

Two empty rectangular input boxes, one with a thin grey border and one with a thin blue border.

BOOK REVIEW: Sam Bardaouil, ‘Surrealism in Egypt: Modernism and the Art and Liberty Group’

A conversation with Mohamed Melehi

Heritage is to Art as the Medium is to the Message: The Responsibility to Palestinian Tatreez

[‘We’, A Global Community Suspended in Time and Space: A Study of İnci Eviner’s Work in the 2019 Venice Biennial](#)

Grab the Form: A Conversation with Hafiz Rancajale

‘A Matter of Liberation: Artwork from Prison Renaissance’

The Colonial Spectre of Classicism: Reflections on ‘White Psyche’ at The Whitworth Gallery

BOOK REVIEW: Engagement or

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‘We’, A Global Community Suspended in Time and Space: A Study of İnci Eviner’s Work in the 2019 Venice Biennial

27 January 2021

[Rana Öztürk](#)

What do we feel when our freedom is physically restricted, when our bodies are shut inside rooms? What new skills will we develop to adapt in this situation? What is expressed by an open door, by a glass falling to the ground? And when we go out, what kind of change do the sensations we experience undergo; what about our gestures? How is the space between our consciousness and our perception filled? Perhaps I am searching for answers to all of these questions. ^[1]

İnci Eviner, 2019

The outbreak of a pandemic that has affected everyday lives across the globe has caused a great rupture in our experience of time, our physical activities and usual spaces of living. Going through this pandemic over 2020 that enforced a lockdown, with many suffering patients and deaths, as well as the severe economic consequences for many, a similar fear, anxiety and uncertainty is shared with others across the world. In its early days especially,

<p>Acquiescence? On 'Critique in Practice: Renzo Martens' Episode III: Enjoy Poverty'</p> <p>'Errata' in retro-prospect</p>	<p>the pandemic created a sense that we are at the end of something, a feeling that nothing will be the same again after the plague disappears. Life as we know it has been suspended in real terms, perhaps so fast and on such a global scale, and for the first time in human history, that we have really experienced a sense of community with fellow citizens of the globe, exemplifying what Jean-Luc Nancy explained about history being a communal thing. According to Nancy, history 'does not belong primarily to time, nor to succession, nor to causality, but to community, or to being-in-common.' [2]</p>
<p>Cameron Rowland, '3 & 4 Will. IV c. 73'</p> <p>Pushing against the roof of the world: ruangrupa's prospects for documenta fifteen</p>	<p>Even though the circumstances are very different to what Nancy was referring to in his essay 'Finite History', the pandemic has created the conditions for an experience of time as shared but also suspended: 'Our time is the time, or a time... of the <i>suspense</i> or <i>suspension</i> of history – in the sense both of a certain rhythm and of uneasy expectation.' [3] This history refers not to something that is past, some kind of a narrative or knowledge, but something that is being performed. This is different from the understanding of history as a narrative that leads to a goal or purpose; it is about experiencing a time that is actually suspended.</p>
<p>BOOK REVIEW: Tom Holert, 'Knowledge Beside Itself: Contemporary Art's Epistemic Politics'</p>	<p>'We' as a community of others</p>
<p>BOOK REVIEW: Laleh Khalili, 'Sinews of War and Trade: Shipping and Capitalism in the Arabian Peninsula'</p>	<p>This context offers a new way of looking at İnci Eviner's installation <i>We, Elsewhere</i> in the pavilion of Turkey at the 2019 Venice Biennial, a work that has become more and more relevant to our individual as well as collective living conditions during lockdown. Taking Hannah Arendt's text 'We Refugees' from 1943 as a reference point, the installation not only directly referred to mass displacement, the displaced and marginalised groups that are struggling to find their voice and place in a society, but also to all of us, as individuals struggling to position ourselves at a time of extreme uncertainty and fragility.</p>
<p>Maria Thereza Alves's 'Recipes for Survival'</p> <p>To Don Duration: Lisl Ponger's 'The Master Narrative und Don Durito in 10 Chapters'</p>	<p>The 'We' in the title evokes the title of this article, highlighting a sense of shared experience, or a community that we might also belong to. Especially in the current pandemic conditions, a sense of a global community, despite the inequalities in the severity of experience of the situation, makes this idea of a 'We' all the more pertinent. Have we not been, after all, in a state of suspense, trying to take refuge in a different form? Despite the attempts at normalisation undertaken by various governments, there are still uncertainties regarding if and when life will actually return back to its usual flow, creating even more questions about our current conditions under refuge and how we will continue living together globally as a community after this.</p>
<p>BOOK REVIEW: Oliver Marchart, 'Conflictual Aesthetics'</p> <p>Karol Radziszewski's 'The Power of Secrets'</p>	
<p>The Method of Abjection in Mati Diop's 'Atlantics'</p> <p>How are the visual arts responding to the COVID-19 crisis?</p>	
<p>Art in Contemporary Afghanistan</p>	

