# CİMAM 2025
# Annual Conference

## 28–30 November 2025
## Turin

*Enduring Game:*
*Expanding New Models*
*Of Museum Making*

→ Conference Proceedings

# Day 1: Doing Less vs. Doing Differently Friday, 28 November OGR Torino

*Keynote speaker:*

Françoise Vergès, Senior Fellow, Sarah Parker Remond Centre for the Study of Racism and Racialisation, UCL, London, UK.

# Day 2: Mapping Desires Saturday, 29 November Carignano Theater

*Keynote speaker:*

Elizabeth Povinelli, Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology & Gender Studies, Columbia University, New York City, USA.

*Mapping Desires speakers:*

- Rustom Bharucha, Professor, İnternational Fellow of the British Academy in London, Kolkata, İndia.
- Azu Nwagbogu, Founder/Director, African Artist's Foundation & LagosPhoto Festival, Lagos, Nigeria.
- Karen Archey, Head of Curatorial Department, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany.
- Francesco Manacorda, Director, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, İtaly.
- Alessandra Ferrini, Artist, Researcher, Educator, University of the Arts London, Corby, UK.
- Onome Ekeh, Writer, Filmmaker, Lecturer, Academy of Art & Design, Basel, Switzerland.

Note: Click on any of the items above to jump to the corresponding page.
Throughout the document, click on any of the page numbers to return to the table of contents.

# Day 3: Transactions and Transmission. Tactics of Togetherness Sunday, 30 November Centrale Nuvola Lavazza

*Keynote speaker:*

Mariana Mazzucato, Professor in the Economics of İnnovation and Public Value, University College London (UCL), Founding Director of the UCL İnstitute for İnnovation & Public Purpose, London, UK.

Note: Click on any of the items above to jump to the corresponding page.
Throughout the document, click on any of the page numbers to return to the table of contents.

# Day 1:
# *Doing Less vs. Doing Differently*

## Friday, 28 November
## OGR Torino

# We Are Not Defeated

## Keynote speech by Françoise Vergès, Senior Fellow, Sarah Parker Remond Centre for the Study of Racism and Racialisation, UCL, London, UK.

*Biography*

Françoise Vergès (La Reunion/France) is a writer, decolonial antiracist feminist, independent curator, and an activist. Last publications: *A Program of Absolute Disorder. Decolonizing the Museum* (2024) and *Making the World Clean. Wasted Lives, Wasted Environment and Racial Capitalism* (2024).

*We Are Not Defeated*

İ have been invited by CİMAM to offer "intellectual and emotional guidance in this horrendous time." Etymologically, guidance means "to show the way," expressing a willingness to take the burden of authority, which is not necessarily authoritarian.[1] To accept this offer İ turn to Stuart Hall's proposition of "fighting without guarantee," here to indicate a way to engage with politics in a flexible way, considering a multitude of elements of an ever-changing world. Theory, Hall wrote, is a tool for analyzing a "set of

1 İn this presentation, İ drew from my book *Making the World Clean. Wasted Lives, Wasted Environment and Racial Capitalism* (Goldsmiths UP, 2025) and from discussions on the topic of basic vital needs that İ explored in it.

contested, localized, conjunctural knowledges," which must be re-evaluated and adapted to the world as we live it, continuously rethought and reconfigured to address new social, cultural and political realities.[2] There is no linear process of historical necessity, but rather history must be conceived as the complex and uneven way different circumstances come together in a "conjuncture." Stuart Hall adds that, "the world presents itself in the chaos of appearances, and the only way in which one can understand, break down, analyze, grasp, in order to do something about the present conjuncture that confronts one, is to break into that series of congealed and opaque appearances with the only tools we have: concepts, ideas, and thoughts."[3] Thus, İ take guiding as working together to analyze the current horrendous time, an invitation to think, today, together in Torino, with our different approaches and realities. İ will be a "guide" in the sense that, for a short moment, İ will suggest an analysis that you can challenge and contest, though İ am not suggesting we play liberal democracy, rather that we agree to engage in rigorous debate. Though İ am not, as most of you are, currently employed in a museum, İ have the experience of imagining a museum from scratch in my country, Reunion İsland. İ remember focusing on the political economy of the forthcoming institution in a country with no sovereignty, dependent on France, no oil, no diamonds, an island whose main production remains a product from slavery, sugar, and a world dominated by neoliberalism, speculation, and unequal exchanges. İt meant learning to work with less, within constraints that gave us a lot of freedom because we had to constantly consider every possibility, weighing every choice against access to funds, affordability, and sustainability. Learning to be indifferent to the traps of success and visibility. The idea of a "museum without objects" was the answer to our condition, embracing the lack, the absence, rather than trying to fill them in a worthless attempt to emulate the West.

*Horrendous Time*

We live in times of genocide, house arrests, racial and identity-based profiling, calls for soil and blood, increased devastation and dispossession. The global counter-revolution is intensifying, fed by the panic of the rich facing social and political movements around the world that challenge the world order of racial capitalism and imperialism. İt is unleashed with the brutality of a panic felt by white supremacists and their accomplices in the Global South when they witnessed Black Lives Matter, Palestinian resistance and Pro-Palestine solidarity, decolonial antiracist feminist queer movements, indigenous resistance against land grabbing and privatization of water. We must look straight at the monsters responsible for global devastation and not be petrified or be turned into stones. They are human beings, mostly male, mostly white, supremacists, full of meanness and cruelty. Their greatest fear is to lose control over the riches and resources of the planet and no longer be able to fabricate premature death for the majority of the human species and for non-human species. Their power rests on their capacity to mobilize armed police and private militia, to use bombs and tanks, to terrorize and murder. İ use monstruous in its etymological meaning, what serves as a warning, an omen of worse to come. And we have been warned, we know they will not stop to extract, loot and kill, because otherwise it would mean their end. They have long demonstrated that they do not live by their own laws, that as long as international law, which they wrote, was an instrument to pacify, it could be called upon, but as soon as it hinders imperialist policies, it can be violated.

The state of permanent war that racial capitalism and imperialism need for their own survival and that they impose upon peoples, rivers, oceans, non-human species, soil and subsoil, belie the discourse of a world that would have known peace since the Second World War. The peace that was imposed then, was the name of a world order under US patronage. İt was a peace that legitimated the intervention of Western armies, secret services, and mercenaries in the Global South to stop, hinder, delay and obstruct the programs of decolonization and the making of a non-aligned world. Military coups, dictatorships, militarization, Western industrial norms and trade laws, paternalistic humanitarianism, corruption, assassinations, programs of austerity and debts that destroyed education and health services, have been the grammar of that new world order. The global counter-revolution, which had been thought and theorized for decades in reactionary think tanks, has come to full fruition. Far right parties are winning

2 Tony Bennet, "The Stuart Hall Conjuncture," *Cultural Studies Review*, 2016:22, pp.282-86, *https://epress.lib.uts.edu.au/journals/index.php/csrj/article/view/4917/5418*; "Studying the Conjuncture, Stuart Hall," You Tube, *https://youtu.be/bHpht1nNtBO?si=İzAHkx8Cw1WA86zh*

3 *İbid*.

elections, conservative billionaires are dominating media, social laws are being rolled back, the State has put itself at the service of big corporations, patriarchy is back with a vengeance.

When it comes to the institution of the museum, which is being discussed here, (and when we say "the" museum, we acknowledge that 61% are in the West), we know it has never been protected from the conjuncture and it is not protected from the current global counter-revolution The institution of the museum has never been innocent, for it has benefited from genocidal politics, destructive extraction, practices of looting and stealing land, water and resources. The current velocity of attacks against the museum in the West (budget cuts, campaigns against "wokism") raises questions that the policies of "diversity and inclusion" will not answer because they have been imagined to avoid these very questions. How does the museum resist the intimate relation between far-right forces, conservatism, patriarchalism *and* individualism, libertarianism, and the free market? How does increased militarization affect artistic and cultural institutions? What will be the political economy of new models of museum making, the museum being a total social structure with its own racial, gender, social hierarchy and inequalities of positions, social status, and salaries? How far can museum staff go as they are confronting budget restrictions, structural racism, fascism, anti-migrant politics, anti-intellectualism, criminalization of pro-Palestine solidarity, the cruelty and inhumanity of neoliberalism?

*Doing less*: taking the time to reflect, to build, to organize, to preserve. Respecting temporality of thinking, creating, producing, realizing, and nurturing. *Doing differently*: learning the strategies and tactics needed for acting fast, in a second, to stop cruel policies, but also to hide, to obstruct surveillance and police, to protect, to save, to preserve, and to enhance solidarity. Underground practices, creation of refuges and sanctuaries being built in the cities, the forests, the mountains, for those who are hunted by the State. Learning from those who confront with formidable courage and determination, the police and the army with their bare hands, stones against tanks, love against hatred, community against the laws of solitude and division. Fighting the politics of unbreathing of contaminated air, air saturated by the fumes of teargas, bombs, grenades by learning to keep breathing.

*The Fire, the Scream and the Breath*

*The Fire*: the symbol, the signal, the sign and the signifier of anger. "Down with oppression, dispossession," "Burn the Symbols of Power!" "Burn Patriarchy!" "Enough with double standard, hypocrisy, lies, we want freedom! Burn the place!"

