion of statelessness developed through Ould Slahi's work by adding brief historical examples of other forms of statelessness and Stateless Propaganda. These examples, all of which result from my own propaganda work, include the model of the refugee collective, the national liberation movement, and an alternative model of stateless democracy. Our particular focus will be the role of Stateless Propaganda Art within each of these examples.

There is no single condition of statelessness but rather a variety of different conditions, depending on the demand of the stateless to be recognized by an existing state; the demand of the stateless to create a state of their own; and the demand of the stateless to define statelessness as an alternative to the state altogether. Within each of these conditions there are certain grey zones. For example, a member of a separatist "stateless" movement might still hold a passport of the state they are fighting against, while receiving no protection from it whatsoever. On paper, they are still "stated," although in the cases we will be discussing throughout this section, this statedness is symbolical at best, and barely functional in reality. Instead, we might have to think of the difference between the stated and the stateless in the way that philosopher Rastko *Močnik spoke of fascism, considering that there is hardly ever complete or no fascism at all, and that the question is rather: "How Much Fascism?"*[295] *In this light, we would have to ask ourselves: How much state? Or how much statelessness?*

Our aim here will thus be to explore how our earlier proposition of a definition of Stateless Propaganda – a performance of the radical precarity of a community of stateless peoples – relates to such different conditions of statelessness, and how these define different *stateless propagandas* and equally different forms of *Stateless Propaganda Art*.

295 Rastko Močnik, *Extravagantia II: koliko fašizma?* (Ljubljana: Insitutum studiorum humanitatis, 1995).

We will note some differences between Stateless Propaganda Art and Popular Propaganda Art. One of the main differences we have discussed in the previous chapter relates to the extreme difference of precarity between a member of politicized civil society and a stateless person, and the way that these different scales of precarity impact the capacity for political organization. The other difference is that while we may understand Stateless Propaganda partly as an "emerging power" when it brings about new structures of organization and governance, it starts first of all from a process of self-recognition of the stateless as an already existing collectivity. In this segment, we will take the stateless as our point of departure, and the specificity of their condition and struggle vis-à-vis the stated.

We will place an emphasis, however, on the third condition of statelessness, which is the demand to recognize statelessness as an alternative to the state. This will allow us to understand statelessness not in mere opposition to the state, but as a condition – a *state of being* – that introduces a construction of stateless reality, or a "reality according to the stateless." And the construction of reality, as we have observed throughout this thesis, is the aim of all propaganda.

STATELESS PROPAGANDAS AND STATELESS PROPAGANDA ART

As we have mentioned, the term statelessness can refer to a variety of different conditions. Let us begin with stateless people who *demand recognition and protection by an existing state*, such as undocumented migrants, refugees, or individuals persecuted as terrorists. Here we speak of people who once had passports, or should have them, but are denied such recognition. We can think for example of refugee collective We Are Here in Amsterdam, a group of more than two-hundred undocumented migrants and refugees – some of which have resided in the Netherlands for more than fifteen years – but whose procedural options have been "exhausted" (*uitgeprocedeerd*). They cannot return to their country of origin due to safety issues or because their countries no longer recognize them, while the Dutch state simultaneously refuses them citizenship.[296] This condition of limbo forces them into the domain of statelessness, or more precisely, "between states." Neither the state of origin nor the hosting state is willing to provide them with crucial structures of life support. In the case of Ould Slahi, we saw the

296 Martijn Stronks, "The Paradox of Visible Illegality: A Brief History of Dutch Migration Control," in Jonas Staal and We Are Here (eds.), *Collective Struggle of Refugees. Lost. In Between. Together.* (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2013), pp. 65–76.

consequence of being labelled as terrorist. His rights as a Mauritanian citizen were revoked and he was subsequently imprisoned as a stateless individual. It is important to mention here how the examples of undocumented migrants and refugees, as well as alleged terrorism suspects, have become increasingly interrelated, for example when Western states refuse to provide resident status or citizenship to refugees out of fear that terrorists or potential terrorists would be among them.[297] The stateless subject can thus become a screen of orientalist projection and the target of War on Terror Propaganda. No matter their background or reasons to migrate, a suspicion of terrorism can come to completely define their status. What connects all these examples is that each aim at recognition by an existing state, whether that is the state of origin or the state of arrival, whether it is as a refugee or as a terrorist suspect.

As we discussed previously under Stateless Propaganda, the claim to power of stateless peoples often does not reach beyond the – limited – use of their bodies. This is the primary "power" that is available to those who are forced to exist outside any form of state recognition. This is the reason why the hunger strike, mentioned by both Butler and Ould Slahi, forms one of the recurring models of Assemblist practice through which the stateless can organize the extremely limited powers at their disposal. It was in this light, that we observed that the performance of Stateless Propaganda is characterized by a nearly complete separation of the stateless from existing power and their claim to an oppositional construction of power. In the case of Ould Slahi, we saw how this translated into *Guantánamo Diary*, in which he performed a form of self-recognition of the stateless community on the one hand while initiating an assembly of the stated and the stateless on the other. The case of the We Are Here refugee collective allows us to add some other examples to the domain of Stateless Propaganda. Although members of We Are Here are not allowed to travel outside the Netherlands, their limited freedom of movement allows for additional strategies of Stateless Propaganda which were unavailable to Ould Slahi.

Yoonis Osman Nuur, one of the key representatives of the We Are Here collective, emphasized the importance of the group's name during a speech on the occasion of the collective's first anniversary: "We didn't want to be invisible any longer. We wanted the world to know

297 Žižek observes about an attack in Paris perpetrated by the Islamic State in 2015: "With the Paris terror killings on Friday 13 November, however, even these ideas (which at least still involve large socio-economic issues) are now eclipsed by the simple opposition of all democratic forces caught in a merciless war with forces of terror – and it is easy to imagine what will follow: the paranoiac search for ISIS agents among the refugees, and so on. The greatest victims of the Paris terror attacks will be refugees themselves, and the true winners, concealed behind the platitudes in the style of *je suis Paris*, will be simply the partisans of total war on both sides." Slavoj Žižek, *Against the Double Blackmail: Refugees, Terror and Other Trouble with our Neighbours* (London: Allen Lane, 2016), p. 110.

that we are here and that we are lost in between. And because this is unacceptable, we came together."[298] Similar to Butler's reading of Assemblist practice, Nuur emphasizes the unchosen composition of the We Are Here collective. The members of the group, coming from different parts of the African continent, are characterized by different political, educational, and religious backgrounds; they are "one" only in so far as each of them is confronted with the oppressive conditions of statelessness. Similar to Ould Slahi's assembly with Hollander and Siems, Nuur addresses the importance of the alliance between documented and undocumented peoples – between the stated and the stateless: "[C]hanges will come about through the people who are protesting with us. We have to bond with them because we need the support of Dutch citizens."[299]

On the one hand, Nuur recognizes that the performative power of We Are Here is both defined and limited by the stateless condition of its members, exemplified by the name of the group, which is simultaneously its slogan – *We are here* – a recognition of the unchosen dimension of this political collective. On the other, an alliance needs to be initiated that includes those who are holding relative positions of power within the existing state while opposing its policies to achieve greater impact upon reality. This led to the collaboration between We Are Here and Christian activists as well as anarchist communities came about, which helped to squat and organize a variety of temporal spaces for the collective to reside. It also facilitated donations in the form of food and material support from Dutch citizenry, which allowed the group to survive up until today. The recognition of their own performativity as stateless bodies and the capacity of these bodies to become visible to each other and to those who are stated, is exactly what forms the preconditions for the group's existence and its enactment of Stateless Propaganda. The strength of the state lies in its capacity to make the stateless invisible; the strength of the stateless is to make themselves visible. First to civil society and subsequently, through civil society, to the state. As Nuur explained in an interview, "[b]y calling attention to the fact that we are living on the streets and in temporary shelters, we made visible the problems that we are confronted with on a daily basis."[300]

In the case of We Are Here, this process of visibilization has taken on particular artistic and cultural forms, which are the direct result of their legal – or rather, "illegal" – status. Whereas statelessness preclu-

298 Yoonis Osman Nuur, "We Exist," in *Collective Struggle of Refugees*, p. 43.
299 Ibid., p. 45.
300 Yoonis Osman Nuur interviewed by Jonas Staal, "We Are a Political Group," in *Collective Struggle of Refugees*, p. 57.