BOOK REVIEW: Kate Morris, 'Shifting Grounds: Landscape in Contemporary Native American Art'

Boring, Everyday Life in War Zones: A conversation with Jonathan Watkins

'Luchita Hurtado: I Live I Die I Will be Reborn'

Movements, Borders, Repression, Art: An interview with artist Zeyno Pekünlü, March 2020

'Shoplifting from Woolworths and Other Acts of Material Disobedience', an exhibition of work by Paula Chambers

Images in Spite of All: ZouZou Group's film installation '– door open –'

Kamal Boullata: For the Love of Jerusalem

Paul O'Kane, 'The Carnival of Popularity Part II: Towards a "mask-ocracy"'

BOOK REVIEW: Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, 'Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism'

'Knotworm': Pauline de Souza interviews Sam Keogh

BOOK REVIEW: Vessela Nozharova,



İnci Eviner, *We, Elsewhere*, 2019, mixed media installation with architectural elements, video, drawing, metal, ceramic and sound, installation view in the Pavilion of Turkey at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019; photo by Poyraz Tütüncü, courtesy of IKS

Yet, there is a disjuncture that continuously disrupts such a notion of a community: there is also the 'Elsewhere' – which suggests another experience in another place, or the place and state of a displaced other. This relates to another drama, a drama that had been going on at the border between Turkey and Greece and which had escalated, with the Turkish government deciding to let all refugees pass through its border to Europe after the killing of its soldiers in İdlib. Just a month before the COVID-19 outbreak, the issue of refugees was the top subject in both the Turkish and the international news until it was interrupted by the news of the pandemic. While the movement of people was put on hold for several months due to the travel limitations, the people actually on the move, the refugees, the displaced and marginal groups, have continued to struggle for survival in invisible ways. And as questions about ongoing conflicts, borders, international politics, and how to act in local and global solidarity, continue to wait for urgent answers, the consequences of mass displacement and the issues of refugees and immigrants have remained in the background.

In a way, the title of Eviner's Venice installation creates an ambiguity between 'We' and the others who are not part of that 'We'. It is a dichotomy experienced in our everyday lives and constantly forces us to negotiate a position. Given the fact that world history is based on mass displacements and migrations, many societies need to reflect on their history and the power relations engrained within and across societies through generations. The Black Lives Matter protests that arose in the US and across the world following the killing of the African American George Floyd by a member of the police is only a recent example that highlights the currency and immediacy of this ambiguity. Hence, we can consider *We, Elsewhere* as an all-inclusive title that not only refers to the refugees of our time but to all of us

