**Responses #1
– Opinions Informed by Practice**

**Edited by
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Introduction to Responses #1
– Opinions Informed by Practice

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On a stormy Thursday in February 2022, I visited Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen to see Mohammed Bouroussia's solo exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* It was the last week of the show. I was accompanied by Itzel Esquivel, Josephine Boesen, Flóra Gadó, Jaleesa Johnston, Stéphane Kabila, Noura Salem, and Kirsti van Hoegee – members of the student group from the study programme MA in Curatorial Practice at the University of Bergen. We spent several hours walking through the gallery rooms – pausing, listening, and looking – and although we were there together, we spent most of the time in silence and contemplation. We dedicated the next day to lively conversation, sharing our experiences, observations, and questions.[1] We defined a set of keywords and then categorized them to see what topics pertaining to the exhibition might be interesting to address. The following week, I had an online meeting with Favour Ritaro and Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou, since they were unable to attend a live walk-through. Together, we applied a similar methodology to explore the same exhibition via its digital presence on Kunsthal Charlottenborg's website.[2]

The members of the student group, all of whom are practicing curators, have each written a text for this anthology. While the relationship between curatorial practice and ethics was central to the discussions that have set the tone for this collection of texts, the texts are also the result of a pedagogical experiment.

The Experiment

During my mandatory pedagogical training at the University of Bergen in the spring semester of 2021, the excellent pedagogues Marie Vander Kloet and Stine H. Bang Svendsen introduced me to the text 'Kollektiv Kvalitativ Analyse' (Collective Qualitative Analysis) by the sociologist Helga Eggebø.[3] Towards the end of this text, Eggebø writes that 'the aim of the article is to contribute to – and encourage others to take part in – the development of collective

methods of analysis'.[4] I took this as the starting point for my own final assignment for 'UPED 693 Group Supervision of MA-students', which I subsequently entitled 'The Helga Eggebø Tweak'. In this text, I suggest considering a curatorial project as the data set that a group of MA students could use as the springboard for a collective qualitative analysis. Following the methodological outline that Eggebø had described, we took the exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg as our starting point. Our collective qualitative analysis of the exhibition would result in a series of individually written texts for an anthology, and the subsequent editorial process would be similar to what happens in professional realms of publishing. The proposal I handed in for my assignment was aimed at strengthening one of the MA programme's pedagogical elements relating to text production that I deemed not yet fully or adequately developed.[5]

To assist me, the student group generously discussed the structure of this experiment with me during the winter of 2021–22. They read an English translation of Eggebø's text as well as my assignment for the pedagogical training programme, and they engaged deeply with the question of how we could collectively carry out the experiment. Their input was particularly valuable when discussing the ethics of research and teaching, as well as practically advising me on how to navigate potential complications resulting from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.[6] The decision to publish this collection of texts was reached by group consensus. As an educator, I believe it is my obligation to be transparent about the fact that this novel experiment has resulted in a great deal of learning on my part as well. I look forward to the next opportunity for collective qualitative analysis leading up to the second volume in the anthology series *Responses – Opinions Informed by Practice*, in order to implement some further tweaks to this teaching methodology.

The Contributors
To accompany the writers and myself in this experiment, I

called on a long-term collaborator and editor, **Gerrie van Noord**, who engaged with the writers and their texts as both an editor and external tutor for their writing processes. She thus acts as co-editor for this volume. Gerrie shares her reflections on the encounters with the texts and the writers in this volume in her text *Finding A Voice Within A Cacophony*. I must also thank Gerrie for the 'subtitle' of this series of anthologies – *Opinions Informed by Practice* – which was part of a sentence that came up in a conversation between the two of us when discussing the texts in this volume. It is a wording that I am certain emerged from all the years of research that have gone into her PhD, which emanates from her own practice as both a lecturer and editor of publications on art.[7] I took note of this phrase, wrote it on a random piece of paper lying on my desk, and over the next few days felt increasingly certain that it would be a perfect way to describe what the *Responses*-series of online publications will be.

Responses #1 – Opinions Informed by Practice is designed by **Abirami Logendran**, a graphic designer and writer with a background in mathematics, history, and media science. Abirami told me, during our first meeting, that she had seen the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* at Kunsthal Charlottenborg and has therefore also been able to engage deeply with the focus for this first volume of the *Responses*-series. Abirami has designed a grid for this volume for both on- and off-screen reading. The PDF is easily distributed and manageable as a digital file, yet also cost-effective and beautiful in print by means of a regular desktop A4 printer. Given how the design mimics book pages scanned for wider distribution, my thoughts are directed to the pedagogical setting from which this volume springs. Even though the design also hints at the affordable mode of reproduction through a xerox machine, and the disposable nature of a photocopied text, it is characteristic enough to feel precious. I also invited Abirami to reflect on the job as a designer for this anthology series and on the exhibition

in question, and I am very happy that she accepted this invitation with the text *Design as Response*.

Responses #1 contains texts that emerged from the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* featuring works of Mohammed Bouroussia as experienced through its iteration at Kunsthal Charlottenborg. *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* was initially conceived for Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA) in London and was curated by director Sarah McCrory and curator Natasha Hoare. It was then transplanted into the Danish art institution by the curator Henriette Bretton-Meyer.[8] Both Goldsmiths CCA and Kunsthal Charlottenborg are closely affiliated with educational institutions: Goldsmiths, University of London, and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, respectively. It is therefore appropriate that this exhibition is the first curatorial case study used as the basis for a collective qualitative analysis at a third educational institution, the Art Academy, Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen.

The curators who have enrolled in the 2021–23 MA Curatorial Practice programme have backgrounds in art practice, art history, philosophy, sociology, and architecture. They work as freelance curators, in established art institutions such as museums, private foundations, and other publicly funded organisations, and in experimental community projects. Each curator's background and practice have given direction to the writing process that has unfolded over the second semester of their MA studies. The collection of texts spans personal accounts of the exhibition, critical engagements with topics that arise from experiencing the artworks, and a range of contextualizations of the exhibition and the art institution at large. Between them, this cohort speaks several languages – Arabic, Danish, English, French, Greek, Hungarian, Kiswahili, Kiluba, Lingala, Norwegian, and Spanish – but each member has written in English. The writers of this volume show up in many different ways for this exhibition, drawing on their own backgrounds and

experiences when addressing it, but what unifies them is the role they take on as an informed professional audience.

The anthology opens with **Jaleesa Johnston**'s text *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!: An Emotional Mapping*, which walks the readers through the exhibition. **Kirsti van Hoegee** then takes the readers behind the scenes in an interview with the curator Henriette Bretton-Meyer in *Relocation and Adaptation*. **Itzel Esquivel** zooms in on one of the video works in the exhibition in *Beyond Blackness and Migration: A Reflection on Mohamed Bourouissa's Horse Day*. **Flóra Gadó** focuses on the exhibition's photographic works in *Reconstruction, Appropriation, and Ethics: On Mohamed Bourouissa's Photographs*. **Stéphane Kabila** also draws on Bourouissa's image-making practice in *Inversion: Reflections on Mohamed Bourouissa's Exhibition HARa!!!!hAaaRAAAA!!!!HAaa!!!* **Noura Salem** unfolds the use of language in the exhibition, both in the artworks, wall texts, and the institution's communication material in *Shit Has Arrived in the Form of a Tongue Twister*. **Favour Ritaro** also focuses on language and addresses issues of communication and knowledge in *The Multidimensional Task of a Curator*. **Josephine Boesen** continues with a probing of institutional behaviour in *A Necessary Institutional Wake-Up Call, or WTF Kunsthal Charlottenborg?* while **Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou** takes the institution as a starting point for reflecting on funding and communication more generally in *(In)visible Funders.*

Together, these texts reflect discussions that the educational model for the MA in Curatorial Practice at the Art Academy in Bergen can generate. The programme follows and supports the participants' practices and interests in a critical manner, and my experience is that even though all the cohorts are set up as temporary educational communities, they grow into long-lasting professional and supportive networks. I consider myself lucky and privileged to see this happen again and again, providing time and space for cross-pollination between practices.

I would like to end this introduction by extending my gratitude to everyone who has supported the MA programme over the years. To all the MA cohorts and all the external tutors, examiners, guest teachers, and hosts in all the different contexts that this programme has engaged with from 2015 to today: thank you for working together with me to develop the MA Curatorial Practice programme. To those who have populated different roles of leadership within Bergen National Academy of the Arts, and later, the new Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen: thank you for trusting me to develop this programme together with you and our colleagues. Thank you to Abirami and Gerrie for working with us to make this anthology a reality, and to the copy editor Arlyne Moi. Finally, to the 2021–23 cohort: thank you for entertaining the idea of this experiment and for posing challenging questions about what new forms of curatorial practice teaching should and could be!

1 I want to thank Henriette Bretton-Meyer and Michael Thouber from Kunsthal Charlottenborg, and Sarah McCrory from Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), for their support and encouragement. A special thanks to Lars Bent Petersen, rector at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, for generously hosting our workshop in February 2022 in one of the academy's seminar rooms.

2 Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 'Mohamed Bourouissa: HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!', Accessed 7 July 2022. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/en/exhibitions/mohamed-bourouissa/

3 Helga Eggebø, 'Kollektiv kvalitativ analyse', *Norsk sosiologisk tidskrift* 4, no. 2 (2020): 106–122, accessed 7 July 2022. https://nforsk.brage.unit.no/nforsk-xmlui/handle/11250/2724396. The text was later translated into English by Victor Szepessy, as 'Collective Qualitative Analysis', for the purpose of sharing it with the MA Curatorial Practice students, the aim being to build on Eggebø's methodology. I want to mention the two courses led by Marie Vander Kloet and Stine H. Bang Svendsen as particularly useful for my practice as an educator: UPED 693 Group Supervision of MA-students, and UPED674: The Politics of Curriculum, both of which are part of the University of Bergen's Programme for University Pedagogy (UPED), the university's unit for training, research and development in learning and teaching, housed within the Institute for Pedagogy (Department of Education) in the Faculty of Psychology.

4 Eggebø, 'Kollektiv kvalitativ analyse', 120. Szepessy's translation.

5 The MA Curatorial Practice at the Art Academy – Department of Contemporary Art, Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design, University of Bergen, Norway, was established in 2015. Since its beginning, it has been led by Professor in Curatorial Practice Anne Szefer Karlsen. The

MA programme developed out of an earlier study programme called Skapende kuratorpraksis (Creative Curatorial Practice) at Bergen National Academy of the Arts, which was operational during 2004–14 and led by Sissel Lillebostad and Jorunn Veiteberg. In 2017 Bergen National Academy of the Arts became part of the new Faculty of Fine Art, Music and Design at the University of Bergen. At this same time, the MA Curatorial Practice programme also opened up for international students. Since 2017, the programme has welcomed students from and/or working in the following countries: Costa Rica, DR Congo, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Indonesia, Jordan, Kenya, Mexico, Nigeria, Northern Ireland, Norway, Singapore, Sweden, Zambia, and the USA. MA Curatorial Practice is a two-year, low-residency, seminar-based, no-tuition education programme for ten professional curators who work individually, in collectives, or who are affiliated with institutions, and who are willing to reflect on and translate their knowledge and practice.

6 I also want to acknowledge the valuable input of Marny Garcia Mommertz, who enrolled in the MA programme in the autumn of 2021 with the current cohort, and who is currently on a leave of absence.

7 Gerrie van Noord, 'The Fringes Publications on Art: Curatorial Intersections of Practices', (PhD diss., Birkbeck, University of London, 2022), accessed 7 July 2022. https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/47540/

8 The exhibition in London was on display between 21 May and 1 August 2021, and in Copenhagen between 9 October 2021 and 20 February 2022.

HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!:
**An Emotional Mapping**

Jaleesa Johnston

Looking at the floorplan of the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaa-RAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* by Mohamed Bourouissa at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen, there is a suggested route for visitors to follow, with a beginning and end marked by way of the numerical sequencing of the works from one to seven. I see a clear 'entrance' and 'exit' to the cluster of galleries. The experience of *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, however, begins beyond the boundary of the spaces outlined on the floorplan. Ascending the stairs to the exhibition, the faintly audible 'edges' of the sound installation *Hara* greet us well before the introductory wall text, and the sound continues to linger with the public as they descend the stairs, having long left the physical exhibition space.

I am a US-American and an able-bodied, queer, Black woman who is also an artist and an institutional arts worker. This text is a reflective narrative informed by my role as a public-programmes curator. In addition, I am currently a student in the Master's programme for Curatorial Practice at the University of Bergen. I approach this exhibition through the lens of my practice as a performance artist, in which I centre embodied experiences and emotional knowledge as legitimate and crucial ways of navigating social, political, cultural, historical, and inter-personal relationships. Although there are many conceptual and intellectual underpinnings to the works in *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* this meditation foregrounds my emotional and embodied readings of the exhibition.

0. From the Periphery
Rounding up stairs
Voices reach me
With each step, I reach closer to them

As I ascend the stairs and approach the galleries on the top floor of Kunsthal Charlottenborg, I encounter Bourouissa's works. Although there are two gallery thresholds with peo-
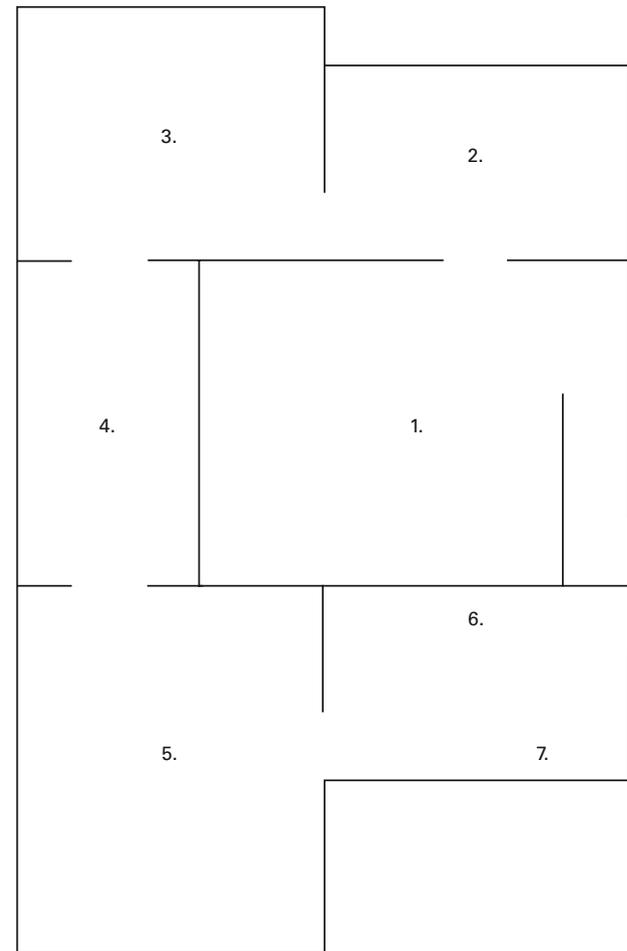
Floorplan from exhibition guide.
Design: Andreas Peitersen.
Courtesy of Kunsthal Charlottenborg.

ple entering and exiting from both, the position of the wall text on the far right suggests that the right doorway is the beginning of the exhibition. In addition to the signal of the position of the text, the beginning of the exhibition seems clear through the audible sound of the piece *Hara*. Pushing beyond the gallery walls, it fills the outside seating area, and the call of 'hara' sets the tone for my experience. In his 2005 text, 'Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art', Steven Connor reflects on sound art as having the 'desire to burst boundaries, to tear down the walls, to break out of the confined space of the gallery'.[1]

From outside these gallery spaces, I imagine the walls being blown out completely, exposing them to the open air of streets, empty of car traffic and other conversations, yet sparsely populated with bodies from afar, reaching to each other through the calls of 'hara'.

Outside wall text
Echoes of yelling from within
The space beyond the threshold feels vast
Vast urban space

1. *Hara*, 2020
From whispers to yells
Whispers, closeness, ghostly, internal
How the breath carries each syllable and sound
Echoes of voices
Grounding
Contained, but vast and grand
Shouting, yelling rips open the space
Enveloping

Going through a narrow hallway and turning a corner, I am surprised by the feeling of containment between the stark white walls of the interior space. Although the ceiling is high, the vast urban landscape I had imagined inside is

confined between two speakers, a surveillance camera in the corner, and scattered chairs in the centre of the room. The chairs seem to imply an invitation to stay and linger, and although I decline to sit down, I close my eyes and move through different parts of the room as I take in the sound. In this shared gallery space, the invitation to remain exposed to others and collectively take in the calls of 'hara' gestures towards Brandon LaBelle's assertion that 'to produce and receive sound is to be involved in connections that make privacy intensely public, and public experience distinctly personal'.[2] Flanked by sounds, I can sense bodies close and far, their voices holding contradictions of urgency and calm, desperation and hope, precariousness and certainty, loud and quiet, severe and tender. As emotions fill my chest, I open my eyes back to a room that is just that, a room, filled only with two others sitting in the sounds.

I linger
My emotions pool
Deliberate voices press in
I must leave

2. *Périphéries*, 2005-08
Darker space
The voices are a wall
Against my back
Present, insistent still
Holding me to a wall of images
People in brief moments
Gatherings
Collective exchange

Although faint, 'hara' continues to resonate as I look up at a salon-style display of photographic images. These photos tower above me, and my eyes trace along them to land on a ring of fire. A person in a skeleton hoodie stands at the centre of a circle of flames. Holding onto the brevity of bones

dressing flesh and the red-orange of burning, I see each image reflected as a reading on passing moments of life. With the fleeting existence of 'hara' at my back, the still images are charged with the motion of in-between moments, of people becoming. In this smaller, darker gallery space, the depictions of meetings and passings mirror the space as a liminal site where sounds bleed together between galleries 1 and 3. Since sound, according to Connor, 'makes us aware of the continuing emphasis upon division and partition that continues to exist even in the most radically revisable or polymorphous gallery space, because sound spreads and leaks, like odour', I register gallery 2 as a place of transition before making my way into the next room.[3]

In-between bleeding sound
Converging spaces 1 and 3 into 2
2 a meeting place, a place to mobilize

3. *Horse Day,* 2015
Music and booming voices
Pull me in from the cool blue
I enter someplace new
Splashed in a wash of red
A new space within
Of self-determination

Moving into the next space, the atmosphere shifts to a cinematic one filled with horses, Black riders, camaraderie, and competition encapsulated in a two-channel video installation that tells a largely overt story of Black urban-cowboy culture. More direct in its message, I am lifted by the red light that washes over the room, which feels more sustaining here than it did in the image of fire. Revelling in the fullness of subaltern positionality and its ability to reach the far edges of despair and joy simultaneously, my time in this gallery feels lighter and shorter, a sensation that I gladly take with me into the next space.

Tender
Joy
Pride
Many sit here
Linger here
To care and work
Black/man/gentle/companion/power
Take care

4. *Shoplifters,* 2014
Divided space
Gritty images
What they hold
The mundane
Faces that lock eyes
Expressions that teeter between
Deadpan and shame
Not precious objects
But precious beings

With the exception of *Hara*, I move through each installation while ignoring wall labels. Leaving *Horse Day* with an affirmation of Black masculine joy, I carry the optimism it has engendered into the fourth room. This room diverges from the salon-style display of images in *Périphéries* by presenting a series of gritty shots of everyday people. The pictures are mounted on a metal divider in the centre of the space. I notice the objects the portrayed people hold: detergent, bottles, and diapers. Looking at them, I also see other visitors looking at the works through the holes in the metal display structure. Circling swiftly around the piece, I move toward the fifth room, but seeing the wall label, which is cleverly placed at the gallery exit, I halt in my tracks. *Shoplifters*. Shock quickly grows into anger. How am I to look at the person with diapers, a basic necessity? How should I now see the people in this image series? Turning back around,

I re-engage with the photos under this new knowledge. But my anger persists as I notice my joy is tempered by the reality of systems designed for certain failures. Regardless of whether these systems apply to me, I still sense their effects and wonder what self-determination truly means for marginalized peoples. Glancing up from my thoughts and from the faces of those I see in the photos, I remember I am not alone in the room. We are meant to see each other. We are meant to see the faces in the pictures and then see each other.

Necessities
See me seeing you
Seeing me
Acknowledgment
That we are in relationship
ALWAYS
That is a necessity

5. *Brutal Family Roots*, 2020
A floor of yellow
Severe sound
Glitched poetry
Living among strangled trees
I touched one and it crumbled
Carpet supports my toes
Tall windows pour in light
Security watches me
What an odd mix
Home is containment

I see the yellow before I hear the sound. Perhaps I am still in my thoughts and feelings from *Shoplifters*? But I see the yellow carpet before I hear the sound, and I see the sign to take off my shoes, an invitation I gladly accept this time. I want to feel being inside the piece. I walk between potted trees that are brittle and partly dying. I am trying to recon-

cile the suggestion of joy and warmth, feelings I attach to the colour yellow, with the sparseness of the trees and the severity of the sound, as voices come and go, glitching poems about roots and land. I want to rest in the light, I want to sit on the carpet, but between the sound and the security guard who is watching me, I am anxious to move on. I notice my exhaustion setting in, as I look ahead, into, and through the final room to the exit.

False comfort
Singing voices
Ghostly, interrupted
Illegible
Something in their stories
Opens slowly
Closes abruptly
I am lost
And longing for a pause

6. *Nous Sommes Halles*, made in collaboration with Anoushkashoot, 2003–05, and
7. *Temps Mort*, 2009
Dignity
Standing in new shoes
Silver hoop earrings
Fresh cornrows
And youthful postures
There are also tears
A space where vulnerability and power
Can live together

The final two works in this exhibition I experience together, as a room, as a whole piece, but also as two separate works.

I am relieved to leave the yellow carpet and return to my shoes. I am relieved to see the end near. I am relieved to see hairstyles, jewellery, clothing, and people who look like my

aunts, cousins, and friends from my younger years. Printed and plastered to the walls, these images are posters of people who are familiar to me. They take up space and this makes me happy. This is total nostalgia, but I am mistaken to think that this is the light before the end of the tunnel, as I sit down for the last video.

Sitting on a small bench before a small screen, I put the attached headphones over my ears. Staring into the gritty, almost flickering video already makes me uneasy. I can feel my body tensing up as I wait for a final emotion to hit me hard in the stomach. I notice a request for images and an exchange of texts and images. It is the everyday feeling, raw and contained on a small screen. I understand, but I do not fully understand. Sitting at the edge of my emotional capacity, I make a choice to accept what I have seen and to accept what I do not fully know.

Vulnerability
Lives here
Gritty film
Flickers
The city
A courtyard from behind a gate
Perspectives
From the inside looking out
Pasta and the moon

8. *Hara*, 2020
Upon leaving *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* I walk across the floor to a different exhibition in search of respite. I passively, numbly, and quickly look through a group show, preparing myself for another walk through the works of Mohamed Bouroussia. My body, my eyes, and my mind call for a place to rest, and I remember the chairs outside the exhibition. I head over to sit with my feelings, still on the edge of my limit. The shouts and echoes of 'hara' continually

interrupt my efforts to centre my attention, and I realize I cannot revisit the show. I am raw now, like an exposed nerve. I have to leave. I quicken my pace down the steps to Kunsthal Charlottenburg's entrance lobby, desperate to escape the final reaching grasps of 'hara'.