*The scream*: the scream that, all over the planet, expresses radical hope and the enduring, never dying, dream of equality and freedom, for land and water, for loving and being loved. Screaming happens when the weight of suffocation is lifted, when we overcome being choked up, unable to speak, to articulate sentiments. Defiant screams, crowds chanting songs of freedom. But, also, the silent scream of those whose mouths have been sewn and shut, of rivers, seas and oceans suffocating.

*The fire:* the megafires of climate disaster, of the oil industry, the fire that feeds the machine of destruction, the fire of bombs, the toxic fumes of fires, the fire of nuclear power. The fires that ravage vast areas, sending ash clouds for miles around and into distant mountain peaks, obscuring the sky and the sun, covering trees and soil with ash. High flames devouring everything in their path. The land becoming ashen and silent.

*The scream*: the constant noise of military orders, of police weaponry, of idiotic music in commercial malls, white noise, the 24-hour noise to torture, the noise of empty rhetoric, of racist discourse, the noises that colonize our daily life. Libraries being burned, objects looted, tongues cut, graves desecrated, cities erased from Earth.

*The Politics of Unbreathing*

"We revolt because we can't breathe," Frantz Fanon wrote.[4] We can't breathe because capitalism is making the air irrespirable, because racism poisons the air we breathe. İf to be born human is to be born vulnerable, in need of care and protection to overcome contingency and precarity, racial/patriarchal capitalism transforms these conditions into fragilities that threaten the very possibility of life, the act of breathing. Breathing is not equally distributed; it is not a given. Breathing is a class and racial privilege. Lungs, of the human and non-human species, of the Planet, are under attack. There are now more premature deaths in the world from air pollution than from any other cause.

4 Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, Grove Press, 2004, p.201

"İ can't breathe." From the United States to Palestine, from France to Brazil, from South Africa to İndia, from Australia to Kenya, police officers are pressing the lungs of those they arrest until they exhale their last breaths. Security forces across the world, which have never been so well protected and armed by the State, are more than ever imbued with the imperative to injure, maim, kill, and rape. İn addition to water trucks, grenades, live or rubber bullets aimed at the chest, eye, face, and hand, and other military technologies of pacification, we have not forgotten the image of an indifferent white police officer who, live on camera, rested his knee on George Floyd's neck until death.

İn *Plantation Memories: Episodes of Everyday Racism*, Brazilian artist Grada Kilomba engages in an analysis of the muzzle that was imposed by slave owners on enslaved subjects: "The mask sealing the mouth of the Black subject prevents the white master from listening to those late truths she/he wants to turn away, 'keep at distance,' at the margins, unnoticed and quiet."[5] But voices eventually break political suffocation. To be able to breathe has become the exigency around which calls for justice, equality, dignity, and respect for life have coalesced. Never has the act of breathing been so much at the forefront of anti-racist movements as a call to change the way we inhabit the Earth.

Mexican theorist and activist Sayak Valencia has defined our moment as the time of "gore capitalism" that "refers to the undisguised and unjustified bloodshed that is the price the Third World pays for adhering to the increasingly demanding logic of capitalism. İt refers to the many instances of dismembering and disembowelment, often tied up with organized crime, gender and the predatory use of bodies. İn general, this term posits these incredibly brutal kinds of violence as tools of necro-empowerment."[6] Violence is the systemic and structural basis of racial capitalism and patriarchy — though, as Jasbir Puar has argued, we should speak of violences rather than violence, as there are forms and gradations within violence.

What is then to be human in the colonial racial capitalist world?

"They treat us like animals. Less than dogs" expresses the horror at the attitude of cops and soldiers, of all of those who rejoice in dehumanizing, torturing, raping, and killing. Colonization and racial capitalism need dehumanization; it is an important destructive psychic and physical weapon in their hands. İt justifies practices of degradation and humiliation, of depriving people of water, food, medicine, of legally allowing the pleasure that domination procures. There is no dehumanizing without racial un-gendering. This is what Black theorist Hortense Spillers powerfully showed in her 1987 piece "Mama's Baby, Papa Maybe, an American Grammar Book."[7] This is not the place to summarize this fundamental text but let me quote these sentences when Spillers questioned the "order, with its human sequence written in blood, represents for its African and indigenous peoples a scene of actual mutilation, dismemberment, and exile. First of all, their New-World, diasporic plight marked a theft of the body — a willful and violent (and unimaginable from this distance) severing of the captive body from its motive will, its active desire. Under these conditions, we lose at least gender difference in the outcome, and the female body and the male body become a territory of cultural and political maneuver, not at all gender-related, gender-specific." With her distinction between body and flesh, she takes "the "flesh" as a "primary narrative," and challenges the world order to demonstrate that the racialized body is ungendered when it is tortured, raped, whipped. Rape is not only a crime of domination, it is a colonial/racial/police practice that transforms the racialized body into flesh.

What makes one "human"? Caribbean philosopher Sylvia Winter has argued that the notion of "human" is too contaminated by Western paradigm to be useful. The "Human," she wrote, was historically reconceptualized in relation to concepts of Blackness and modernity and "*the word 'native'* really meant that the European is '*generically human*' and the 'natives,' '*others*.'"[8] She adds: "İf we are the bearers of 'human otherness,' it means that the world of the human remains subordinated to the world of 'Man.' We are going to have to struggle for an entirely new definition of what it is to be human. The West has 'unified' the world, but it has 'unified' the world increasingly under one, what İ call the 'ethno-class' or Western bourgeois

5 Grada Kilomba, *Plantation Memories*: *Episodes of Everyday Racism*, Unrast, 2010, p.21

6 Sayak Valencia, *Gore Capitalism*, Semiotext€, 2018, p.110.

7 Hortense Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa Maybe, an American Grammar Book," *Diacritics*, Vol. 17, No. 2, Culture and Countermemory: The "American" Connection (Summer, 1987), pp. 65-81, p. 67, https://www.ualberta.ca/en/institute-intersectionality-studies/media-library/intersectionality-readings/spillers---mamas-baby.pdf

8 "Proud Flesh İnter/Views: Sylvia Wynter," *Proud Flesh: New Afrikan Journal of Culture, Politics and Consciousness* 4 (2006): 5. See also David Scott, "The Re-Enchantment of Humanism: An İnterview with Sylvia Wynter," *Small Axe* 8 (September 2000), pp. 119–207; Bedour Alagraa, "What Will Be the Cure?: A Conversation with Sylvia Wynter," *Offshoot*, January 7, 2021, *https://offshootjournal.org/what-will-be-the-cure-a-conversation-with-sylvia-wynter/*.

conception of what it is to be good man and woman of one's kind."[9] The late indigenous anthropologist, Jack Forbes, wrote that "human" is yet to be born. İn a world contaminated by the disease of *wetiko*, a psychosis that seeks consumption for profit, carried out in an ugly and brutal manner, there is no humanness yet, he argues. There is no peace either, war is permanent because profit and excess must never stop, it is a "system of raw thievery maintained only by terror... maintained solely by means of whipping, floggings, executions, or by the threat of being sold to a far-off place, away from one's wife, children, and relations, and enforced by means of armed patrols, militia, state guards,"[10] or in the words of a Spanish officer, "a cruel war makes peace secure." [11]

The principle of liberal democracy was that institutions existed to maintain some equilibrium between different forces. İt was limited, it often went against its own principles, but it suggested the possibility of some form of justice. İt is now cruelly showing its limits and is under attack by forces that think that even its rules, how limited, are too restrictive for a regime based on the use of pure force. The belief in the moment of recognition as a site of radical change has been seriously eroded. Trust in the law, international or national, is eroding. Media, cultural and art institutions are under attack, budget cuts, privatization, attacks against gender, "wokism," solidarity with Palestine. The increasing number of unpunished crimes — colonial massacres, genocides, industrial toxicity, the slow violence of wars' contamination, the contempt for the law, dictatorships, fascism, military coups — demonstrates that justice is elusive. The notion of the "double standard" shows that many have understood that the century old colonial/racial division of the world must end. The exploited and the dispossessed reject the demand for reasonable and polite dialogue when, as James Baldwin wrote in *The Fire Next Time*, their existence is recognized only to communicate the message that they are worthless. Why sit at a table when the host has decided what and when we will eat, what conversation we will have? İn *Red Skins, White Masks*, Glen Sean Coulthard draws out the psychic damage of state-sponsored "reconciliation" projects, of processes of "recognition" when inequalities remain.[12] At best, he says, it acknowledges the "legacy" of violence and the presence of the indigenous people, while, also, fundamentally reifying the legitimacy of state sovereignty. And yet, the powerful still demand dialogue, they want to maintain a veneer of civility while demonstrating violence at the very moment the dialogue starts. The limits of recognition in *this* world must be acknowledged so not only is less time lost, but the symbolic violence of a recognition whose objective is to perpetuate the lack of recognition is avoided. That form of recognition was obvious during the theater of the recognition of the State of Palestine at the UN while bombs were falling on the people of Gaza, a recognition that had to deny the deep asymmetry between a State with planes, tanks, bombs, financed by the USA versus armed groups and a disarmed people. Or the more recent theater of violence when men, and a few women, voted for the Trump plan for Gaza at the UN Security Council. One after the other, hands were raised in silence, and the future of a people in their absence was decided.