<p>'Introduction to Bulgarian Contemporary Art 1982–2015'</p>	
<p>A Place for/in Place of Identity? A conversation with Larissa Sansour</p> <p>Danh Vo's Exorcism of Vietnam</p>	<p>as a community inhabiting this world and constantly negotiating the complex nature of otherness. It is through this tension between being an individual but also a member of a community that a notion of otherness is continuously being defined and redefined. This and the institutional structures that enforce the notions and relations of otherness is what Eviner has always been interested in. She has developed a space that offers the conflicted experience of a community, which could possibly suggest a shared time. According to Nancy, by only being in a communal time, something takes place, or happens, that he calls 'spacing of time'. This spacing of time makes it possible to say 'we' and 'our' time. [4] In this sense, Eviner's installation also suggested a 'we' that includes all humankind through the sharing of a certain common space of time. It was an attempt at opening a space for this happening of 'we' as a 'community of otherness', and hence the occurrence of history as a common existence.</p>
<p>BOOK REVIEW: Jessica L Horton, 'Art for an Undivided Earth: The American Indian Movement Generation'</p> <p>In conversation with Adam Pendleton: What is Black Dada?</p>	<p>Eviner's Venice exhibition offered a comprehensive view of her artistic work as an example of her multi-disciplinary practice, which brings together drawing, video, performance and sculpture, as well as presenting her conceptual integrity. In this work, traces of her earlier concerns could be seen regarding social traumas, marginal groups such as immigrants or refugees, mass displacement and exile, the politics of the body and space and how they are used and shaped through the oppressive mechanisms of society, and the political nature of gestures and identity. The installation in the Arsenale in Venice integrated several elements within an architectural structure that almost functioned as a stage for the performing characters in Eviner's videos, as well as for the audience (a short video tour of the installation can be seen here on YouTube). This was further enhanced with sound that seemed to come from the depths of the structure, almost creating a sense of an underground life beneath the feet of the viewers. Moving images of the same figures kept appearing on different walls of the structure, so that the viewer encountered them more than once as if these figures were also moving across the space. This continuous movement of figures increased the sense of disorientation that the architectural structure created, almost suggesting a continuous loop that the audience also became a part of.</p>
<p>Edward Chell: 'Common Ground'</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: Jonas Staal, 'Propaganda Art in the 21st Century'</p>	
<p>The 2019 Istanbul Biennial</p> <p>The Aliveness of Moses Quiquine</p>	<p>The ambiguity evoked in the title was further enhanced by the double role deliberately given to the viewer, combined with the architectural setting. While experiencing the exhibition, the viewer was an agent both lost and disturbed in the space, holding a potentially active role in formulating his or her own position as a viewing subject and as one struggling to find a language to relate to others. You wandered around the installation almost as one of the characters that appeared in the videos. In Eviner's earlier video works, since her <i>The Parliament</i> in 2008, figures appear in sections of architectural structures and in some labyrinth-like underground tunnels below them. In Venice the artist developed this three-dimensional structure, providing the viewer with an active position that incorporates you as part of the whole installation, a body among other bodies that needed to orient itself in space, becoming a witness, or an outsider, that has to adapt to the circumstances offered. This was like an abstraction of a communal space, a kind of stage that activates everyone on it. This tension between being a</p>
<p>'Terror Nullius' by Soda_Jerk</p> <p>Archive Matters: Fiona Tan at the Ludwig Museum</p>	
<p>Communicating Difficult Pasts: A Latvian initiative explores artistic research on historical trauma</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: Translating the World into Being - A review of 'At Home in the</p>	

World: The Art and Life of Gulammohammed Sheikh'

Visiting the Arabian Peninsula: A Brief Glimpse of Contemporary and Not-So-Contemporary Art and Culture in KSA, aka the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

[AR]T, Apple and Us

BOOK REVIEW: David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan, 'Fictioning: The Myth-Functions of Contemporary Art and Philosophy'

Art and Theory in an Anti-fascist Year: An Interview with Kuba Szedrer

Paul O'Kane, 'The Carnival of Popularity'

BOOK REVIEW: Nora Sternfeld, 'Das radikaldemokratische Museum'

The 2019 Whitney Biennial

'Passage to Asylum: The Journey of a Million Refugees' – Dilpreet Bhullar in conversation with Kalyani Nedungadi and Maya Gupta

On Brexit in Vienna: Mirroring the Social Decay

Forever Young: Juvenilia, Amateurism, and the Popular Past

viewer as well as one of the actors held the political potential of the work to offer an understanding of a 'we' in our contemporary condition that is not immediately exclusive by its nature. Presented as part of an international exhibition, the work also gained even greater resonance in a global context, in which we constantly negotiate our position as a participant in a community and as an 'other' at the same time.