Now, at a distance, I can see what wore me down so quickly: negotiating, reading, and feeling the constant shifts of power between subjects and systems in the works. Shifts of power, from subjects avoiding capture through the shouts of 'hara!', to protests and resistance, to finding meaning and fulfilment under the threat of systemic death. Shifts of power also take place in real time, between viewers and the works, from passive listening to building emotional distance from the subjects in the works, to refusing participation. This constant negotiation of power dynamics in an effort to reclaim self-determination and self-realization mirrors the shifts of power present in the sound work *Hara*. As voices move in, around, and through bodies, they destabilize the physical grasp of representational objects. *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* is cyclical in its never-ending dance of shifting agency between marginalized subjects.

[1] Steven Connor, 'Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art//2005', *Sound*, ed. Caleb Kelly (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011), 129.

[2] Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), ix.

[3] Connor, 'Ears Have Walls', 129.

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Hara*, 2020. Installation view,
HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,
Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

Relocation and Adaptation – A Conversation with Curator Henriette Bretton-Meyer

Kirsti van Hoegee

In her essay 'How Should One Read a Book?', Virginia Woolf stresses that the readers should take no advice, follow their own instincts, use their own reason, and come to their own conclusions.[1] She writes about what to expect from books:

> 'Most commonly we come to books with blurred and divided minds, asking of fiction that it shall be true, of poetry that it shall be false, of biography that it shall be flattering, of history that it shall enforce our own prejudices. If we could banish all such preconceptions when we read, that would be an admirable beginning.'[2]

Is it possible to enter an exhibition without any preconceptions? The first time I visited *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!h-HAaA!!!*, by Mohamed Bourouissa at Kunsthal Charlottenborg, I had a quick walk through all the rooms. I was trying to get an overview of the narrative and the concepts, and my mind started to deconstruct and analyze the total experience. I decided that the first room was overwhelming. I couldn't stay there, and by making that decision, I wonder if I failed to give the work a fair chance.

Was this experience the result of a curatorial decision, or did it result from my preconceptions and expectations? By entering an exhibition, I am already in a certain mental state. I have an idea of myself as an open-minded and curious art viewer, but I start to wonder if this is true. I tend to observe quite quickly and jump to conclusion before digesting all aspects of the artworks. By digging deeper into the Bourouissa exhibition, I discovered some new aspects of both the art and myself.

Imagine walking down the streets of Marseille, immersed in your own thoughts, your ears suddenly catching the sounds of '*hara*' and '*aouin*' shouted out in the distance. Someone is sending a signal or a message that travels from one street to the next, from one person to another.

In another city at a different time, similar sounds are heard by the entrance to a building: '*HARA!!!!!!hAAARAAAAA!!!!!h-HARAAA!!!*' The sounds in Marseille are words shouted in warning by lookouts when they see police approaching a drug dealing spot. The sounds in London emanate from an artwork by Mohamed Bourouissa, in which he has transformed and distorted the sound recordings from the streets and turned them into a more-or-less abstract sound work.

What they did in London was not possible at Kunsthal Charlottenborg. We share the backyard with the art academy, a café, and the art library, so we couldn't have an outdoor sound piece running for the duration of the exhibition.

I am talking on Zoom with Henriette Bretton-Meyer, a curator at Kunsthal Charlottenborg since 2012, about the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* by Mohamed Bourouissa. I wanted to have a conversation about her curatorial approach, how collaboration is part of the process, and how she positions herself when dealing with art that has political content in an exhibition. I prepared several questions, but quite early in the interview, it became clear to me that the choice of making this exhibition was a result of the pandemic situation since early 2020.

So, what to do when things happen that you have no control over, that interfere with all plans and force you to act in a slightly different way? In a way, that's the everyday life of a curator, but we were not prepared for how far-reaching the corona pandemic would be for us as an institution and the artists we work with. Mohamed Bourouissa´s exhibition came to fruition quite hastily since the exhibition that was planned for this time slot was cancelled due to travel restrictions and other obstacles. So, we had to find someone who could jump in fast, and to produce an exhibition that was feasible. I had been interested in Mohamed's work for a while, and when I saw that he had an exhibition in London,

I contacted our colleagues at Goldsmiths CCA [Centre for Contemporary Art] and then the artist himself. After that, things fell into place quickly, and a modified version of the exhibition was shown at Charlottenborg.

Even if the planning of this exhibition happened over a short period of time, there were still multiple decisions to be made. Bourouissa was able to come to Copenhagen for the installation, and Henriette worked closely with him in planning the exhibition.

The second time I visited the exhibition I did a slow-looking exercise and stayed there for three hours. This deep dive into the exhibition gave me new perspectives on the works and made me aware of the nuances and details of the installations that had previously escaped me. But even though I stayed in the sound installation in the first room for a long time, I still felt that this room didn't quite work. Was it my preconceptions that disturbed the experience, or my expectations?

We talked about how we should do it, and then we got the idea of having the room completely stripped so that you would walk into an empty room. There is only the sound, and the sound becomes the sculpture or installation. Later, the idea for those chairs came up, so you could sit for a while. While the outdoor installation in London refers directly to the actual sounds in the streets, something else happened indoors here in Copenhagen. It was the only thing there in the room, and that made it more intense. It became a radical start to the exhibition, and we liked that. There were so many clear connections between his works over so many years. With the work Périphéries, *toward the centre of the exhibition, and* Nous sommes Halles, *toward the end, the sounds of different works intertwine so beautifully with each other.*

Kunsthal Charlottenborg has an open floorplan; the walls that separate the rooms are unconnected to the ceiling, and this makes the sound travel through the whole space. I agree with Henriette that in some works, the sound from another work binds them together and helps create an atmosphere that is consistent throughout the exhibition. It's only when I'm lying on the yellow carpet in the work *Brutal Family Roots* that I wish I could experience the sounds undisturbed. It even says in the catalogue text for this work in room 5 that 'the installation is a welcoming space in which to take some time, listen to the sounds, and contemplate the complexity of their origins.'[3]

You could say that practical things came into play. We needed a dark room for Horse Day, *and enough space to get some distance from the screens. There are six rooms in total, so if you start with* HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!! *in number one, and you want a room for Horse Day, it must be either number three or number five. It's kind of where it makes sense to have them. So, they were placed first. That way the sounds spread out, from one room to another, so there was sound in the first room, there was sound in the third room with* Horse Day, *and there was sound in the fifth room with the installation from the Biennale of Sydney with the yellow carpet and the sound work with the plants. You know, sometimes you sit and look at a floorplan, and you think that it could fit very well, but then you're in the room and suddenly you notice something else. That's why I was so happy that Mohamed was there.*

It strikes me that the work *Brutal Family Roots* revolves around relocation and adaptation. The acacia, a tree that Bourouissa had always assumed was indigenous to France and Algeria, turns out to have originated from Australia. In this way, the tree traces colonial routes and networks of exchange. Then it suddenly dawns on me; this work had its origins elsewhere, and the same goes for the sound piece at the beginning of the exhibition. So what is lost and what is gained in these transitions?

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Brutal Family Roots*, 2020. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

The sound piece Hara *was created for and commissioned by Manifesta, when Manifesta was in Marseille [2020], and it was installed outdoors in a publicly accessible place in the city. They did the same in London, where there were two places as far as I know.*

Before this conversation with Henriette, I had no idea that this piece was originally made for an outdoor setting. I had read that *Brutal Family Roots* was commissioned for the Biennale of Sydney, but for all I know, the sound may not have been isolated there either. Recontextualizing works in new surroundings creates challenges for both an artist and a curator, and in this particular case, Henriette luckily was able to work closely with the artist when planning and installing the exhibition.

Mohamed Bourouissa is a committed artist, a quality that becomes prominent when one sees how he includes different communities in his projects. There are many political aspects in his works, and I want to dig deeper into how this political content is mediated. While talking with Henriette about Bourouissa's exhibition at Charlottenborg, I realized that the planning in terms of such content was mostly coincidental and the result of the pandemic. So I asked her, in a more general sense, about her thoughts on working with politically engaged artists within an institution.

The political issues are certainly a theme among the artists I'm interested in, but it is also because it is an overarching focus of the institution. It is an important part of our profile, to show and convey contemporary art that relates to the society we live in, and to show exhibitions that reflect our time.

It is not the only thing we focus on, but it colours the exhibition programme to a very high degree. Making exhibitions, we are always thinking: What is the urgency? Why should we look at this now? Why should we relate to it

now? How does it speak to current debates? For me, it is also about expanding the definition of what is political.

Entering the institution, I was handed a booklet with information. Henriette tells me that since the exhibition had already been produced for Goldsmiths CCA, they reproduced the presentation text with some changes to account for the new context. Thinking of the introduction in the small booklet, I suggest that the information seems to hold back a bit, as if the institution does not take a position in the text, nor does the artist.

Yes, I really like that you must open your eyes yourself as a spectator instead of being told what you are going to experience. In these exhibition guides that we make, the idea is that you are taken by the hand and welcomed, then you are given some coordinates that will let you navigate by yourself.

In the exhibition guide I read the following:

> 'He directs his attention to marginalized communities, who, against the odds, use the means at their disposal to make a place for themselves. Each situation that Bourouissa focuses on demands a different artistic approach, dialogue, and ethical negotiation. […] His artistic practice questions how it's possible to make images as part of, and from within these communities that reveal how they are fixed (sometimes violently) within hierarchies of value dictated by capitalism and colonial history. The tension inherent to this project is palpable, given the role image-making plays in processes of classification and policing.'[4]

This is quite generic, but at the same time, I'm given some helpful hints on the overarching topics that Bourouissa deals with. But what about Bourouissa himself? How does he relate to the distinction between street and gallery?

The text argues that Bourouissa claims no emancipatory role for his artistic practice, even though, in his works, he talks about hierarchies and positions of power, inside and outside, centre and periphery. I wonder how he relates to the fact that his subjects ultimately end up on a gallery wall. Has he said anything about these power dynamics, and have they been discussed while installing the exhibition? Returning to the exhibition guide, I read about differences between his earlier and later works: 'His early work has often centered on the lives of young people of the Parisian suburbs, whose futures have been compromised, and whose backgrounds run against the rigid nationalism of the French Republique [sic]. Later his scope has globalized, finding subjects in Australia and the US, creating works from these encounters that reveal systems of power and routes of exchange.'[5]

The method he has used several times relies on interaction. With Horse Day, *for example, he had a completely different idea for a work, I think, but then he stumbled upon a photo book of black people on horses by an American photographer. He had never thought about black people being cowboys, and he just thought the whole picture was so wild because it disturbs one's common image of who rides horses – one would think of characters such as a John Wayne or the Marlboro Man. Mohamed said he took that book and thought 'What?', because it is precisely what his practice is about. It's about representation and who you see and in what way. Many of Mohamed's works deal with issues of representation; the way black boys often are the troublemakers, both in the news and in films.*

He then went to that area of North Philadelphia with the plan to make a black cowboy movie, but of course it became something completely different, and he ended up staying there for nine months. He became part of that community and, through that, he was able to document and make this video project called Horse Day. *This method can be found in several of his works; he gets involved with those he works*

with, becomes embedded. This is a strength in his work, that he really involves himself in the material and resources he researches and does not just remain on the outside as an observer.

I watched the film *Horse Day* four times in a row. Sitting on the carpet on the floor, doing both deep listening and slow watching, the scenes and the music really touched me. It now dawns on me how little time I usually devote to a work in an exhibition, and how much disappears in the quick approach that usually constitutes an exhibition visit. I revisit the Virginia Woolf essay and find the following quote very appropriate when it comes to how I experienced the exhibition in a more devoted state of mind:

'But if you open your mind as widely as possible, then signs and hints of almost imperceptible fineness, from the twist and turn of the first sentences, will bring you into the presence of a human being unlike any other. Steep yourself in this, acquaint yourself with this, and soon you will find that your author is giving you, or attempting to give you, something far more definite.'[6]

[1] Virgina Woolf, *How Should One Read a Book?* (1925, reis., London: Renard Press, 2021), 7.

[2] Woolf, *How Should One Read?*, 9.

[3] Henriette Bretton-Meyer and Natasha Hoare, *Mohammed Bourouissa: HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* (Copenhagen: Kunsthall Charlottenborg, 2021), 12. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/KC-Mohamed-Bouroussia-guide.pdf

[4] Bretton-Meyer and Hoare, *Mohammed Bourouissa*, 3.

[5] Bretton-Meyer and Hoare, *Mohammed Bourouissa*, 3.

[6] Woolf, *How Should One Read?*, 9-10.

Beyond Blackness and Migration:
A Reflection on Mohamed Bourouissa's *Horse Day*

Itzel Esquivel

What is lost when discussing an artist's work if one excludes viewpoints on gender or class? Accompanied by the diverse voices present in this and other texts that have accompanied my thinking, I want to reflect on the interwoven struggles related to structural colonial norms such as whiteness, borders, capitalism, and patriarchy, as well as on how privileges are shaped by things such as class, nationality, race, and gender.

I also want to investigate how privileges are performed, using as a starting point the two-channel video work *Horse Day* by Mohamed Bourouissa, which was displayed in the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* at Kunsthal Charlottenborg. Ultimately, I want to consider how cultural practitioners can advocate for and contribute to knowledge formation from a counter-hegemonic, non-heteronormative, and decolonial perspective.

Black feminists are among those who have pointed out these interwoven issues and have used intersectionality as a way of thinking about and addressing systemic matters such as the problematic fact of being suppressed for several centuries by males and white females. The artist and writer Grada Kilomba,[1] for instance, would add that a black woman is the *Other's Other* constructed from the male gaze: '[…] the Black subject becomes not only the 'Other' – the difference against which the *white* 'self' is measured – but also 'Otherness' – the personification of the repressed aspects of the *white* 'self'. In other words, we become the mental representation of what the *white* subject does not want to be like.'[2]

In her book *Lugar de enunciación* (Place of Speech) the Brazilian philosopher Djamila Ribeiro, reflecting on the thinking of Linda Alcoff,[3] highlights not only this situation, but also the role of colonialism and the institutionalization of hegemonic practices. This she does when writing that 'the main objective when confronting the norm is not only to talk about identities, but to reveal the use that institutions make of identities to oppress or privilege'.[4]

I find it interesting to investigate structures created for 'supporting' migrants to assimilate into their new country and context. I think specifically of institutions that strongly suggest knowledge – situated knowledge. If I focus on the 'assimilatory journey' for migrants in the context of Norway, where I live, and address the challenges related to learning a language such as Norwegian, then learning something new is truly but one of many challenges; it is also, following Ribeiro's line of thinking, important to reflect on each individual migrant's status as a starting point. While some migrants, for instance refugees and spouses of Norwegian citizens, have the right to attend obligatory Norwegian language classes for free, for others, it is an expensive obligation. Thus, every migrant status – refugee, expat, and other – has its own privileges, challenges and obligations.

I transport concerns about migration and assimilation processes such as these onto Mohamed Bourouissa's artistic practice. Bourouissa was born in 1978 in Algeria and now lives and works in France. His practice addresses the paradox of integration and exclusion processes related to migration and how this leads to re-shaping identities and subjectivities. His touring solo exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*[5] included works dealing with these notions as well as ideas about 'the charged legacies of colonialism, and contemporary realities of racial and socioeconomic inequality', as curator Henriette Bretton-Meyer writes in Kunsthal Charlottenborg's press release.[6]

From this exhibition, I was particularly interested in the piece *Horse Day*, a project developed over a period of eight months, in which Bourouissa met and interacted with inhabitants of Fletcher Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. They worked together to create a celebration day, Horse Day, which included an equestrian competition. Bourouissa's research evolved into a series of photographs, drawings, sculptures, the collaborative event, and a 13:32 minute video diptych called *Horse Day* (2021). The video diptych shows

the preparation for this one-day event as well as some of the context and experiences of the black cowboy community in Philadelphia. Curiously, however, viewers only see black male riders. There is a short sequence of a woman grooming a horse. Otherwise, women or persons who perform femininity are restricted to the audience.

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Horse Day*, 2015. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

Inspired by the work of the American photographer Martha Camarillo in her book *Fletcher Street*, Bourouissa travelled to Philadelphia in 2014 as part of an artist residency. His aim was to learn more about the Fletcher Street Urban Riding Club, a non-profit organization whose mission is 'healing individuals and community through equine experience'[7] and to teach discipline and commitment using riding as a

method, and to offer an alternative leisure activity to inner-city youth.

Horse Day intends to offer a more inclusive version of the figure of the cowboy than the one created by Hollywood. According to Bourouissa, '*Horse Day* borrows the classic codes of the westerns only to better deconstruct them and reveal the great diversity of American equestrian culture, [which was] deliberately reduced to its white participants through the invention of the myth of the conquest of the West'.[8]

These last sentences aroused my curiosity and led me to look into Bourouissa's urge to reflect on the potential of deconstruction. In a video interview produced by Louisiana Channel, Bourouissa says he wonders about the possibilities to *deconstruct* himself as an immigrant, what it means to be male, and the relation to other power structures such as the police or the wider society.[9] The reflection on stereotypes of masculinity, the periphery, and being a migrant are all present in the works in the exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg.

While these reflections are premised on the notion of the deconstruction of identity created and shaped by nation-states, and while they are crucial for imagining alternative ways to coexist in 'a world where many worlds can fit',[10] they also highlight the power structures concentrated in nation-states that decide who is an immigrant, who is a refugee, who is an expat, and so on. As accurately pointed out by the Nigerian-Finnish and Swedish writer and lecturer Minna Salami, these structures are based on 'Europatriarchal' knowledge and norms that have considerable consequences:[11] 'If our approach to knowledge production is patriarchal, then ultimately everything we know and everything we do as a result of what we know will be patriarchal too. If knowledge production is systemically anti-woman, then those values will shape everything from our intimate relations to our social structure.'[12]

If Bourouissa reflects on displacement, migration policies, and masculinity, it is also important to highlight that he, following Salami's thinking, does so from an anthropocentric and particularly male-centred perspective, and is therefore likely to be falling into the trap of patriarchy.

How is this so? Well, when talking about masculinity, *other* bodies are automatically excluded, as if masculinity were not part of those bodies, or as if those bodies were not affected by it. This leads me to think about the invisibility of the role of women within capitalist practices, which is a point raised by the Italian-American writer and thinker Silvia Federici, when she talks about Karl Marx's omission, in his book *Das Kapital*, of unpaid domestic labour and the notion of the uterus as a creator of human beings who will be part of the labour force in the future. Women are 'producers and re-producers of the most essential capitalist commodity: labor power'.[13] Federicci also questions the lack of inclusiveness by pointing to another male-centred perspective, now within Michel Foucault's thinking: 'Foucault's analysis of the power techniques and disciplines to which the body has been subjected has ignored the process of reproduction, has collapsed female and male histories into an undifferentiated whole, and has been so disinterested in the "disciplining" of women that it never mentions one of the most monstrous attacks on the body perpetrated in the modern era: the witch-hunt.'[14]

I will go one step further, beyond heteronormativity and Europatriarchy. I do so because I deeply believe that the struggle now is not only to include women or female bodies in the public discourse, but to be as open as the '+' in the LGBTQI2S+,[15] and to think from a non-heteronormative perspective. It is exactly from this perspective that the possibilities to think and reflect on masculinity expand among different minority groups, thus opening up a space with the potential to create anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive practices and ways of thinking.[16] Equally

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Horse Day*, 2015. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Goldsmiths CCA, 2021.

important is for those who perform masculinity to start reflecting on their performance of it.

Paul B. Preciado's *An Apartment on Uranus* (2020) is a useful reference at this point, for it reflects that sex change and migration are both crossing/crossover practices that push the notions of citizenship and humanity to the limits and challenge the political and juridical architecture of patriarchal colonialism. Furthermore, thinking beyond the geographic, linguistic, and corporal displacement involved, a characteristic of both journeys (migration and sex change) is the radical transformation, not only of the persons who travel, but also of the society that receives them or rejects them.[17]

Taking all of the above into account, I wonder if the lack of representation of bodies *other* than male or male-presenting ones, in general but specifically in Bourouissa's *Horse Day*, reinforces the Europatriarcal notion of masculinity instead of deconstructing it. I think the first step is taken when Bourouissa attempts to put the spotlight on the black cowboys of Fletcher Street in order to challenge the notion of the white cowboy that has been created mostly in cinema and especially in Hollywood. But as Bourouissa points out,

'in reality, the history of the conquest of the American West teems with people from all walks of life, including Blacks, Mexicans, and Native Americans'.[18] Therefore, looking at the work *Horse Day*, I wonder if the focus on ethnicity is the limit, or if that is enough. What is lost when discussing an artist's work if one excludes viewpoints on gender or class? Which privileges are worth including, skipping, or ignoring?

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Horse Day*, 2015. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Goldsmiths CCA, 2021.

The important role that an institution plays when hosting political artworks should not be neglected. How crucial it is, then, that curators and cultural workers within the institution – because the artwork that is the focus of attention for this text was exhibited in an institution – can expand the reflection from the artist through discursive programmes around the exhibition, publication, mediation, and educational initiatives? There is an intersection of privileges at play. I think reflections like these emerge when there is diversity in the team members of institutions; some members can raise issues that are unperceived by other members due to the latter's privileges. More importantly, however,

the scope of reflection expands when there is an openness amongst the team members to discuss such topics.

In a TED talk titled 'The Danger of a Single Story', the novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie explores the danger of the creation and repetition of a community's narrative through the other's gaze, creating stereotypes. She argues that the 'problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete, they let that one story become the only story [...] the consequence of the single story is this: It robs people of dignity, it makes our recognition of equal humanity difficult, it emphasizes how we are different, rather than how we are similar'.[19]

What I am suggesting here – and I would argue that it is also suggested by Bourouissa – is that reflecting on an *image* also involves reflecting on the dialectic of it and its appearance and re-appearance at different moments, all according to what the image's anachronic potentiality allows. What I mean is that it is impossible to think about the image of the white cowboy without thinking of the image of the black cowboy that Bourouissa offers. Allow me to clarify where I am going with this. First of all, the term 'cowboy' comes from the translation of the Spanish word *vaquero*, which refers to a person who worked with cows (*vacas*) and cattle raising in the north of Mexico in the early 1800s, when Texas was part of Mexican territory. Since indigenous communities represented the majority of the population in these areas at the time, Mexico invited other citizens and foreigners to inhabit these lands as part of the 'Colonization Law'.[20] Even though Mexico opposed the slave trade, people from the US disregarded this position and brought slaves into Texas to work on the cattle ranches. While white workers were called 'cowhands', black workers were pejoratively called 'cowboys' or 'black cowhands'.[21]

Here is where I would like to elaborate further on the premise that Bourouissa, while reflecting on displacement, migration policies, and masculinity, does so from an anthropocentric

and particularly male-centred perspective: there are plenty of examples of people *other* than male or male-presenting, who are part of *his*tory, not least thanks to the traces that some researchers with other perspectives have picked up, such as Native Americans,[22] First Nations persons and other cowpersons.

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Horse Day*, 2015. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!,* Goldsmiths CCA, 2021.

If Bourouissa were to challenge his own privileges and dislocate his male perspective by including these communities into his discourse around blackness and migration, then, I argue, he would need to acknowledge that the violent separation caused by borders and political divisions that continues today could do with further unpacking. While Bourouissa looks into the tension between race and representation, he challenges the *image* of the white cowboy, and by challenging it also creates alternative subjectivities. It is precisely this point that suggests that the *image* appears as an aesthetic and political movement which allows the possibility of formulating an innovative way of thinking about alternative subjectivites.

It would be very interesting, for instance, to hear from the cowperson communities in different geographies and with alternative identities. This is because, as far I can see, the cowboy as a figure has been shaped from a male perspective. When patriarchy is the gatekeeper, then the struggle and division of women, Native Americans, LGBTQI2S+, and many others, deepens, not to mention the high risks involved when one is a dissident of those Europatriarcal norms.