des its members from working, gaining access to social security or education under the threat of incarceration or instant deportation, it does not limit them from creatively expressing themselves. In other words, creative expression – art – is not considered to be labor, and thus does not threaten their status in their quest to obtain citizenship.[301] As a result, the artistic community of the Netherlands and We Are Here assembled to organize a variety of exhibitions, concerts, and even theater pieces as a means to gaining further visibility and thus leverage as "stateless citizens" of the Netherlands, to the point of which Nuur even joined forces with Öğüt to declare We Are Here an "undocumented political party."[302] As the *We Are Here Manifesto* (2013) states: "We enhance our visibility through unification, protests, a media campaign, lobbying, and other means."[303]

We Are Here's main output as Stateless Propaganda Art, is the theater play *Labyrinth* (2015), created in collaboration with German theater maker Nicolas Stemann and Frascati Theater in Amsterdam. Initiated through the We Are Here Cooperative – an assembly of artists in the Netherlands and members of We Are Here, founded in 2013 – *Labyrinth* is based on a radical reversal of roles. Visitors are handed a file of the Somalian refugee Mohammed Hassan Abdi, born in the Bay region where the fundamentalist Al-Shabaab organization is in control. After being asked to leave their personal belonging at entry, visitors are moved through a labyrinth of rooms created from a patchwork of fabric, similar to the improvised residences of the We Are Here members. In each room, they encounter a key "actor" from the asylum procedures that each of the We Are Here members have been subjected to countless of times, but now reenacted by the members themselves. The audience is subsequently interrogated on the limited information at their disposal about their new identity as Mohammed Hassan Abdi. Representatives of the Dutch Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Dutch Repatriation and Departure Service, as well as police officers and judges, each of which are played by We Are Here members, make the audience of *Labyrinth* keenly aware of the level of internalization of the immigration script each of them has been subjected to. Any contradiction in a statement, a wrong answer or joke can mean expulsion from the labyrinth. The script of the play is structured

301 Something elaborated from a juridical perspective through the work *X and Y v. France: The Case for a Legal Precedent* (2007–present) by French artists Patrick Bernier and Olive Martin. See: Audrey Chan in conversation with Patrick Bernier and Olive Martin, "Artists at Work: Patrick Bernier and Olive Martin," in *Collective Struggle of Refugees,* p. 91–101. For further reading on the political, economic, and juridical paradoxes of artistic practice of We Are Here, see Ellen C. Feiss, *A Critique of Rights in We Are Here* (Amsterdam: We Are Here Cooperative, 2015)

302 Yoonis Osman Nuur and Ahmet Öğüt presented their resolution "Political Representation Beyond Citizenship" during the *Beyond Allegories* conference, Amsterdam Town Hall, May 9, 2014.

303 We Are Here, "We Are Here Manifesto," in *Collective Struggle of Refugees,* p. 23.

on the perverse legislative reality of stateless peoples facing the stated. The radical role reversal in which the stated enter is an attempt to further the cause proclaimed by Nuur; to strengthen the assembly of the documented and the undocumented, the stated and the stateless. To assemble those in whose name immigration policies are enacted together with those who are subjected to those policies. The stated cannot understand what it means to be stateless, but they can to some degree learn about its consequences, and about their own implication in them.

The methodology of *Labyrinth* shows a strong overlap with Brazilian educator and philosopher Paulo Freire's definition of a *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1968), in which he argues: "[T]he oppressed must not, in seeking to regain their humanity (which is a way to create it), become in turn oppressors of the oppressors, but rather restorers of the humanity of both."[304] Interestingly enough, in the case of *Labyrinth,* We Are Here seems to challenge and simultaneously follow Freire's script. They temporarily "oppress" the participants in their play by placing them into a state of subjection, although – very different from the actual asylum procedures that We Are Here members are subjugated to – the stated participants can walk out of the procedure at any time. The fact that visitors grant the members of We Are Here temporary power over them, is a performance of the power of the stated over the stateless. Nonetheless, the power of the oppressed, We Are Here, lies in the fact that they, in Freire's words, "unveil the world of oppression and through […] praxis commit themselves to its transformation."[305] We Are Here decides the dominant "theme" of *Labyrinth*, and involves the audience as co-investigators of the oppression they are co-responsible for, with the aim of changing this reality through praxis in the form of an assembly between the stateless and the stated. It is this praxis of mutual liberation – instigated on the conditions of the oppressed, not the oppressor – that Freire claims fundamental to the pedagogy of the oppressed.[306]

Although described as "agitation propaganda" by some,[307] *Labyrinth* had an enormous impact, both by involving audience participants to its cause – many of which were policy makers – as well as through its broad visibility in Dutch mainstream media. Together with many other cultural projects this effectively led to the creation of a history for We Are Here members in the Netherlands, creating grounds to argue that

304 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London/New York: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 26.

305 Ibid., p. 36.

306 It is important to point out Freire's reservations regarding what he calls the "false generosity" of the oppressor as an expression of their sense of guilt. In a more negative reading, stated collaborators and participants to *Labyrinth* might – in Freire's words – aim to "preserve an unjust and necrophilic order" while simultaneously "buy peace for himself." Ibid., p. 127.

307 Simon van den Berg, "Schrijnende rolverwisseling met vluchtelingen," *Theaterkrant*, Jan. 21, 2015, https://www.theaterkrant.nl/recensie/labyrinth/we-are-here-cooperative-frascati/.

they have become so rooted in a society to which they have made substantial and visible – cultural – contributions, that for some citizenship has come in reach.[308] This was for example the case for Nuur, who was granted residency status in 2017. Different from the work of Öğüt and Bruguera, which we discussed in the context of Popular Propaganda Art, this case study of Stateless Propaganda Art originates from the initiative of stateless people themselves, seeking alliances with stated artists and cultural workers. Their performance is defined by severely limited access to power, their bodies being among the few tools available to articulate the claim that they are "here." But by effectively deploying them they achieve to establish a political collective with one another (self-recognition) and engage in assembly with the stated (recognition by others), thus increasing their limited power through further visibilization. This assembly is the basis for the articulation of a new community – a new reality – performed through *Labyrinth*, in the form of a Stateless Propaganda Art.

Having briefly touched upon the condition of statelessness with regard to a demand to be recognized by the state, and the subsequent impact of this claim on a specific practice of Stateless Propaganda and Stateless Propaganda Art, let us move to the second condition of statelessness; namely of *those who demand the establishment of an independent state of their own*. Such examples are the Basque Country in Spain, the Palestinian people still living under Israeli occupation, or the Azawadians in Mali. These are peoples that through different degrees of oppression, are stateless within a state, or stateless as a result of the occupation by another state. Although the Basque people have gained regional autonomy in Spain with their own language and parliament, there remains a strong popular movement that considers its particularity as a nation unrecognized without full statehood. In the case of the Palestinians, we are dealing with an actually occupied people that was about to achieve their own independent state before they were massacred and forced to migrate during the Nakba – as we discussed earlier on in the context of *Popular Propaganda Art*. In the case of the Azawadians, we are dealing with a nomadic people, predominantly the Kel-Tamasheq, who did not desire a nation-state in the first place, but were forced to articulate their claims to independence through such terminology after being colonized by the French and forcefully inte-

308 Other notable projects are the *We Are Here Academy* (2014–ongoing), which provides free education by invited academics, artists and activists in the form of an artwork to members of We Are Here; *We Are Here Occupying the Border* (planned for 2017), which takes the form of a "refugee parliament" at the borders of Germany, Belgium, and the Netherlands, allowing each refugee to participate legally, as long as they remain exactly within the border of the country where they filed their asylum request. Retrieved from the website of Here to Support, http://heretosupport.nl/.

grated into the post-colonial state of Mali. To different degrees, the term statelessness here thus designates a lack or complete absence of rights within an existing state or occupation and simultaneously, the demand for their own independent state.

The case of Azawad is of particular interest here, as it relates to a relatively recent achievement to create a newly independent nation-state. Nevertheless the state of Azawad has existed only for four years and has never been recognized by any other existing state in the world.[309] Although the Kel-Tamasheq people revolted against the French occupation from the end of the 19th century onward, and opposed, in alliance with other people from the region like the Songhai and Fula, their integration into the new French-backed state of Mali, their demand for their own independent state through armed rebellion in 1960, 1963, 1990, and 2006, followed by the actual – albeit temporary – realization of an independent state of Azawad, is more recent.[310] In 2012 the National Liberation Movement of Azawad (MNLA) declared Azawad's independence, backed by highly trained Kel-Tamasheq fighters that left the crumbling Ghadaffi regime, effectively expelling the Malian army from their lands in the Sahara and Sahel. This caused a crisis, as the power vacuum resulting from the revolution was quickly filled by radical Islamist groups such as Ansar Dine and Al-Qa'ida in the Islamic Maghreb, which resulted in the return of the French and their allies to the region to support the Malian state in stabilizing the conflict.[311] Our main focus now though, lies on the Stateless Propaganda of a stateless people in its few years of independence.