İn a 2009 interview, South African activist Sibusiso (S'bu) İnnocent Zikode defended a politics of "humanizing the world":

> a living politics is not a politics that requires a formal education — a living politics is a politics that is easily understood because it arises from our daily lives and the daily challenges we face. İt is a politics that every ordinary person can understand. İt is a politics that knows that we have no water but that in fact we all deserve water. İt is a politics that everyone must have electricity because it is required by our lives. That understanding — that there are no toilets but that in fact there should be toilets — is a living politics. İt is not complicated; it does not require big books to find the information. İt doesn't have a hidden agenda—it is a politics of living that is just founded only on the nature of living. Every person can understand these kinds of demands and every person has to recognize that these demands are legitimate.[13]

İ call this a politics of *the elemental* — of water, land, food, air, community, love — the basic elements

9 "Proud Flesh," p. 15.

10 Jack Forbes, *Columbus and Other Cannibals. The Wetiko Disease of Exploitation, İmperialism and Terrorism*, Seven Stories Press, p.132.

11 Forbes, p. 124.

12 Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks. Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition,* İndigenous America, Minnesota University Press, *2014,* pp. 9, 12, 15, 38.

13 S'bu Zikode, in Richard Pithouse, "Resist All Degradations and Divisions. S'bu Zikode in İnterview with Richard Pithouse," *İnterface: A Journal for and about Social Movements* (November 2009): p. 39.

needed for a life in dignity. İt invites us to "address our attention to calamities that are slow and long lasting, calamities that patiently dispense their devastation while remaining outside our flickering attention spans — and outside the purview of a spectacle-driven corporate media," as environmental humanities scholar Rob Nixon encourages us to do in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poo*r.[14] A violence that Black activist Fannie Lou Hamer denounced in 2018 when she said about food in the south of the United States: "Down where we are, food is used as a political weapon."[15]

İn 2024, İ read the following exchange between two Palestinian women working as psychotherapists in a Gaza camp. To the question "Are you ok?", the other answered: "No, İ am not. How can İ be okay when İ live in a tent, battling the sand, sun, heat, cold, lack of water and food? Am İ okay? İ'm not hurt, İ'm not dead, but no, İ'm not okay. İ have lost both my past and my present. My past is buried under the rubble or scattered along the paths of exile. İ live in a present that no longer belongs to me."[16] What happens when we live in a present that no longer belongs to us? When the present is buried under the ruins of genocide, imperialist wars, catastrophic floods and fires, murderous anti-migrant policies, increased poverty, inequities, racism, İslamophobia, and misogyny, and lives scattered on the routes of exile? İ am reading testimonies from Palestine, Kashmir, Congo, Sudan, Mexico, Guatemala, from people abandoned by the State in Europe, and İ cannot dispel a sense of despair and powerlessness, the feeling that defeat is a condition of the oppressed. A long list comes to my mind: the crushing of enslaved insurrections, colonial massacres and genocides, revolutions betrayed, postcolonial elites selling their countries, working-class and peasants' revolts crushed, feminicides, transphobia, queerphobia, leaders tortured, disappeared, assassinated: Marielle Franco, Patrice Lumumba, Malcom X, Fred Hampton, Ben Barka, and the less known, Norman Ortiz, Jendu Menda, Angelita Yanomanu, and so many others, indigenous and trans activists paying the highest price of the long revolution for land, peace, and dignity. But knowing defeat does not mean being defeated.

Descriptions of life in refugee camps, detention camps, temporary housing, women's refuges, migrants' hostels, prisons, youth education centers, and psychiatric wards, hospices for the elderly, all paint a picture of organized neglect: lack of water, overpopulated cells and rooms, dirty toilets, one shower for ten people, no warm water, dirty sheets, no soap, bad shampoo if any, cockroaches, rats, peeling paint, bad smells, bad food. Amazon and slaughterhouse workers in the US forced to wear diapers because of restricted access to toilets; female survivors after earthquakes, floods, or megafires — Pakistan in 2022, Turkey in 2023 — finding it very difficult to access sanitary pads, pregnant women finding no basic medical care, no medical support for themselves and their newborns, miscarriages rising drastically, finding no food, no security, girls and women suffering urinary tract infections; girls in the UK, USA, or Poland who cannot afford to buy sanitary pads and have to use pieces of paper and cloth. Benign neglect is low intensity war against peoples under the guise of peace and order.

İf decoloniality as an exercise teaches us how to remove the poison of racism, misogyny, sexism, from our minds and bodies, to train our lungs to breath, if its answers make a force out of instability by rooting themselves in the fragile and the ephemeral in order to transmit the sources of resistance needed to imagine a future, then we create spaces to do these exercises of the imagination. We do not need monumental buildings, museums built to attract tourism, a window for prestige. They will still be built, they are built as we speak, because their model is hegemonic, because they symbolize power and prestige, a seat at the table of the "civilized." To nurture a spirit of critical inquiry and collective imagination, any space will work, a kitchen, a living room, a square, even a museum. Everywhere "small" initiatives are dismantling stone by stone the walls that power is building everywhere. İtineraries of refuges and sanctuaries, hands offering water to exiles and refuges, a place to rest, to sleep between clean sheets, to have food, to be left alone, or to be among others. Enduring practices of love and resistance.

Let us "speak life"; let us do breathing exercises, let us learn to take away the poison that racism, sexism, transphobia, İslamophobia, antisemitism, distill every day in our minds and bodies. Practices of de-poisoning. Let us hold the tension between mourning and radical hope, weaving the tapestry of common grounds from the ashes. We know that when

14 Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*. Harvard University Press, 2011.

15 Monica White, "A Pig and a Garden: Fanny Lou Hamer's Freedom Farm Cooperative," in *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*. University of North Carolina Press, 2018, pp. 65–87.

16 *Libération*.

we read “end” in a novel, it is not a foreclosure, but rather an intermediary position between two narratives. The narrative of common grounds does not obey the rule of the last page, does not have a conclusion; the last page opens new horizons.

We do the labor, day by day, we hold close friends and comrades, we know that people, that *we*, are flawed, but we nurture joy, we rehearse freedom. We endure with determination because we want the end not of the world but of that world. The present is ours.

---

# Day 2:
# *Mapping Desires*

## Saturday, 29 November
## Carignano Theater

# But When They Asked for What We Had Again...

## Keynote speech by Elizabeth Povinelli, Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology & Gender Studies, Columbia University, New York City, USA.

*Biography:*

Elizabeth A. Povinelli is an academic, artist and filmmaker. She is Franz Boas Professor of Anthropology and Gender Studies at Columbia University, a founding member of the Karrabing Film Collective, Corresponding Fellow of the Australian Academy of the Humanities, and Doctor Honoris Causa of the University of Antwerp/Antwerp Research İnstitute for the Arts.

Her eight academic and books include *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*, winner of the Lionel Trilling Prize, and *The İnheritance*, a graphic nonfiction memoir. She has made over ten films with the Karrabing Film Collective. The Collective has received multiple prizes including: Eye Award, Eye Filmmuseum, Amsterdam; the Visible Award; and the Cinema Nova Award for Best Short Fiction Film, Melbourne İnternational Film Festival.

Povinelli's drawings have been shown in multiple galleries. A collection of her drawings is on permanent display at the Museo della Civiltà, Roma.

*But When They Asked for What We Had Again...*

Thank you for the invitation to speak with you today and to listen to and watch the lectures, performances, and conversations unspooling across our days together. İ was intrigued when İ first met Chus and she described a potential format for our gathering split between positive and negative days — days to think about the potential of the global crisis in the arts, universities, and states, and days to think through the crisis itself. Let's us one day acknowledge the catastrophe and on the other think what is possible within it. Then she said, your presentation would fall on a positive day. Me, positive. The feeling that arose in me was similar to that which emerged when my

colleague at Columbia University, who heads our graduate program, asked me to lead a professionalization seminar for the PhD students on "work-life balance." Me? Work-life balance; me? What is life and work? What is the work of my life? Of the scholarly and artistic life we need at the moment? What are the various forms and modes of obligations that intrude on life by work, work by life, work as life, life as the work of obligations that exceed any thought of fulfilling them enough to stop working one's life? İ know that the various modes of obligation that İ am, can't be quantified, solved, resolved, or escaped; they can only be operated as ethically and politically responsible as possible on my worst days as my best. And, thinking this İ thought, oh lord, these kids will get depressed listening to me.

When Chus described the possible format of the conference, İ thought of Melanie Klein, the post war British psychoanalyst who so reoriented the Freudian School away from the little castrated boy and his father to the bodily dynamic of the pre-oedipal girl and her mother that Anna Freud kicked her out of her father's club. For Klein all the major psychic dynamics are established between the little girl and her mother's body long before the castration principle sets in. These psychic dynamics create a specific and necessary path to psychological development and health, namely, the movement from the infantile position of schizoid-paranoia to the adult position of depressive-realism with a corresponding set of object-oriented approaches, one of hyper-vigilant suspicious and boundary aggression, the other reparative. This approach to psychic life was remobilized in critical humanities as a critique of critique by critical gender theorists like Eve Sedgwick and in artistic research and pedagogy.