1 ICI Berlin, 'Grada Kilomba', accessed May 2022. https://www.ici-berlin.org/people/kilomba/

2 Grada Kilomba, Plantation Memories. Episodes of Everyday Racism (Münster: UNRAST-Verlag, 2010, 2nd Edition), 19.

3 For information on Alcoff, see Hunter College, 'Linda M. Alcoff', accessed May 2022. https://www.hunter.cuny.edu/philosophy/faculty/alcoff-1

4 Ribero, *Lugar de Enunciación*, 41. My translation. Original 'El objetivo principal al confrontar la norma no es solo hablar de identidades, sino develar el uso que las instituciones hacen de las identidades para oprimir o privilegiar.'

5 The exhibition was first shown at Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art (CCA), London (21 May–1 August, 2021). I saw the work in the iteration at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen (October 2021–February 2022), curated by Henriette Bretton-Meyer.

6 Henriette Bretton-Meyer, 'Mohamed Bourouissa at Kunsthal Charlottenborg', *Artforum*, 23 August 2021, accessed May 2022. https://www.artforum.com/uploads/guide.006/id00695/press_release.pdf

7 http://fsurc.com/

8 Mohamed Bourouissa, 'Project, Horse Day', mohammedbourouissa.com, accessed April 2022. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/horse-day/#horsetuningexpo

9 Mohamed Bourouissa, 'I'm not a political artist. But it is political', *Louisiana Channel*, accessed April 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k_z2B8DfWw

10 My translation of the Spanish phrase 'Un mundo donde quepan muchos mundos' by Ejército Zapatista Liberación Nacional, EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation].

11 As Salami argues, 'Europatriarchal Knowledge is rooted in the idea that knowledge is something to acquire, own and possess, and subsequently that quanitification [sic] and the deductive method are the only worthy ways of knowing. I think this takes away the humanity of knowledge. It creates systems that are measurement and hierarchy obsessed.' Andy West, 'Sensuous Knowledge: A Conversation with Minna Salami', 3:AM Magazine, 1 April 2020, accessed April 2022. https://www.3ammagazine.com/3am/sensuous-knowledge-a-conversation-with-minna-salami/

12 Minna Salami, *Sensuous Knowledge: A Black Feminist Approach for Everyone* (London: Zed Books, 2020), 110.

13 Silvia Feredicci, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (Brooklyn, NY: Autonomedia, 2004), Kindle edition, upag., [16].

14 Feredicci, Caliban and the Witch, upag., [17]. My translation. Original: el análisis de Foucault sobre las técnicas de poder y las disciplinas a las que el cuerpo se ha sujetado ignora el proceso de reproducción, funde las historias femenina y masculina en un todo indiferenciado y se desinteresa por el «disciplinamiento» de las mujeres, hasta tal punto que nunca menciona uno de los ataques más monstruosos contra el cuerpo que haya sido perpetrado en la era moderna: la caza de brujas.

15 Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender (or transsexual), questioning (or queer), intersex, two-spirited. More information about two spirited on: https://www.theguardian.com/music/2010/oct/11/two-spirit-people-north-america, and https://www.bbc.com/mundo/vert-tra-46374110

16 This underlines the importance of a transfeminist approach, in which it is important to see 'trans' as a prefix indicating movement and transition among different groups.

17 Paul B. Preciado with Brigitte Baptiste, 'Manifiesto contrasexual', *Parque Explora*, 22 January 2021, YouTube video, 58:52, accessed 23 March 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mAbqQo918uc&t=1785s

18 Mohamed Bourouissa, 'Project, Horse Day', accessed April 2022. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/horse-day/#horsetuningexpo

19 Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, 'The Danger of a Single Story', *TED*, accessed May 2022. https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story

20 See Jan de Vos, 'Una Legislación de Graves Consecuencias. El Acaparamiento de Tierras Baldías En México, Con El Pretexto de Colonización, 1821 –1910', *Historia Mexicana*, 34, no. 1 (1984): 76–113. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25135874

21 When the US offered to buy Texas and other territories that formed the north of Mexico, the Mexican government rejected it. The US government then decided to invade Mexican territory to take the land it wanted. Mexico had barely gained independence from Spain, therefore found it almost impossible to fight another war.

22 I am aware that 'Native Americans' is also a way of generalizing communities, and that it would be better to refer with the name of the specific community. However, by acknowledging this, I intend to avoid misunderstandings. Examples of researchers: Wanda Nanibush, Candice Hopkings, Pablo José Ramírez, Liisa-Rávná Finbog, Yásnaya Elena Aguilar Gil, Aura Cumes.

Re-enactment, Appropriation, and Ethics:
On Mohamed Bourouissa's Photographs

Flóra Gadó

In the film *The Story of Looking* (2021), made by Mark Cousins before he underwent eye surgery, Cousins talks about how he sees the world and what looking means to him: how reality is changed when it is captured by a camera, how a documentary photo or film can play with fiction in the pursuit of an 'ideal' version of reality otherwise impossible to portray. Like Cousins, the artist Mohamed Bourouissa is not only interested in our various gazes and viewpoints, but also in how the photographic apparatus can change our perception and what it means to invite participants into the process of visually capturing something. By working with found photos and often appropriating photos shot by others, Bourouissa's practice not only raises ethical questions but also makes me wonder whether it is possible to distinguish between so-called amateur and professional photography.

Bourouissa's solo exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg can be considered a retrospective. It presents works from the past 15 years and manages to highlight the various interests and approaches the artist has pursued since the early 2000s. However, what I find to be the most interesting aspect of the exhibition is the artist's use of photography and film as media. I therefore find it worth examining how Bourouissa experiments with and deconstructs certain image-making practices and turns from being a solitary documentary photographer into an artist who collaborates with others. How these collaborations are presented and whether his collaborators are regarded as co-authors were questions that emerged when I started to think about the photographic series and videos in the exhibition. In the works, there is a conscious reflection on art history and contemporary photographic practices, as well as an urge to dismantle certain hierarchies related to 'high' culture that are deeply rooted in the artworld. Bourouissa uses different strategies to question, criticize, and deconstruct traditional Western art-historical image-making tendencies, but while he tries to move towards a more collaborative approach in creating his works, certain ethical dilemmas arise.

One of the artist's most well-known series, *Périphéries* (2005–08), refers to the *banlieues* of Paris, that is, the suburbs in the area outside the Périphérique, the circular motorway dividing central Paris from its outskirts. As is stated in the exhibition guide written by Henriette Bretton-Meyer (curator of the exhibition) and Natasha Hoare, Bourouissa had a clear intention with this series: he wanted to dismantle the stereotypical and distorted images presented by the mainstream media about the protest in 2005, which started because the police did not prevent the death of two young men from a banlieue. Photos in mass media of the demonstrations in Paris showed angry teenagers and youngsters on the streets; they did not focus on the origin of the problem – police violence – but presented a stereotypical and narrow image of the community concerned. In the photos by the artist, we do not see the riots themselves, but the in-between moments, the everyday life of that community, with which the artist shares several characteristics, including his immigrant background. Bourouissa's photos also depict the community members' moments of bonding, at the same time as these people are filled with tension and uncertainty about the future and the everyday aggression they face. In a way, Bourouissa has created a series of counter-images about people rebelling against the system; he is interested in those who are really part of the events and who are often portrayed as a homogeneous crowd. Through this series, he gives a face and an identity to his community by using strategies of restaging and re-enactment.

Re-enactment in an artistic sense is intriguing. It is generally used for celebrating historical battles, but when used as an artistic strategy, it often critically questions and re-engages with past events.[1] Re-enactment is also a method used in documentary filmmaking and photography, and it involves repeating a scene in front of a camera, as we see in such films as Errol Morris's *The Thin Blue Line* or Werner Herzog's *Little Dieter Needs to Fly*.[2] In *Périphéries*, the viewer encounters photos that seem both staged and spontaneous,

impressions derived from the fact that the people depicted actually re-staged some things they had already done. Here Bourouissa plays with the distinction between photos taken 'in the moment' and images that have a certain 'rigidity' and which seem to be directed by the artist. I found it difficult to understand how the images had been created; I saw them as both spontaneous and staged at the same time. This ambiguity, however, might have been intended by the artist. In the process of capturing these re-enactments, Bourouissa – as mentioned in the guide – discussed with the participants how and what they would like to re-stage, and he worked with them to present images that the community found acceptable as depictions of themselves.

In this exhibition, the curator and the artist seem to prefer to focus more on the visual output than on the artistic process. But when an artist's process is as important as the output, a dilemma often arises as to how that process can be presented to the audience. I for one would have liked to learn more about Bourouissa's process of collaboration beyond or prior to the final stage of the photographs presented. Maybe there could have been a more substantial mediation display of interview excerpts with the artist, more documentation, or a presentation of some preliminary sketches and drafts.

While researching re-enactment and reconstructive practices in contemporary photography, it was intriguing to discover that many photos in Bourrouissa's series draw inspiration from famous allegorical paintings from the nineteenth century. One can notice how they mimic the paintings' compositions, figures, colours, and storytelling aspects. While this mimicking was a common academic, and nationalist tendency throughout Western art history (prior to the 'isms' that appeared in the late 1880s, and which defied academism), Bourouissa's re-stagings challenge that tradition, not only by transferring the compositions, colours, and so forth to a different time period, but by presenting a community that is often not considered as a symbol of French resistance.

One specific work, *La République* (2006), draws inspiration from a canonical piece – Eugène Delacroix's *Liberty Leading the People* (1830). Bourouissa, however, did not directly re-enact the painting as a tableau vivant – an ironic strategy quite prevalent in contemporary photography, from Cindy Sherman to Instagram profiles. In such cases, the emphasis is more on the transition from one medium to another, on how the medium changes the image's content, and how the new or revised content can situate the image in our present times.

Bourouissa's version of Delacroix's painting is much darker. Set in the present, in 2005–08 in the banlieues of Paris, I did not sense in it the glorious aspect of remembrance but a more realistic approach to what freedom could mean. This photo is not a simplistic re-creation of the original painting; the flag in the photo, for example, is not raised triumphantly but is lowered and seems fragile. And even though certain elements of the painting reappear, the iconic figure of the woman who represents Liberty is gone. Throughout the exhibition, I could not help but notice the absence of women in the communities depicted. Even though the artist is seemingly interested in challenging a white male perspective, his perspective is still very heteronormative and macho, lacking more diverse gender representations.

Whereas Delacroix's painting refers to the July Revolution in 1830, showing the fight on the barricades that defeated Charles X, Bourouissa's version does not show a clear moment of triumph but rather a confused crowd. It is unclear who is fighting whom and whether anyone could win at all. In this re-staging, the notion of a homogenic nation-state shifts towards a more inclusive and wider perspective of France, bringing in topics such as migration and marginalization as well as hinting at the existing xenophobia amongst the French population. The flag's uncertain status reminds me that the people depicted in the series are still not considered French citizens by certain nationalistic and far-right politicians and groups. The glorious depiction of

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Périphéries*, 2005–2008. Installation view,
HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Le miroir*, 2006.

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Shoplifters*, 2014. Installation view,
HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

Freedom, which in Delacroix's painting has a connection to the establishment of the nation-state, is challenged in Bourouissa's iteration and shows how our understandings of notions like freedom and the nation-state have changed in the past decade.

Bourouissa also openly references other photographers in his works. While making the film *Horse Day* (2015), he lived for several months in the United States. In this case, he was inspired by the photographs of Martha Camarillo, an artist who took pictures of urban horsemen in North Philadelphia in the early 2000s. In a way, Bourouissa's film can be seen as making these photos come 'alive'. But he wanted to do more than document the community of black cowboys; he also organized an event, Horse Day, in which participants could compete with each other in order to figure out who the 'best horseman' was. They were paired up with local artists who helped design 'costumes' for the horses. Watching the film, the event initially seemed to me like some kind of traditional competition, so without reading the exhibition guide, it was unclear that the event was the artist's idea. In actual fact, the whole event was proposed by the artist, and it is presented as something that helped create a bond within the community. The artist came up with something which *could* have been the idea of the people in the community, so maybe that is why the film looked like the documentation of an existing event. Will this festival remain part of the community's celebrations, and could it slowly change from an artist's project to a real tradition? The event is a fascinating example of how something that never existed before could become the everyday reality of a group.

Meanwhile, the viewer is introduced to the black cowboys, who are important to Bourouissa because they constantly deconstruct the typical American image of the white (male, straight) cowboy usually seen in the Western film genre. Bourouissa's film can be seen as an ironic twist on this genre: here the horsemen are playful, casual, and proud, but they

reject the typical 'macho style' we associate with cowboys. The film does not really have a plot or narrative. Observing the competition, I was carried away by the rhythm of the horse riding and the powerful soundtrack.

As we know from the exhibition guide, the artist collaborated with the community to organize Horse Day and to make the costumes for the horses, but the depiction of the collaboration is not really part of the final film. As I mentioned before, it is always difficult to incorporate the process of collaboration in the final work, but here as well, it would have been interesting to see some glimpses of the way the artist worked together with the community of black cowboys in North Philadelphia, people who are probably not so well-known to an average exhibition goer. How did the residency programme that Bourouissa participated in help him create connections with these people, and what where his methods for doing so? The parts of the film where these collaborations are more nuanced are the clips showing the horsemen and the local artists discussing together as they design the costumes for the horses. It was interesting for me to observe how art making became an everyday activity; the local community connected with the local artists for the first time and engaged in a meaningful working process. Art became a tool or a device to link people together. They focused on a shared interest and something with a clear goal.

Bourouissa also references 'amateur' photographers in some of his works. This is clearly demonstrated in the series *Shoplifters* (2014), which focuses on the life circumstances of financially disenfranchised people in New York City. In this series, ethical challenges come to the fore. Bourouissa found some Polaroid photos in a supermarket in Brooklyn: they depicted shoplifters the manager had caught in the act and subsequently photographed. The Polaroids were intended to scare off other customers with such intentions, but I find that they cross the line of ethical representation of persons, especially in light of today's perspectives on surveillance
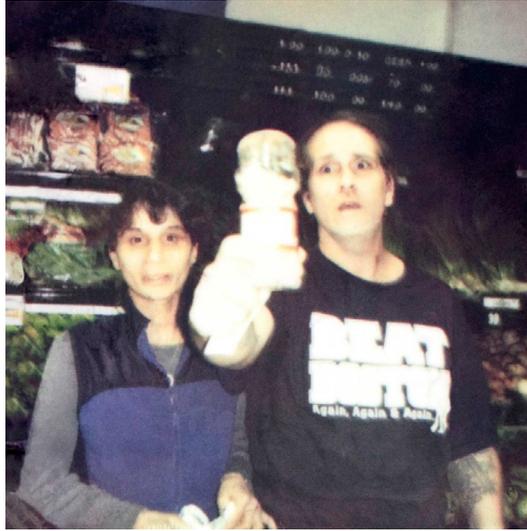
Mohamed Bourouissa,
Unknown #16, 2014–2015.

Mohamed Bourouissa,
Unknown #18, 2014–2015.

Mohamed Bourouissa,
Unknown #17, 2014–2015.

and data mining. The shop owner allegedly made a 'deal' with the shoplifters, telling them that in exchange for being allowed to take the photos, he would not call the police. Even so, there is a distinction between keeping the photos and directly presenting them in the shop. The shop owner thus became the first photographer in this project.

For the series in the exhibition, the artist re-photographed the already fading, low-quality Polaroids and presented them framed and hanging on a fence-like installation. The artist asked permission from the shop owner, but as the exhibition guide says, he was hesitant to present them to a wider audience. The series highlights ethical dilemmas about image-making and representation. I ask myself: Is it ethical, as an artist, to further contribute to the dehumanizing and criminalizing process of documenting shoplifters who often come from difficult backgrounds and circumstances?

The artist's method for making the photos in *Shoplifters* also challenges the notion of originality because it does not matter anymore what the original image is or what came first. Several questions started to run through my mind: Whose photos are these ultimately? Can we see this 'only' as a gesture of appropriation, of re-photographing already-existing photos, and by removing them from their original context, also state that the responsibility of taking the photos in the first place lies with the shop owner? How does the status of these photos change once they are presented as Bourouissa's artwork to a predominantly white, middle-class audience in a traditionally prestigious Western art institution? Do the artist and the shop owner share responsibility when these photos are displayed in an art institution, or does all the responsibility lie solely with the artist? And how much should the curator interfere in this dilemma? I would argue that in the case of a solo exhibition, where there is strong collaboration between the artist and the curator, it is also the responsibility of the curator(s) – for he or she or they inherit the ethics of the artist in a way – not only to discuss

this, but to present the dilemma in an articulate way to the audience. When thinking about the exhibition, I could see it both ways: the gesture of the artist (and the curator) is to appropriate and present the photos as de-criminalizations of these people, but also to take advantage of them due to their marginalized position, and, in a way, transmit the ethical dilemma to the audience.

In these atypical portraits, one can see that the persons mostly stole food and daily necessities. This highlights the difficult living conditions they face and that the act of stealing may have been provoked by need and despair. Bourouissa had to digitally restore these photos in order to make them less obscure and faded, and this gesture could also reflect on the process of giving identity to these people. On the other hand, the installation of the works, using a fence-like structure that triggers (at least for me) thoughts of a prison, can possibly undermine the whole endeavour. The re-contextualizing and re-photographing of the original photos causes me to ask a question: Is this series simply about appropriation and using 'found footage', or is Bourouissa, by further presenting the photos, silently reinforcing the circumstances under which they were taken? It is a difficult question to answer, especially since Bourouissa (maybe unconsciously) makes the shop owner a co-author, someone with whom he shares authorship and responsibility. And even though the artist is, in a way, honest with us as viewers by naming the event and precisely telling us where the photos come from, in the end he is the one who receives the 'glory'.

One of his early films, *Temps Mort* (2009), has an intimate style that makes it the most captivating for me. To make it, Bourouissa took recourse in a strategy also used in *Horse Day* and *Shoplifters*, namely, to combine his own photos with images made by 'non-professionals'. The starting point for this early piece was a conversation Bourouissa had with an incarcerated friend, Al, who sent photos to the artist from his smartphone. These images documented Al's life at the

Mohamed Bourouissa, *Temps mort, sans titre #20*, 2008.
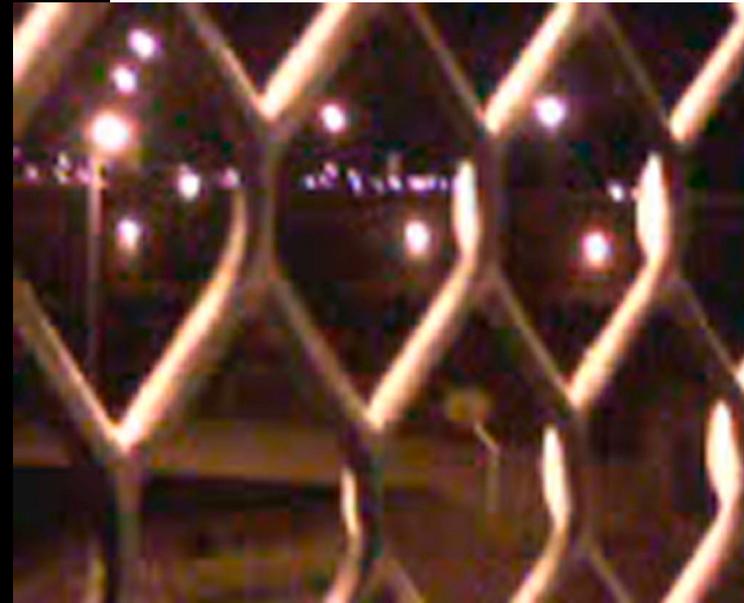
Mohamed Bourouissa, T*emps mort, sans titre #21*, 2008.

prison, and Bourouissa found them so intriguing that he got in touch with another inmate in a remand centre (a jail for people awaiting trial or sentencing) and started a collaborative project with him. What we can see in the video is a montage of text-message exchanges, still photos, and short videos the man sent to the artist in exchange for phone credit vouchers and some images by Bourouissa.

The film has a particular aesthetic character. In light of our digital lives, it was interesting for me to experience the use of communication channels before smartphones became prevalent, for example, early SMS messages and photos taken with old mobile phones. A focus on the materiality of the medium is also present in many of the artist's other projects; he is not only interested in the circulation of images and the different sources and resources one can use but also the materiality of the images. This was also clear in the way the exhibition showed *Temps Mort* on an old Hantarex television monitor.

In the film, a delicate conversation unfolds. At first the two persons mostly talk about practicalities, and I often sense some kind of discomfort or misunderstanding from the inmate's side. As their relationship develops, they exchange more and more personal and intimate messages, and the film becomes even more relatable. It is possible to see inside the prison, the small private space the man lives in, and to understand his dreams and wishes. These scenes are filled with a tension that arises from the contrast between life inside prison and life outside, an aspect which has an even greater relevance for me in 2022, after two years of the Covid-19 pandemic and the isolation and social withdrawal which many people, myself included, have experienced.

Bourouissa not only plays with the tradition of incorporating amateur, private footage into his film but also makes most of the film out of these images. As such, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the photos sent by the man living in

the remand centre and the photos sent by the artist. Even though their lives are so different, the grainy and blurry images on the television monitor connect them and create one larger narrative. The work can be discussed in the context of participatory filmmaking, a situation in which an artist gives someone a camera in order to document their life as they themselves want, to show their perspective and thus make visible often hidden nuances and aspects of an 'ordinary' life. This is especially important when it comes to marginalized people such as prison inmates whose lives are often not treated as valuable. *Temps Mort* presents the artist's collaborative practice in a way that differs from what can be seen in his other works because it shows the collaborative aspect of the image-making process. The work is nevertheless credited to the artist, which means that the idea of co-authorship, which I presented before, might be challenged. Who is the real 'author' of the film? Or is it not necessary to talk about this anymore? First the inmate follows Bourouissa's quite straightforward instructions, but as time passes, he becomes increasingly 'free' in terms of how he wants to document his life. This way the artist starts to lose control, which makes the film more interesting: we sometimes experience their arguments or conflicts through the exchange. In these participatory filmmaking processes, the control and agency probably always shift back and forth, and Bourouissa's video clearly shows how the different roles can mix and intertwine with each other.

I would still ask questions similar to what I asked regarding *Shoplifters*: Is the artist's gesture of sharing authorship emancipatory? Does it give tools to people so they can represent themselves, or does it merely become a single-artist-credited work shown in a prestigious institution where the participant of the project would never be able to go? I would say that this ambiguity is both the strongest and the weakest aspect in this and other works by Bourouissa. On one hand, they create a certain kind of tension, a blur between different genres, tendencies, and strategies related to appropriation,

reality, and fiction. But on the other hand, I often miss the open discussions he had with his partners about the process and the collaboration. Without access to these discussions, there is the danger of seeing the artist as taking advantage of the subject matter and the persons involved. I am not saying that Bourouissa did not reflect on this while creating the works, but examining his artistic practice from a curator's position, the discussions with his collaborators certainly could have been strengthened and more clearly articulated. I would have been interested to learn more about the process of collaboration, for example in *Horse Day* or *Temps Mort,* and to learn about the participants' communication with the artist. Despite all these questions, I would argue that several series by Bourouissa successfully rewrite the binary division between so-called 'amateur' and professional photography, first, by blurring the boundaries between these two fields, and second, by using art-historical references in a creative way. This was refreshing to see, even though the exhibition fails to discuss the process of collaborations and certain ethical concerns.