During the first years of Azawadian independence Moussa Ag Assarid, the international representative of the MNLA, explained that "the peoples organized in the MNLA are still hesitant about the idea of independence, the idea of a state, for it is a form that we have never known to be ours."[312] This is of particular relevance, as it explains the changing understanding of statelessness for the Kel-Tamasheq people. As mentioned before, the Kel-Tamasheq were originally a nomadic people. In that context, the notion of "statelessness" did not mean

309 Representatives of the Malian government and the Azawadian rebel groups signed the Accord for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali that emanated from the Algiers on May 15, 2015. This effectively ended the MNLA's demand for an independent nation-state, with the MNLA agreeing upon relative autonomy and humanitarian development aid in the region. See: Gaudence Nyirabikali, "Mali Peace Accord: Actors, issues and their representation," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute*, Aug. 27, 2015, https://www.sipri.org/node/385.

310 See for a historical account of the colonial history and uprisings in the region: Berny Sèbe, "A Fragmented and Forgotten Decolonization: The End of European Empires in the Sahara and their Legacy," in Moussa Ag Assarid and Jonas Staal (eds.), *The Art of Creating a State* (Utrecht: BAK, basis voor actuele kunst, 2013), pp. 113–42.

311 For a detailed reconstruction of the Azawadian revolution and its crises, see May Ying Welsh's three-part documentary *Orphans of the Sahara* (2014).

312 Moussa Ag Assarid interviewed by Jonas Staal, "We Inhabit the Horizon," in *The Art of Creating a State*, pp. 41–42.

much, as there was nothing to call a "state" in the first place. It was rather in the process of French colonization and the creation of the state of Mali, that the terms "stateless" and "state" became relevant as a terminology that could articulate their demand to regain some of the freedom it held before colonization. As Ag Assarid explains, in 2012 the very conception of an Azawadian state – especially in the harsh conditions of the scarcely populated region of the Sahara and Sahel – still had to be imagined by its population. A striking photo by Ag Assarid from his series *The Revolution Is Without Frontiers* (2014) of a hand-painted sign displaying the yellow, green, red, and black colors of the new Azawadian flag, embodies the challenge of state creation in the region. In his photo, we witness the brownish yellow sand of the open horizon of the desert, not a person or building in sight, only the sign that attests to a "bare state" in construction.[313] Here, Stateless Propaganda operates without a vast communication network or interconnected urban infrastructure, but through small cities and villages often at great distance from one another, and through limited radio signals and satellite phones. To construct the imaginary of a new state in this environment is a severe challenge.

In this context, the work of artist Mazou Ibrahim Touré, an MNLA militant of Songhai and Kel Tamasheq descent, proves crucial. As the founder of the *Artist Association of Azawad*, the artist, calligrapher, and radio maker has been in charge of all banners, slogans, and symbolic depictions of the new state since the start of the Azawadian revolution. Explaining his formation simply by stating that "I saw the situation of my people, and I realized that they needed an artist,"[314] he has adorned the streets of the MNLA-controlled city of Kidal with his slogans – the most famous one being "Azawad, Mali No!" – murals of the Azawadian flag and peace signs, as well as public monuments constructed from the limited amount of available scrap metal, among which remnants of weaponry. In some cases, existing infrastructures are re-appropriated by the artist, for example in the form of road signs which used to refer to Malian cities, but are now repainted to direct only to the state of Azawad. Touré uses a similar strategy with old monuments and roundabouts installed by the Malian government, which are repainted in the colors of the Azawadian flag, and have been transformed into new monuments and landmarks of independence.

Within the sober environment of Azawad, the impact of Touré's colorful trilingual work – all slogans are written in Tamasheq, Arabic, and

313 Cf. Agamben's previously discussed notion of "bare life."
314 Mazou Ibrahim Touré interviewed by Jonas Staal, "I Was Needed, so I Became an Artist," in *The Art of Creating a State*, p. 92.

French – should not to be underestimated. And different from what an outsider might presume, this Stateless Propaganda is not aimed primarily at outsiders to gain recognition for the Azawadian project. As Touré explains:

> The first thing is not to wait until others recognize you — other states, in this case. The first thing is to be confident of oneself, to understand that you represent something, because if you have not accepted and internalized that, then others will never recognize you. The recognition of others, *Inshallah* [God willing], will come as result of our belief.[315]

Touré's double role as radio maker and agitator at rallies of the MNLA forms a crucial part of the choreography in which this process of self-recognition takes place. Music is an important part of this process as well; the work of the Kel-Tamasheq band Tinariwen (Deserts) can be heard constantly on the radio channel, and is distributed through Bluetooth from the phone of one MNLA militant to another. Having achieved world fame with its liberation songs, Tinariwen unifies not only the Azawadians on their land, but also its diaspora, and builds greater knowledge of Azawadian language, history, and struggle through its own strand of cultural diplomacy.[316]

The diverse practice of Touré and his Artist Association of Azawad, whose work, different than Tinariwen, consciously limits itself to the Azawadian territory, is aimed at a collective *self-performance,* an enactment of a state to come, or better, a state that is present insofar its diverse peoples can imagine, recognize, and enact it. To become stated in this context does not mean to be recognized by others, but to recognize oneself as a citizen of Azawad and not as a second-degree citizen of Mali. Touré's Stateless Propaganda Art is aimed at creating the symbols, slogans, and monumental landmarks that allow this process of assembly and self-recognition of a new community to be performed collectively, with the aim to establish a new reality, the state of Azawad. In this case, the self-recognition of the stateless is the foundation for a new condition of statedness.

This process of self-recognition, the creation of a new "national culture" vis-à-vis the oppressor culture, is a key aspect of the writings of Martinique-born anti-colonial resistance fighter, psychiatrist, and writer Frantz Fanon, in particular in his work *The Wretched of the Earth*

315 Ibid., pp. 94–95.
316 See Tinariwen member Abdallah Ag Alhousseini's conversation with Banning Eyre on the Azawadian revolution, "Tinariwen's Abdallah Ag Alhousseini Talks about Mali," in *The Art of Creating a State*, pp. 51–68.

(1961). An important inspiration to Freire, Fanon argues: "[C]olonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it."[317] The erasure of native culture in the form of language, symbols, social and political organization, and self-sufficiency is subsequently aimed at "driv[ing] into the natives' head the idea that if the settlers were to leave, they would at once fall back into barbarism, degradation and bestiality."[318] It is in this light that we might gain a better understanding of Ag Assarid's explanation of a hesitancy among his fellow people to demand a state of their own, and Touré's investment in the process of collective self-recognition through his artistic and cultural work. Without the confidence and understanding of one's own cultural history, a culture that needs to be translated into a new national culture, the endeavor of independence cannot succeed. It is this transition from cultural history to colonized culture and to a new national culture that is at stake in the struggle of decolonization and independence. In Fanon's words:

> A national culture is not a folklore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover the people's true nature. It is not made up of the inert dreg of gratuitous actions, that is to say actions which are less and less attached to the ever-present reality of the people. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence.[319]

In Touré's work we thus encounter an attempt to both re-construct pre-colonial history and to construct a new national culture. He takes up a role that Fanon describes as an "awakener of the people," recovering the colonized past, constructing a liberated presence.[320] Touré's self-described "poetry of the revolution" aims at both to imagine, self-recognize, and enact the cultural body that is the desired Azawadian nation-state.[321]

We have briefly discussed two conditions of statelessness so far, first the demand to be recognized by the state, and second the demand to construct a new state. In the first example, we saw how We Are Here, similar to Ould Slahi, performs self-recognition of the stateless collective and seeks to become recognized by others to create an alliance between the stateless and the stated. In the second example, we saw how Touré and his Artist Association of Azawad enacts a process of self-recognition first, to become stated on their own terms. The third and final example, which will be of our particular interest in this final segment, concerns the *demand of the stateless to define statelessness as an alternative to the state altogether.*

317 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (London/New York e.a.: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 169.
318 Ibid., p. 169.
319 Ibid., p. 188.
320 Ibid., p. 179.
321 Mazou Ibrahim Touré interviewed by Jonas Staal, "I Was Needed, so I Became an Artist," p. 91.