İnci Eviner, *We, Elsewhere*, 2019, mixed media installation with architectural elements, video, drawing, metal, ceramic and sound, installation view in the Pavilion of Turkey at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019; photo by Poyraz Tütüncü, courtesy of IKS V

The stage-like structure allowed the viewer to enter the work from different points, with the possibility of starting from the sides and looking at moving images as well as the artist's drawings in display boxes, drawings that seemed to present the thought process of the whole work. It was also possible to climb up a ramp through the labyrinth-like metal structures that resembled architectural fixtures or furniture, such as bars and railings, school desks or bunk beds – all usually associated with communal living spaces, or institutions of order and control like prisons, camps, detention centres, schools and dormitories. These structures looked almost like the dysfunctional ruins of a past civilisation. A young figure, possibly a boy, caught the eye of the visitor while they were on the way up the ramp, as if swearing threateningly and looking you directly in the eye. Such disturbance continued throughout the whole installation, with the useless appearance of furniture cut up into two halves, the metal framing of bunk beds hanging down the sides, desks cut in two but joined to each other in various combinations that formed a kind of unity but remained unusable, a line of urinals along the left side of the structure, all in halves and with stains of black ink. The ramp led up to a double screen video projection, while in a small room in the lower part of the structure a drawing of a section of a whale with moving figures was projected on the ground.

(or 'Transvaluing Values in the Age of the Archive')

Captain Cook Reimagined from the British Museum's Point of View

Okwui Enwezor: In Memoriam

BOOK REVIEW: Chad Elias, 'Posthumous Images: Contemporary Art and Memory Politics in Post-Civil War Lebanon'

Arthur Jafa at the Berkeley Art Museum

Repair, Ergonomics & Quantum Physics: Reflections on how Cairo's contemporary art scene is reviving vanishing futures

Vivan Sundaram: Disjunctures

Rome Leads to All Roads: Power, Affection and Modernity in Alfonso Cuarón's 'Roma'

Still Caught in the Acts: 'Mating Birds Vol. 2'

A Political Gemstone Kingdom of Natural-Cultural Feelings from Bucharest to Warsaw: Larisa Crunțeanu's 'Aria Mineralia' exhibition

INTERVIEW: The Politics of Shame – Ai Weiwei in conversation with Anthony Downey

The setting that Eviner created offered a suspended space for her characters and for the audience. The space seemed to be due for a change and transformation, yet the control mechanisms that had been operating continued to be limiting. Among the remains of institutional fixtures, there was still the memory of times that had shaped relationships within the community for so long. The characters that remained underground until then were now dealing with such memory, as well as with other individual memories to engage with each other, almost trying to find a new language and a means of bodily communication. It is only by finding that again that these characters would start to become subjects and form a new community. As such, the stage in the exhibition was thus a space of suspended history, and the figures and the audience were there to perform, to create a communal time, 'our time'.



İnci Eviner, *We, Elsewhere*, 2019, mixed media installation with architectural elements, video, drawing, metal, ceramic and sound, installation view in the Pavilion of Turkey at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019; photo by Poyraz Tütüncü, courtesy of IKS

'We' as Relational Bodies

The performative quality of *We, Elsewhere* relies on this idea of being a subject in community – in other words, a subject in relationship to others. Moving around the exhibition space the viewer encountered Eviner's video characters that were continuously moving, making repetitive gestures, interacting and communicating with each other. These characters are on a blank background, so the only point of reference for their location was the architectural stage Eviner had constructed. Perhaps this was to suggest that