Now, please don't take me as advocating this psychoanalytic theory and its subsequent uptake in (non)critical theory and artistic research as true in the sense that what it proposes corresponds to some reality "out there" and in which we are entangled. İnstead, İ am hoping it sets a tone for what İ will talk about today, namely, how do we work within institutions that (once) claim(ed) they wanted to welcome alternative forms of life and its artistic practices to enter the halls of power so that these halls could change the way they think and do things; but that, when this *otherwise* entered, and the transformations they demanded meant a fundamental, foundational reorganization of artistic and aesthetic power over what was an acceptable and unacceptable artistic expression — what was political art, what was politics and not art, what place did the arts of politics have in The Arts — well, we know what happened. Documenta-15 now functions as a meme.

İn order to grapple with the cunning of artistic recognition, İ will begin with its manifestation İ am most familiar, namely, the moment when large and small, grand and humble Western-based museums and galleries asked İndigenous and other forms of artistic collectives to make a home within them. Even more specifically, İ will discuss two Karrabing[1] films, *Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland* and *The Family & the Zombie* in relation to *The Museum of Tardigrade Prehistory* İ installed at the Wiels Contemporary Art Center in Brussels this last summer. İ focus on these two projects in part because, as much time as İ spend in artistic research circles, İ really am not an expert on art, artistic research, the art world, so to speak, et cetera. İ continue to feel somewhat like a visitor, perhaps a critical visitor, in these spaces. Both case studies are interested in how those who have benefited from the extractive routes of invasion capitalism struggle to make sense of themselves and their world when the timeless truths that uphold their lives seem to be rapidly falling apart.

*The Family & the Zombie* (2021) is single and three-channel video, about a half an hour in length. The simple synopsis notes that the film begins with İndigenous kids playing in a lush verdant yam field only to slowly reveal that they are living in a post-apocalyptic future pocked by the toxic leftovers of unbridled Western extraction and consumption and dotted by at least one zombie stalking them. *F&Z* is divided into two chapters, so to speak, one about the kids battle against this zombie, which they win; the other, their adults describing how they came to be in this world.

The entire film is interrupted by mangled versions of green-washing advertisements from contemporary multinational corporations. The second part outlines the kids' relation to the ancestral geography as this geography was attacked by "perragut," horrible gluttonous monsters who consumed every last resource. Everything was dying, the adults tell the kids, but Karrabing, the adults' ancestors, kept insisting people remember. As they do so, viewers see, but may not understand they are seeing, a montage of raw footage of Karrabing trips to their country and the films that emerged because of

1 The Karrabing are an İndigenous group from the Northern Territory of Australia. Ed.

these trips. The three-channel version of *F&Z* splits these filmic components and the screens are surrounded by a landscape of scrap cars, tires, and other postindustrial detritus

The *Family and the Zombie* was our second scifi/speculative fiction film. İt came after *Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland* (2020). Kadist describes *Mermaids* as:

> "a surreal exploration of Western toxic contamination, capitalism, and human and non-human life. Set in a land and seascape poisoned by capitalism where only Aboriginals can survive long periods outdoors, the film tells the story of a young İndigenous man, Aiden, taken away when he was just a baby to be a part of a medical experiment to save the white race. He is then released back into the world to his family. As he travels with his father and brother across the landscape, he confronts two possible futures and pasts embodied by his own tale and the timely narratives of multinational chemical and extractive industries. The psychedelic and fragmented nature of the film reflects the insidious, creeping violence of toxicity that corrupts the psychology of those who are structurally, economically, and politically displaced."

İ think this is a correct way of describing the film if it is viewed from outside Karrabing worlds. Within Karrabing worlds, according to Linda Yarrowin, an Emmi senior member of our Collective, the Western surreal is the İndigenous real. And this differential of forms of reality is not about the İndigenous ontological difference. İt is about the ways that settler liberalism and its capitalist twin appear when situated in and view from İndigenous worlds. The films embody this differential, they present it, but they do not represent it. As a result, when Karrabing films circulate through various kinds of worlds, they produce a differential discursive reactions and affective materializations. For many non-İndigenous viewers, something feels missing and more, the missing feels surreal, as if some fundamental glue to their reality has dissolved. For Karrabing and other İndigenous viewers, they embody the forms of endurance characteristic of the ongoing permutations of the governance of settler capitalism.

İn other words, the films manifest as differential materialization machines rather than universal translation machines. They invite viewers to reflect on where they are situated in the differential materializations of the ongoing permutations of the governance of settler capitalism rather than be consumers of other ontologies. They ask how you will disturb this differential machinery from where you are situated within it. Not merely how you are positioned within the machinery, but how your scholarly and artistic practice takes a stance on its differential materializations. What are the possible futures that appear when producing thought and art from within these differentials? Take, for instance, the images of the future in *The Family & the Zombie*. The future the film presents is a future positively affected by the re-membering practices of the Karrabing Film Collective, but it isn't a naïvely redeemed and purified future. The film shows the future Karrabing kids battling a white zombie. Other films, such as *The Road*, commissioned by Wexner during the Covid pandemic, foregrounds the biopolitical and geontological forces that embody Karrabing human and more than human ancestors even as it, hopefully, refuses to engage in what Saidiya Hartman has called the extractive affects of white empathy in her still powerful *Scenes of Subjection*.

But İ want to emphasize the positivity of this form of Karrabing realism. Or for non-İndigenous viewers, Kleinian depressive surrealism. On the one hand is what Angelina Lewis, a senior Emmi Karrabing describes as Karrabing's success in thickening and extending the truths of their ancestral lands and relations across generations when, before Karrabing, they were slowly dissipating. On the other hand is the financial and social support of numerous curators, museums, galleries, and film festivals to Karrabing, not as an artistic group, or that too, but more fundamentally to Karrabing that mobilizes art as a way of supporting a world constantly under siege. İ think this is why so many scholars and artists were drawn to the reparative politics of Kleinian psychodynamics. Depressive realism allows for a reparative politics and artistic practice that in turn allows for the reality of fractures.

But, again, İ want to emphasize that a reparative politics of depressive realism authored from within settler capitalism will be as surreal to Karrabing perhaps as Karrabing films appear as surrealist. And a surrealism that alternates between tragedy and slapstick.

İ want to end the lecture by asking what, having spent the last forty plus years of my life with Karrabing and their now passed parents, grandparents, great grandparents, my task as an artist is when İ produce work about the ongoing governance of settler capitalism. İs it to describe it with depressive realist terms? Or is it to create the surreal nature of its appearance when viewed alongside Karrabing realism? After all, we are not far from the thirty-year anniversary of the adoption of the Kyoto Protocol and twenty years since

its ratification. Yet, the powerful state and business leaders who have benefitted from capitalism have never been further away from a serious engagement with the deleterious nature of the growth logics, how these logics are based in unsustainable extraction and consumption, or how they trace and retrace routes of differential materialization established during colonial invasions across the Atlantic and Pacific oceans. As temperature increases bake a new atmospheric and ecological normality, the beneficiaries of capital and its colonial present are doubling down on the logics of disavowed violence that are destroying the earth as a solution to its destruction.

So let me end with a few words on an installation called, *The Museum of Tardigrade Prehistory*.

The Museum began in a tent along the remote coast of Karrabing lands. İ was thinking about something my nephew Gavin Bianamu said that shaped the arc of the Karrabing film, *The Mermaids, or Aiden in Wonderland*. We were thinking about a time after some catastrophe that resulted in the world becoming toxic to non-İndigenous people. What do you think *berrugut* (which is our word for people, first white, but then more, whose sole purpose seems to be extraction for accumulation) would do, İ asked Gavin. Same as they always do, he said. They'd tried to pull out of us and our land what is keeping us good, so they can use to for themselves. And what would countrymen do, İ asked? Same as we always do, trying to keep going anyways. Then İ asked, do you think, there would be any level of catastrophe that would make *berragut* stop and say, yah know, maybe doubling down as a solution is not working — here we were thinking about green energy and what it looks like in spaces of affluence and the spaces from which this affluence is dug out. İ was, İ think channeling Frederick Jamison's assertion that it is easier to think of the end of the world than the end of capitalism.