[1] Inke Arns, 'History Will Repeat Itself: Strategies of Re-enactment in Contemporary (Media) Art and Performance', in *History Will Repeat Itself*, eds. Inke Arns and Gaby Horn for Hartware MedienKunst Verein and KW Institute for Contemporary Art (Frankfurt am Main: Revolver, 2007), 37–63.

[2] Bill Nichols, 'Documentary Reenactment and the Fantasmatic Subject', *Critical Inquiry* 35, no. 1 (2008): 72–89.

Mohamed Bourouissa, *La République*, 2006.

Inversion: Reflections on Mohamed Bourouissa's Exhibition *HARa!!!!hAaaRAAAA!!!!HAaa!!!*

Stéphane Kabila

In the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, which I visited in February 2022 at Kunsthal Charlottenborg in Copenhagen, the works by the artist Mohamed Bourouissa open a world of multiple exclusions, margins, gaps, and suburbs in the daily lives of his subjects, in response to the spectacular images of violence that mainstream media in general produce. In this text, I intend to reread the notion of 'the periphery' as a consequence of a long historical story of centralization told from a specific viewpoint – that of domination. This domination is embedded in the capitalist system that carries with it the perfume of slavery in a post-colonial world, and it manifests itself in multiple peripheries.

In his book *Congo Inc.: Bismarck's Testament* (2018, published in French in 2014), the Congolese writer In Koli Jean Bofane describes the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) as a colonial project that has left the scent of colonialism's strange fruit and the stigma of violence in collective memory. The French edition's cover is well illustrated by Kiripi Katembo, a photographer and filmmaker from the DRC to whom I pay homage. In the cover image, which is from the photographic series *Un regard* (2009), Kiripi poetically depicts the daily life of Kinshasa's inhabitants as well as the DRC's unstable political and economic context. Those realities are similar to what is found many places in the world.

Like Bourouissa, Katembo and Bofane open the possibility of amplifying the small stories of life by turning them into a metanarrative of historical reversal. In *Mathématiques congolaise* (2008), another novel by Bofane, the character of Celio introduces me to the so-called marginal neighbourhoods of certain parts of Kinshasa, places where survival – the struggle merely to 'get by' in a system called Article 15 – is a daily occurrence. When reading Bofane's books, I felt as if he personally spoke to me, since I grew up in a commune, or *commune rouge* called Kenya, in the city of Lubumbashi. My particular DRC context is Katanga, a mining region rich in minerals but whose population lives below the poverty

line. The consequences of extracting raw materials have not had a positive impact on the local communities, not least because the communities are on the periphery of politicians' interests. At the centre of their field of interest are their relationships with the multinational companies oriented toward extracting raw materials. Tensions therefore arise between the needs of the local communities and the needs of the mining companies, and between the politicians' ideal and actual interests. It is worth mentioning that this situation is backgrounded by the specific case of the mining company La Générale des Carrières et des Mines (Gécamines), its problems with solvency, corruption, and the liberalization of the mining sector in the 2000s. Many mine workers are based in camps called *Komponi*, a linguistic appropriation of the Kiswahili label for the work camps that flourished in the colonial era. The song *Wa Mu Komponi*[1] ('Coming from Komponi'), by the singer and performing artist Sébastien Lumbwe (known as 'Infrapa'), summarizes in about four minutes the daily life of past generations in the Komponi from the point of view of children. The Komponi remain in collective memory as places of nostalgia, and although they are now becoming popular neighbourhoods, they remain existential peripheries.

In my view, Bourouissa turns the notion of the periphery on its head by using images of what is perceived to be on the periphery as the focus of his works. This is particularly apparent when one considers Bourouissa's biography. Living in one of the Parisian suburbs, the artist has experienced firsthand what it is like to be associated with where one lives, yet without opportunities or a voice, in a state of semi-living or mere survival. His living situation has also allowed him to see the struggle and resistance of communities that organize themselves in response to the failures of the dominant system when it tries to respond to ordinary events. Bourouissa chooses to work with images, sounds, and videos that carry the weight of intercommunity tensions.

In the history of the world, there have always been cases of exclusion determined simply by the will of a dominant elite on the basis of biological, socio-cultural, and socio-economic factors. Exclusion has also often led to the displacement of those people, causing them to live in geographically less-favoured places often perceived as marginal. But if the body is excluded and massacred, it can also be the main revolutionary and transforming agent. For the body is also a place of existence, and it needs to constitute itself as a palpable existence, which occurs through performativity, through the way this body appears to other bodies. Bourouissa proposes a challenging exercise: to recognize the performativity of identities even for the most diverse bodies. Such an exercise could produce possible languages of recognition that enable these different bodies to have a liveable human life.

The exhibition offers the audience a glimpse, a fleeting penetration, into the intimacy of neighbourhoods that offer almost no recreational activities. What they do offer is the notion of Otherness and a certain degree of the exoticism that is attributed to peripheral areas by the political system that produces them. The works in the photographic series *Périphérique* (2005–08) have titles that poetically list the situations which the photos capture and the issues they address: encounters between people, group life, moments of love, dead ends, tensions, imaginary circles, bites, hands, colours, outlets, a window, halls, a telephone.[2] Titles of other works are more descriptive, examples being *Hara* (2020)*, Horse Day* (2015), and *Brutal Family Roots* (2020). Bourouissa captures intercommunity tensions with a genius all his own. He opens spaces for dialogue, for breathing in these tensions. By means of an artistic device, he reconstructs settings and events in suburbs that are otherwise inaccessible to us as outsiders. He brings them to the centre of our gaze. Yet while fully immersed in the fictions he creates, he preserves a documentary aspect that causes the constructions to remain open to interpretation. In his works, especially his photographs, he uses simple yet powerful means that manage to capture the density of moments, tensions, confrontations, or what preceded them. He offers a raw realism, cold and without nuance, to highlight the images that emerge from the banality of a daily stigmatized life in the suburbs. But although rich in tension, the images are not sensationalist; they move from tension to normality with great gentleness. In some of his works, particularly *La République* (2006), Bourouissa allows us to imagine the symbolic borders which people in these marginalized contexts face.

The words used to designate the phenomenon of the peripheral as presented in the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAA-!!!!!hHAaA!!!* vary in name and in relation to the context in which peripherality is lived. Here, I want to consider further the peripheral phenomenon resituated as the centre, and to read it as a relativization of its perceived universality. In his *Poetics of Relation* (1997), the Martinican poet and theorist Edouard Glissant explores relational belonging as a decolonial poetic intervention.[3] Initially, his work was directed against the essentializing tendencies of the *négritude* movement, which was a response to the exclusion of black people from the domain of culture. Glissant's reading is a distortion of the position of the 'centre' in relation to itself and the peripheral. The displacement of positions results in the removal of not only symbolic, epistemological, existential, economic, political, and historical violence but also the consequences of the so-called grand narratives. These narratives are contained in history books written from the point of view of the dominant culture or system. But as the French philosopher René Girard argues, by shifting the gaze, the history may be read as a persecution text told from the point of view of the executioners.[4] These grand stories are how the dominant capitalist and consumerist system reproduces what Bourouissa denounces, and they are represented by the brands of clothes that most people wear in the *Périphérique* series and by the yellow-flowered Acacia in *Brutal Family Roots*. Such elements are symbolic tools for highlighting the small acts of violence in the system.

The interesting aspect is the way the exhibition shifts the perspective on current issues. Bourouissa's works have an effervescence that allows the periphery – so aggressively presented by mass media, as if it were less human – to try to make itself heard. The problem, however, is that the voice or point of view of the periphery is only heard when it moves to the centre. This is represented by Bourouissa, who identifies himself as coming from the periphery, and his achievement of presenting his works in the gallery context. I therefore cannot but reflect on the protagonists who live on the existential peripheries; their images are conveyed by the artist – this is the point of his artistic practice – and I would go so far as to say that they are the protagonists in his discourse. While negotiating the space of life, Bourouissa selects specific signs in order to create an experimental space where the public can engage with the works. In his installations, particularly in the video-installation *Horse Day*, he builds trajectories between the artwork and the members of a community and manipulates the space so that those on the periphery are situated in the centre.

In Bourouissa's construction of the network of meanings that multiple peripheries beget, questions of gender are neither central nor explicit. They nevertheless recurrently underlie the unequal performance of social roles and the valorization of the body. The people represented in the photographs are overwhelmingly male, asserting themselves through gestures, groupings, and postures; they constantly affirm themselves in front of their peers. This reality in Bourouissa's photographic works also informs viewers of the impact of gender in this environment, where asserting oneself as a human is already a challenge. What about the acceptance of differences in sexual orientation? Without such acknowledgement, these differences become other peripheries in the centre of the periphery.

Here I take into consideration the American philosopher and gender theorist Judith Butler's emphasis on the need to create 'alliances' between marginalized bodies so they can express their indignation and represent their plural existences in public space. Even if they do have access to basic rights such as food, clothing, education, and housing, human bodies primarily seek recognition and valorization, 'they are exercising the right to appear, to exercise freedom, and they are demanding a liveable life'.[5] This is where Butler's idea that there are 'abject bodies' (that is, bodies that represent what is seen as external to heterosexuality) comes into play.[6] Abject bodies form the field of the inhuman – what has been excluded, denied, and marginalized – and they become a useful reference point when critically reflecting on Bourouissa's representations.

In the exhibition, I understand that the conceptualization of the periphery goes beyond the issue of geography. The images are transposed from one context to another regardless of physical or symbolic boundaries, thus becoming deterritorialized. It is, at this point, pertinant to mention the American anthropologist Clifford Geertz, who understands the notion of identity as a fluid and imaginary cultural construction. He deduces that 'culture is not defined by a blood base, the same language, the same place of insertion, the same territory – it is a network of meanings that a group shares, it is public because the meanings are public'.[7] Above all, he reveals complex social strategies to fill the spectrum of what, for the dominant system, had been invisible before the peripheries became the centre. He does so within in the privileged territory of contemporary art, and he uses the street as a test site for this transformation in visibility, for this affirmation of what was presumed marginal and bad.

To speak of living on the periphery is to understand that there are symbolic, political, cultural, economic, and geographical spaces where the stages of humanization and/or denial of humanity begin with depriving human beings of the right to express their voice, culture, and feelings, leading to the inexorable marginalization of those persons and the

spaces where they live. This is why, despite the obviousness of my first impression, Bourouissa insists on the option, even if subsumed, of the political reverberations his works promote.

Bourouissa's artistic practice presents relevant results. Although he almost always depicts nocturnal, tense environments filled with a disconcerting realism, the violent settings carry seeds of hope. I wonder, at every depicted moment, about Bourouissa's audacity to interfere in them, even as a simple spectator, and to grant the characters and their circumstances the status of immortality once photographed. But let us not forget the simultaneously symbolic aspect or cultural background present in Bourouissa's works, since the real events or situations that are represented imply a construction of meaning, both through the participation of the receiver and that of the artist producing the images, and since any representation of reality implies perceptual codes of recognition.

Bourouissa's photos are therefore no longer final products but a support around which ideas converge – an open space for discussions on issues of community integration. They are the result of a sequence of political and ideological choices, and their realization obviously follows from the social, historical, and political formation of the subject who photographs, who clearly takes sides in the daily war of life, and who materializes the photos as receptacles of reflections on the world in the context of art.

Bourouissa's images produce multiple meanings and meeting spaces in dialogue with cultural values. These images are constructed from observed realities that are understood by the viewer because they are in fact constructions of a second reality, where what matters is the information around the message the artist wishes to transmit. Bourouissa problematizes the old notion of identity forged in feelings of confinement, distance, or origin. What interests me are the specific

ways in which communities live, or have lived, and how they position themselves in this context of interconnections and establish relationships with other communities. The cultural construction of the reality that the artist proposes in the photos does not come from a single source; it is not unidirectional but rather relativizes urban and suburban or peripheral borders.

Finally, it is impossible to understand Bourouissa's works outside the filters of culture and the viewer's perspective. They represent, in fact, the construction of a second reality, where what matters is the information around the message they wish to convey. For the meaning of an image never resides just in itself; it is also the result of a relationship – between what is exhibited, the configuration, and an observer. Meanings are thus shared by some and not by others, since cultural expressions are produced in multiple layers whose connections escape easy perception. The artist here asks whether the most significant structures of culture lie not in culture's forms but in its distribution and patterns of non-sharing. I believe that Bourouissa is more a creator and manipulator of signs than a producer of art objects, as his works call for an active viewer, one who engages in decoding messages, rather than a passive contemplator of the aesthetic or a consumer of the spectacular. His images, sounds, and videos involve an inversion of systems and forms of representation, and in this process, the images transmute into symbols.

The exhibition resonates with the theme of the movement of people – a critical issue in today's world. The idea of the periphery is a result of geopolitics and national migration policies. The recent migration from Ukraine on account of the war is an example. The different designations and treatment of people on the move reveal double standards in Western countries, particularly in France. Some migrants who qualify for asylum or a residence permit are unwanted while others are welcomed with open arms, for instance

Ukrainian refugees. This discrimination poses questions about both the perception and reception of the Other, about the Other's peripherality or centrality, about the geopolitics of human movement, and about the cohabitation of communities in the territories of reception. Bourouissa's exhibition *HARa!!!!hAaaRAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* therefore becomes a window to the periphery as a centre and a space of possible meeting in the negotiation of living together in difference.

[1] Sebastien Lubwe Infrapa, *Wa Mu Komponi*, YouTube video, 5:23 minutes, accessed 8 August 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zFxbtnO0cbQ

[2] These words correspond to some of the French work titles in the series.

[3] Edouard Glissant, *Poétique de la Relation* (Paris: Gallimard, 1997).

[4] Charles Ramond, *Le Vocabulaire de René Girard* (Paris: Ellipses, 2009).

[5] Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018), 26.

[6] Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993).

[7] Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 19.

Shit Has Arrived in the Form of a Tongue Twister

Noura Salem

In her essay 'Cruel Images', the artist and researcher Oraib Toukan observes the following:

'In *Regarding the Pain of Others*, Susan Sontag does not use a single 'I' in the entirety of her prose. On the contrary, she is concerned (but ultimately takes for granted) the implications of using the word 'We' on the act of looking at suffering. 'WHO ARE THE "WE"', she writes, 'at whom such shock-pictures are aimed?' 'If one feels that there is nothing "we" can do – but who is that "we"? – and nothing "they" can do either – and who are "they"?' she asks. Who is this Sontagian 'We' now, when say my news feed is either entirely different from yours, or suffocatingly similar to it? Who is the 'We' when a Palestinian from Gaza is algorithmically more likely to see undecipherable body parts in their news feed than a Palestinian from Ramallah? And who is the 'We' in the Euro-American male demographic of Reddit, or the eye-washed liberals of Instagram? Who is the 'We' in the demographics of a Facebook-bought Global South? And who is the 'We' when content is being filtered by outsourced gatekeepers feeding us our realities?'[1]

Who are you? Where are you reading this? What languages do you speak?

Titled *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, the exhibition by the artist Mohamed Bourouissa at Kunsthal Charlottenburg screams, yells, and warns, alluding to sirens, 'gangsters', and prison cells, invoking a lot of 'shit' or Khara (خرى), pronounced as a breathy *khhhaarra* in Arabic – all terms considered relatively 'uncivilized', a notion most recently and notoriously cited as akin to 'Iraq and Afghanistan', in contrast to the predominantly hegemonic white, Western standards with which the exhibition is set to engage.[2]

Approaching the exhibition, one is confronted with the big curatorial text in English and Danish, which sets the tone.

In the exhibition, labels are also bilingual, with work formats and collaborations noted and translated. Still, curiously, the work titles are presented in one language only, presumably the originals given by the artist. Can titles of works not be translated from French to English and Danish? How do we approach an exhibition whose title is also foreign to us, or one that is seemingly gibberish? What does it mean to hear or read gibberish? How many languages should an exhibition speak?

It is easy to understand how and why an international art institution such as Kunsthal Charlottenborg caters not only to a Danish audience but also to an *international* one. This assumed international audience necessitates the use and facilitation of the English language, and therefore Kunsthal Charlottenborg has become a bilingual institution. Everything is translated into English, from captions to catalogues to communication on the website.

It is worth pondering on what is international and what is universal here. Often, in such contexts as Kunsthal Charlottenborg, the necessary intent of internationality (and the privilege that comes with being able to cater to it) becomes subverted by the hegemonic and imperial nature of universality. As such, any sincere attempt to build and connect with an international audience becomes laced with a subtle layer of white imperialism packed with tropes such as fetishization, orientalism, and subjugation. This dilution and overshadowing compromises the heart of the exhibition in question as well as the themes it grapples with, reappropriating them in the form of *globalized artspeak*.[3]

But then comes Mohamed Bourouissa with his multilingual works, captions, and subtitles convoluting Arabic, Darja, English, French, and Danish. He challenges the 'universal ease' and 'easy universality' of artspeak, offering multitudes instead of one narrative and allowing language to serve as a key to access the many stories that the artworks want to tell

and the many questions the exhibition seeks to ask. Bourouissa focuses on what the institution is eager to celebrate, but more importantly, what the institution is not interested in highlighting or sharing, what it wants to hide, what is not translated, what is not considered universal, what negates the universal and exposes the hegemonic imperialism implicit behind it – how universality is an impossibility under such frameworks.

In her moving article 'War in Translation: Giving Voice to the Women of Syria', the writer and translator Lina Mounzer references her translation as a way to smuggle words from one landscape (language) to another. She describes the act of translation as an act of witnessing: 'From "to witness", we get *shahed*, the one who witnesses; *mashhad*, the spectacle or the scene, but also *shaheed*, martyr; *istishhad*, to be martyred, to die for a cause.' She continues: 'As if the act of bearing witness, followed to the end of one of its branches, snaps under the weight of what is seen, and you fall to your death. As if to die for a cause in Arabic is to bear witness to something until it annihilates the self.'[4]

Although *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* stands witness to all the shit enacted by state police officers against migrant communities in Europe, more importantly, the artist invites his subjects, the bodies he portrays in the images on display, to stare point-blank into the camera and at the audience at the receiving end. His subjects *witness* the audience members as they navigate the shit taking over their precious state-funded European white cube. The artist orchestrates the act of witnessing.

On a television screen in Algeria, Bourouissa observes a series of cruel images depicting the burning *banlieues* (suburbs) of France, images first demonized and then dismissed as *racaille* (riffraff) by then-president Nicolas Sarkozy.[5] Alongside cruel images, language often makes a cruel appearance. Later, in response, the artist returns to the ban-

lieues and stages a series of images – a nuanced performance, with a hand on a shoulder, a glance across a room, a gloved hand clutching a flag.

On one hand, the exhibition – as marketed by Kunsthal Charlottenborg – flaunts the artist, his works, and the role image-making plays in processes of classification and policing, but on the other, it seems to neglect how black and brown bodies are being used in its communication materials (e.g., the exhibition guide) to fetishize, reclassify, and police. Although not acknowledged in any of Kunsthal Charlottenborg's English communication materials, this neglect can be understood as a subversive act by the artist, as hinted in several of his interviews,[6] or it can be a severe oversight attributable to a well-intentioned yet overzealous white art institution desperate to appear inclusive and open to those *Othered* by the institution itself.

As the art historian Tausif Noor observes so astutely about Bourouissa's works, 'in their insurgent performances of the European canon, the figures in Bourouissa's pictures illuminate a fundamental flaw of the nation-state – its failure to imagine the racialized poor as part of its fabric.'[7] This arguably turns Bourouissa's works into acts of translating *cruel images, poor images*, and images of the poor. The poor image is no longer about the real thing – the original original. Instead, it is about its own conditions of existence: about swarm circulation, digital dispersion, fractured and flexible temporalities. It is about defiance and appropriation just as it is about conformism and exploitation.[8]

Looking for Trouble…
The freedom of the bodies, and their pride, both of which are portrayed in *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, are not celebrated by Kunsthal Charlottenborg – rather, what is celebrated is the act of their documentation. This is not a novel act, and it is inherently imperial and orientalist.

What is on display is conveyed as an act of general acknowledgment of the Other, the marginalized, the subjugated. According to Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 'Bourouissa's works productively trouble the dividing line between the museum and the street, the center and the periphery'.[9] But all this is done while not actually acknowledging the Other; Kunsthal Charlottenborg is very quick to tidy up the representation of the bodies in the exhibition, burying them yet again in vague universal generalizations evident in the exhibition catalogue and curatorial text: 'young people acting as lookouts', 'set in the big city and with African-American protagonists', 'the populations who lived there', and when there is an attempt to define the subjects on display, it is often detached from the context of the exhibition, as if they are a foreign or alien conception that does not exist outside the walls of Charlottenborg. '*Shoplifters* speaks of the modern misery of poverty, which often disproportionately afflicts POC communities, and has yet to disappear in even the wealthiest nations.'[10] Who are these wealthiest nations? Is Denmark included here? Scandinavia? The Nordics? Europe? There is no attempt to link or trace the thematics that the exhibition grapples with and situate them within Copenhagen or Denmark. This lack of accountability, consequently, predefines a safe and comfortable distance for the audience to occupy concerning the works and bodies portrayed in the exhibition.

The artist Yazan Khalili and the writer Ariel Goldberg proclaim that 'every photo is connected to an act of violence that is contained within it'. They continue:

'A photo hides more than it shows, which is merely the physical and reflective light of the world: bodies in a place, scars on skin, a wall in a landscape, a person holding a book, fireworks at night, trees, four people hugging each other in a joyful moment, a boy looking at his drawing, a policeman shooting at demonstrators. We have seen all of that, we have photographed it, but what about the unphotographable violence that goes through the image

without leaving a trace in it, the systematic violence that is normalized within life itself, the pain of the forest, the law that doesn't allow your child to get a birth certificate, the fear of being profiled, of not being allowed to travel, and the bureaucracy of everyday life?'[11]

Mohamed Bourouissa is aware of how his works, within the framework of an international art institution, can be reduced to an orientalist gaze. 'How we interpret them is not so much a product of the images themselves as it is of the prejudices and preconceptions we bring to them.'[12]

A mirror, a projection, *you are who you see*. The exhibition is intended by the *artist* to playfully highlight these problematic frameworks, to challenge these structures, and allow space for deviance in order to challenge these structures. Bourouissa recognizes the pacification of what is wild, uncivilized, and unruly within the white cube. He cleverly manipulates the space of the exhibition, instrumentalizing language and sound to allow discomfort and friction to seep through and compromise the white cube, and ultimately compromise the white gaze that is not held accountable. Here an art institution can become a space for democratic deviance – the task of the institution would then mutate to some extent to become one of clearly communicating its own agenda and encouraging art 'to face its own task'.[13]

HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!! Is a Mask
The insistence on remaining in the periphery has been a powerful and central position for populations of the Global South. The occupation of spaces of invisibility is a defiant response to hegemonic systems of power that demand visibility or hyper visibility, specifically as regards gestures that assert the right to gaze at, and look back at, the often unmarked and conquering gaze of surveillance. Such gestures undertake the important work of making structures of power visible.

At the white art institution, representations of the Other – of the marginalized – as decolonial acts, as acts of revolt and rebellion, are then quickly and inadvertently subjugated yet again by the structure of the exhibition and the power of the institution itself. Thus, given the institution's power and marketing, the representations can be easily reproduced and regurgitated by the press, reframing the bodies lining the exhibition walls and reiterating the power dynamics at hand. The liberated subject is confined yet again in the exhibition space, never free, and always subjugated by the gaze of the audience.

There is little room for the rebellion of the marginalized body at the white art institution; it is often pacified and nicely re-packaged for its sensitive audience. Bourouissa's exhibition overcomes this by utilizing language and sound as a *mask*.