We will discuss those who identify the very model of the state as inherently oppressive and opposed to forms of egalitarian governance. We find rare examples of this model throughout different histories of anarcho-libertarianism, or libertarian-socialism, the most known example being the 1936–37 Spanish Revolution, in which a communalist "stateless" project of self-governance emerged in Catalonia during the civil war.[322] A contemporary and sustained example is the Rojava Revolution, resulting in the autonomous Kurdish-led region in Northern-Syria that declared its model of "democratic confederalism" or "stateless democracy" in 2012, during the second year of the Syrian civil war. Highly critical of the colonial history of the nation-state in the Middle-East, the Rojava revolutionaries claim statelessness as the necessary precondition for their model of stateless democratic self-governance. Statelessness in this context is no longer a counterpoint to the state, but as a state of being, the precondition for a radically different stateless reality to emerge in the face of the existing geopolitical stated system.

Considering the profound role of art and culture in the Rojava Revolution that I was able to research on location through a direct collaboration with the autonomous government starting in 2014, we will dedicate the next part of this segment to understanding in more detail what brought this revolution and its political model about, and how its Stateless Propaganda produces a distinct model of Stateless Propaganda Art.

ROJAVA'S STATELESS PROPAGANDA AND STATELESS PROPAGANDA ART

In Kurdish Rojava means "West" and refers to the western part of Kurdistan, the northern part of present-day Syria. The partition of the region after the First World War led to the fragmentation of the Kur-

322 On the 1936 Spanish revolution, see Murray Bookchin, *To Remember Spain: The Anarchist and Syndicalist Revolution of 1936* (San Francisco: AK Press, 1994). For a more extensive historical examination of the concept of libertarian socialism, see Alex Prichard, Ruth Kinna, Saku Pinta, and David Berry (eds.), *Libertarian Socialism: Politics in Black and Red* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012).

dish nation across four different states – Turkey, Syria, Iraq, and Iran – in each of which the Kurds faced severe oppression, leading to the foundation of the Marxist-Leninist Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in 1978 in Bakûr, North Kurdistan (south-eastern Turkey), led by Abdullah Öcalan. The PKK declared Kurdistan as an "inter-state colony" and called for revolution to "establish an *independent, united and democratic Kurdistan*."[323] The mountains of south-eastern Turkey formed the perfect terrain for a guerrilla war, and from an elite cadre the PKK transformed into a mass movement.

Of particular importance for the Rojava revolution – often referred to as a "women's revolution" – is the emergence of the Kurdish women's movement within the highly disciplined and hierarchically structured PKK. Co-founder Sakine Cansız explained her party had been "giving an ideological struggle from the very beginning against denial, social chauvinistic impression, primitive and nationalist approaches."[324] As a result, in the 1990s the women of the PKK, encouraged by Öcalan, started to actively organize themselves to put their liberation from patriarchy within the party on the agenda.[325] This development ran parallel to a series of crises within the PKK due to Turkey's massive military operations leading to Öcalan's arrest in 1999. He has remained in prison ever since.[326]

From prison, Öcalan continued to theorize about the future of the Kurdish liberation movement. Öcalan argued that "[t]he male monopoly that has been maintained over the life and world of woman throughout history, is not unlike the monopoly chain that capital monopolies maintain over society." He concludes that "women [are] the oldest colonised people who have never become a nation."[327] The critique of patriarchy thus brought Öcalan to redefine the relation between family, state, and capital. Combining the ideas of the Kurdish women's movement with his own mythological strand of Mesopotamian history[328] and the writings of eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin,[329] Öcalan declared in 2005 the struggle for an independent nation-state to be over. Instead he proposed a new political paradigm named "democratic confederalism,"[330] which he explained as "a democracy without the state."[331] The core principles of Öcalan's *stateless democracy* are based on local self-governance, gender equality, communal economy, and the right to self-defense: a new and crucial 21st-century paradigm of Stateless Propaganda. Instead of starting from the conditions dictated by the opponent – the existing Turkish state – Öcalan now began working from the concrete conditions of statelessness, the fact that they have no state at all. This particular *state of being* now was no longer a weakness, but could be claimed as the strength of the movement: statelessness was both its *condition* and its *objective*.

When in 2011 the Assad regime was forced to the south to fight the Islamic State, the Kurds in Bakûr and Rojava seized their chance. Together with Assyrian and Arab allies they declared their original part of West Kurdistan autonomous. Subsequently, three autonomous cantons of Rojava – Afrin, Kobanê, and Cizîre – were founded by what was now called the new Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava. The political project was officially announced on January 29, 2014, as part of "The Social Contract" – referring to Rousseau's famous text from 1762 – co-written by all peoples living in the region: Kurds, Arabs, Assyrians, Chaldeans, Arameans, Turkmens, Armenians, and Chechens.[332] This Social Contract was the translation of stateless de-

323 Amil Kemal Özcan, *Turkey's Kurds: A Theoretical Analysis of the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 87.
324 "The Foundation of the PKK in the Words of Sakine Cansiz," *Kurdish Question,* Nov. 27, 2014, https://www.kurdishquestion.com/oldarticle.php?aid=the-foundation-of-the-pkk-in-the-words-of-sakine-cansiz.
325 The fact that it was a male leader who called upon women to liberate themselves has often been observed as the great paradox of the movement.
326 "By 1995, Ankara was spending as much as $11 billion a year to fight the war […]. Turkey also deployed some 220,000 troops in the region – tying up a quarter of NATO's second largest army in a domestic battle." Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York/London: New York University Press), 2007, p, 249.
327 Abdullah Öcalan, *Liberating Life: Woman's Revolution* (Cologne: International Initiative Edition/Neuss: Mesopotamian Publishers, 2013), p. 35.

328 Öcalan's most elaborate attempt to articulate a social, historical, cultural, and political analysis of the roots of the Kurdish Question, narrating the birth of subsequent tribalism, statism, capitalism, and patriarchy to provide a viable scenario for an autonomous and democratic Kurdish movement can be found in his *Prison Writings: The Roots of Civilisation* (London: Transmedia Publishing, 2007).
329 Particularly Bookchin's elaboration of non-state confederalist structures of political organization were of Öcalan's interest. Bookchin poses that "[a] free ecological society – as distinguished from one regulated by an authoritarian ecological elite or by the "free market" – can only be vast in terms of an ecologically confederal form of libertarian municipalism. When at length free communes replace the nation and confederal forms of organization replaces the state, humanity will have rid itself from nationalism." Murray Bookchin, *The Next Revolution: Popular Assemblies and the Promise of Direct* Democracy (New York: Verso Books, 2015), p. 138.
330 Within the concept of democratic confederalism Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden distinguish three interrelated projects: "A democratic republic, democratic autonomy and democratic confederalism. The democratic republic seeks to redefine the Republic of Turkey, by disassociating democracy from nationalism; democratic autonomy refers to the right of people to decide on their own priorities and policies, to determine their own future; and the project for democratic confederalism is to serve as a model for self-government, its concrete realization sought through the political organization of society at four different levels, namely, communes in villages and districts, the organization of social groups (such as women and youth), organization on the basis of cultural and religious identities, and civil society organizations.," Marlies Casier and Joost Jongerden, "Understanding Today's Kurdish movement: Leftist Heritage, Martyrdom, Democracy, and Gender," *European Journal of Kurdish Studies, No.* 14 (2012), http://ejts.revues.org/4656.
331 Abdullah Öcalan, *Democratic Confederalism* (Cologne: Transmedia Publishing, 2011), p. 21.
332 "In pursuit of freedom, justice, dignity and democracy and led by principles of equality and environmental sustainability, the Charter proclaims a new social contract, based upon mutual and peaceful coexistence and understanding between all strands of society. It protects fundamental human rights and liberties and reaffirms the peoples' right to self-determination. Under the Charter, we, the people of the Autonomous Regions, unite in the spirit of reconciliation, pluralism and democratic participation so that all may express themselves freely in public life."

mocracy into practice, investing powers predominantly in the local self-governing communes within the cantons instead of its overarching administration, implementing a quota of forty percent women's participation in political life, establishing male–female co-presidencies for all political organizations, and recognition of a plurality of languages and religions within a secular system of self-governance. Front lines were set against the Assad regime and the Islamic State by the People's and Women's Protection Units (YPG/J) which are independently organized by the Kurdish women's movement.