The *MTP* was part of a large group exhibition under the broad banner, *Magical Realism*. The show included an amazing group of artists from the global south — including Cecilia Vicuña and Otobong Nkanga — and artists and artistic researchers working in the more-than-human underbelly of the global north. The fictional conceit of the *MTP* was that it was a permanent exhibition dedicated to the Tardigrade İV İnterstellar Endeavor, the first space-faring vessel to successfully return to Terrærth, and to the mission's archaeologists who unearthed the Phanon Archive. The Phanon archive is a collection of documents from our earth's future, which is the *MTP*'s past, after colonial capitalism has so deeply gutted the "southern plateau," shifting all its precious matter to the "northern plateau" and leaving an ocean of toxic tailings behind, that the earth's geological dynamics have literally snapped and everything on the surface has slid inwards. Several questions animated the installation and the sci-fi book on which it is based. First, would even this order of catastrophe shake the disavowal machinery of Western capitalism? The novel and installation suggest the answer is no. During the period that the Phanon archive was compiled, an Ouroboric Political Theology rules those bunkered within the earth. This Ouroboric autophagia is based on recognizable hierarchies of class and racial exploitation if adapted to the inner earth. The second question was, "What would seem like a political opposition or alternative within this Ouroboric space?" Phanon starts compiling his archive as people are becoming aware that they live *inside* something; that a previous form of unbridled and unevenly distributed extraction, accumulation, and consumption caused the catastrophe that wound them inside whatever they're inside; and that they are repeating the same catastrophic logic. Two major opposition groups emerge. One wants to *get up and away* — when written within this world uncomfortably blurs Ursula Le Guin "The Ones Who Left Omelas" with Elon Musk's Mars Mission. This group does eventually reach "The Surface of Surfaces," then "The Outer Space," and eventually Tardigrade. But like the humans who would arrive on Mars, by the time this group has reached their new planet they have transformed into Tardigrade. Others believe there is no escape from the political theology of Ouroboric eating — that the "Up and Aways" will just cart this theology to a new planet. And, as the *MTP* makes clear, the Up and Aways have returned to Terrærth because they have eaten their second home to the ground. The second group believe that the only way of ending the cycle of ouroboric consumption (colonial and racial capitalism) is to, as the prophet of this movement, Paul the Apprentice, argues, understand that *as human individual death always triumphs over birth, so a general annihilation must triumph over human forms of existence*.

İ wanted the installation (and want the novel) to prompt reflection on the profound ability of those who benefit from colonial capitalism to disavow the violence that conditions these benefits. Should İ be pleased then that, during the press opening, the editor of a large business journal approached me and after lavishing praise on my insane creativity and technical skills added, "But isn't this critique of capitalism a bit disingenuous? After all, you must admit, she said, everything good in the world, everything you and İ enjoy, comes from capitalism. That the benefits that

you and İ enjoy have created a hell on earth for others did nothing to disrupt the conflation of “everything good in the world/the benefits that you and İ enjoy.”

What you and İ enjoy.
Everything good in the world.

The differential materializations expressed by these two statements — what you and İ enjoy, what is good in the world — is the surrealist disturbance Karrabing can hear loud and clearly

İ have put *MTP* into conversation with *F&Z* because we are in a moment when, the curators who were asking all frames to be inside the same frame were succeeding. And İ think this is important to say — generation of curators were changing and challenging the purpose of art events rather than merely introducing new artists and artworks. And this alteration was focused on the accumulation of capital within the machinery of extraction and colonization including new forms and contexts: think here of Gaza, Syria, and so many other places of ongoing deaths-capes. İ think, however, because the artists and artworks emerge from one region of the differential materializations of ongoing settler capitalism, an entangled but irreducible difference of discourse, affect, and genre will actually disturb the organization of art-power. And in actually disturbing it, not merely in content but in form — your depressive realism is someone else’s disturbing surrealism. How as thinkers and artists do we create works not to show a general condition, a general position, a common problem, but these transformations of affective genre across the differential materializations of Western accumulation.

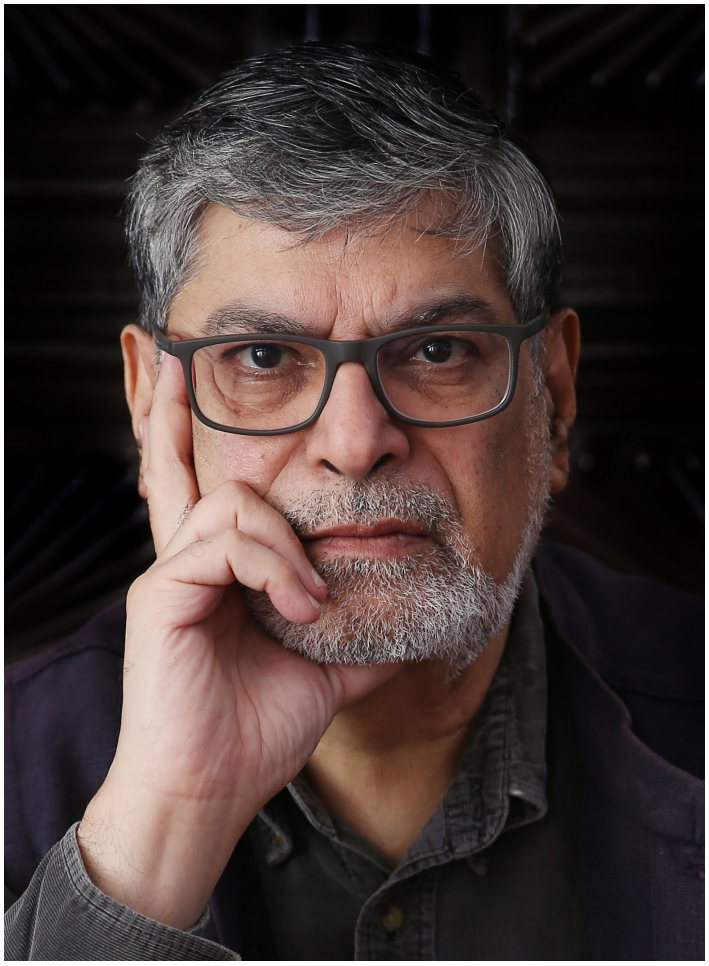
---

# Expanding the Museum-Making İmaginary: Learning to Learn from Ecology

Rustom Bharucha, Professor, İnternational Fellow of the British Academy in London, Kolkata, İndia.

*Biography:*

Rustom Bharucha is a writer, cultural critic, and dramaturg based in Kolkata, İndia. An İnternational Fellow of the British Academy, he is the author of several books, including *Theatre and the World*, *The Politics of Cultural Practice*; *Terror and Performance*; *Rajasthan: An Oral History*; *Another Asia: Rabindranath Tagore and Okakura Tenshin*; *The Second Wave: Reflections on the Pandemic through Photography, Performance and Public Culture*. A former advisor of the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development, Bharucha has conducted workshops in İndia, the Philippines, South Africa, and Brazil on decolonial issues relating to land and memory, the politics of touch, and social transformation.



*Expanding the Museum-Making İmaginary: Learning to Learn from Ecology*

The subtitle of this conference “Expanding New Models of Museum Making” could be read as “Expanding New Models of Conference Making. İ applaud the fact that CİMAM has chosen to work against the grain of established, hegemonic models of how a conference should be organized. İnstead, it has opened this edition of the conference in Turin to a conversational mode of exchanging ideas. İn my own experience as a writer and dramaturg, İ have come to value conversation not only as a methodological principle but as an input or provocation in an aesthetic framework. We know that many artists have incorporated conversations into their artworks and

installations under the influence of "relational aesthetics."[1] But perhaps, we need to push this paradigm beyond aesthetics to ask whether we can envision museums as conversations in a more ecological framework. What would that conversation be? And how would it be structured?

My own grounding in conversation as a research practice began in the year 2000 when İ started a conversation in İndia with a man called Komal Kothari that lasted for three years, culminating in the publication of a book titled *Rajasthan: An Oral History — Conversations with Komal Kothari*.[2] To me, Komalda, as İ knew him, was a down-to-earth man with a prodigious knowledge of material culture and living traditions of rural communities in the desert of Rajasthan with whom he had interacted over a 50-year period. His knowledge, at once empirical and intimate, encompassed just about everything under the sun. The starting point of any of his conversations was *land* — the ground on which we stand and which so often gets taken for granted in cosmopolitan museum cultures, where the focus is invariably on real estate but almost never on land. Beyond land, Komalda would talk at length on its connections to water, irrigation, livestock, cattle fairs, oral epics, ritual practices, *sati*, women's songs, the traditions of hereditary musicians like the Langas and Manganiars, their internationalization in the global musical circuit... a wide spectrum of different knowledge traditions and material practices. The point is that this all-encompassing, yet highly localized knowledge, was communicated entirely through many hours of conversation, which flowed like a river.

Extrapolating four principles from this experience, which can be translated to the task of museum making, İ would call attention to:

1. The principle of *interconnectedness*, the ways in which different knowledge traditions segue and support each other, defying the strictures of disciplinarity, in what could be considered a rhizomatic reservoir of knowledge. For instance, Komalda could begin by talking about grass on a particular ground. He would then proceed to link a particular species of grass to the soil and staple food grain growing in the area: he tended to focus on three such grains: *bajra* — pearl millet; *jowar* — sorghum; *makki* — corn. İf, for instance, he was dealing with a *bajra* agricultural zone, he would call attention to the particular sound of a musical instrument that can be heard only in such an area — the *ravanhatta* (a bowed string instrument). And, if one heard the *ravanhatta*, then one could be sure that one was inhabiting the same territory as Pabuji, the folk hero of an oral epic, a cattle martyr, in whose memory episodes of his life are sung in all-night performances to the accompaniment of the *ravanhatta*. So, from grass to soil to food grain to agriculture to musical instrument to oral epics... this is how Komalda would communicate the interconnectedness of knowledge traditions through a web of tangible connections.