<p>BOOK REVIEW: Renate Dohmen's 'Encounters Beyond the Gallery'</p> <p>Juliet Steyn reviews Juan Cruz's 'I don't know what I'm doing but I'm trying very hard.'</p>	<p>their existence as subjects was detached from a past time and place, and it would be realised within this current space through these actions. The characters look as if they are trying to communicate, to find gestures or a voice to express themselves and to relate to each other; they are characters who have lost their language in the absence of a reference point in their current circumstances. Just like Arendt's refugees, in their desire to become prospective citizens these figures are trying to become subjects and to create new identities not associated with being refugees, which would allow them to once again become part of society.</p>
<p>INTERVIEW: Mediating Social Media – Akram Zaatari in Conversation with Anthony Downey</p> <p>An Indigenous Intervention: Richard Bell's Salon des Refusés at the 2019 Venice Biennale</p>	<p>As a refugee herself in the United States, Arendt expressed the feeling of loss and the inability to express oneself in everyday situations: 'We lost our home, which means the familiarity of daily life. We lost our occupation, which means the confidence that we are of some use in this world. We lost our language, which means the naturalness of reactions, the simplicity of gestures, the unaffected expression of feelings.' [5] Arendt writes that a refugee is constantly changing identities, depending on where, when and with whom he or she engages with. A refugee is detached from the past, not only by force but also through her/his own choice in trying to fit in to the new societies as well. This refusal to have a fixed identity in order to become subjects is also the case for Eviner's figures. The characters in her films do not represent their horrible pasts or their current states of struggle. They are in a state of being-in-common, and in a process of happening, rather than figures that are already beings and representative of a certain community. Only through being in community and in communication can they become subjects, since 'Community is no longer the essence of individuals, an essence that is given prior to them. For community does not consist of anything other than the communication of separate "beings", which exists as such only through communication.' [6]</p>
<p>INTERVIEW: Sunil Shah, 'Uganda Stories'</p> <p>Zarina's 'Dark Roads': Exile, Statelessness and the Tenacity of Nostalgia</p>	<p>Nancy talks about 'selfness' and 'otherness' without an essence, 'the otherness of existence happens only as "togetherness"'. So, others are not individuals that share common traits, but are others only in togetherness with other subjects. 'I am "I" (I exist) only if I can say "we".' [7] In that sense we are all others in a togetherness, and 'the way we exist together' is how 'our world' is. Accordingly, 'We have to decide to – and decide how to – be in common, to allow existence to exist... it is a decision about politics, about if and how we allow otherness to exist, to inscribe itself as community and history.' [8] The figures in Eviner's videos are also struggling to find a way of being together. They are not trying to become individual subjects but are in a process of relating to each other as subjects. The viewers are there as witnesses to this process, but at the same time need to negotiate their own position with regard to the figures. Watching the figures is disconcerting. For a moment they seem to be enacting gestures of love, affection, friendship, but these might then suddenly turn out to be gestures that are hurtful and damaging. It is as if the characters in the videos are looking for ways to move together and in harmony. Yet they also look like they have physical disabilities, lacking some limbs or aptitudes, hence unable to communicate through language and gestures. They are in a shared struggle to find a voice and language through</p>
<p>BOOK REVIEW: 'Fahrelnissa Zeid: Painter of Inner Worlds' by Adila Laïdi-Hanieh</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: Iain Chambers, 'Postcolonial Interruptions, Unauthorised Modernities'</p>	<p>The 2017 Venice Biennale and the Colonial Other</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: David Kunzle, 'CHESUCRISTO: The Fusion in Image and Word of Che Guevara and Jesus Christ'</p>
<p>The 2017 Venice Biennale and the Colonial Other</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: David Kunzle, 'CHESUCRISTO: The Fusion in Image and Word of Che Guevara and Jesus Christ'</p>	

Longing for
Heterotopia: 'Silver
Sehnsucht' in
Silvertown

BOOK REVIEW: Future
Imperfect:
Contemporary Art
Practices and Cultural
Institutions in the
Middle East

Art as Anachronism

INTERVIEW: John
Akomfrah

Steven Eastwood: 'the
interval and the
instant'

INTERVIEW: Sala-
manca

BOOK REVIEW: Open
Systems Reader -
Tomorrow is not
Promised! edited by
Gulsen Bal

Paul O'Kane, 'The
Other Side of the
Word: Translation as
Migration in the
Anthologised Writings
of Lee Yil'