Most important for our endeavor of gaining an understanding of Öcalan's proposition of a new model of Stateless Propaganda are the alternative institutions founded throughout the revolution in the Rojava autonomous region. Educational institutions are at the core of disseminating the ideas of stateless democracy, to politicize and mobilize its communities to carry out the project of self-governance. Women civil servants and militia are to follow mandatory education in the women's academies before being allowed on the battlefield. An example is the Star Academy in Rimelan, organized by the Yekîtiya Star, the umbrella group of the women's movement in Rojava. In an extension of the rejection of the nation-state and its patriarchal foundations, the main task of the academy is to break the ties between the state and science, not as a rejection of science as such, but of the specific power structure underlying it. The alternative takes the form of "jineology," meaning "women's science," *-logy* referring to the Greek "logos" (knowledge) and *jin* referring to the Kurdish word for woman.[333] Jineology is an attempt to re-write history from a perspective of colonized classes – women, stateless peoples, minorities – through the Rojava Revolution. Here we see Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* translated into a *Pedagogy of the Stateless*: the academy transformed into a space in which the very conditions of knowledge production and dissemination are re-investigated by the stateless, in favor of a history that is founded on their particular condition of being. Oppression here is no longer identified through the lack of the state, but identified as an inherent part of the

Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava, "The Social Contract," in *Stateless Democracy*, pp. 131–58. We note the radical reversal of what Masco described as the negative social contract in War on Terror Propaganda to the emancipatory claim expressed through Rojava's social contract in the context of Stateless Propaganda Art.

333 Journalist and representative of the women's movement Gönül Kaya writes that "in history, rulers and power holders have established their systems first in thought. As an extension of the patriarchal system, a field of social sciences has been created, which is male, class-specific, and sexist in character." Based on this analysis, Kaya calls for a "women's paradigm," described as a rejection of the relation between the woman-object (slave) and the male-subject (master), which she considers inherently intertwined with modern science and which has in turn had a severe impact on social life, with nurture or domestic work – framed as part of feminine "nature" – not considered "labor," but instead articulated in terms of "service" to the masculine master. Gönül Kaya, "Why Jineology? Re-Constructing the Sciences Towards a Communal and Free Life," in *Stateless Democracy*, p. 86.

state paradigm as such.

What is at stake is not merely a military and territorial struggle, but an ideological one, which the Rojavans refer to as the importance of "changing mentality."[334] The revolution is not aimed at just seizing power, but at re-articulating the very notion of power through stateless democracy. The power of the stateless – those who have rejected the state – demands not only a new administrative and political system of self-governance, but also a different educational and scientific paradigm. The endeavor of Stateless Propaganda is thus both to educate and perform the specific power paradigm that Öcalan recognized as being inherent to the condition of statelessness. That is the case for the political, economic, and educational system, but is possibly expressed most strongly – or at least, most visibly – in the context of Rojava's Stateless Propaganda Art.

In many examples of Rojava's Stateless Propaganda Art, the overlap with the work of Touré and his Artist Association of Azawad is striking. Similar to Azawad's state-in-the-making, we encounter in Rojava's stateless democracy the continuous presence of the yellow-red-green colors of its flag, often painted on discarded barrels to define the borders of its cantons, or checkpoints for its people's army. Old monuments, fountains, and statues of Hafiz al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad's father, have been thrown off their pedestals, repainted in the colors of Rojava and adorned with images of Rojavan martyrs.[335] Essentially, we witness here visual and artistic strategies of repurposing the structures of the old regimes into new ones to create the symbols and reference points of a new political space in the form of stateless democracy. Just like in Azawad, popular slogans such as "Resistance is Life," "Women, Life, Freedom," and "Martyrs Never Die" – the latter one echoing the famous slogan of the Palestinian liberation struggle – cover former regime buildings. The trilingual representation of the slogans in Kurdish, Assyrian, and Arabic bring to mind Touré's trilingual banners as well.

What the Artist Association is for Azawad, is the network of Tev-Çand cultural centers for Rojava – although the latter has far more means at its disposal. The network reaches from Rojava's small cities to its villages, providing cultural education to its youth in the field of music, theater, and visual art. In another similarity to Azawad, mu-

334 As Janet Biehl, partner of Öcalan's inspiration Murray Bookchin, noted during her travel to Rojava: "Aldar Xelîl, a member of the council of TEV-DEM [Movement for a Democratic Society], explained to us, Rojava's political project is "not just about changing the regime but creating a mentality to bring the revolution to the society. It's a revolution for society." Janet Biehl, "Revolutionary Education: Two Academies in Rojava," in *Stateless Democracy*, p. 213.

335 When I travelled to the canton of Kobanê, I witnessed how in only recently liberated territories, the Islamic State had appropriated old monuments and roundabouts for its own purposes as well. Painted in black and white, they were used for public executions or for the public display of prisoners in cages.

sic is particularly present in the curriculum. Since Kurdish culture was long suppressed, clandestine songs had been the carrier of Kurdish history, struggle, and language. With several radio and satellite TV channels at Rojava's disposal, music is also a popular means to communicate the ideals of stateless democracy and mobilize Rojavan constituencies for the ongoing fight at the front lines. As Nesrin Botan, a vocalist for the musical group Koma Botan explains:

> We have an important role in the revolution. [...] This revolution gives us the opportunity to express our culture, art, and folklore that used to be suppressed. We are now working hard for our culture and identity. [...] Like a musician receives education from school, our fighters learn the art of fighting in the People's Protection Units. Like a teacher of art, our warriors show performance on the battlefield.[336]

Botan's use of the notion of performance describes the direct relationship between her artistic work and the construction of a society based on the model of stateless democracy. Her performance as a musician is directly related to the larger collective performance of stateless democracy, and the defense of this model against the militias of the Islamic State, thus connecting the military with the cultural battlefield.

The case of the Rojavan artist Abdullah Abdul is particularly relevant for the analyzis of the differences between Stateless Propaganda Art of those who aim to create a state of their own and those who reject the state altogether. Abdul's work explores the notion of statelessness through his construction of a *contemporary* museum of a *lost history*. Working from a small studio next to a Tev-Çand center in Amude, a substantial part of Abdul's source material relates to the nearby archeological site of Urkesh, the remnants of an ancient kingdom.[337] Formerly under the control of the Assad regime, Abdul explains that the Rojavans for a long time "did not know whether [Urkesh] was part of our history or of another civilization."[338] Under the Democratic Self-Administration of Rojava, the site is recognized as heritage of Hurrians, Kurds, and other peoples that lived in the Mesopotamian region. With many of Urkesh's treasures residing in Assad's museums or in museums overseas, Abdul endeavors to reconstruct this heritage. In

336 Interview with Nesrin Botan conducted in the Mitra Hasake cultural center, Dec. 20, 2014.
337 In 1995, researchers in Syria reported Urkesh "to be the capital of a fabled kingdom and the most sacred religious center of the Hurrians, an obscure people who were contemporaries of the Sumerians in the south and the Semites of Ebla in the west." John Noble Wilford, "Lost Capital of a Fabled Kingdom Found in Syria," *The New York Times*, Nov. 21, 1995, http://www.nytimes.com/1995/11/21/science/lost-capital-of-a-fabled-kingdom-found-in-syria.html.
338 Interview with Abdullah Abdul conducted in the artist's studio in Amude, Dec. 18, 2014.

his words: "We, Kurds, care a lot about our history, yet we do not have a museum here. All museums are in Damascus and Aleppo. We do not have access to our own history, but I would like to learn about it and see its images."[339] As a consequence, he uses the Tev-Çand as a space to exhibit his clay and stone sculptures, modeled on actual archeological findings, in part on Mesopotamian mythology. He argues:

> Everybody knows that our culture and history are stolen, but I do not want to visit empty museums and cultural centers. That is why I make these sculptures. We [Abdul and his fellow artist, Masun Hamo] donated these sculptures to the Tev-Çand, so everybody who visits here can be reminded of our heritage.[340]

Using materials often recuperated from the surroundings of Urkesh, Abdul's work is hard to distinguish from archeological findings. His red clay relief *King of Urkesh* (2013), for example, takes the form of a broken fragment from a pot or vase, with the image of the former king sculpted upon the surface. Abdul's scratching and sanding of the clay, suggests a long passing of time in between the creation of the original object and its present-day exhibition. This is even more so in the case of Abdul and Hamo's collaboration entitled *A Woman from Rojava* (2014), which from a distance looks like a stone, placed soberly on the floor, leaning against a wall of the Tev-Çand. On closer inspection, the contours of a woman's face appear upon the surface, which, similar to *King of Urkesh*, has been scratched and sanded to give it an ancient appearance. Abdul's marble sculpture *A Woman from Mesopotamia* (2015) goes even further, by showing a female figure without legs or arms; suggesting it has been damaged by the passing of time.