Masks have been used by artists such as Jumana Manna, Zach Blas, Ali Cherri, and Basel Abbas & Ruanne Abou-Rahme in their respective works *A Sketch of Manners (Alfred Roch's Last Masquerade)* (2013), *Facial Weaponization Suite* (2012–14), *Staring at a Thousand Splendid Suns* (2021), and *And Yet My Mask Is Powerful* (2017 and 2022), which reveal acts of retreating from the field of the visible. Acts of manipulation that refuse the reduction of the body as a navigable object are intricately present in most of Bourouissa's works.

The small translated labels that dot the walls of the exhibition, the inconsistency in the language used with subtitles, horses in costume, Lacoste streetwear, a yellow carpet, staged photographs, and the gibberish sounds echoed through the exhibition are all masks layered to amplify, glorify, and celebrate the pride that is contesting, blurring, and playing with the preconceived stereotypes attached to the bodies portrayed – where a drug dealer is no longer just a drug dealer but still also a drug dealer.

There remains a prevailing insistence to be explicit, under the central presumption that migrant communities comprised of black and brown bodies must become or yearn to become visible. Referencing Edouard Glissant's right to opacity – specifically, his rejection of transparency and thus the right to retreat into invisibility while examining the consequences and violence of visibility – opacity 'exposes the limits of schemas of visibility, representation, and identity that prevent sufficient understanding of multiple perspectives of the world and its peoples'.[14]

So, if the universal exists, who is behind it? Who are the 'universal we'?
There is something sincere in the messy and inconsistent use of language in and around the exhibition. *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* successfully subverts the institution into offering a space for its audience to speculate on what is universal and shedding light on how it may be challenged, but more importantly, on why it should be challenged. Should there be a universal story? One story? Should there be a universal art institution? Should the institution speak French too? How about Arabic? Should the institution just stick to Danish? Should the institution let the exhibition dictate the language it should speak? Does this mean the institution shall speak different languages – one exhibition presented in Danish and French, the other in Danish and Dagaare? But what about consistency? Oh, the fallacy!

Ultimately, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* proclaims that a police presence is shitty. The exhibition challenges the public to stain a yellow carpet by policing it, using a prominent sign with a font larger than any other used on labels or wall texts in the exhibition. The sign instructs the audience: 'Please remove shoes before walking on the carpet.' The police are shit – but they are peacekeepers, they are civilized, they wear uniforms, they protect, they serve the people, they follow instructions. The 'universal we' thus

oppose this notion (how can the police be shit?!), and that is where the magic of the exhibition lies: in the many subtle confluences present, the chaos intended by Mohamed Bourouissa's works.

This muddled presentation of representations feels like glitches within a well-functioning white cube. But as the photographer and filmmaker Sohrab Hura explains, glitches serve an important function:

'Glitches tug at us, draw us closer, whisper to us, manipulate us into believing that they want to share with us their secrets. In today's more fixed, homogenized, and polarized world, where information is meant to be definite and therefore limited, glitches open up fault lines of doubt. These cracks of doubt are the spaces from which we can pull out new layers of understanding. Glitches have this ability to give us a sense of the real in an increasingly fake world made up of images determined by algorithms and patterns.'[15]

What is on display becomes unruly and contrary within the context of a white art institution, debilitating its communication and disrupting its narrative. The institution, its polished walls and lustrous legacy, become compromised, but not to its detriment; it becomes more approachable – 'it has become an active space rather than one of passive observation'.[16]

[1] **Oraib Toukan, 'Cruel Images', *e-flux*, no. 96, January 2019, last accessed July 2022, https://www.e-flux.com/journal/96/245037/cruel-images/.**

[2] **Now This News, 'Hypocritical Media Coverage of Ukraine vs. the Middle East', 2 March 2022, YouTube video, last accessed July 2022. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2z9UyPurVok&ab_channel=NowThisNews**

[3] **See Alix Rule and David Levine, 'International Art English', *Tripple Canopy*, November 2018. https://www.canopycanopycanopy.com/contents/international_art_english; and Hito Steyerl, 'International Disco Latin', *e-flux*, May 2013. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/45/60100/international-disco-latin/, both last accessed July 2022**

[4] **Lina Mounzer, 'War in Translation: Giving Voice to the Women of Syria', *Literary Hub*, 6 October 2016, last accessed July 2022. https://lithub.com/war-in-translation-giving-voice-to-the-women-of-syria/**

[5] **John Rosenthal, 'Nicolas Sarkozy: Scourge of the Banlieues?', *World Politics Review*, 11 May 2007, last accessed July 2022. https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/nicolas-sarkozy-scourge-of-the-banlieues/**

[6] **See Mohamed Bourouissa, 'I'm not a political artist. But it is political', 2021, L*ouisiana Channel*, YouTube video, 10:41. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9k_z2B8DfWw&ab_channel=LouisianaChannel; Alex Merola, Peripheral Views', *Burlington Contemporary*, 28 May 2021. https://contemporary.burlington.org.uk/reviews/reviews/peripheral-views; Dale Berning Sawa, 'Mohamed Bourouissa on France's Identity Crisis: "We've got catching up to do!"', *The Guardian*, 3 June 2021. https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/jun/03/mohamed-bourouissa-artist-france-identity-crisis; 'Authenticity and Auteurship in the Art of Mohamed**

Bourouissa', *Art Fund*, 30 April 2021. https://www.artfund.org/whats-on/more-to-see-and-do/listicles/authenticity-and-auteurship-in-the-art-of-mohamed-bourouissa; Joe Lloyd, 'Mohamed Bourouissa – Interview: I see art as a playground', *Studio International*, 30 March 2021. https://www.studiointernational.com/index.php/mohamed-bourouissa-interview-i-see-art-as-a-playground-goldsmiths-centre-for-contemporary-art-london-2, all last accessed July 2022

[7] **Tausif Noor, 'Beauty and Uprising in the Working-Class Suburbs of Paris', *The New Yorker*, 23 April 2022, last accessed July 2022. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/photo-booth/beauty-and-uprising-in-the-working-class-suburbs-of-paris?utm_campaign=falcon&mbid=social_twitter&utm_source=twitter&utm_brand=tny&utm_medium=social&utm_social-type=owned**

[8] **Hito Steyerl, 'In Defense of the Poor Image', *e-flux*, no. 10, November 2009, last accessed July 2022. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/10/61362/in-defense-of-the-poor-image/**

[9] **'Mohamed Bourouissa: HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!', Kunsthal Charlottenborg, last accessed July 2022. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/en/exhibitions/mohamed-bourouissa/**

[10] **Henriette Bretton-Meyer and Natasha Hoare, 'Mohamed Bourouissa HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!! 9 Okt 2021 – 20 Feb 2022', exhibition guide, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, last accessed July 2022. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/KC-Mohamed-Bouroussia-guide-1.pdf. POC = persons of colour**

[11] **Ariel Goldberg and Yazan Khalili, 'We Stopped Taking Photos', *e-flux*, no. 115, February 2021, last accessed July 2022. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/115/374500/we-stopped-taking-photos/**

[12] Mark Rappolt, 'Mohamed Bourouissa: "There Is Poetry Inside the Streets"', *Art Review*, 5 March 2021, last accessed July 2022. https://artreview.com/mohamed-bourouissa-interview-poetry-inside-streets/

[13] Charles Esche, 'What's the Point of Art Centres Anyway? – Possibility, Art and Democratic Deviance', *Transversal*, April 2004, last accessed July 2022. https://transversal.at/transversal/0504/esche/en

[14] Zach Blas, 'Opacities: An Introduction + Biometrics and Opacity: A Conversation', *zachblas.com*, 2016, last accessed August 2022. https://zachblas.info/writings/opacities-introduction-biometrics-opacity-conversation/

15 Sohrab Hura, 'Images Are Masks', e-flux, no. 122, November 2021, last accessed July 2022. https://www.e-flux.com/journal/122/429128/images-are-masks/

16 Esche, 'What's the Point of Art Centres Anyway?'.

Mohamed Bourouissa with Anoushkashoot, *Nous sommes Halles*, 2003–2005. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

Mohamed Bourouissa with Anoushkashoot, *Nous sommes Halles*, 2003-2005.
Brutal Family Roots, 2020. Installation view, *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*,
Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 2021.

The Multidimensional Task of a Curator

Favour Ritaro

A curator was traditionally a person who took responsibility for a collection of art objects through cataloguing, organizing, caring for, and displaying them. I remember my first visit to a museum in my home country Nigeria; it felt like going back in time. The array of old looking objects in a building with poor illumination suggested that I was in a shrine. While the above tasks have not changed entirely, the roles and responsibilities in curatorial practice have certainly expanded from those of a traditional keeper. More specifically, a curator is often referred to as having the responsibilities of producing knowledge, interpreting, and communicating with others in order to ensure that the art, artists, cultures, and organizations that they serve are presented and heard. Whether working independently or employed by an institution, curators are now tasked with the production of a wide range of cultural and creative activities.

Attesting to the above, I recall the words of curator Teresa Gleadowe in a conversation she had with curator Viktor Misiano on how much the curator's role had changed in the last two or three decades: 'Some aspects of curatorial practice remained constant. For instance, writing and communication remain central to a curator's practice'.[1]

My current job title is 'Curator and Communications', which, in summary, entails a range of curatorial tasks, including preserving a collection, contributing to art history by doing research and writing, as well as exhibition-making. The communications aspect of my role includes writing press releases, newsletters, catalogue essays, and other communication materials, and corresponding with the press, sponsors, and other third parties. While performing these tasks, it is clear that the roles of curator and communicator are intertwined. Based on this current position, I would go as far as to say that it is fundamental for a curator to be able to perform communication tasks. How else is it possible to describe the work the curator does in liaising with artists, other staff and board members, sponsors and donors, the

press, artisans, the audience, and so on? After all, the processes of interpreting and mediating always involve communication.

I was therefore eager to consider how the communication played out in the case of *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, a solo exhibition by Mohamed Bourouissa at Kunsthal Charlottenborg curated by Henriette Bretton-Meyer. I particularly took into account the curatorial statement, the press release, and the exhibition guide. After engaging with the available material online, I will discuss aspects of the communication around the exhibition, particularly the translation of the exhibition material (from English to Danish) and how I believe curators should take part in processes of translation. Let me start, however, by recounting a curatorial solution I myself was involved with that forms part of the background for my approach to communication relating to the exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg.

Not so long ago, I curated an exhibition that took place in Kaduna state in Nigeria. A state I had never been to prior to the exhibition planning. During the exhibition-research period, it became clear that the majority of the targeted audience for the exhibition might not be able to understand our message since all the exhibition materials were written in English. How, then, could the visitors understand what was being said to them? This sort of challenge is only to be expected in a country with over 500 native languages. Ultimately, visitors may have trouble experiencing the exhibition because of the lack of translation into their native language. When the audience comes in contact with the exhibition materials, they are receiving the message that is mediated by people who contributed to making the exhibition.

In a bid to solve the above-mentioned challenge, I engaged some indigenous persons from the state as curatorial and research assistants. It came to my knowledge that there are two major languages spoken in the state, and that it has over

50 endangered minority languages. The choice of language also gave rise to a conflict due to existing inter-ethnic and religious clashes. At that point, we concluded that it was best to leave all exhibition materials in English and to use other ways of engaging with the audience.

In the final analysis, this decision enabled us to devise relatable ways of presenting the exhibition concept to a general audience – specifically: through the design of the exhibition space, a video recorded in one of the major languages spoken in the state, and by setting up a stand with the assistant curator who spoke both English and the other major spoken language. This made it possible for us to take into account the disparity between the languages and the exhibition outcome. Doing it any other way would not have resulted in a good outcome. This curatorial exercise has therefore triggered. This curatorial exercise has therefore triggered my understanding of a curator's workflow in the process of exhibition-making, but it is worth emphasizing that the chain is structural and not necessarily hierarchical. While questions could be asked about the curatorial techniques and strategies applied in exhibition-making that inform a curator's workflow, I want to focus on Paco Barragán's ideas in the article 'Curating as Metanarrative (On the Metatextual Nature of Curating)',[2] where he maps one possible process of curatorial practice. In his model, it is the artist, works, processes, and discourses that reveal to the curator certain aesthetic and/or theoretical speculations that contain the seeds for a curatorial experience. According to Barragán, it is the artist who pre-figures and configures the curator's concept, and it is the artist and the artworks that generate meaning. Based on this understanding, Barragán outlines a curatorial communication process in line with classic semiotics: the artist is positioned as the source of a message, the curator is the transmitter of the message, the exhibition is the framework of the message, and the audience is the receiver.

If we follow this train of thought and choose to acknowledge the communication process as outlined above, we might agree that communicating a 'message' to members of an audience who are referred to as receivers is done by a curator who transmits the message. Curators are responsible for creating meaningful and memorable experiences that communicate the exhibition idea to the public. Curators create artistic meaning through the exhibition, through different forms of mediation – spatial, and textual, for instance. Because of the important role they play in art organizations, it almost goes without saying that if any form of miscommunication occurs in an exhibition, it will be considered the curator's responsibility.

The first introduction to Bourouissa's artistic practice, the exhibition text as written on Kunsthal Charlottenborg's website, states that the artist works 'in the field where documentary and fiction intersect', using 'photography, rap music and other modes of expression to call attention to the peripheries of society and challenge the mainstream media's portrayals of young people from minority backgrounds'.[3] First, I want to question the label 'ethnic minority' as used in the introduction on the organization's website. I wonder: Who are these people from ethnic minority backgrounds? According to the general definition, ethnic minority groups are people who belong to ethnic groups that comprise a relatively small part of a population. Reflecting on the juxtaposition of images and texts in the communication materials for the show, it is rather difficult to see the curator's use of the phrase 'ethnic minority' as inclusive. Perhaps if the statement was more direct, it would be easier to understand in the context of the exhibition rather than being perceived as a generalization. This calls for a critical evaluation of the purpose of the exhibition itself.

When criticism is levelled at an exhibition, it is not surprising that the curator is held accountable. Perhaps this is so because in recent decades, the role of the curator as a com-

municator has been professionalized. However, I want to keep an eye on other agents involved in the communication process who might create possible challenges for the curator. The artist could pose a barrier or a challenge in the process of communication. Or the institution could influence how the message is passed along. In addition, the receiver could interpret the message being passed on in a different way than intended. I would argue that such expectations are impossible to deliver on, and why should any one person carry such a burden alone anyway? All the while, communication has also grown into an area of expertise in its own right.

The exhibition's press release opens with the headline 'Internationally acclaimed artist Mohamed Bourouissa portrays masculine culture in disadvantaged communities'.[4] Here I am taken aback by the reference to 'masculine culture' as a way of describing the works in the exhibition. It suggests to me that the mainstream media's portrayal of people from ethnic minority backgrounds gives the same impression of a masculine culture. Even when someone other than the curator handles the communications of an institution, as in the case of Kunsthal Charlottenborg, which has a Head of Communications, the curator is still held responsible for any form of communication. Here, the linguistic twist catches you because you are unaware of the fact that others were involved. I therefore think of the task of communication as being first and foremost the curator's responsibility.

Communication requires having a common language – a *lingua franca*. Language is the framework through which people interpret things, and no matter how imaginative the mind can be, we all use language to make sense of what we see, read, or hear. Regardless of the subject matter at hand, the art work's materiality, the spatial construction of the exhibition, and so on, language is used as an important means to communicate with audiences who visit the exhibition. Language can mediate knowledge and generate appreciation and an understanding of the works on display

amongst audience members. In addition, it is important to acknowledge that the use of language changes depending on the communication medium. For example, a brochure or leaflet could contain summarized information, while a catalogue could be far more comprehensive and extensive. In recent years, the expanding range of interpretive media used particularly in and by museums has expanded the role of language. Spoken or written, on walls or screens, in books or online, language frames the way content is (re-)presented and knowledge is constructed. In doing so, it is part of a complex set of relations between the institution and its audiences. In examining the grey areas of communication that occur – those instances where misunderstanding or misinterpretation might arise, I propose that we consider language – its possibilities and limitations – more closely.

In connection with the exhibition *The Shores of the World (Communality and Interlingual Politics)*, curated by Pablo José Ramírez for Display – Association for Research and Collective Practice in Prague in 2018, Ramírez held a discussion with Karina Kottová, a curator and theoretician of contemporary art. Ramírez made a strong assertion:

> 'Language has always been inscribed in a system of colonial hierarchies. You can speak Czech, Slovakian, English or Russian and say the same sentence, but it will always mean something different. It will also be heard with different levels of attention and reception. Words are loaded with weight, texture and power. To use language is, on one hand, the only way we get to communicate with other beings, but on the other hand it's a huge barrier. Using the dominant language so often links to xenophobia and racism.'[5]

The relevance of this assertion lies in the role language plays in curatorial practice, because it is essentially the key mode of expression and communication for curators, alongside the exhibition itself. Additionally, it insinuates that there are

inconsistencies in language which can affect people's understanding. The effect of the above statement in the context of the case at hand, the exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg, is that the work of translation, mediation, and interpretation being carried out by the curator affects people's understanding. Consequently, translation, interpretation, and mediation have become part of curatorial practice. From this point of view, it is important to note that if the curator is responsible for the processes involved in offering the means for audiences to gain an understanding of artworks, a literal translation of texts from one language to another can take place. This happens not least because of the multilingual and multicultural audiences that art institutions often serve. The implications of interlingual translation are complex, and a curator is part of the translation process. An exhibition is usually accompanied by a range of texts, including catalogues with curatorial statements, essays, artist's statements, interviews, images with captions, and so on. The curator is often expected to be involved in writing and editing some of the texts as well as in providing editorial support. When translations are involved, a curator is only able to vet them if the language the text is translated into is known; otherwise, the curator must depend on the expertise of translators. This of course has an impact on the transmission of the message from the artist to the curator, the other people involved, and the audiences.

When considering the expectations around the role of the curator as a creative or cultural communicator, perhaps we should consider the complexities involved in the use of language as a major tool in our prevalent modes of communication. Thinking about this slippery territory from my own position as 'Curator and Communications', I would like to propose what I call 'interdisciplinary interventions' in curatorial practice. Progress in the area of communication, interpretation, and mediation relies, in my view, on the coming together of diverse sets of expertise and perspectives, and the shared commitment of a vast number of individuals

unified by a common goal. As Julia Schäfer suggests, 'It is okay to involve other teams'.[6]

As the curatorial field expands, especially when referring to curating in contemporary art, curators could become significant cultural collaborators. Within the art institution, a greater level of collaboration has already been happening between curators and scholars as they both contribute to knowledge in the field. This sort of collaboration could stretch beyond the curatorial arena and comprise collaborations between curators and linguists, anthropologists, and so on. Curators nowadays often have different backgrounds and hold academic degrees in subjects such as the history of art, archaeology, anthropology, classics, history, conservation, or related fields. More recently, a new breed of curators has emerged with unconventional and non-traditional academic backgrounds. Such curators' engagement now often goes beyond art while also working with artists and artistic processes. In summary, while this text presents curators as experts in their own field, often with wide knowledge of other areas, it also portrays curators as unable to be all-knowing. My proposition for transdisciplinary collaboration could lead to more inclusive and accessible communication with an ever-growing multilingual and diverse audience.

1 Viktor Misiano, 'Terms of Engagement: A Conversation with Teresa Gleadowe', *Manifesta Journal* no. 4 (Winter 2004): 24–31.

2 Paco Barragán, 'Curating as Metanarrative (On the Metatextual Nature of Curating)', *Artpulse 5*, no. 19 (2014): 20.

3 Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 'Mohamed Bourouissa HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!, accessed 11 July 2022. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/en/exhibitions/mohamed-bourouissa/

4 Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 'Internationally acclaimed artist Mohamed Bourouissa portrays masculine culture in disadvantaged communities', press release, *Mynewsdesk.com*, accessed 11 July 2022. https://www.mynewsdesk.com/dk/kunsthal-charlottenborg/pressreleases/internationally-acclaimed-artist-mohamed-bourouissa-portrays-masculine-culture-in-disadvantaged-communities-3128886

5 Artist talk with Pablo José Ramírez and Karina Kottová, Artishock, 19 September 2018, accessed 11 July 2022. https://artishockrevista.com/2018/09/19/pablo-jose-ramirez-interview/

6 Julia Schäfer, 'Mediation as Curatorial Practice', lecture presented at the conference *The Art of Ethics in the Contemporary Art Institution*, Overgaden 2015, 28–29 November 2015, YouTube video, 29:45 minutes, accessed 11 July 2022. https://foryou--archiv-gfzk-de.translate.goog/?p=8831&_x_tr_sl=de&_x_tr_tl=en&_x_tr_hl=en&_x_tr_pto=sc

A Necessary Institutional Wake-Up Call

Josephine Boesen

The overarching question I want to explore here is whether Kunsthal Charlottenborg is intentionally or unintentionally using its exhibition programme to 'art wash' its colonial past – a past with which it is so strongly identified. To frame this exploration, I will start by discussing recent events at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. These events are relevant because Kunsthal Charlottenborg is housed in the same building as the art academy: Charlottenborg Castle in the centre of Copenhagen. Both institutions are state-funded and part of the Royal Danish Academy; they collaborate closely on many things, from talks to the academy students' graduation shows.

To underline this close connection, I quote an excerpt from the text 'Det Kgl. Danske Kunstakademis Grundlægger Smidt i Havnen' (The Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts' Founder Has Been Thrown into the Harbour). The text was part of a similarly-titled happening by Anonyme Billedkunstnere (Anonymous Artists) that literally brought the title to life. Published together with video documentation of the event,[1] it sheds light on the history of Charlottenborg Castle and how the art academy came into being.

'Charlottenborg was built in the 1670s by U. F. Gyldenløve. Gyldenløve's ship *Friderich* is believed to be among the first Danish-Norwegian ships to transport enslaved Africans across the Atlantic; from the Danish fort Christiansborg in Ghana to the Danish West Indies (today US Virgin Islands). Rubble, which was part of the building of Charlottenborg, was used as ballast in the ships, and can therefore be found in buildings on St. Thomas.