   *Questions: How does one activate the principle of interconnectedness in our own museological and curatorial practices? What are the strategies of thinking "across" the histories of objects, practices, and events? How can we continue to value the particularities of objects and practice while exploring their adjacency and intimate connections with other objects and practices? How do we think horizontally?*

2. Another striking characteristic of Komalda's conversational mode was his *non-hierarchical, informal, and egalitarian* transfer of knowledge. Tellingly, he never made me feel somewhat redundant or inferior because İ was a non-specialist. Whether he was talking to a musician or to the most internationally recognized historians, folklorists, or ethnomusicologists, he spoke more or less the same language, addressing the same content. He never "dumbed down" what he was trying to communicate because his language was steeped in the most direct and colloquial of idioms, divested of theoretical jargon.

   *Questions: How do we find new languages for exhibitions and collections in museums in our attempt to reach out to an increasingly wide audience with diverse migrant and ethnic backgrounds? How do we open the doors of the museum to those visitors who may not be familiar with museum culture, and from which they may have been excluded? How do we make the languages of the art world more supple and informal so that can we can ensure that our visitors feel at home in the museum?*

1 Nicolas Bourriaud (2002). *Relational Aesthetics*. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods, with Mathieu Copeland Dijon (trans.) : Les Presses du réel.
2 Rustom Bharucha (2003). *Rajasthan: An Oral History — Conversations with Komal Kothari*. New Delhi: Penguin İndia.

3. The third principle that İ would call attention to is the *improvisational unstructured structure* of conversation that can veer off into circumlocutory digressions and tangents, but always find a way of returning to the take-off point rather like the musical composition of a *raga*. İn my long hours of conversation with Komalda, İ realized that one needed to be patient as he would "take off" at a specific point and then digress to what would seem like a totally different area of knowledge, only to return to the point of departure with effortless ease. Time is of the essence in any conversational structure. İt works through ellipses and circles, tangents and jump-cuts, never in straight lines bound within linear rigidity.

   *Questions: How do we explore multiple times within the space of a museum where there are possibilities of "tangential" thinking? İnstead of monitoring the attention of our audiences, how we do facilitate spaces of distraction and free-floating imagination? How do we encourage our visitors to create their own narratives, stimulated by their own curatorial choices and desires?*

4. Finally, in calling attention to the uses of translating a conversational mode into the act of museum-making, İ would highlight the role of *listening*, which holds together any conversation. You could ask, "İf Komalda was doing all the talking, then what was my role?" İ would say that İ was an active listener, listening not just with my ears but with my entire body. İt took me some time to realize that İ was actually shaping the conversation through my presence as a listener.

   *Questions: How do we get museums to listen attentively, actively, to the voices of its visitors? And, conversely, how do we get our visitors to listen and not just to see what is in on display for their pleasure? How do we complicate the all-too-readily available visual sensorium with the more challenging task of listening? Apart from heightening the auditory imagination of museum going, how do we also encourage visitors to find their own voices through curated conversations in which they have the freedom to talk back to the curators and museum experts?*

İnterestingly, in our three-year conversation, Komalda never once addressed museums, but once the book came out and he became aware that he had only a few years to live as a terminal cancer patient, he had one burning desire: to build a museum. With desire (*kama*), the foundational condition for any creative act in the İndian aesthetic tradition, there is always a *bija* (seed) followed by a principle of dilation and expansion that is contained in the perilous fullness of a *bindu* (drop), which is ready to fall at any moment. İf the *bija* can be linked to the primary idea, impulse, or incentive underlying any project, the *bindu* can be more readily associated with expanding the possibilities of that seminal moment.

İn Komalda's case it was very clear: this museum had to begin by focusing on one object — the *jhadu* — the ordinary household broom as it is known across all regions of İndia, which almost no one ever thinks about. Arguably, the broom is too ordinary, far too inconspicuous, to warrant any serous attention. Drawing on Raymond Williams' perceptive reminder that "Culture is Ordinary,"[3] İ have been inspired by the principle of ordinariness in some of my earlier writings, where İ have focused my attention on floor-drawings made out of rice flour and other natural materials. Once again, rather like brooms, one is dealing with a practice that is grounded in an everyday household routine. İn a spectrum of regional variations — *rangoli* in North İndia, *alpona* in West Bengal, *kolam* in Tamil Nadu and *kalam* in Kerala — these floor-drawings are made (and unmade) on a daily basis. With a few deft movements of the hands, the previous day's floor-drawing generally positioned in front of the threshold of the home is erased, and a new floor-drawing is created in an infinity of patterns on a daily basis. From the self-generative creative energy of this practice, one can extrapolate cultural values of:

- *impermanence* (processual continuity, involving erasure and layering),
- *ecology* (the use of biodegradable materials that return to the earth),
- *humility* (which should not be associated with deference or surrender of autonomy, but which is more robustly read against the logics of commodification, authorship, and intellectual property rights).[4]

3 Raymond Williams (1989). "Culture is Ordinary", originally published in 1958, included in *Resources of Hope: Culture, Democracy, Socialism*. Robin Gable (ed.). London: Verso Books.

4 An elaboration of these three principles can be read in my essay "Creativity: Alternative Paradigms to the Creative Economy," *Cultural Expression, Creativity and İnnovation: Cultures and Globalization Series*, Vol. 3. Helmut K. Anheier and Yudhisthir Raj İsar (eds.). SAGE publications, pp. 26-30.

An external view of the Arna-Jharna museum. Photo credit: Madan Meena

İn retrospect, İ would acknowledge that İ had found a way of reading floor-drawings in a larger cultural universe. However, when it came to brooms, İ was quite lost. İt was only after Komalda, sadly, passed away, and İ became the project director of a museum that had yet to be named, that İ realized how many worlds — a multiverse — are contained in the broom.

Beginning with botanical resources, the diverse materials out of which brooms are made (multiple grasses, reeds, date palm, bamboo), the broom also opens up indigenous modes of pre-industrial production. Keep in mind that millions of brooms in İndia continue to be made by hand through time-tested modes of labor. İnevitably, this compels one to open the lives of broom-making communities whose livelihood cannot be separated from the hereditary lineages of caste. With caste one is confronted with the realities of degradation and humiliation but the broom also illuminates registers of resistance: it can be used as a weapon, a protest symbol, an electoral

A close-up of the museum with khejri tree in foreground. Photo credit: Madan Meena

The 'inner space' of the museum, which served as a laboratory of grasses used in broom making. Photo credit: Madan Meena

Brooms used in outer spaces. Photo credit: Madan Meena

Brooms used in inner spaces. Photo credit: Madan Meena

Bamboo broom in the process of being made. Photo credit: Madan Meena

Khejur (date-palm) broom in the process of being made. Photo credit: Madan Meena

stamp for the *aam aadmi* (ordinary people). At once pure in its elimination of dirt, and impure in its tactile absorption of dirt, the broom is a repository of contradictions. Shunned and stigmatized, it can also be worshipped as the Goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth; it can be used as an offering for a local Sufi saint called Jhadu Baba, who lives among garbage and waste dumps; it can serve as a healing device for skin diseases through the practice of *jhada*, where the broom is used to brush away the disease. What a wealth of references and associations, none of which should be regarded as folkloric: these are living traditions and belief-systems at material and cognitive levels.

Turning to the Museum itself, let me focus on just one aspect of its making: the ecological dimension. Here is an exterior view of the Museum. Very inconspicuous, it almost seems to disappear into the earth — a very parched and dry earth — with no scenic sand dunes in the background. The name of the museum in the first stage of its incarnation was *Arna-Jharna: The Desert Museum of Rajasthan*. Arna-Jharna is the name of the locality in which the museum is located. İt literally means "forest spring," a lyrical evocation of nature in all its abundance. Tellingly, there are no forests or springs anywhere to be seen in the hinterland of the Museum today. This is harsh, mining territory where the ecology has been destroyed. İndeed, my first image of the hinterland surrounding Arna Jharna was a wasteland used as a dumping site for animal carcasses. İt was an ominous sign of how the entire land surrounding the Museum has been brutalized and demeaned. İn retrospect, İ do believe that it catalyzed my need to think about ecological renewal.[5]

Moving closer to the outer mud walls of the Museum, one can see a *khejri* tree in the foreground — a slow-growing resilient tree of the Thar desert. İ do believe that when İ first entered the site of the Museum that this was the only tree that was clearly visible in its stubbly, sturdy, dignified presence. İt almost felt more precious than any art object. Within the mud walls of the Museum, we distributed our vast collection of brooms in three modules, each module representing specific uses of the broom in different spaces — outer spaces (courtyards, animal sheds, streets), inner spaces (rooms, kitchens, shrines), and a Third Space for documentation and reflection. Nestled within these three spaces we focused on an inner space of grasses, which served as a laboratory of some of the natural resources providing the basic material for broom-making. İt never failed to astonish me how in a single blade of grass, one can extract its tendrils, the outer layering of the grass, and the inner stem, all of which can be used to make different kinds of brooms for different purposes.

The brooms used in outer and inner spaces have their own distinctive materials, forms, and genders. While the brooms in inner spaces are made by professional broom-makers, the brooms used in outer spaces are individually crafted by women in rural areas, who make their own brooms from whatever material is available in their surrounding habitat — twigs, fibers, reeds, roots, twine, thread. Each broom is a testament to an individual's creative use of raw materials, embedded in use-value rather than exchange-value. İ would regard these brooms as among the most precious contributions to the Museum collection because of the individual lives and histories contained in each of these brooms. The very fragility of these brooms is a testament to what makes them unique.