The resemblance of Abdul's work with archeological findings is so striking, that his pieces cannot leave the Rojava region. Iraqi border patrol and customs would confiscate the materials, suspecting them to be actual historical objects.[341] This exemplifies the complex layering of his work. One could argue that his works are archeological falsifications, but it is actually the staging of history that forms the core of his artistic endeavor. The aesthetic representation of history in the form of archeological heritage defines his conceptual approach, material, and style. Simultaneously, being a Kurd from the region, it is hard to argue that his work would not be an actual continuation of a Mesopotamian

339 Ibid.
340 Ibid.
341 In 2015, contemporary art center BAK, basis voor actuele kunst requested me to aid in the loan and transport of Abdul's work, but quickly the Rojava administration confirmed that this would be impossible, due to the likeliness of his work with archeological findings.

heritage. Operating between material historical findings and mythology, Abdul's work overlaps with Öcalan's own mythological reading of Mesopotamian history.[342] In opposition to what Jineology defines as the doctrines of the statist scientific paradigm, we encounter here a complex entanglement of history and myth, or better, of *history as myth*.[343]

Using the Tev-Çand as museum, Abdul introduces a distinct model of Stateless Propaganda Art, which constructs and stages a cultural history of the stateless. The stateless not as those bereft of the state, but who – through ancient confederal structures – were from their very origin stateless. Abdul's museum therefore claims Rojava not as a break in the history of the state, but a continuation of the history of the stateless. His museum is both *historical* and *contemporary*, as it displays the ancient and contemporary in the making.

The construction of reality through the paradigm of stateless democracy is also at stake in the work of the Rojava Film Commune in the city of Derbisiye. Founded in 2015, the organization consists of filmmakers and educators, who collectively declared in their first communique:

> We shall not allow the cinema to be simplified to become an industrial tool, or a consumable and exhaustible object. The squares of our villages will become our culture and art centers. Our factories and our restaurants will become cinema halls. Our vibrant streets will be our films sets.[344]

The Rojava Film Commune articulates an understanding of cinema along similar lines to the ideal of communal self-governance espoused by stateless democracy. In their case it is not focused on a redistribution of political power, but on a redistribution of the means of cultural representation. As Diyar Hesso, a filmmaker, teacher, and one of

342 As David Graeber observes, there is a strong cultural dimension to Öcalan's writings, which introduces ancient Mesopotamia as a mythological space in which goddess-women ruled, and peaceful and ethnically diverse pre-democratic confederalist structures existed. Graeber in this regard notes that Öcalan "wishes to speak […] about a history and social science that does not currently exist, but itself, perhaps, can only be imagined." David Graeber, "Preface," in Abdullah Öcalan, *Manifesto for a Democratic Civilization, Volume I: Civilization, The Age of Masked Gods and Disguised Kings* (Porsgrunn: New Compass Press, 2015), p. 13.

343 The staging of archeology is a reoccurring strategy of regimes to legitimate their native or indigenous origins. Whether in the case of large scale Hollywood productions in which white English-speaking actors retrospectively claim ancient Greece as the origin of all-American values in movies such as Zack Snyder's *300* (2006), portraying Spartans fighting Persians as the pre-enactment of the War on Terror; or in the case of North-Korea's hybrid "excavations" of historical sites, often enlarged or mixed with more contemporary styles and symbols to affirm continuity between past and present. In the case of Abdul, the staging of history is of course part of his artistic endeavor. See: Terence McSweeney, *The 'War on Terror' and American Film: 9/11 Frames Per Second*, pp. 186–88; Jane Portal, *Art Under Control in North Kore*a, pp. 105–23.

344 Rojava Film Commune, "To the Press and Public Opinion," 2015, https://www.kominafilmarojava.org/english/profile/.

the main organizers of the Rojava Film Commune explains: "The first thing in a revolution is that society needs to reorganize itself. And this is how the revolution affects the arts: the arts are reorganized."[345] The redistribution and production of culture in the broad public realm – the factories, restaurants, and streets of Rojava – are its point of departure. Concretely, this happens through the four "wings" of the Rojava Film Commune. The first is focused on the education of the Rojavan population on the history of cinema, the second on the training of young Rojavan filmmakers, the third on the actual production of a Rojavan cinema, and the fourth on supporting filmmakers from abroad who, as the communique claims, "are tired to be captured by the capitalist modernity in their countries."[346] Hesso, further elaborating on the commune's artistic approach to the notion of stateless democracy, argues:

> If you look at the history of art from the perspective of statehood, we see the emergence of an art that I would call "unrealistic." With that I mean that we see ourselves faced with an art that is consciously separated from societal developments, what is called "art for art's sake." In the context of the Rojava revolution we aim to develop a realistic art that is of a specific use, one could say a "useful art."[347]

With this notion of "realism," Hesso refers to what he describes as a "reality rooted in this society," namely the "imagination and dreams of the revolution."[348] This relates to Guillermo's definition of *"revolutionary realis*m," a reality that is in the making through concrete political and cultural struggle. What Hesso calls "art for art's sake" would in this framework be unrealistic as it denies such revolutionary imagination, instead turning into what the communique refers to as an "industrial tool" in support of capitalist modernity's hegemony over present-day reality. With his proposition of a "useful art," which reminds of Bruguera's work, which we have to define "use" by the capacity of art to contribute to the construction of a new reality. Its usefulness is thus not literally that of a technical tool or consumable object, but the capacity to transform an imagined reality into an actual one. In Hesso's words: "Our cause is society's cause; but not the society that is already present, the society that we're constructing as we speak."[349]

The Rojava Film Commune's approach to revolutionary realism

345 Interview conducted with Diyar Hesso at the Rojava Film Commune, Derbisiye, Oct. 30, 2015.
346 Rojava Film Commune, "To the Press and Public Opinion."
347 Interview conducted with Diyar Hesso.
348 Ibid.
349 Ibid.

and its attempt to reorganize art alongside the reorganization of Rojavan society clarifies the role of the four branches. Let us shortly review their modus operandi, to map out the particular translation from stateless democracy as a political proposition to an artistic one.

As we noted, the first branch is aimed at popular education. Members of the Rojava Film Commune travel to cities and remote villages to mobilize children and workers to attend film screenings. This work, according to writer and Film Commune member Şêro Hindê, is organized "with the help of the communes and the city councils."[350] The aim is to educate the Rojavans on the history of popular cinema so that the films of the Commune are able to resonate with its population, with an emphasis on the younger generation. The first screening that was organized was Charlie Chaplin's *The Kid* (1921), considered among Chaplin's most successful works. The film was screened throughout dozens of villages and cities, assembling squares full of children, parents, and workers. Journalist Chris Keulemans observed a strange mutation of Chaplin's principal vagabond character, "the Tramp," in the Rojavan context:

> [S]uddenly, Chaplin is a Kurd. Look at him standing, with his large eyes full of wonder. His worn-out clothes, holes in his shoes: he fits his suit as perfect as the YPG in their uniform. But he is smart too. Homeless, no money in his pocket, the police on his heels – but he remains elusive. At the last moment, he always finds his way out. By accident or on purpose. Chaplin the Kurd always lands on his feet.[351]

What Keulemans's observation shows is that the screening of *The Kid* in Rojava should be understood as both a form of popular education and as something of an artistic intervention itself. The Film Commune shows a key document from the history of cinema, which is at the same time part of the construction of a new revolutionary cinema. No longer is Chaplin a symbol of capitalist modernity, he is now a Kurd: one of the many actors in the construction of reality through stateless democracy. Just like the old monuments of Assad are repurposed, so is an icon of American cinema. Chaplin is "liberated" in the way the Rojavans are attempting to liberate democracy from the state.