In 1754, at the request of [Lord Chamberlain] Adam Gottlob Moltke, Frederik V donated Charlottenborg's premises to the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. In the same period, Frederiksstaden and the area from Kgs. Nytorv to Amalienborg was [sic] built. Artists and architects were to be trained to erect the new mansions,

to paint portraits, and to create sculptures of the new elite.'[2]

The event that fostered this historical overview was the dismantling of a copy bust portraying Frederik V, situated in the assembly hall of the art academy. The bust was removed and taken to the harbour front where it was thrown into the water.[3] The reasons behind this action were explained:

'to articulate the ways in which the colonial era is invisible, but still has direct consequences for minority people inside and outside the academy. We want an art world that takes responsibility, not only for the actions of the past, but for the ways in which colonialism is still active today.'[4]

At the time, a proper debate about the reasons underlying the happening was derailed by the Danish media. The 'agitators' behind it were strongly criticized for vandalizing state property, distorting information about historical events, and using methods related to terrorism and torture – for instance kidnapping, hooding, and waterboarding – as means for practicing 'cancel culture'. Merete Jankowski's comment 'Voldens Sprog' (The Language of Violence) is an example of this rhetoric:

'In international law, "hooding" is a means of torture that is punishable following the Geneve Convention because it is an act of violence that objectifies a human being. When the hood covers the head, the person loses his or her identity, name, and personality in order to become the object of the executioner. When the hood covers the head, YOU don't exist anymore. Or said differently: Hooding is the ultimate form of cancel culture.'[5]

Kunsthal Charlottenborg refrained from commenting on the event despite overwhelming interest from the Danish media. When Katrine Dirckinck-Holmfeld, the head of the Institute for Art, Writing and Research, took responsibil-

ity for the event to protect the anonymous student group, she was expelled by the director of the Royal Danish Art Academy.
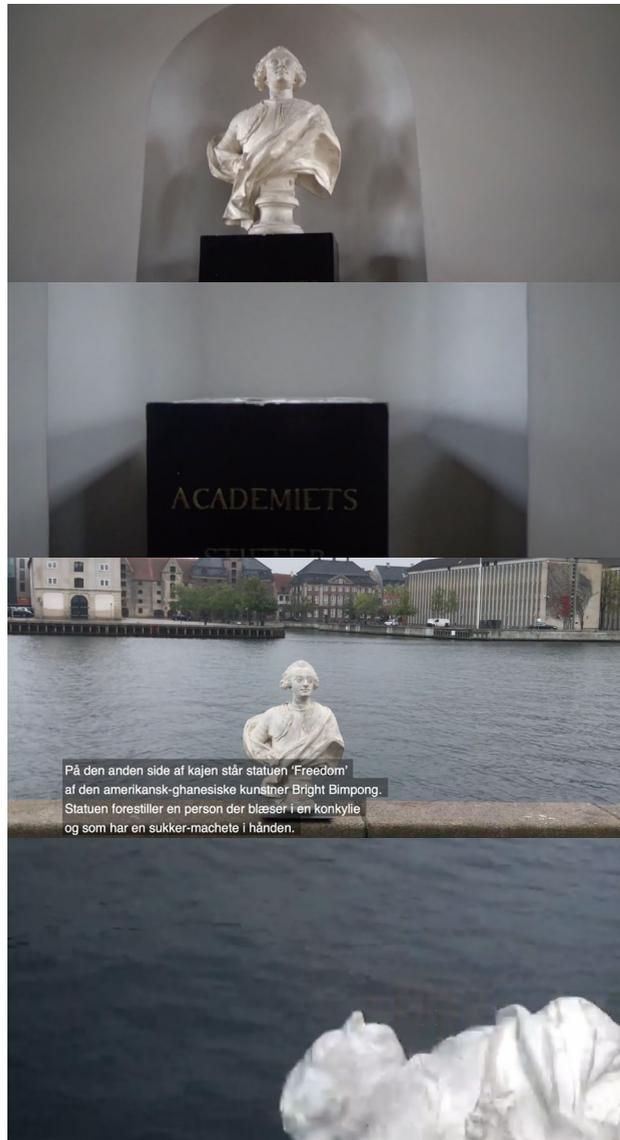
Video stills from Anonymous Artist's video, 2020.

As described by Anonyme Billedkunstnere in the above quote, the primary purpose of the happening was to draw attention to the academy's colonial past and how the effects of colonialism are still felt within the academy today. Clear evidence of students feeling marginalized and discriminated against was strongly downplayed in the intense media coverage.[6] In what follows, I use two examples of recent activity in Kunsthal Charlottenborg that suggest that colonial attitudes are indeed still active within Kunsthal Charlottenborg and the Royal Academy of Fine Arts.

Liberty Leading the Young People with Other Ethnic Backgrounds

'HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!'… upon entering Kunsthal Charlottenborg, I am alerted to the impact of the exhibition by Mohamed Bourouissa, not solely because of the number of exclamation marks used to accentuate the urgency of the exhibition title, but also by the word 'Hara' that is heard throughout the building. 'Hara' is a warning signal used by lookouts in areas of Marseille where drugs are a vital part of the local trade, and it is used to warn dealers about approaching police forces. 'Hara' is an alert to evacuate. *Hara* (2020) is also the title of a sound installation echoing through the art institution. The sound is my first and immediate encounter with Bourouissa's work, an encounter that has become emblematic to me of how Kunsthal Charlottenborg frames its collaborations with artists of a certain background.

HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!
HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!
HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!
HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!

As a student of curatorial practice, I ask myself: Was it the artist who chose not to soundproof the space in which the art installation is presented, or was it a curatorial decision? This question arises because the work has an extreme pres-

ence throughout the kunsthal as a whole; it has an impact on the audience in Bourouissa's exhibition but also in the other, unrelated exhibition next to it, as well as in the foyer, the restrooms, and the art cinema. If this effect is unintentional, I would consider it as a substantial curatorial blunder. After some research, I learned that the sound work was originally produced for a public courtyard during Manifesta 13 in Marseille, suggesting the installation was intended to have a presence in, and an impact on, a large public space. Even if the immersive sound experience was intended by the artist, a soundproofing would have been beneficial. Just think of the poor staff. To me, the resonating call to evacuate is testament to the generally off-key institutional approach to issues of marginalization and discrimination within the walls of Kunsthal Charlottenborg and the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. Allow me to elaborate.

The second time I visited the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRA-AAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, I was accompanied by my fellow students of the MA Programme in Curatorial Practice at the University of Bergen. I was the only Dane in the group. During our visit, Anne Szefer-Karlsen, our Norwegian professor, asked me to clarify a particular Danish wording in the pamphlet that was the primary means of mediation within the exhibition.

The excerpt in English reads as follows:
These works challenge contemporary image culture and the media's portrayals of young people with minority backgrounds.

The Danish version:
Det er værker, der konfronterer samtidens billedkultur og mediernes fremstillinger af unge med anden etnisk baggrund.[7]

The wording my professor alerted me to was 'unge med anden etnisk baggrund', which is a Danish translation of 'young people with minority backgrounds'. The issue arises because this is an imprecise Danish translation of the already non-specific 'youth with minority backgrounds', in a context that is very specifically related to French youths with migrant backgrounds living in Parisian suburbs. 'Anden etnisk baggrund' directly translates into 'other ethnic background', which is a Danish expression used to describe people deriving from other cultural or national backgrounds – people who are other than 'traditionally Danish', in which 'traditionally' could easily be replaced by the adjective 'ethnically'.

This rhetoric is frequently used in the Danish media to distinguish between the white, ethnically Danish population and those parts of the population that somehow differ from that description. In other words, it creates an 'Othering' that is typically found in everyday language when referring to migrants or refugees and their descendants. One of many examples is in the article 'Efterkommere af indvandrere stormer frem på arbejdsmarkedet under Corona' (Descendants of migrants storm into the labour market during Corona) by the journalist Signe Stoumann Fosgrau. The article describes how 'youths with other ethnic backgrounds' have advanced in the workforce during the pandemic.[8]

This phrasing is very particular to a Danish context, and by using it in the mediation of Bourouissa's exhibition, Kunsthal Charlottenborg is performing an Othering of the French youths portrayed in the works. Furthermore, by paying little attention to the translations of the mediation texts, the kunsthal also ends up Othering the artist.

Context and Meaning
On the artist's website, the photographic series *Périphérique* (2005–08), also included in the exhibition at Kuntshall Charlottenborg, is described in the following words:

'In this breakthrough series of photographs, Mohamed Bourouissa chose to appropriate the codes of history

painting. The artist composed his photos by staging scenes with his friends and acquaintances in the Paris banlieues where they used to hang out. Confrontations, gatherings, incidents, looks, and frozen gestures all suggest a palpably dramatic tension. Readings of these images were inflected from the start by the violence of the 2005 riots in the French banlieues. Invoking Delacroix as much as Jeff Wall, the artist appears to give a place in French history to agents whom that country usually neglects.'[9]

As this excerpt indicates, Bourouissa is particularly concerned with *demarginalizing* the young men he portrays and ensuring their place in (art) history. This is particularly apparent in the photograph *La République* (2006), which shows a large group of men during riots in the French suburbs. The photograph, however, is staged in a way that directly references Delacroix's iconic painting *La Liberté guidant le peuple* (1830).

Eugène Delacroix , *La Liberté guidant le peuple (28 juillet 1830)*, 1830.

By using the particularly Danish phrase 'anden etnisk baggrund' (other ethnic background) Kunsthal Charlottenborg is calling the artist out as non-Danish. In addition, Kunsthal Charlottenborg is depriving the portrayed young men of their reclaimed place in history and re-marginalizing them in a Danish language context. It is obvious that the French-Algerian artist Bouriossa and his portrayed subjects are not Danish, so why is this important? This particular phrase may not necessarily come across as Othering to an international audience unfamiliar with the Danish language. To a Danish audience, however, it will translate perfectly as 'non-Danish', and it plays into a societal act of structural discrimination towards people with migrant backgrounds.

By using this sort of language, Kunsthal Charlottenborg continues to position itself as the white, Western art institution it was built to be – an identity that lies embedded in its historic foundation. This is an issue because it is the only state-funded centre for contemporary art in Denmark, and it is supposedly representative of the student body at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts – students who are publicly calling the institution out for still being actively colonialist.

This is also implied in the article 'På det Kgl. Danske Kunstakademi er der heldigvis plads til nuancerne' (At the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts there is fortunately room for nuances). Here, Rikke Luna and Matias Albæk-Falk interview students and ask them about the presence of 'cancel culture' inside the academy walls. The artist and student Sabitha Sofia Söderholm has this to say:

'The idea that art should be neutral is only possible if the artist fits into societal norms, and that this person, by virtue of his or her normalcy, can be read as neutral. If you fall outside of these norms, for instance, because of the colour of your skin, neutrality suddenly is not accessible. It doesn't have to mean that everything should

be a fight, or that everything has to be political, but that easily happens because – to fall outside the norms and still produce art – always will be read as a political action. All bodies are political, but only the deviating ones (those that don't fit society's image of "the normal") are read as political.'[10]

Faded Fireworks
Another example of the institution's habit of discriminating against non-Danish artists is the recent cancelation of the Russian artist Sergei Prokofiev from the Charlottenborg Spring Exhibition, which was held at the same time as Bourouissa's exhibition.[11] The cancelation happened because Denmark's Ministry of Culture encouraged Danish cultural institutions to boycott Russian art and culture.

The Charlottenborg Spring Exhibition is a traditional juried exhibition, and artists who want to participate must submit an anonymous application. The works are selected by a jury that also determines that year's prize winners. Prokofiev won the Solo Prize for the following reasons:

'There is an enormous power in Sergei Prokofievs work […] The calm of the deep forests and the silence at the shore of the lake in the wild Russian nature stand in contrast to the unease that dwells under the surface. On behalf of Politikens Forhal, I am honoured – especially at this time – to select Sergei Prokofiev.'[12]

This quote is from a press release published by Kunsthal Charlottenborg on 5 February 2022. Although the speaker does not exactly explain what is implied by the phrase 'especially at this time', for the sake of my argument, I assume it refers to the political crisis in Russia that led to a full-blown Russian invasion of Ukraine only 19 days later. In light of this statement, it seems paradoxical that Prokofiev was cancelled from the exhibition for reasons similar to why he won the Solo Prize.

The two works in question were *Fan of the Land* (2021) and *Fireworks on the Swamp* (2020). A description of both is provided in an article on the Danish news site Føljeton and on the artist's website:

'Both works show fireworks being set off in the free and peaceful Russian countryside. Unchanging spaces disturbed by explosions. Fireworks have historically been used by Russian leaders to celebrate the state and its power. But in nature it is taken out of context; a thinly veiled critique of the symbolic language of power.'[13]

Similar to Bourouissa and his portrayal of Frenchmen with 'other ethnic backgrounds', Prokofiev is used as a symbol of the Other. As winner, he plays the part of the brave Russian artist critical toward the Russian regime. Later, on 4 March 2022, the roles were reversed and Prokofiev became emblematic of the regime itself.

The way in which the intentions of the works in question – *Fan of the Land* and *Fireworks of the Swamp* – were ignored when the decision to exclude them was made, emphasizes that the honouring, subsequent cancelling, and then reinstatement were all purely political framing devices for Kunsthal Charlottenborg. By excluding the two works, Kunsthal Charlottenborg basically helped President Putin in oppressing and censoring Russian artists critical of the regime.

Questions of Discretion
My question is whether the discreet mediational language mishap in the case of Bourouissa's exhibition and the not-so-discreet cancelling of Prokofiev are institutional Freudian slips, or whether there is more to it. Is Kunsthal Charlottenborg using its current exhibition programme as a way of art washing a colonial past that the institution still identifies with? Is the institution conscious of what it is doing? Did the student group from the Royal Academy of Fine Arts that was responsible for the bust-happening

have a valid point in its assessment that colonialism is still active today within the confines of Charlottenborg Palace? Is Kunsthal Charlottenborg still haunted by the ghosts of the past?

Returning to Bourouissa's work and the echoing of *Hara*, on reflection, the call to be alert seems somehow fitting in the current climate within Kunsthal Charlottenborg.

'Taking note of the climate of hyper-control constitutive of the violence widespread in contemporary societies, the artist reverses the codes, turning the lookout's signal to flee into a wake-up call.'[14]

Wake up Kunsthal Charlottenborg.

1 Anonyme Billedkunstnerne, 'Det Kgl. Danske Kunstakademis Grundlægger Smidt i Havnen', *I Do Art*, 6 November 2020. https://www.idoart.dk/blog/det-kgl-danske-kunstakademis-grundlaegger-smidt-i-havnen

2 Anonyme Billedkunstnerne, 'Det Kgl. Danske Kunstakademis Grundlaeger'.

3 It is worth stressing that the bust thrown into the harbour was a copy of a bronze original that is still in the academy's collection. Furthermore, there are many copies of this particular portrait bust.

4 Anonyme Billedkunstnerne, 'Det Kgl. Danske Kunstakademis Grundlaeger'.

5 Merete Jankowski, 'Voldens sprog', *Kunstkritikk*, 12 November 2020. https://kunstkritikk.dk/voldens-sprog/. My translation. The original Danish: 'I internationel ret er 'hooding' en torturform, der er strafbar efter Geneve-konventionen, fordi det er en voldshandling, der tingsliggør mennesket. Når hætten går over hovedet, mister mennesket dets identitet, dets navn, dets betydning for blot at blive en genstand for bødlens luner. Når hætten går over hovedet ER du ikke mere. Eller sagt på en anden måde: Hooding er den ultimative form for cancel culture.'

6 For a portrayal of the Royal Danish Academy from the inside, plus further evidence of students feeling marginalized and discriminated against, see Anna Martensens, 'Oprør på Akademiet', DRTV, 2021. https://www.dr.dk/om-dr/nyheder/palet-af-nye-kulturprogrammer-gaar-i-dybden-med-kunst-musik-og-arkitektur-0

7 Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 'Mohamed Bourouissa: HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!', accessed 25 April 2022. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/da/udstillinger/mohamed-bourouissa/

and https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/en/exhibitions/mohamed-bourouissa/. My emphasis.

8 Signe Stoumann Fosgrau, 'Efterkommere af indvandrere stormer frem på arbejdsmarkedet under Corona', *Berlingske*, 21 January 2022. https://www.berlingske.dk/samfund/efterkommere-af-indvandrere-stormer-frem-paa-arbejdsmarkedet-under-corona

9 Mohamed Bourouissa, 'Périphérique', mohamedbourouissa.com. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/peripherique/

10 Rikke Luna and Matias Albæk-Falk, 'På det kongelige danske kunstakademi er der heldigvis plads til nuancerne', *I Do Art*, 21 April 2020. https://www.idoart.dk/blog/paa-det-kgl-danske-kunstakademi-er-der-heldigvis-plads-til-nuancerne. Original quote in Danish: 'Idéen om at kunsten kan være neutral er kun mulig, hvis kunstneren falder inden for samtlige samfundsnormer, og at denne i kraft af sin normalitet kan læses som neutral. Falder man uden for disse normer, f.eks. via sin hudfarve, er neutraliteten pludselig ikke tilgængelig. Det behøver ikke at betyde, at alt skal være en kamp, og at alt skal være politisk, men det bliver det nemt, fordi det – at falde udenfor normen og stadig lave kunst – altid vil læses som en politisk handling. Alle kroppe er politiske, men kun de afvigende (dem der ikke passer ind i samfundets forestilling om 'det normale') læses sådan.' My translation.

11 Kunsthal Charlottenborg, 'Charlottenborg Spring Exhibition 2022', press release. https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/en/exhibitions/charlottenborg-spring-exhibition-2022/

12 Signe Jochumsen, on behalf of Politikens Forhal and this year's jury, quoted in 'Charlottenborg forårsudstilling 2022 prisvindere'.

https://kunsthalcharlottenborg.dk/da/aktuelt/2022/02/10/charlottenborg-forarsudstilling-2022-prisvindere/. My translation.

[13] Jon Kvist Sommer, 'Serjej Prokofiev creates symbols for posterity', Nyhedsanalysen, Føljeton, 15 March 2022. https://foljeton.dk/150585/sergej-prokofiev-creates-symbols-for-posterity. The article is also available on Sergei Prokofiev's website: http://prokofiev.net/resources-interviews-sergej-prokofiev-creates-symbols-for-posterity

[14] Mohamed Bourouissa, 'Project, Hara'. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/hara/

(In)visible Funders

Niovi Zarampouka-Chatzimanou

This Text, the Context, and Me

I should maybe start with acknowledging that I have never visited the exhibition *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* by Mohamed Bourouissa at Kunsthal Charlottenborg, nor have I visited any other exhibitions of the artist's works, or an exhibition curated by Henriette Bretton-Meyer in any other context. Instead, I have 'visited' the exhibition through the information about it on Kunsthal Charlottenborg's website. It is necessary to underline that this online information does not claim to provide a full interface with the exhibition or to be a comprehensive overview of the works displayed in the way an online exhibition might aim to be. In short, I have engaged with the usual information material that can be expected to be online regarding exhibitions and events in an art institution in a metropolitan European city.

Engaging at first with a press release, a teaser video, and some selected images, I began my research in February 2022, initially with no pre-conceived idea regarding where this would take me. Slowly, this process of searching through the online space without an agenda led me to a sequence of leads that enabled me to 'see' the exhibition rather than simply look at the works presented. 'Seeing' unlocked my thinking and focused my attention on certain elements that are integral to the realization of curatorial projects, both inside and outside of institutional contexts, but that may remain unnoticed when immersing oneself physically in the experience through wandering in an actual exhibition space.

So, although the departure point of this text was that I was unable to see the show in person, my engagement with the online material published on the occasion of Bourouissa's *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!* became a trigger for further reflection on the ethics of different kinds of funding in the arts sector, and specifically, on the politics of the visual presence surrounding them, and in relation to the power relations and institutional decisions that accompany them.

What Is Actually There?

I will reveal that I have a personal-professional fetish of checking 'where the money came from' because I enjoy guessing the stories behind the negotiations, being led to new funding possibilities, but that I also fancy appropriating smart aesthetic ideas of how to present funders in a space. I therefore investigated the available exhibition photos and the available information on sponsors on the webpage. My meandering scrolling research was in vain, as there were no colourful and aesthetically annoying logos popping up, nor a more elegant version of a black-and-white format of them. To my surprise, there was not even – at that moment – a text that acknowledged any financial support. My surprise and curiosity took me deeper into Kunsthal Charlottenborg's website and the supporters' section, only to find an alphabetical list of the institution's sponsors. There was no information about who supported what exhibition, the duration of their sponsorship, or other purposes of sponsorship. I should admit that the elegance and discreetness was remarkable. Yet while my admiration regarding this visual identity was emerging, I started asking questions. Do elegance and discreetness originate from a deliberate choice, an institutional power over the negotiation with funders – or an insecurity? And reversely, could the well-known colourful logo 'nightmare' be considered a more transparent choice?

The Power of Negotiating and the Presence of the Funder

A recurring question in the Western institutional artworld is where the money comes from, not only when talking about private initiatives but also, and maybe more so, when considering what are perceived as public institutions. It seems tricky for artists, curators, and administrators to be paid properly and fairly without fees being somehow tainted, especially when the sources of funding remain hidden, or, in contrast, are very visible and present in all information emanating from the organizations paying the fee. Sometimes the visual presence of a sponsor or donor seems to become either an awkward moment of silence or a massive debate

that eventually will be solved with a random *deus ex machina-DIY* solution that applies each time to a different context and a different project team. The attitudes and choices vary between institutions, and they are hardly ever disclosed to permanent or project-based staff such as curators and communications officers who are not in the upper echelons of the organization.

I want to move beyond merely questioning the resources to question the transparency surrounding resources and the clear and public access to such references. It seems to me that the radicalization in the thinking behind the content and the context of an exhibition does move along with the development of new and radical practices of funding, communication, and transparency. The least radical exhibitions with huge, colourful, and annoying company logos might indeed lack aesthetics and may sometimes overwhelm the space and the works on display, but there is no doubt of the institutional positioning. This brings me back to a historical reference. A donor, as seen in the face of an emperor commissioning a Renaissance or Byzantine masterpiece, was a clear statement. The emperor's presence in the Byzantine frescoes claimed his divine representation standing next to Jesus and the Madonna. This is an extreme yet public and real demonstration of power that gives us the opportunity to read the 'logos' of the time clearly.

While transparency appears to be ugly and corporate, no matter the conversation on ethics and the role of the institutions and the resources that fund them, arts professionals seem to be floating in a space of uncertainty and contradictions. It is a collective effort, possibly through conflict as well as a strong curatorial stand in the decision making, that can shift things and reveal or describe the *deus x machina*. For *documenta 14* in 2017, the artistic director Adam Szymczyk wrote a text on the 'ownership' of the exhibition that focused on the art-workers and the people creating and visiting, all of whom were participants in the project.[1] This text was

published in the *documenta Reader* and was carefully positioned before the numerous logos of the sponsors and other funders. Whether the statement's position was an editorial decision or not, it seemed to imply an awareness of inherent contradictions, an awareness reflected in the simple turning of the page.

The Funders' Web

Since funding is directly interlinked with all stages of production, it creates an ever-growing list of supporters, financial or in-kind contributions, that changes with every constellation of artworks and artists in an exhibition. Behind any institutional exhibition, there is a complex network of commissioning parties in different geographical contexts, each supported in different ways by public, corporate, and private streams of money that have all contributed to one final result. The artists produce works with their own sponsors and supporters through institutional or private commissions. These works are then brought into different exhibition contexts where oftentimes a communication team is asked to deal, amongst numerous other assigned tasks, with the visual management of all of them. Given the lack of archives for the different negotiations and agreements, it sometimes happens that over time the financial roots are lost.

Returning to Bourouissa's exhibition, I found several more supporters mentioned in three different websites. I learned that before traveling to Kunsthal Charlottenborg, the entire exhibition was initially curated and produced at Goldsmiths Centre for Contemporary Art in London, with the support of Fluxus Art Projects, Trampoline, and kamel mennour, Paris/London.[2] The sound installation *Hara* was commissioned by Manifesta 13 (2020) with the support of the Ammodo and Drosos Foundation.[3] The work *Brutal Family Roots* was commissioned by the 22nd Biennale of Sydney (2020) with support from the Oranges & Sardines Foundation, with assistance from the Ambassade de France en Australie, Institut Français, and the Council for Australia-

Arab Relations; it was created through an artist residency at the Bundanon Trust.[4]

Puzzlement / Embarrassment / Confusion / Hesitation / Intention?

Why do institutions choose to include, or not include, one of the most debatable ethical parameters of artistic production in their printed or online material? If such information is included, is it an acknowledgement of the sponsor's power? And if the information is not included, is it because the art institution wants to protect its own integrity – or is it simply a lack of transparency? Do institutions choose to mention financial backers discreetly in order to avoid unfair criticism?