'The Self-Evolving
City': Architecture and
Urbanisation in Seoul

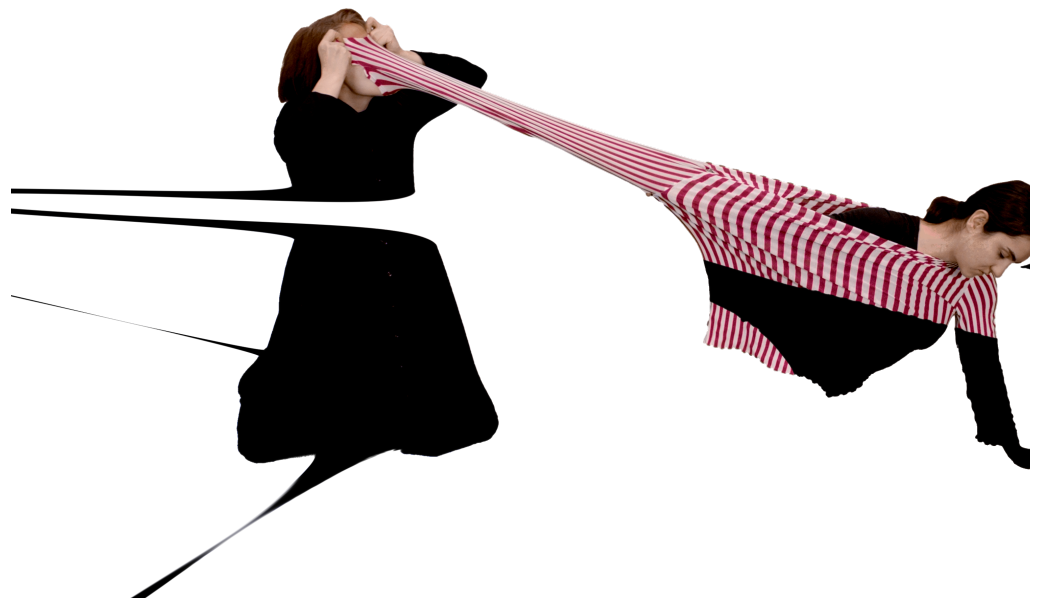
The Folkestone
Triennial 2017

Sharjah Biennial 13
Offsite: Ramallah

Theory of the
Unfinished Building:
On the Politico-
Aesthetics of
Construction in China

which to communicate, with their facial expressions, body movements and the repeated gestures of their body parts.

Even though they seem to emerge from everyday life situations, the gestures in Eviner's work are deprived of context and of temporal sequence. They are like citations or quotations that break with the contexts from which they originated. [9] This is enhanced by the lack of a background; the figures appear in blank space, unlike Eviner's earlier works that presented them moving on some architectural sections. However, their isolation denaturalises their sequence and their ability to form perceptual unities. These characters have bodies that are disfigured or lacking some parts or functions. They seem to have no coordination, and their gestures and expressions no longer match. Their gestures lack the traditional support that would give them meaning; their movements seem to be incomplete and undefinable through existing words and contexts. At the same time they have the potential to reveal something that has not been revealed and to initiate a transformation. In Judith Butler's words: 'Disconcerted moments of citation and incomplete performances can bring to a halt what has become both very usual and utterly wrong'. [10] Eviner's characters seem to reproduce some of the existing gestures and definitions, but before they even resolve in a definite conclusion they put a halt to those gestures and come up with something new. In that way, a certain gesture is never repeated, which would have affirmed a fixed identity, but actions and their relation to each other are constantly reconfigured in a continuous flow of movements.



İnci Eviner, video still from *We, Elsewhere*, 2019, courtesy of the artist

The tension caused by the lack of a context is also enhanced by the architectural environment. The viewers were inside an architectural structure that offered potential movements and mobility; however, it was also delimiting and divisive because of the railings and barriers that seemed to prevent access. The suggested links to the oppressive mechanisms of state