350 Interview conducted with Şêro Hindê at the Rojava Film Commune, Derbisiye, Oct. 30, 2015.

351 Original quote in Dutch: "En plotseling is Chaplin een Koerd. Kijk hem nu eens staan, met die grote, verwonderde ogen. Kleren versleten, gaten in de schoenen: hij zit net zo strak in het pak als de YPG in hun uniform. Maar slim is hij ook. Dakloos, geen cent op zak, de politie op zijn hielen – maar hij blijft ongrijpbaar. Telkens verzint hij een nieuwe list. Per ongeluk of expres. Chaplin de Koerd komt altijd op zijn pootjes terecht." Chris Keulemans, "Charlie Chaplin is een Koerd," *Groene Amsterdammer*, Nov. 11, 2015.

The second and third branch of the Rojava Film Commune are directly related, in the form of educating Rojavan filmmakers and producing Rojavan films. In this context, Film Commune members like Hesso and Hindê educate their students on the importance of art production within revolutionary situations, with examples from the French to the Soviet revolutions.[352] But just like Avant-Garde Propaganda Art attempted to liberate art and culture from their subservience to the ruling classes, the Rojava Film Commune emphasizes its aim of regaining control over its own means of cultural production and representation. In the past, the Assad regime controlled all means and channels of artistic production and distribution, but ever since the beginning of the Rojava revolution, hundreds of journalists, television teams, and filmmakers from abroad visited the region to report on the uprising, while no productions were actually in the hands of the Rojavans themselves. In a logic similar to the foreign looting of cultural heritage, there has been a looting of contemporary culture as well by those foreign actors who uphold the means of cultural production and representation from the Rojavans who do not. The Rojava Film Commune aims to reverse this process by developing a practice of film through the distinct condition and worldview of stateless democracy.

The Film Commune's first major production is entitled *Roza: Country of Two Rivers* (2016), created by several of its members and students, with the aim of becoming the first documentary film on the Rojava Revolution realized by Rojavans themselves.[353] Striking is the film's gritty and heart-torn reality of the revolution's losses, displaying images of martyr funerals and public mourning, which form a hard contrast with *CNN* reports of composed English-speaking Rojavans explaining the democratic aims of the revolutions. *Roza* embodies a proximity and intimacy to its subject, which demands of its makers to fully identify with their surroundings. Who is the one that stands behind the camera, who is the one that asks questions, in what language are these questions asked. These issues define half of what a "documentary" can be as a testimony to, or even active participant in the construction of a new reality.[354] Retaking control over the means

352 Interview conducted with Diyar Hesso and Şêro Hindê at the Rojava Film Commune, Derbisiye, Oct. 30, 2015.

353 Examples of foreign documentaries have been Vice's *Syria's Unknown War* (2013) and BBC's *Rojava: Syria's Secret Revolution* (2014). Note how in both titles signal the Western "discovery" of Rojava's "unknown "and "secret" revolution. A notable exception would be *The Sniper of Kobani* (2015) of Reber Dosky, a Kurdish–Dutch filmmaker from Başûr, Southern Kurdistan (Northern Iraq).

354 I experienced something similar. Having conducted many interviews in the region, it quickly became clear that as a male subject, I was often not able to address issues of the women's movement in a relevant or accurate way, or was partly mistrusted as the person asking the questions due to my own implications in the patriarchal paradigm. As a result, my colleague, Renée In der Maur, took over this part of the research. In the Rojava context, knowledge also relates strongly to awareness of gender embodiment.

of cultural production and representation thus also means being able to construct and mediate reality differently. The reality of a society in construction, as Hesso termed it, includes the losses that made this construction possible in the first place. In *Roza: Country of Two Rivers* source and mediator are implicated in the same process of constructing reality anew.

The fourth branch relates to the Film Commune's criticism of outsiders controlling the means of cultural production and representation of the Rojavan reality. Foreign filmmakers are asked to propose their scripts to the organization for feedback first, and are asked to allow free screenings of their work throughout Rojava upon realization. This is a gesture toward filmmakers who are inspired by stateless democracy and wish to "make a movie freely,"[355] but also a way to confront the gaze of the foreign subject observing and "approprioating" the Rojava revolution, by demanding that "[a]t least one person from the Rojava Film Commune will be present during the foreigners' films shooting."[356] One's interpretation of this criterion may differ, between a form of educating foreigners on their own gaze or as a form of censorship of the filmmakers' message – although it must be said that registration with the Film Commune by foreign filmmakers is on a voluntary basis.

The Film Commune's four wings show us clearly how the reorganization of culture alongside the reorganization of society takes place. The aim of the Film Commune is not simply to make art, but to create the infrastructures through which a different cultural production and representation becomes possible. The four wings of the Film Commune invest as much in creating a public as in regaining control over and redistributing the means of cultural production and representation among the Rojava population.

Both in the case of Abdul's work and that of the Rojava Film Commune, we witness a constant interplay between the specific conception of power brought about through the model of stateless democracy and Stateless Propaganda Art. As much as the Rojava society is in the process of construction, so is its art. Whereas Abdul attempts to create a cultural continuity between stateless Mesopotamian history and stateless democracy, the Rojava Film Commune attempts to re-organize the means of cultural production and representation in the service of

355 Brigitte van der Sande adds a critical note: "[D]anger looms on the horizon […], that of censorship. Article 33, 34 and 35 of the Social Contract assure the freedom of expression and information, but each book to be published must pass through a committee." Brigitte van der Sande, "Inside Hell We Build Paradise," *Open! Platform for Art, Culture and the Public Domain*, Jan. 15, 2015.

356 Retrieved from the website of the Rojava Film Commune, section "For Foreigners," https://www.kominafilmarojava.org/english/join-us-in-rojava/for-foreigners/.

a revolutionary realism by juxtaposing stateless democracy's culture to the history of cinema as it has largely been appropriated by statist capitalist modernity. In both cases, we observe an attempt to break with a past represented by the state, while re-engaging a neglected past in the form of stateless history. Although we may find certain overlaps with Popular Propaganda Art, Rojava's Stateless Propaganda Art differentiates itself quite evidently. Simply put, Rojava's Stateless Propaganda Art does not predominantly seek to compose a people, but works from the recognition of a social composition already present: namely that of statelessness. Rojava's Stateless Propaganda Art starts from a self-recognition of the stateless community *to become stateless on one's own terms*.

Possibly most telling in this interplay between Rojava's stateless democracy and its Stateless Propaganda Art is the people's parliament of Qamishlo. Situated in an old theater from the Assad regime, the stage continues to be used for musical and artistic events, while simultaneously serving as a platform for local communes in their daily practice of self-governance. The staging of a new political reality intersects with the staging of its new artistic productions. The theater as a space of both artistic and political imaginary; a space in which the performance of politics and that of art co-exist. Augusto Boal, following Freire, coined the concept of *The Theater of the Oppressed* (1974), a practice of theater in which passive spectators would be transformed into active spect-actors, embodying the politicization of the oppressed as actors and creators of their own faith. Calling the theater a space for the "rehearsal for the revolution," Boal claimed that "truly revolutionary theatrical groups should transfer to the people the means of production in the theater so that the people themselves may utilize them."[357] In the case of Rojava, we are faced with a yet unknown outcome of a politics and art in the making, something we – in Boalian terms – would have to term a *Theater of the Stateless*.[358] A space of communal performance that does not use the theater to "rehearse" the revolution, but to concretely conduct it; a communal performance that no longer starts from the counter-point of state oppression, but which attempts to articulate the very condition of statelessness as a point of departure of a new reality under construction. It is through Stateless Propaganda Art and its revolutionary realism that we have attempted to witness hints of what that society and culture of the future might bring.

357 Boal, *Theater of the Oppressed*, p. 98.

358 In this case, a full reversal of what we have earlier discussed as the *Theater of Operations* in the War on Terror Propaganda segment and the War on Terror Propaganda Art section.

STATELESS PROPAGANDA ART: SUMMARY

Before arriving at a general comparison and conclusion to our exploration of categories that help us to define contemporary propaganda art in the 21st century, let us first provide a summary of Stateless Propaganda Art based on our observations in this section:

- Stateless Propaganda Art is a contemporary propaganda art structured on specific conditions of statelessness, aimed at performing the demands for a reality in which either (1) the stateless are recognized within an existing state; (2) the stateless realize a state of their own; (3) the stateless reject the state altogether;
- Stateless Propaganda Art aims to different degrees at self-recognition and recognition by others, starting from the– often severely limited – power located in the body of the stateless. In some cases, this power is performed as a means of visibilization towards the stated (those who seek recognition in an existing state), in some cases as a means to radically separate themselves from an existing state or the state altogether (those who create a state of their own, or reject the state in its entirety);
- Stateless Propaganda Art can be analyzed through the educational and artistic work of liberational practitioners such as Fanon, Freire, and Boal, whether it relates to the pedagogy of the oppressed enacted to create alliance between the stateless and stated (We Are Here), the creation of new national culture separated from an occupying state (Touré), or a pedagogy and theater of the stateless, which starts from the liberational dimension of statelessness altogether (Abdul, Rojava Film Commune);
- Stateless Propaganda Art in all cases aims to construct reality on the basis of the condition of statelessness, whether this is a reality in which the stateless become equally stated (refugees, terrorist suspects), in which the stateless become stated in a state of their own (Azawad), or in which statelessness becomes the precondition of a new stateless reality altogether (Rojava).