As my reflections and questions were piling up, I considered it of utmost importance to address some of them to the Kunsthal Charlottenborg team members, the ones who had worked on this particular exhibition. These inside voices are many times ignored in writing about exhibitions, resulting in speculations and aggressiveness instead of peer-to-peer exchange and growth. The hot potato of 'Where did the money come from?' is frequently debated, becoming the epicentre of gossip and provocative posts on social media. Fellow-professionals are attacked without even posing the direct question: 'Was this intentional or not?' The visual transparency of the process is indeed an issue that institutions should consider seriously, but endless negotiation regarding the presence of the funder, the size of each logo, and the distance from the other funders is commonplace and usually leads to a nightmare of endless back-and-forth email exchanges amongst sponsors, the communication department, the artistic team, and – unfortunately – a longsuffering graphic designer. With this spirit of understanding, I sent four main questions on decision and policy making to the Kunsthal Charlottenborg team.

I asked whether Kunsthal Charlottenborg has a specific sponsorship policy, officially approved, and which could be shared publicly, or whether there is a set of 'unwritten rules' that keep things going according to a collective team consensus. In this official or unofficial way of doing things, who would be the decision maker(s) and to what extent would the curator have a say in the public communication of support and sponsorships? Also, would an individual artist's web of funders be a reason for not mentioning them in exhibition-related information? How has the institution negotiated the discreet presence of the funders inside its entire digital presence? What does it take to convince funders to let go of their visibility benefits when only listed in one online space?

Unfortunately, the questions sent to Kunsthal Charlottenborg's team were unanswered. Instead, a very polite email came along apologizing that they would not be able to reply. This made sense, actually. Time is always limited in fast-working environments. This lack of time can also serve to demonstrate the problem that institutions face regarding the issue at hand. If the team members are working overtime to finish a production, if they are interested in the creative part, as they should be, then the listing of the funders comes last, in moments when everyone is too tired to discuss and above all document this discussion, for the purpose of creating a legacy or policy document. Yet my questions continued to puzzle me.

Postscript

As I was concluding the writing of this text in May 2022, I returned to the various texts on Kunsthal Charlottenborg's website for one more final check regarding editing details. Although the texts appeared to be the same as before, one phrase was added as far as I could see. Towards the bottom of the page presenting Bourouissa's exhibition, it is now possible to read something about the supporters: 'The exhibition is supported by the Augustinus Foundation, the Obel Family Foundation and the Danish Arts Foundation.' Was this addition a result of my contact with the institution, or had it always been there?

After spending some days doubting and questioning myself about what I had seen in the first place, and after having written one more unanswered email to the institution's team in order to verify the changes, I simply decided to let go. I did so because my intention had never been to speculate on one institution or accuse a colleague of a mistake. On the contrary, my aim was to embrace the contradictions which we, as curators, must live through and to share them publicly. Being transparent about our unintentional mistakes is a way to move the collective dialogue forward, instead of using the quick, invisible correction methods made available to us by digital tools. I feel the need for a best-practice handbook to be created and agreed upon by a collective of professionals. How can we as curators be part of institutional processes in a way that guarantees a transparent context for us, the artists, but most of all, for the people who trust our work and choose to participate in it?

[1] Adam Szymczyk, 'Appendix', *The documenta 14 Reader*, eds. Quinn Latimer and Adam Szymczyk (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 2017), 675. As a member of the documenta 14 team, I functioned as the community liaison for the artistic director's office in Athens. From my insider perspective, and for me personally, Szymczyk's text is one of the most incisive statements regarding this exhibition's positioning in the history of documenta as an institution. It sends a message regarding artistic freedom beyond sponsorship, institutional requirements, and impositions, and it is a message I try to apply in my personal practice.

[2] Goldsmiths CCA, 'Mohamed Bourouissa HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!! 21 May–01 Aug 2021'. https://goldsmithscca.art/exhibition/mohamed-bourouissa/

[3] Mohamed Bourouissa, 'Project, Hara'. https://www.mohamedbourouissa.com/hara/

[4] Biennale of Sidney, 'Mohamed Bourouissa', 2020. https://www.biennaleofsydney.art/participants/mohamed-bourouissa/

Installation views of *Brutal Family Roots* at 22nd Biennale of Sydney, Cockatoo Island, Sydney.

Design as Response

Abirami Logendran

To write a design statement for a book and have it be included in the book is a novel experience for a graphic designer. Nevertheless, the process of designing a publication is punctuated by many interesting choices that, when described, can provide rare insights for a reader. These choices certainly convey a message along with the texts and images that are designed. When Anne Szefer Karlsen invited me, as the designer, to contribute a text to this publication, I was certainly intrigued.

Just as the authors and editors of this book consider themselves curatorial practitioners, I also consider my work to be graphic design *practice*. The notion of practice involves something more open-ended than a final result. It involves a project, the process of making something. It often involves research, and I consider both discourse and politics in the process. *Responses – Opinions Informed by Practice* is therefore a project that fits my practice, and it is an ongoing series of publications, with more volumes to come. The project has a defined deliverable, but it is at the same time process-oriented, and this goes well with my approach to graphic design.

The authors of this book have spent time looking, reflecting, and analysing one exhibition in particular. They have seen it through various lenses and written critical pieces. Both curatorial work and graphic design are concerned with *communication*. A book design is the result of many choices – regarding format, colour, fonts, type, type area, grid, etc. All these choices are informed by various factors and motivations. Like a curatorial or an artistic process, every design process is different. Design also conveys ideology and should be informed by political awareness.

In the fall of 2021, I too experienced the exhibition at Kunsthal Charlottenborg that is the focus of the essays in this volume. In *HARa!!!!!!hAaaRAAAAA!!!!!hHAaA!!!*, Mohamed Bourouissa depicts marginalized communities. The intro-

duction text in the handout I received when I saw the exhibition says that Bourouissa is interested in people who use the means at their disposal to make a place, a home for themselves. According to the curator Henriette Bretton -Meyer, he seeks to show how hierarchical the world is and how value is dictated by capitalism and colonial history. Like the other contributors, I felt an urge to discuss some aesthetic and some ethical questions related to Bourouissa's work as well as the curatorial choices. After reading the raw texts for this book, I have responded with my design choices.

A key decision a designer needs to make concerns the colour scheme for a project. The use of colour is culturally dependent, and the colour scheme is important because it can manipulate, inform, and enrich the content. In a publication like this one, the function of colour is liberated from sales and marketing logic. The choices I have made are meant to resonate with my feelings towards the material. I initially started with four colours that I identified in the artworks themselves. But after the first draft, I decided against using them and focused instead on colours I *associate* with the material: orange gives the feeling of alertness, blue signifies labour, green holds a reference to virtuality, and grey suggests dilemma. Additionally, the extensive use of black, as an opposite to white, gives a sense of pressure. The page numbers are unconventionally large and space-consuming, and I have used a bold weight for the footnotes, emphasizing details outside the main text body.

A good part of each page is dedicated to the margins which are contrasted in black. I consider this the 'dispossessed part of the book' – the part that lacks information or resources to possess (as articulated in Ursula K. Le Guin's novel *The Dispossessed*). The main texts are positioned in the top right corner of the type area, as close as possible to the margin. By pushing the text into the margin in this way, white space stands out on the page. This creates a space for the reader's contemplation – while the typography almost suffers.

There is also another, more pragmatic, reason for this choice. I was asked to design a book that can be distributed as an online PDF but with the possibility to print it out on a Xerox machine. This calls for the A4 format – yet it does not really make sense to use the typical vertical format for a book of this kind that seeks to challenge existing hierarchies. When a book is scanned or copied on Xerox, the machine will fill in empty space with black. I want to give the reader a similar experience while reading: the feeling of a physical book, yet perfectly suited to a screen. I therefore hope to make the ambiguity between the online and offline version visible to the reader.

Finding A Voice Within A Cacophony

Gerrie van Noord

Where to start and what to say? And, maybe more importantly, how to say it? Simple questions that are not so easy to answer succinctly when writing about an exhibition. Especially when the task is approached in a particular framework, alongside others in a similar, though not the same, position. What can one say about an artist's body of work that is so vocal – literally because of the sounds that emanate from it, and metaphorically, in terms of its social-political content? What can one say when the context (geographical, institutional) in which it is encountered is one that possibly, to a large extent, directs what we experience and what we see? And beyond the question of what to say, what do we feel we are able or allowed to say, and on what grounds? How does what we do in our day-to-day work, our practice in practice, feed into what we think we should or should not say? And how does what we think we want to say translate into a coherent piece of writing that makes sense in relation to all of this? These are among the concerns that came to the fore in the process of developing the contributions to this volume – some consciously present and others quietly simmering below the surface.

Being involved in this project, I have had the privilege of looking at the process of its unfolding largely from the sidelines; I didn't visit the iteration of the exhibition that is the focus of the essays included here, and I didn't participate in any of the discussions among the authors. Nor am I part of the programme in the context of which these pieces were produced. However, as an editor of publications on art and curatorial projects, and as a lecturer affiliated with a course similar to the one from which all this emerged, the questions I grapple with in my own work are not that different from those outlined above. This was a key reason to say 'yes' when Anne invited me to be a critical reader and to respond to drafts of the texts that were to be written. Before I expand on the interactions with their authors, I will reflect on some of my own queries around the knotty relationships between publishing, curatorial practice, and discourse.

Despite much of what we know about art and curatorial projects coming to us via a wide variety of publishing formats and platforms – from press releases to catalogues, from peer-reviewed journals to posts on various digital platforms and feeds – publications tend to be perceived as operating on the fringes of the fields of art and curating. Working with artists, curators, writers, graphic designers, and many others, as well as with organizations and less visible or identifiable (f)actors, I, as an editor, experience that the projects I produce or contribute to are often treated as something after something else – a group or thematic exhibition, an artist's entire practice, a single work – which is considered the 'main thing' that has primacy in people's attention, perception, and sense of value.

Meanwhile, my work as a lecturer is heavily informed by and dependent on published material as the basis for discussions with those who want to become or already are practising artists and curators, who often use all that material as a means for knowledge gathering before launching into what they think of as practice. If publications are so important for how we encounter and learn about art and curatorial projects, why is there a persistent perception of them being merely derivative means of dissemination? Especially when ideas of 'expanded practice' and notions of 'the curatorial' have apparently embraced modalities of curatorial work that manifest themselves beyond the exhibition as form, and step away from traditional hierarchies of value and agency? Despite the expansion of what curatorial work may entail and an embracing of discursive processes as modes of 'the curatorial', publications continue to be perceived as 'afterlives' rather than as part of a spectrum of closely interconnected forms of practice.

A concept that can help us think a way out of or beyond this conundrum is that of an 'ecology of practices', outlined by Isabelle Stengers as a fluid, ongoing chain of interactions between different modes of thinking and working that con-

stitute an ecology.[1] Although Stengers developed the idea of what an 'ecology of practices' may comprise in a particular field – philosophy – what she describes can also be applied to other areas of practice, including curating. In trying to consider the development of a field, Stengers argues that rather than looking for grand gestures that are so closely tied to narratives of singular authorship and individual agency, value, and voice, it is through what she calls the 'minor key' that senses of belonging, possibilities, potentials, and effects can manifest themselves. These aspirational descriptions may seem generic, but when linked to curating, they may help us think beyond the traditional hierarchical and temporal trajectories of origin and destination, of intention and outcome, and other dichotomies and distinctions that prevail.

Stengers's urge to think of an 'ecology of practices' rather than of an expanding range of individual practices coming together momentarily – as certain interpretations of 'the curatorial' foreground – suggests we could consider curatorial practice in a way that may help us circumvent the persistent habit of assessing which modes and positions have greater sway, expressed in who and what we value most. Instead, her ideas point towards a thinking *around* individual contributions and contributors – while not negating their individual relevance and agency per se – by allowing us to embrace what happens in their interactions and being part of an ecology. Applying Stengers's ideas to publishing in relation to art and curating – with writing among a range of practices that converge within publications – can also offer us a different way of thinking about curatorial practice at large. But particularly when approaching writing, there is no denying we often feel a nagging pressure to come up with grand, overarching statements, fully resolved arguments, comprehensive explorations, and definitive assessments. It is precisely attempts towards such achievements that Stengers's ideas try to steer us clear of. By deliberately not aiming for the 'major key', she argues, it may be possible to 'create a

different practical landscape', underlining that there is no 'identity of a practice independent of its landscape'.[2] This brings me back to the questions of what to say, how to say it, and the essays in this publication.

Reading the drafts sent to me, followed by individual conversations, I found some authors had gone for a very personal approach but were worried their text might be read as 'biased', as if their views were somehow not as valid as those of others. Some came with a particular agenda but were not entirely sure how to go about articulating it, wondering where and how their views might land – among those of the artist, the curator and the institution, or the wider field and its discourse. Many were trying to tackle undercurrents of power dynamics – and possible imbalances – within the work discussed, with the presentation of the work in its context, with the voice of the institution/curator in relation to their own. Assumptions of what one was or was not 'supposed to' do seemed to weigh heavily – albeit with different inflections, given that each author practises in their own geographical, political, social, and institutional frameworks, in different roles that have their own genealogies and written and unwritten conventions.

On reflection, my input towards this publication was not just that of a critical external reader, but also that of someone embedded in overlapping and interconnected areas of practice – of publishing as a form of curating, of writing, of teaching – seemingly tasked with giving each author licence to articulate their ideas and find their voice within this sprawling ecology. This also highlighted that writing is indeed not a solitary, authorial act but can be conceived as a process of conversation and collaboration with existing discourse and with others holding slightly different positions within its ecologies. The essays here are therefore not only part of this publication, of the course within which it was conceived, and the wider ecology of the artist's and the institution's work, but also of the writers' own ecology of

practice(s) within which they operate and already have a voice. All the individual voices speaking at the same time may sound like a cacophony, but only if we do not take time to listen to each voice and consider how it resonates among all the others.

[1] Isabelle Stengers, 'Introductory Notes to an Ecology of Practices', *Cultural Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (March 2005): 183–96.

[2] Ibid.

Collective Qualitative Analysis

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Abstract

Current research policies create incentives for large collaborative research projects across disciplines, institutions and countries. Even though qualitative researchers are increasingly expected to be involved in research collaboration, qualitative analysis is mostly presented as an individual endeavour. The aim of this article is to contribute to the scholarly literature about qualitative analysis, by presenting a procedure that I call "collective qualitative analysis". The method has four steps: First, the research group works through the entire data material by presenting abstracts of each interview. The second step is mapping data, and third step is about sorting data. The fourth step is to make a disposition and outline a workplan. I explain these steps by using examples from my own research projects. By engaging with collective qualitative analysis, we can make room for a creative analytical process where we can develop our understanding of empirical data and the process of analysis by learning from each other. I argue that it would be fruitful to further develop collaborative forms of qualitative analysis and aim to contribute to this endeavour.

Keywords

Collaborative data analysis, collective data analysis, collective methods, teamwork.

Introduction

In my work as a sociologist focusing on qualitative methods – and especially while working on my MA and PhD – I have often felt unsure of what I should do the day I completed, transcribed, and read through all the interviews. I've asked myself the question that Steinar Kvale calls the 1000-page question: "How shall I find a method to analyse the 1000 pages of interview transcripts I have collected?" and I recognise the overwhelming feeling behind the question (Kvale, 1996, p. 90–2). In the academic literature about qualitative methods there are several descriptions of uncertainty and confusion when confronted with the collected data (e.g., Johannessen et al., 2018, p. 278; Skilbrei, 2019, p. 8; Tjora, 2017, p. 196; Widerberg, 2001, p. 117). David Silverman for example, writes incisively about how ambiguous qualitative data analysis can be: "Data analysis can be something of a mystery. You have gathered your interview, selected your documents or made some observations. Now what do you do? […] Beginning qualitative data analysis can seem like exploring a new territory without an easy-to-read map" (Silverman, 2014, p. 110). Especially when you are not familiar with qualitative analysis, you can become overwhelmed and unsure of what to do with all the data.

After several years in the field of research, I now have more experience and feel less unsure than I did as a student and PhD candidate. However, I have often wondered how other researchers handle their data. In the academic research environments I have been part of, the academic discussions first and foremost happen when we have written drafts for chapters or articles that we present to each other. Raw data is something we mainly keep to ourselves, and many of us carry out the first analysis alone and without enlisting another set of eyes. The discussion of methods also has the unfortunate tendency to circle around methodological approaches and epistemological prerequisites rather than the practical work of analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Silverman, 2014, p. 42). Putting our process of analysis into words is

a condition for being able to verify, criticise, and further develop academic analysis and methods. As many others have done before me (e.g., Album et al., 2010; Christensen et al., 1998), my desire is to contribute to developing methods through presenting and discussing concrete experiences and research projects.

In this article I describe a method I've chosen to call "collective qualitative analysis", and in this I'm following on from Karin Widerberg's (2001, p. 29, translated) urging that the collective "should and could be developed as a method in itself". In brief, collective qualitative analysis aims to gather a research group for a collective workshop where they engage in the work of analysis together. The method has four steps: 1) Reviewing the data 2) Mapping the data, 3) Sorting the data and 4) Creating an outline and workplan. I have developed the method in collaboration with colleagues as a part of the practical procedure during several empirical research projects. Developing a method was not part of the objective of these projects, but because a collective qualitative analysis was helpful for us, I would like to share our experiences. The method proved to be a very useful, thorough, and reliable way to start the process of analysis. Starting the process of analysis as a collective effort has been the basis for a creative collaboration throughout the rest of the analysis and writing process. As Aksel Tjora (2017, p. 251–2) has pointed out, analysing collectively can be a strategy for managing confusion and strengthening the quality of the process of analysis. Firstly, I would like to start by discussing a few contributions to the literature about quantitative analysis. Existing literature indicates that there is a lot of room for development of collective methods of analysis. Furthermore, I will present the research projects that I draw on as examples, and the data that I have analysed as part of developing this article. The main part of the article is a presentation of the four steps of collective qualitative analysis: 1. Reviewing the data, 2. Mapping the data, 3. Sorting the data, and 4. Creating an outline and workplan. The examples I present, are mainly focussed on analysis of interview data, because this has been the most important source of data for the projects in question.

However, the method can also be used to analyse other types of data, and this is something I will return to in the discussion. I would like to emphasise that collective qualitative analysis is only one part of the process of analysis. Therefore, I have also included a discussion of the process of analysis before and after the workshop. To conclude, I discuss how collective quality analysis can contribute, and how the method can be further developed for research and supervision.

Analysis of Qualitative Data

The mere fact of two or more researchers collaborating on data collection, analysis, and writing is nothing new. However, as the research politics increasingly creates an incentive for large interdisciplinary collaboration projects between different countries and institutions, it is also beneficial to develop good methods for collaboration in all parts of the research process. In literature and publications on method, analysis is generally presented as an individual process, and collective analysis work seems to be the exception here rather than the rule (Cornish et al., 2014, p. 79; Hall et al., 2005, p. 394). Widerberg has pointed out that collective processes of analysis are important to highlight how our understanding affects our interpretation, but that the collective element is seldom included as a separate thematic in textbooks. Aksel Tjora (2017, p. 107–8, 251–2; 2018, p. 53–4, 85–6) has argued in several textbooks that the collective process of analysis can be useful and has referenced personal experiences as well as that of others in these processes. But he hasn't—as far as I know—systematically described how these processes of analysis can be carried out, or integrated the collective aspect in the description of the step-by-step deductive inductive method (SDI model) he has developed (see Tjora, 2017, 2018).

There are several new contributions in academic literature available in English language where the authors argue for and describe how you can carry out collective processes of analysis (Bilda et al., 2006; Cornish et al., 2014; Lordly et al., 2012; McPhail-Bell & Redman-MacLaren, 2019; Pardee et al., 2017; Richards & Hemphill, 2018).[1] Some focus on the advantages and challenges of collaboration throughout the research process for projects that include several researchers—often from different disciplines and institutions—students or representatives for the groups the research projects are concentrating on (Allen et al., 2019; Cornish et al., 2014; Fernald & Duclos, 2005; Hall et al., 2005; Pardee et al., 2017; Potter, 1998; Sweeney et al., 2013). Others have focussed on how they have carried out one or several workshops as the backbone of a collective process of analysis (Bilda et al., 2006; Lordly et al., 2012; Richards & Hemp- hill, 2018). A common factor of these contributions is that they believe that a collaboration during the process of analysis can be challenging and time consuming, but that it is worth it because it strengthens the analysis. Collective analysis does not mean that you break with existing and more individually oriented approaches to analysis, but that you adjust and develop these to function as collective processes of analysis (Richards & Hemphill, 2018).

The research literature about qualitative analysis includes several different methodological perspectives and approaches, for example, grounded theory (see Skilbrei, 2019, p. 53–4), narrative analysis, phenomenology, institutional ethnography, conversation analysis, and discourse analysis. However, there are also those that focus on the common features in different approaches and argue for the benefit of combining different methodological perspectives in the same research project (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006; Elliott & Timulak, 2005; Frost et al., 2010).

I share this opinion and have worked with analysis in line with what Braun and Clarke (2006) call "thematic analysis".

Thematic analysis is a method to identify, analyse, and describe patterns (themes) of the data. Thematic analysis has six steps: 1. An in-depth review of the material by reading all the data, highlighting the text and writing in the margin, 2. Making a list of ideas about each theme you identify in the data, and working through the data looking for as many interesting themes and patterns as possible, 3. Identifying an overall theme and sorting all the subthemes and text extracts according to these, 4. Reviewing the themes critically, double checking if they fit the data and if necessary revising them, 5. Finding suitable titles for all the themes that capture the essence and give the reader an insight into what they are about, and 6. Writing the article (Braun & Clarke, 2006).[2]

Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that a thematic analysis is a foundational method for qualitative data analysis that can be used across different methodological approaches. The method is flexible and can be used for both empirical (inductive) and more theoretically oriented (deductive) analysis. Furthermore, the method is suitable whether you have a constructivist or realistic approach to the process of analysis and whether you focus on analysis of experiences, opinions, discourse, or a combination of these (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Collective qualitative analysis in many ways resembles thematic analysis both in terms of the steps of the process and the flexibility. The most important difference is that we have conducted several of the steps collectively during workshops rather than individually.

Developing a Collective Qualitative Analysis
This article is based on experiences with carrying out collective qualitative analysis for several different research projects. The data is in the form of practical experiences from several project collaborations, collective reflections on these experiences, and documentation of the process of analysis. The documentation consists of two short blog texts about the process that were written shortly after they were carried out (Eggebø, 2015, 2018), photographs, minutes, and notes

from the workshops, and conversations and discussions I have had with colleagues about the process of analysis. The process was best documented when working on the research project "Ageing at home: Innovation in home-based care for older people in rural parts of Northern Norway" and "Queer Migrants in Norway". For this reason, I have chosen to use examples from these projects in the article and will briefly outline the goals, framework for and analysis of these two projects. In terms of recruitment, selection, data collection, and ethical issues my reference is the methodology chapters from the project reports (Eggebø et al., 2018; Munkejord et al., 2017).

The aim of "Ageing at home" (2016–2019) was to investigate what it is like to grow old in rural areas, and what types of specific challenges and possibilities they have in home-based care for older people in rural areas with spares population. Two municipalities in northern Norway were collaborators in the project, and it was financed by Regionalt forsknings-fond Nord-Norge. Managers, employees, users, and next of kin were interviewed, and the data consisted of 42 individual interviews, four group interviews and observational notes from relevant arenas for older people.

All three of the researchers participated in the data collection. When all the data had been collected and transcribed, we organised a two-day workshop for the project group where we carried out collective qualitative analysis as a common starting point for the process of analysis. This process was mainly empirically driven; we focussed on exploring the data and adjusted and developed hypotheses and ideas for articles using the empirical analysis as a springboard. The further process of analysis formed part of the writing and mediation, where we worked on interpreting data in light of theory and previous research.