<p>Marcus Verhagen, 'Flows and Counterflows: Globalisation in Contemporary Art'</p> <p>An Architecture of Memory</p>	<p>power – such as prison, military barracks, hospitals and school systems – also diminished their potential role as a support mechanism for free movement, and so mobility was somehow restricted. What Judith Butler highlights with respect to the necessity of infrastructural or social conditions of support for embodied collective action is limited here. Performance relies upon social relations, infrastructures and communities to take place. While performing, bodies are also reproducers of those relations. Hence, there is a chance to recreate the social conditions and community through the kinds of performances undertaken. ^[11] But with the absence or inadequacy of infrastructural support, what forms of action can take place? As the body of the viewer was actually integrated into the work, the audience also had to face the same question while establishing a relation with the figures in the work, as well as with other people.</p>
<p>Learning from documenta 14: Athens, Post-Democracy, and Decolonisation</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: Joan Key, 'Contemporary Korean Art: Tansaekhwa and the Urgency of Method'</p>	<p>Even though Eviner would not have known at the time about the lockdown to be enforced by governments, in making this work she questions the effects of physical restriction on the body, the gestures and conditions applied by the disciplinary mechanisms of modern societies. In line with Foucault's associating of the plague as a legitimate cause to generate biopolitics and the regulation of everyday existence of citizens, ^[12] the current virus crisis has shown us that governments are ready to takeover control of our bodies, along with daily leisure and economic activities, for the sake of health precautions. Many scholars have argued that this could even lead to legitimacy for the deployment of new totalitarian surveillance tools by governments. ^[13] As seen through this experience, the human body is a very fragile thing when up against outside forces, and its freedom is continuously dependent on and fractured by the state. In industrial societies, the individuals to be disciplined move in a closed system of disciplinary and architectural structures through which they pass, starting with the family, and continuing with school, prison, barracks, hospital, factory and workplace, almost like moles that move inside readily structured spaces and submit to the limitations of those sites. ^[14] The noise coming from below the ground in Eviner's installation could indeed be thought of as coming from the moles of the disciplinary society and the figures that have emerged above ground are somehow freed to find their own language in bodily communication. The open structure created by Eviner provided a space that was dark, but with the potential to recreate a new way of existing together within the fragmented remains of an architectural system.</p>
<p>Kader Attia: Dispossession</p> <p>BOOK REVIEW: Zhuang Wubin, 'Photography in Southeast Asia: A Survey'</p>	
<p>Spectral Anxieties of Postculture</p> <p>'Exercises of Freedom': Documenta 14</p>	
<p>Bloom</p> <p>Artes Mundi 7</p>	
<p>Post-Perspectival Art and Politics in Post-Brexit Britain: (Towards a Holistic Relativism)</p> <p>A Short History of Blasphemy</p>	
<p>BOOK REVIEW: Moulim El Aroussi, 'Visual Arts in the Kingdom of Morocco'</p>	

The Vicissitudes of
Conduct

South Korea's Painful
Past

Return of the Condor
Heroes and Other
Narratives

'The Savage Hits Back'
Revisited: Art and
Global
Contemporaneity in
the Colonial Encounter

The Unrepresentables

From a Postconceptual
to an Aporetic
Conception of the
Contemporary

Christof Mascher:
Memory Palace

The 6th Marrakech
Biennale: 'Not New
Now'

The 2015 Venice
Biennale

Art in the Time of
Colony

Brad Prager, *After the
Fact: The Holocaust in
Twenty-First Century
Documentary Film*

In Media Res: Heiner
Goebbels, Aesthetics
of Absence: Text on
Theatre

Failure as Art and Art
History as Failure

Restrictions Apply

13th Istanbul Biennial



İnci Eviner, *We, Elsewhere*, 2019, mixed media installation with architectural elements, video, drawing, metal, ceramic and sound, installation view in the Pavilion of Turkey at the 58th Venice Biennale, 2019; photo by Poyraz Tütüncü, courtesy of IKS V

'We' as members of 'our global world'

The 58th International Venice Biennial took place from 11th May to 24th November 2019, with the title 'May You Live In Interesting Times'. As if it was a global curse, it was then only within the course of a few months that we found ourselves in such interesting times that no one had ever expected. The fact that the Biennial's title is an English expression translated, it is said, from the Chinese is an interesting coincidence, since the entire world then came under the threat of Covid19, a virus that spread initially from China. History has its awkward moments, and although not always the case, contemporary art can forecast those moments even without pointing them out directly. Eviner's installation *We, Elsewhere* was also a very timely one as it could be read with reference to urgent social and political issues that have a global impact. Yet, in the current conditions of the worldwide pandemic, the work gained even more relevance for its reflecting on global crises and their immediate consequences.