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this fourth and final chapter, we have explored and mapped the practices of Contemporary Propaganda Art in the 21st century by identifying three key actors, three different subjectivities, which define the conflictual theater of the contemporary, namely the neoliberal public-private infrastructures of the *expanded state*, politicized civil society and its *popular mass movements,* and those dispossessed by the expanded state in the form of *stateless peoples*.

To understand how each of these 21st-century actors attempts to construct reality through different propagandas, we revisited the propaganda model of Chomsky and Herman, and proposed an expansion in the form of the inverted propaganda model, which replaces Chomsky and Herman's "filters" with "demands." Whereas the revisited propaganda model of Goss can be used to understand the performance of power through the expanded state, the inverted propaganda model can be used in relation to the performance of power through popular mass movements and stateless peoples. As a result, we were able to diversify different contemporary propagandas: War on Terror Propaganda, which attempts to construct reality based on threat production and the Us/Them divide to consolidate the interests of the expanded state; Popular Propaganda, which aims at constructing reality by enacting collective demands through the assemblies of popular mass movements; and Stateless Propaganda, which through the performance of precarious power aims at different forms of self-recognition and recognition by others, in some cases with the construction of a stateless reality as a result.

To gain insight into how these different models of power attempt to construct different realities, we examined different structures of power and their performance as art, based on the equation *propaganda=power+performance*. As we established in previous chapters, we did so through a multidisciplinary approach, following from our earlier conclusion that propaganda art can never be understood in the form of an isolated artwork, but only by mapping out the process in which different artistic forms relate to a larger interface of politics, economy, technology and industry. It is through such a interdisciplinary approach to propaganda art that we are able to trace what McSweeney termed the "master narrative" of propaganda.

In the case of War on Terror Propaganda Art, we tried to expand Masco's work into a proper art discourse. Through the work of Lütticken, Dipaolo, Robb, Eisenman, Fusco, Paglen, and others, we observed two interdependent styles through which the expanded state performs and constructs the reality of the War on Terror in the form of projects

of imminent destruction structured on the Us/Them divide. We defined these styles as that of Expanded State Realism and Expanded State Abstraction. Whereas the latter is directed at erasing public history, territories, and bodies, the former aims to replace these with the image of imminent destruction and future survival. These two styles manifest themselves through different interrelated media. In the case of Expanded State Realism, we discussed theater, games, cinema and television in particular, to trace their impact in extended performances in the forms of the actual torture and destruction of those designated as Them. In the case of Expanded State Abstraction, we approached the creation of abstract voids in public records and even geographies as an aesthetic practice, and showed how even a critical art practice such as that of Paglen, is affected and altered through them.

In the case of Popular Propaganda Art, we started from alternative historiographies of art which examine the relation of artists to popular mass movements and its precarious constituents. Through the work of Sinclair, Guillermo, Lippard, Bishop and others, we saw how throughout history Popular Propaganda Art has been the product both of the impact of such movements on the way artists understand reality, and of how artists contribute to the construction of reality as aimed for by these movements. In the process, we defined the aim of Popular Propaganda Art as the contribution to the performance of the popular and the construction of a people, the former describing the enactment of popular demands as we traced them in the inverted propaganda model, the latter relating to assembling a collectivity as an outcome of the enactment of these demands. We articulated the overall aim of Popular Propaganda Art as the objective of Popular Realism: the construction of reality structured by the demands of popular mass movements. We further discussed how these aims of Popular Propaganda Art translate into different models of artistic practice, namely in the form of Assemblism, Embedded Art, and Organizational Art. Through the work of Butler, Athanasiou, McKee, Garza and others, we defined Assemblism as the term through which we describe the aesthetic dimension of popular assembly in popular mass movements: not necessary as a form of "art," but rather as the artistic and aesthetic component that emerges in the process of devising alternative social forms. Through the work of Steyerl, Not An Alternative, De Bruijne, and Decolonizing Art Architecture Residency, we defined Embedded Art in terms of art practices that directly relate their artistic competences to or operate within popular mass movements, and who re-invent their artistic vocabulary in the process. Finally, through the work of Bruguera's *Immigrant Movement International* and Öğüt's *Silent University*, we defined Organizational Art as an artistic practice in which organizational political models are devised both as means to support the aims of popular mass movements – if not to instigate them – as well as artworks in and of themselves.

In the case of Stateless Propaganda Art, we shifted away from the overall construction of a "we" throughout this thesis, in order to acknowledge the limitations for a stated writer – someone recognized, administered, and living under relative protection of the state – to draft a series of observations on stateless practices of propaganda and propaganda art. Taking into account the fact that the condition of statelessness embodies particular knowledges inaccessible to the stated, we thus shifted from a model of mere analysis, to one of learning. In that process, we articulated three specific conditions of statelessness: first the demand of the stateless to be recognized by an existing state; second the demand of the stateless to establish a state of their own; and third the demand of the stateless to reject the very model of the state all together. Subsequently, we examined several case studies from the domain of art and culture to see how these different conditions of statelessness translate into different models of Stateless Propaganda Art, and how the aims of self-recognition and recognition by others play out differently in each of the examples. In the case of the demand of the stateless to be recognized by the state, we discussed the work of the collective of undocumented migrants and refugees We Are Here in relation to Freire. Subsequently, we observed how through its artistic and pedagogical practices We Are Here attempts to create an assembly that consists of citizens and refugees/undocumented migrants, a composition that introduces the stated and stateless as part of a collectivity. In the case of the demand of the stateless to create a state of their own, we discussed the work of Touré and his Artist Association of Azawad in relation to Fanon's work. Subsequently, we observed how through his artistic and agitational practice, Touré attempts to bring about a process of collective self-recognition for a diverse stateless people to recognize itself as part of a new collective state in the making. Finally, we discussed in more detail the demand of the stateless to reject the state in its entirety through the work of Öcalan and his proposition of a "stateless democracy," a radical proposal to separate democracy from the state by engaging the condition of statelessness as an alternative liberational paradigm, rather than as a condition of oppression. We traced the impact of this alternative model of self-governing power in the domain of Stateless Propaganda Art through the work of Abdul and the Rojava Film Commune, which attempt to historicize statelessness on the one hand, and aim to organize the notion of a stateless reality through artistic means on the other. Referencing the work of Freire and Boal, we have presented the possibility that these practices could

be understood as a Pedagogy and Theater of the Stateless.

In the 21st century we have so far avoided to engage actively with the term propaganda in a more complex manner. In popular discourse, the term propaganda continues to be used predominantly to describe the output of authoritarian regimes and dictatorships. While the Trump administration in some cases is confronted with the accusation of using propagandist means to achieve its goal using terms such as the "alternative fact" and the designation of mainstream media as "fake news," the propagandistic notion that democracy stands in opposition to propaganda remains largely intact. This is even the case in key propaganda studies, such as Ellul's and Chomsky and Herman's, as they are only capable of understanding alternative approaches to constructing reality as forms of "non-propaganda," or "counter-propaganda" at best.

Instead, through our historical exploration of Modern Propaganda and Modern Propaganda Art in the first two chapters of this thesis, we have approached propaganda as a performance of power, and concluded that the practice of propaganda is inherent to any society impacted by modernity – even when described as "advertisement" or "public relations." To that end, we have emphasized that we should diversify the performance of different structures of power in the form of different propagandas. In this fourth and final chapter, we have tried to do so by showing that even emerging powers or extremely limited forms of power still show themselves capable of propagating alternative realities. We did so to gain insight in the plurality of realities that are constructed through propaganda, simultaneous to one another: sometimes in conflict, sometimes in overlap, but all define our existence in the 21st century.

Let us now, based on this chapter, propose the following definition of contemporary propaganda art in general:

- <u>Contemporary propaganda art is the performance of power as art in contemporary society</u>