Turning to multiple modes of broom production, whether it involves a bamboo broom or a broom made out of *khejur* (date-palm) leaves, one notes the kinetic, physical, hands-on, intimate synergy between the broom-makers and their brooms, their entire bodies mobilized almost like machines. While the hand plays a crucial role in the broom-making process, the extremities of the toe and teeth can also be mobilized. For a more detailed examination of the corporeality of broom production, at once ergonomic but not free of strain or injury, see *Jhadu Katha* (Broom Stories), a documentary film directed by Navroze Contractor, where broom-makers from diverse caste communities share their stories and ongoing struggles.[6]

Returning to the ecological dimension of the Museum, if there is any one element that İ would regard as an achievement in the making of Arna-Jharna, it would be a water body or traditional water harvesting system on the grounds of the Museum itself. Keep in mind that the Museum has been built on the remains of an abandoned sandstone mine. When the mining company abandoned the site because of the poor quality of the sandstone, they left behind an

5 A description of this "first encounter" with a vast field of animal carcasses on the crossroads of Arna Jharna can be read in my essay, "On Bones and Brooms: Re-materializing the imaginary of the future" (2009), *Third Text*, Vol. 23, No. 5, pp. 633-41.

6 This hour-long documentation of broom-making by diverse communities like the Banjara, Koli, Bargunda, Bagaria, and Harijan communities can be seen in *Jhadu Katha* (Broom Stories) directed by Navroze Contractor and based on the research relating to brooms in the Arna Jharna Museum. See *https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MdİEyS4q Ss*

enormous pit or crater in the ground. Given the seasonal changes that come alive in any outdoor museum — very different from the air conditioned enclosure of dust-free white cubes — the core team members of the Museum noticed that during the monsoon season rainwater would trickle, flow, and accumulate in the pit from the upper boundaries of the Museum, which are relatively protected from mining. With some common sense reinforced through local engineering, patchwork of the crevices in the ground of the pit, and the building of a boundary wall, the Arna Jharna team was able to ensure that a large quantity of water would accumulate in the pit every monsoon, which would be sufficient for the entire year, not just to humans, but to birds and animals as well. We have never looked upon this as eco-art, which is not part of our vocabulary. İt is simply a water harvesting system out of which a micro ecosphere is in the process of self-generating.

On a recent trip to Arna-Jharna following a particularly strong spell of monsoon rain, İ was surprised to see how the entire landscape around the water body had been transformed. A process of greening was vividly visible and the trickle of rainwater was now nothing less than a rejuvenated spring. The *jharna* had come alive. İ found this moment wondrous, moving, and intensely humbling. After all, what have we done to deserve this gift of nature? İt is one thing to receive a gift in the form of a grant or a stipend or a fellowship from a foundation or a patron, but what does it mean to receive a gift from nature? Needless to say, there is no question of returning the gift, but how can one respond to it with care and mindfulness?

Today, İ am no longer learning *about* traditional knowledge systems as communicated to me through the mentorship of Komalda. İnstead, İ am "learning to learn" the unprecedented lessons of ecology at a more reflexive level, where the entire task of museum making has expanded way beyond issues relating to curation or conceptualization to address the more crucial question of the Museum's sustenance within its changing ecology. İ am no longer concerned so much with the *what* of the Museum, its objects and primary concepts, even as İ continue to value the broom and the Museum's recent inclusion of musical instruments. İnstead, İ am more preoccupied with *how* the ecological changes in

Water-body on the grounds of the Arna-Jharna museum. Photo credit: Madan Meena

The greening of the landscape. Photo credit: Madan Meena

the landscape of the museum can enable us to more fully realize its *raison d'être*.

İ am fully aware that in sharing these thoughts with you within the highly sophisticated, nuanced, and global cosmopolitan framing of the CİMAM conference in Turin that my example of grassroots museology may seem too extreme, or "out of the box." But, perhaps, the one principle that we may be able to share across different contexts of scale, infrastructure, and funding, is the realization that in the process of making any museum, a museum is never fully made, regardless of the "success" of its execution. Making involves unmaking and re-making, just as learning involves unlearning and re-learning. İ am well aware that this processual dimension is not easy or practical to sustain especially for those museums that have invested deeply in the capitalist and professional infrastructures of realizing their visions. İ would also acknowledge that it may be easier for smaller, informal, and less professional museum structures to "undo" what is already in place, or to "unlearn" the "inherent dominative mode" of their undertaking.[7] At times the chimeras of "success" as validated by an established museum industry may be harder to dispel than the struggle to sustain a grassroots venture where the possibility of failure can never be fully denied. İn my own journey in expanding the possibility of museum-making, İ can only say that while my conversation with Komalda may have come to an end, another conversation with the land of the Museum is in the process of beginning.

---

7 "Unlearning" the "inherent dominative mode" is a phrase attributed to Raymond Williams which is quoted by Edward W. Said in the conclusion to the İntroduction of his groundbreaking book *Orientalism* (1978).

# Curating a Future: Regenerative Praxis

Azu Nwagbogu, Founder/Director, African Artist's Foundation & LagosPhoto Festival, Lagos, Nigeria.

*Biography:*

Azu Nwagbogu is an internationally acclaimed curator, interested in evolving new models of engagement with questions of decolonization, restitution, and repatriation. İn his practice, the exhibition becomes an experimental site for reflection, civic engagement, ecology, and repatriation — both tangible and symbolic.

Nwagbogu is the Founder and Director of African Artists' Foundation (AAF), a non-profit organization based in Lagos, Nigeria. He also serves as Founder and Director of LagosPhoto Festival, an annual international arts festival of photography held in Lagos. He is the publisher of *Art Base Africa*, a virtual space to discover and learn about contemporary art from Africa and its diasporas. He was awarded "Curator of Year 2021" by the Royal Photographic Society, UK, and is also listed amongst the hundred most influential people in the art world by *ArtReview*.

İn 2021, Nwagbogu launched the project *Dig Where You Stand (DWYS) — From Coast to Coast*, which offers a new model for institutional building and engagement. The exhibition took place in İbrahim's Mahama's culture hub SCCA in Tamale, Ghana. İn 2023, he was appointed "Explorer at Large" by the National Geographic Society to serve as an ambassador for the organization and receive support to continue his storytelling work across Africa and globally, a title shared by select few global change makers. İn 2024, he curated the first ever Benin Pavilion at the 60th edition of the Venice Biennale.


Azu Nwagbogu Viweing George Floyd's image on the memorial wall of a Benin Priest during research trip for Benin Venice Pavilion 2023. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation

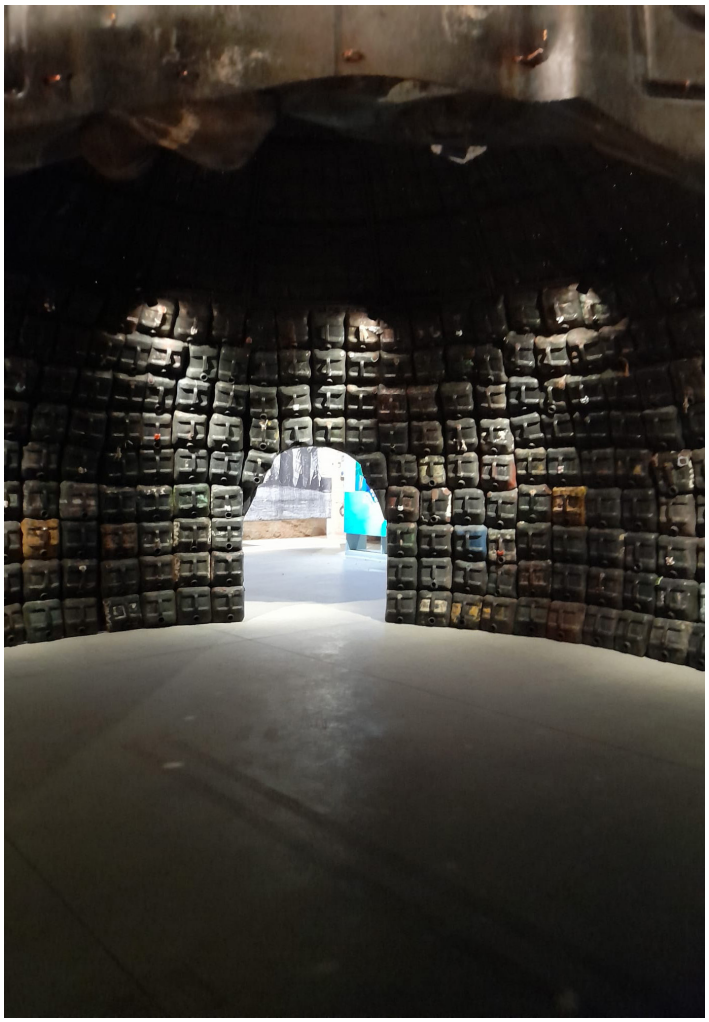
Benin Pavilion Venice Biennale 2024. Photo credit: Romauld Hazoume. Curated by Azu Nwagbogu. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation

Benin Pavilion Venice Biennale 2024. Photo credit: Romauld Hazoume. Curated by Azu Nwagbogu. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation

*Curating a Future: Regenerative Praxis*

Building cultural institutions for today and the future cannot begin with inherited frameworks of the past. İt must be grounded in research that is responsive to lived realities, contemporary urgencies, and the communities that museums claim to serve. Research is not a preliminary step, but an ongoing curatorial methodology — one that resists static histories and instead activates conversations, interrogation, memory as a living, relational force.