In 2017–2018 I led a research project about the living conditions amongst lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and in-

tersex people with migrant backgrounds in Norway (Eggebø et al., 2018). This was a commissioned research project financed by The Norwegian Directorate for Children, Youth and Family Affairs (Bufdir). The aim of the project was to map living conditions, including crucial aspects such as education and employment, health, relationships and social networks, openness, discrimination and violence. The data consisted of a survey (N=251) and qualitative interviews (individual and focus group interviews) with 41 queer people with migrant backgrounds in Norway. After the data had been gathered, we organised a workshop where we looked at the quantitative material and another workshop with a collective qualitative analysis of the interview data. The analysis was first and foremost empirically driven and oriented towards giving as complete a mapping of the material as possible. After the workshop we continued developing the analysis—by interpreting data drawing on theory and previous research —as part of the writing process. This work was also collectively oriented; we organised writing seminars, took turns writing the different chapters, and conducted meetings routinely over the phone to discuss text and analysis.

The common thread in the above projects is that they were empirical research projects where individual interviews were a central source of data. Both the project groups consisted of three people who all took part in gathering the data. I acted as group leader during the workshops.[3] Another common denominator was that both the projects had open and explorative designs and the analysis was empirically driven. In terms of other data sources, time frame, financing, themes, and hypotheses, the projects were different. Despite the differences, we used the same model for collective qualitative analysis and experienced this as useful and relevant, because it proved to be a flexible method and an efficient way to start the analysis. Moreover, our experience was that the collective qualitative analysis formed the foundation for the subsequent writing and analysis work also being collectively oriented. We explored the possibility of thinking and writing

together, testing out analytical ideas, challenging each other, and further developing our thoughts using the tension that arises from different viewpoints and approaches.

Preparation
The preparation for the workshop had three main points: 1. Writing a summary of the interviews, 2. Reviewing the data and 3. Reading relevant research. As Skilbrei (2019, p. 182–3) points out, you should reduce data—in other words write a summary—before continuing with the analysis. This is a crucial step in the preparation for collective qualitative analysis, because we work from summaries, not full transcripts of interviews, at the workshops. The summaries were written during the data collection process, right after we had carried out an interview, and stored in a password protected shared access area for the research group. The summary was ½ to 1 ½ pages and included background information about the main themes in the interview. Here is an example of a summary from the project "Ageing at Home":

> Interview with older married couple. He is 79 and she is 84 years old. They live in the municipality centre. They have both lived very active lives. He was a headmaster and politically active. She was a civil servant in the municipality and has chaired several clubs and organisations. They have two children who live in the south of Norway. They emphasise that they feel that's far away. They highlight that they don't like growing old. It's difficult to accept that you can't be as active as before and that your friends are dying. It's a bit gloomy, he said several times. They are interested in discussing what could have been done to make it easier to grow old. They receive assistance from the home care service. She suffers from dementia. He has struggled with depression and misses the counselling services available before, but that now have been shut down.[4]

We also noted down other impressions from the interview situation, such as how the house looked (pictures of the family on the wall, wheelchair access), what happened in the interview situation (the phone rang, a relative came by), and our own feelings and reflections around the interview situation. These summaries of the interview or observations, which also include reflections, analytical ideas and interpretations, are often called "memos" in methodology literature, and the term comes from grounded theory (Charmaz, 2005).

Here is an example of a reflection I wrote down in the summary after the first interview of "Ageing at home": "Throughout the interview he talks a lot about WWII and growing up in his hometown. I understand that this is what he finds most important to talk about (…) Difficult to see how the interview provided much relevant information". The aim of the project was to explore people's experience with home care, but the interviewee barely answered these questions. Had I collected completely irrelevant data? Both during the field work and during the workshop I brought up this question with the research group. Through academic discussion we arrived at another interpretation: the fact that this informant – and several others – preferred to talk about the life they had lived instead of being reduced to a care recipient was an important analytical point (Eggebø et al., 2019a). What I at the time interpreted as a fairly irrelevant interview, was in fact a key interview for the further analysis.

Another important part of the preparation was to go through the data, that's to say read the interview transcripts, summaries, and listen to the recordings. This work corresponds to the first step in more individually oriented descriptions of the process of analysis (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006; Johannessen et al., 2018). In "Queer Migrants in Norway" we initially limited ourselves to reading through the summary and listening to some of the interviews that we hadn't carried out ourselves. In "Ageing at home" we read through the complete interview transcriptions and summaries, both those we had conducted ourselves and those others in the research group had done.[5] During the read through we noted several

different themes, interesting sequences in the conversation, and the main story of the interview.

A third important condition for the analysis during the workshop, was to familiarise ourselves with empirical research and relevant theories in the field. In the project "Queer Migrants" the research group was familiar with theory and empirical work at the intersection of gender and sexuality, on the one hand, and immigration and ethnic discrimination on the other. In the project "Ageing at home" I had a greater need to familiarise myself with previous research, and before the workshop I spent a lot of time getting an overview of the interdisciplinary research field of ageing and care. It was useful to get a certain overview of the research early in the process, but it is also important that the readings do not get in the way of making progress gathering data and planning the workshop. If you are going to perform empirical analysis, it can be more fruitful to familiarise yourself with the research literature after the workshop, as a part of the process of writing.

Step 1: Reviewing the Data Together
The first step of collective qualitative analysis is to go through the data as a group. In this way, there will be two reviews of the data: first individually as a part of the preparation and then as a group during the workshop. In this way, the whole research group gets a thorough insight into the data, both the material they collected themselves and the material collected by others. The presentation can be done in the following way: the person who did the actual interview or made the observation, presents the summary for the others, while one of the others notes down key words. Here is an example of this kind of record:

– Queer woman in her 40s, grew up in Norway, parents arrived as refugees from the Middle East.
– Racism and ethnic discrimination are the main problems with being a queer migrant.

– She experienced being different as a child and wanted to be normal.
– Racism in queer communities.
– During the interview she is interested in showing that homophobia also exists amongst ethnic Norwegians and not just in minority communities.[6]

In the notes from this interview, we have identified background information, central themes, and the overarching narrative in the informant's story: she presented a clear counternarrative to the understanding of homophobia in migrant communities being the main problem for many queer people with migrant backgrounds. Her message was that racism is the biggest problem she has as a queer migrant. The keywords contain not just the background information and experiences, but an interpretation of the interview. We wrote down the keywords on A3 sheets of paper and put the sheets on the wall as we went along. We spent about ten minutes per summary, and a whole day going through all the interviews (33 in total). The result of this group review of the data looked like this:
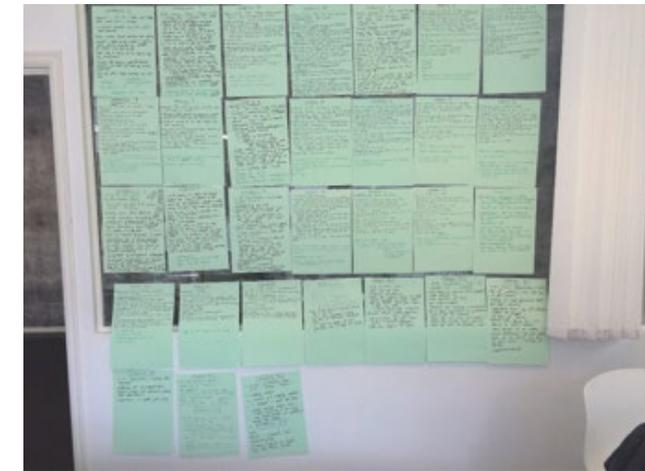
Figure 1: We've reviewed the interviews, written down keywords, and put sheets on the wall.

An important point regarding reviewing the data, is that we don't invite comments and discussions at this stage. This is important for two reasons: firstly, we risk running out of time for the next steps of the analysis and not finishing within the time frame. Secondly, sticking closely to the empirical material will be an advantage and getting a total overview of the data before discussing it. So, at the beginning of the meeting we start reviewing right away.

Step 2: Mapping Themes
The second step of collective qualitative analysis is an open mapping of themes in the data. After collectively reviewing the data, we had made many reflections. To get started mapping the themes, you can formulate the following open question: "What is the material about?" (see Johannessen et al., 2018, p. 280), or ask "What kind of themes, ideas, thoughts, analytical threads, and questions are you left with after reviewing the material?" In "Queer Migrants in Norway" we organised ourselves so that one of us mentioned a theme and wrote a heading on a large piece of paper. Then we noted down bullet points and relevant interviews for this theme. This step of the process is what Johannessen et al. (2018, p. 282–4) has called coding—that's to say the process where you emphasise and put into words important points from the data. Although Johannessen et al. (2018), and contributions from many others to the methodology, describe this as an individual process, we carried out this work collectively at the workshop.

A theme that was raised by many informants in "Queer Migrants in Norway", was the experience of sexual abuse. On the theme page for "Sexual Abuse" we listed the following points:

– Occurs often in the material.
– During childhood and over time.
– Isolated incidents.
– The perpetrators are usually men, often several different men.

– The victims have multicultural backgrounds.
– Narratives about that they are queer due to the abuse, came up frequently in the material, both for men and women and informants from different countries, including Norway.
– Encounters with support network, mostly bad and some good.
– Negative consequences: poor results at school, mental health issues, partners leaving, virginity testing, shame.
– Important interview: 1, 4, 18, 8, 12, 17, 20. Especially 4.

Several informants said that they themselves and others thought that there was a connection between sexual abuse and sexual orientation: a man who suffered abuse from different men during childhood, had thought a lot about whether this was the reason he was gay. Women who were victims of abuse by men, pinpointed this as the reason they rejected men and sought out women. During the mapping we didn't get further than describing this as a theme of the material. In the subsequent analysis—during the writing—we worked a lot on interpreting the informants' own understanding in light of violence and sexual abuse (see Eggebø et al., 2018, p. 122–3).

During the mapping we found the following overarching themes: racism, living openly or closeted/stealth as queer, discrimination, homophobia, immigration experiences, places, religion, sexual abuse, law, encountering institutions, disappointment with Norway, family, isolation/loneliness, love/partnership, queer networks, health, and reflections on methodology. Here is a photo illustrating the mapping process:
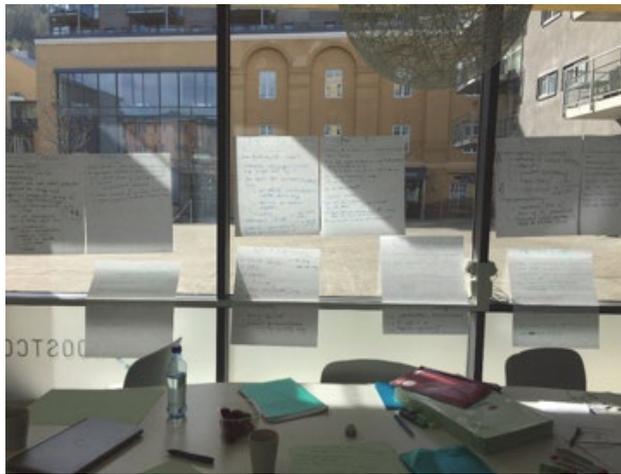
Figure 2: Mapping themes (step 2) during the analysis workshop we organised in Trondheim, May 2018, as a part of the research project "Queer Migrants".

During the mapping phase we only opened slightly for discussions around what could be important themes and relevant interpretations. We focussed on listening to each other and collaborated to put words to as much as possible of what the material could shed light on. As Widerberg (2001, p. 120) also has described it, we wrote down everything we saw as interesting, without systematising or evaluating in terms of importance.

Even though the mapping was empirical it is important to emphasise that the mapping process was also informed by theory in the sense that the research group was well oriented within the relevant research fields. In the project "Ageing at home" we made theory and previous research into an explicit part of the mapping phase. I presented main points from the research I had read up on from the field of ageing and care and summarised with the following list of keywords:

"Sociological literature about ageing, sociological theory about individualisation, risk, body, agency and care used by studies on ageing, network theory, research on care,

gender perspective on ageing, multicultural perspective on ageing, gerontology (medical, social, critical), "ageism" (alienation, stigma, and stereotyping), empirical analysis of older people's perspectives on ageing, "the third and the fourth age", social politics and care politics, "disengagement" theory, professional perspectives, geographic perspective on ageing, welfare technology, innovation, and "successful ageing".

We used a part of the contributions from the first mapping of the research fields when working on the articles from the project. Other contributions proved to be less relevant and, in any case, we worked thoroughly through several other contributions in the continued writing and analysis.

Step 3: Sorting Themes
The next step of the collective process of analysis was a discussion of how to group the themes we had found in the mapping phase. This step in the process is equivalent to what Tjora (2017) called "code grouping" and Johannessen et al. (2018) called "categorisation". We can start by asking: Which of the mapped themes belong together and what is the connection between them? What is an important and overarching theme and what are the subthemes? (See Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 82). In "Queer Migrants" we continued working on grouping the theme sheets from the mapping phase. We moved the sheets from one wall to another and discussed the connection between the different themes. Tjora (2018, p. 53–54) has pointed out that it can be useful to do the grouping work collectively, write on sheets and physically move around notes and paper, which was also our experience. Moving paper around can look like more of a practical than an analytic exercise, but in fact moving the theme sheets—and moving around physically in the room—felt stimulating in terms of the thought processes. Here is a photo illustrating the work process:

Figure 3: The author at work during the theme grouping (step 3).

We grouped together isolation/loneliness, love/partnerships, family, and social networks because the main theme for all of these is relationships. Encounters with institutions, the law, disappointment with Norway, we grouped together because the disappointment that several informants expressed centres around laws and regulations and how they were met at different institutions. Sexual abuse and health were grouped together, because abuse to a great extent leads to health problems. Racism, discrimination, homophobia, and living openly or closeted/stealth as queer were grouped together because they are about the two dimensions of discrimination that form the focus of this project: migrant background on the one hand, and gender and sexual orientation on the other. Experiences of migration and stories of places were grouped together. We chose to place religion as a sub point within several of the other groups of themes.

A key point in this phase of the analysis work is to be open to discussion, disagreement, and different interpretations of the material. During the processes of analysis that I have taken part in, the participants have had many common ac-

ademic frames of reference. The discussions were mainly characterised by continuing to develop each other's points rather than any direct disagreement. But it is not difficult to imagine that if you come from different disciplines, with quite different theoretical perspectives and academic interests and with obvious differences in the participant's status, the process could be much more frustrating (see Bilda et al., 2006, p. 228; Cornish et al., 2014, p. 10–2; Potter, 1998, for a discussion about trust, differences in disciplines, participant's status and positions of power). However, frustration about differences of opinion and a lack of understanding can also be productive, as I experienced in "Ageing at home". One of the members of the research group had a background in social work and entered the project wanting to explore social care. At the beginning I found it difficult to understand what he meant by this, and I didn't see the research articles and definitions he referenced as elucidating. But as we continued working with the empirical material—first during the workshop and later during the writing process—the concepts made more sense to me. Collectively, we developed our own definition and understanding of social care, and this concept became one of the main points in our analysis (Munkejord et al., 2018).

Step 4: Outline and Work Plan
The last step of the process was to make an outline and work plan for the writing. In "Queer Migrants" the aim was to map several different dimensions of living condition amongst queer people with migrant backgrounds in Norway. Therefore, we chose to look at one theme per chapter, and use the theme sheets as a starting point for finding headings and research questions. We wrote down suggestions for chapters based on themes on A3 sheets and put them on the wall. Photo below illustrates the process:

Figure 4: Elisabeth Stubberud taking notes from the process of making an outline and work plan (step 4).

After agreeing on which chapters to include, we discussed the order. Then we decided who should start writing which chapter and wrote down a detailed disposition with themes and hypotheses.

In "Ageing at home" we chose to write a report in Norwegian and several research articles. At the workshop we made an outline for the report and divided the writing tasks among us. In addition, we discussed plans for article publications and presented five concrete ideas for the articles to each other. Here is an example:

"Taking a closer look at the concept of social care. In Norway, this concept is closely connected to the health care profession. The professionals we interviewed emphasise that something is missing, but it is not part of their job. But who should fill the gap? A model is needed that can get a foothold within the reality of the Nordic countries."

We continued developing this idea during our writing process. First through the work on the project report, where we wrote a separate chapter about the perspectives of the professionals in home-based care for older people. Later, we developed this into a research article and through this writing process the analyses were made more precise, nuanced, and connected to relevant international care research and theory.

Analysis after the Workshop
After the workshop, we worked separately reading through the material again, with a focus on the themes, chapters, and article projects we were responsible for. In "Queer Migrants in Norway", for example, I first worked on the theme "racism and discrimination due to migrant background" and labelled all the data connected to this. We used the computer program Nvivo and worked in the same file so that everyone had access to all the codes.[7] At the same time, I started writing the relevant chapter.

In my opinion, it is a good idea to start the writing process right after the workshop and not wait until you've gone through all the data again. This is because the continued interpretation and analysis to a great extent happens through the writing process (Skilbrei, 2019). Collective quantitative analysis was the starting point for the analysis. But the time consuming and difficult work finding strong analytical tools, by interpreting the empirical data in light of previous research and theoretical perspectives, was done mainly in front of our individual computer screens, combined with regular phone and skype calls and taking turns contributing to the different chapters.

In "Queer Migrants in Norway" both the authors wrote together from the start. In the articles from "Ageing at home" the first author wrote a draft and took the main responsibility for revisions, while the others wrote and commented on these drafts in several rounds. Collectively, we have tried different interpretations, changed the structure of the texts and scrutinised each contribution, and the collective process

of analysis laid a good foundation for a collective writing process.

Discussion

Collective qualitative analysis has been useful and important in the research projects I myself and colleagues have worked on. Since we've all actively taken part in the analysis of the data, we feel confident that the results are not just the product of a single point of view. Collective qualitative analysis has also been a positive way to handle the feeling of being overwhelmed and confused when engaging with large amounts of qualitative data. Moreover, the method has proved itself to be an efficient way to start the process of analysis and we quickly began the process of writing. We have influenced each other's thinking in the early phases of analysis and the process of writing has therefore been characterised by dialogue, which has been successfully incorporated. But most importantly, collective qualitative analysis has created a room for collaborative creative analytical processes where we feel we have reached exciting, nuanced, and valid interpretations. This has had a positive effect on the writing process, and I believe it has strengthened the quality of the publications.

Collective qualitative analysis has also invited a collectively oriented process in the analysis and writing after the workshops, and it has opened up for transparency in the data collection process, as well: in "Queer migrants" we first carried out a pilot interview each and then listened to each other's interviews and discussed the interview situations and common strategies for further data collection. Sharing recordings and transcriptions made us vulnerable to criticism in terms of interview methods. But also made us better equipped to interpret each other's interviews, because they gave us a deeper insight into the interview situation and other ways of interviewing. At another workshop for collective qualitative analysis researchers or practitioners have been present who have not taken part in the actual data collec-

tion (Eggebø et al., 2019b; Stubberud & Akin, 2018). An important strategy can be for the participants that haven't collected data to listen to and read through a few interviews ahead of the workshop. But we have also experienced that it has worked fine for people to participate without knowledge of the empirical data in cases where the person is familiar with the field already. The person who has carried out the interview, will maybe always have a better insight into the actual interview situation than the others and in the writing process we have therefore provided suggestions, corrections, and nuances when others have analysed "our" interviews. In the groups that I and other colleagues have worked in, we have had positive experiences sharing and participating in analysing each other's interviews.

Together with the others in the research group, I have discussed the possibilities for further developing collective qualitative analysis. Firstly, I think that the method has potential for being used in supervision. As I wrote in the introduction, during my MA and PhD I felt insecure and alone when starting the analysis of the collected material. In this phase I think it would have been useful to have participated in collective qualitative analysis together with for example, my tutor or other researchers and students. A collective process would have made me feel more confident continuing the work and there would have been a lot to learn from analysing together with experienced researchers. Kvale has described this as practice based learning —that's to say the activity, in this case collective qualitative analysis, "is taught by exploring the activity in collaborative research practices" (Kvale, 1999, p. 149, translated). From the supervisor's perspective, collective qualitative analysis could give a more thorough insight into the data that you might otherwise have had, which probably would make the further tutoring easier and more interesting. It would also be easier to write a research article together with the student/candidate at a later point in time, if relevant.

However, it's worth bearing in mind that the status hierarchy between students and tutors can hinder the process, for example if the tutor has too much power to define and the student has little room to develop their own interpretations (see Cornish et al., 2014; Potter, 1998, for a discussion of status and power hierarchy in collective processes). Another challenge is that the workshop takes up a great deal of the time available for tutoring. One way to solve this challenge is to have group tutorials. The tutor could join in one of the workshops where you analyse one set of data, but where the whole group takes part in the process. Subsequently, the students could themselves organise the workshops where they analysed the data from the other students according to the model of the process the tutor joined. Students and PhD candidates can, of course, also organise analysis workshops without a tutor.

Another possibility for further development is to use collective qualitative analysis to include people that are not researchers or students in the process of analysis. They could be collaborators in the project or representatives for the groups being researched. In "Queer Migrants" we organised a workshop where we included people who are queer migrants to contribute to the first draft of the report. But it could also be possible to include them in the analysis workshop.[8] As Widerberg points out:

"In this way, different forms of collectives could be used at different points to contribute to a richer interpretation. The research subject would be able to contribute, for example by clarifying the role our understanding plays in the interpretation of their statements" (Widerberg, 2001, p. 29, translated). Participating in the analytical process should also make people who are not researchers better able to use, discuss, and criticise research (Allen et al., 2019). A possible challenge is that the research subjects could experience the interpretations as problematic, and the question is how you handle this when they are invited into the process of analysis.

A third possibility for development is to use collective qualitative analysis to analyse other types of qualitative data other than interviews. In "Ageing at home" for example, we analysed—in addition to qualitative interviews—the field notes as a part of the process. I imagine it could be an idea to work in a similar way to the process I've described here, also if the data consists of observational notes, photos or texts (for example literature, textbooks, newspaper articles, social media and similar sources). You could also use other analytical strategies apart from thematic analysis. With a narrative analysis, it could be useful to present a few selected excerpts in greater detail, shown text extracts on screen, and discuss interpretations. I also think that collective analysis could be useful in analysing quantitative data, even though you would probably have to organise the process differently. In "Queer Migrants" we also started the analysis of the quantitative data with a collective workshop and in an ongoing research project about the living conditions of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, and queer people (LGBTQI people),[9] we are planning to test collective analysis of quantitative data.

Collective qualitative analysis—as I've described it here—is a starting point for the analysis. It doesn't provide any guarantees of good, interesting, and valid analysis. As Rapley has pointed out, good qualitative data analysis can never be summed up by "a list of specific steps or procedures that have been undertaken. Above all, you need to develop a working, hands-on, empirical, tacit knowledge of analysis. This should enable you to develop, what I can only think to call, 'a qualitative analytic attitude'" (Rapley as quoted in Silverman, 2014, p. 115). In this article I've emphasised a thorough understanding of the four steps of the process, so that the reader can gain a clear understanding of how we've worked. The description might be slightly coloured by being a recipe, which is useful when you're about to do something you haven't done before (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Dreyfus et al., 1980, p. 283; Johannessen et al., 2018). However, the aim

of collective qualitative analysis is to create an analytic process where we can learn, correct, and develop the analytical attitude in dialogue with others. The aim of the article is to contribute to—and encourage others to take part in—the development of collective methods of analysis.

About the Article

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