In line with the spatial experience that offered disconnected elements of institutional infrastructures, the work also offered a view of our fractured global community that has been self-destructing. This complies with what Nancy said regarding human history:

Our time is the time, or a time, when this history at least has been suspended: total war, genocide, the challenge to nuclear powers, implacable technology, hunger, and absolute misery, all these are, at

'Re: turn': Bashir Makhoul

Global Occupations of Art

The Politics of Identity for Korean Women Artists Living in Britain

Art Beyond Conflict

David Craven's Future Perfect

Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology

the least evident signs of self-destructing mankind, of self-annihilating history, without the possibility of the dialectic work of the negative.

[15]

What we are experiencing globally is a suspension between the previous narratives of history and the infinite development of time; the idea of time as a flow. In an era of global warming, and with all the catastrophes now deriving from human intervention in nature, along with a lack of willingness to take action due to the conflicts of interest in the global economy and politics, it is as if what is happening now is beyond graspable through past historical narratives. It is also beyond representable, as 'History no longer presents or represents any history, *any idea of history*.' [16]



İnci Eviner, video still from *We, Elsewhere*, 2019, courtesy of the artist

So we could argue that the 'We' that the exhibition referred to is the community of 'our time', a time that is beyond history but a time in the making. Today there is no belief in, or a sense of history as something that extends towards an ultimate truth, a narrative that explains the flow of events based on reason. This also points to the lack of an ultimate goodness. At the end of 'We Refugees', Arendt claimed that when Jews were outlawed it meant the outlawing of European nations too: 'The comity of European peoples went to pieces when, and because, it allowed its weakest member to be excluded and persecuted.' [17] While this was said in very different historical circumstances, what is happening now across the world, either with regard to the dismissal of ecological dangers or the human suffering caused by global conflicts, can also be interpreted as the invalidation of human values. The pandemic has revealed the fragility of living as a global society. We are physically and psychologically disconcerted by the effects of it. As a global community that is very disintegrated and unable to unite, there is now an even greater need to be a community. In a context where governments are

attempting to gain greater control and when there are increasing concerns for global wellbeing, we need to question more the power imbalances between different groups, states and citizens, between the powerful and the oppressed and the privileged and the marginalised. This is a place where everything is interconnected, and we need to find a way of existing together and making it 'our world' and 'our time'. What Eviner's work highlights is a potential new way of being that is possible through an active engagement of each individual in a collective existence.

[1] İnci Eviner, Interview with Bige Öner, in *We, Elsewhere*, published on the occasion of the pavilion of Turkey, 58th International Art Exhibition, La Biennale di Venezia, Istanbul Foundation for Culture and Arts, Yapı Kredi Yayınları, İstanbul, 2019, p 14

[2] Jean-Luc Nancy, 'Finite History', in *The Birth to Presence*, Brian Holmes, trans, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1993, p 143

[3] Ibid, p 144

[4] Ibid, p 151

[5] Hannah Arendt, 'We Refugees', in Jerome Kohn and Ron H Feldman, eds, *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books, New York, 2007, p 264

[6] Nancy, 'Finite History', op cit, p 154

[7] Ibid, p 155

[8] Ibid, p 166

[9] This is similar to how Judith Butler explained the relationship between citation and gesture with reference to Walter Benjamin's account of Brecht's epic theatre and Jacques Derrida in a talk entitled 'When Gestures Become Event' delivered in June 2014 at Sorbonne University, Paris; a video of the talk is available on [YouTube](#), accessed 2 September 2020

[10] Ibid

[11] Ibid

[12] See Michel Foucault, 'Panopticism', in *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Alan Sheridan, trans, Vintage Books, 1995, pp 195–228

[13] For example, Yuval Noah Hariri's notion of 'under-the-skin-surveillance' that makes use of biometric data such as body temperature, heart rate and blood pressure, suggests a greater level of threat that these tools could be used for monitoring purposes other than for health only; [Yuval Noah Hariri, 'The World after Coronavirus', *The Financial Times*, 20 March 2020](#), accessed 2 September 2020

- [14] Byung-Chul Han, *Psikopolitika: Neoliberalizm ve Yeni İktidar Teknikleri* (Psichopolitik: Neoliberalismus und die neuen Machttechniken), Haluk Barışcan, trans, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 2019, pp 27–28
- [15] Nancy, 'Finite History', op cit, pp 144–145
- [16] Ibid, p 148
- [17] Arendt, 'We Refugees', op cit, p 274

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