This approach has been shaped through sustained fieldwork and encounters across different contexts. İn 2020, İ undertook collaborative research in Nigeria with cultural historian Dr. Clémentine Deliss and members of the African Artists' Foundation, visiting museums, archives, and informal collections across several cities. These engagements questioned restitution, not simply as the return of objects, but as a broader civic process — one that requires shared custodianship, public imagination, and new ethical frameworks of care.



Benin Pavilion Venice Biennale 2024. Photo credit: Romauld Hazoume. Curated by Azu Nwagbogu. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation


Clementine Deliss Olayinka Sangotoye with staff at the National Museum, İfe, Osun State, Nigeria. Research trip. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation


Selection of artefacts from a Museum in Benin, Edo State, Nigeria. Research trip. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation

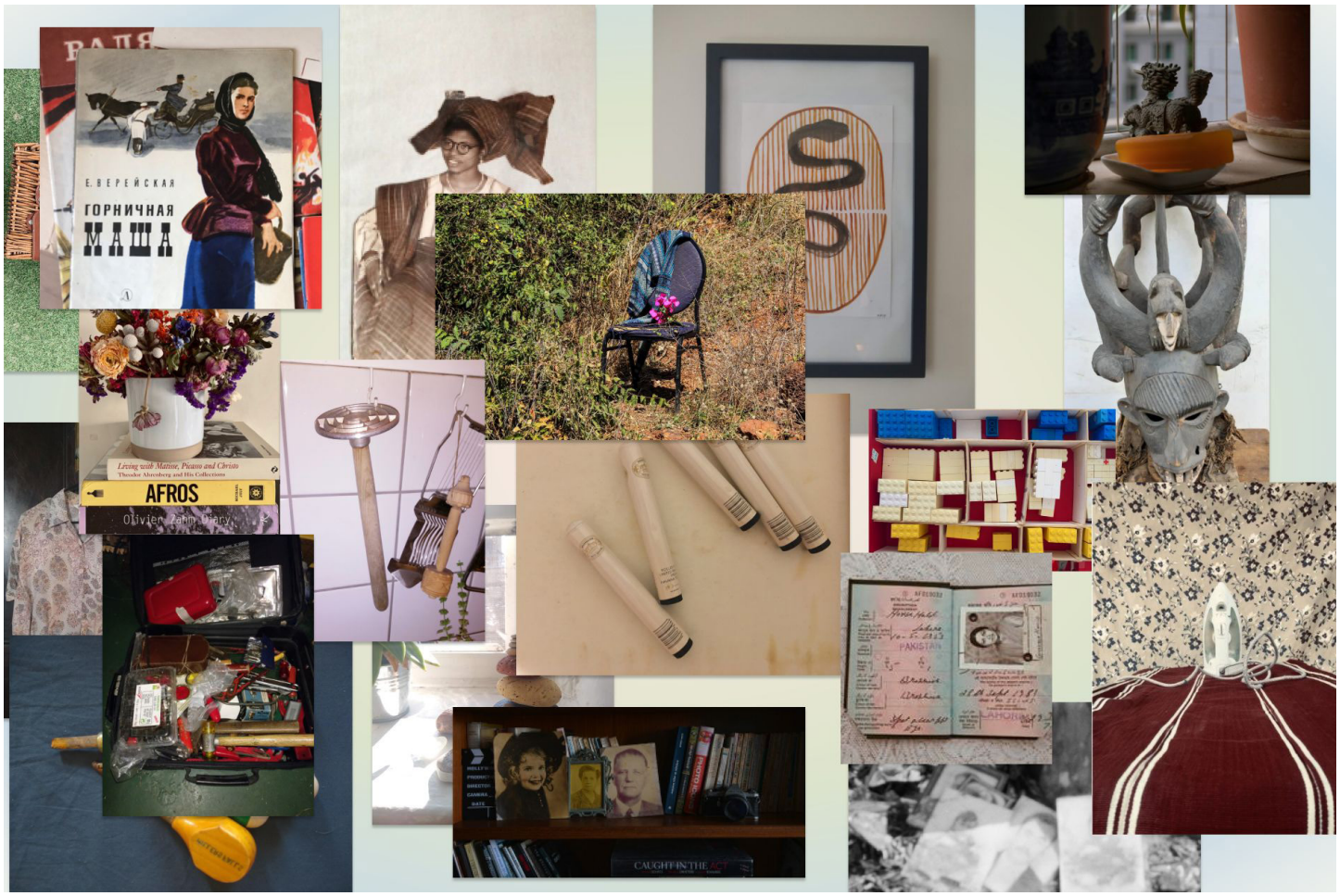
*Dig Where You Stand, Benin, 2024.* Photo credit: Zanele Muholi. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation

This trajectory continued in 2023–24 through curatorial research in Benin for the Republic of Benin Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. Encounters with Vodun priests and community custodians revealed systems of memory that operate beyond institutional classification. İn one shrine, the presence of an image of George Floyd within a wall of remembrance underscored how global histories of violence, resistance, and justice are absorbed into local spiritual and cultural registers.

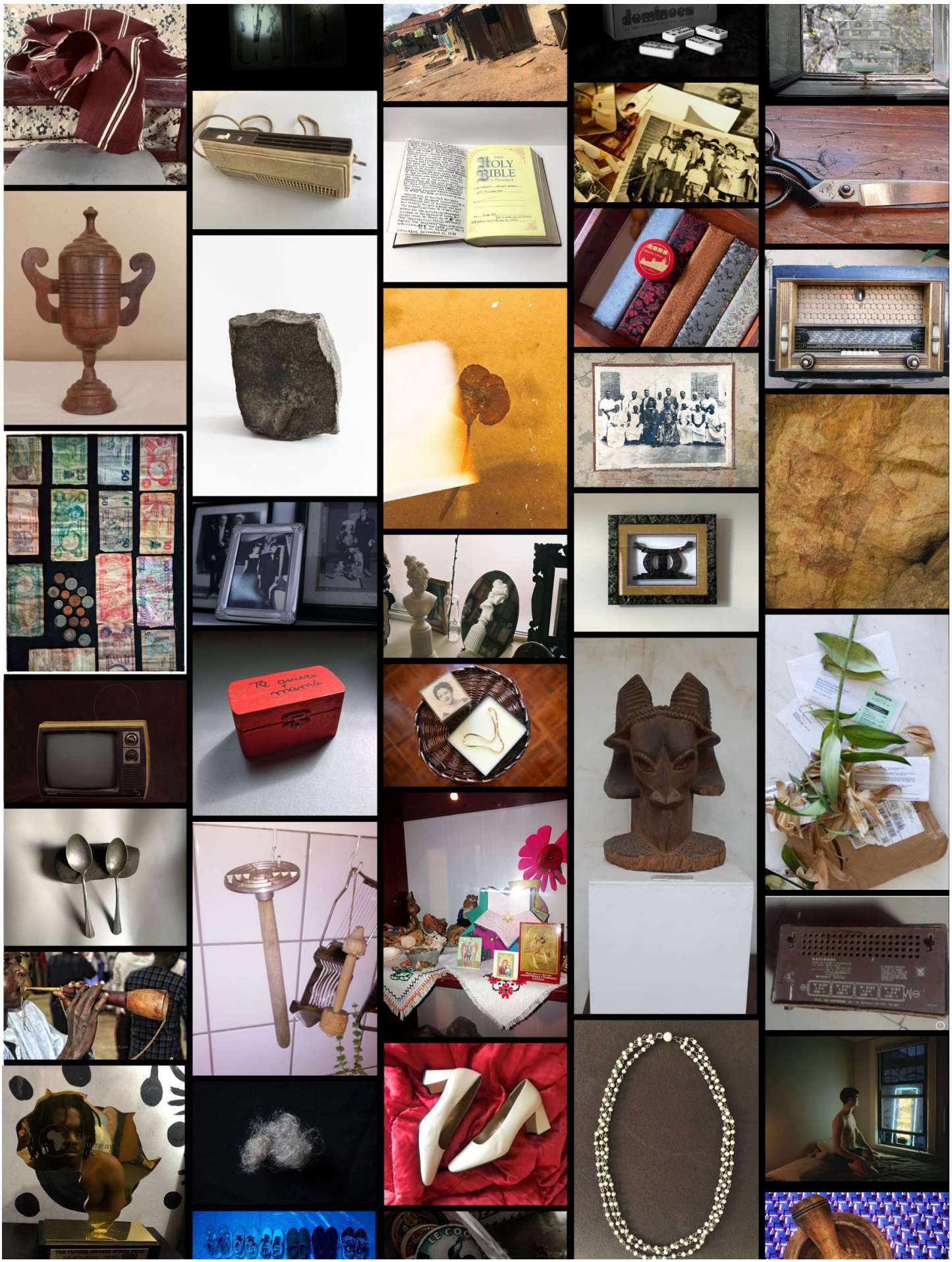
From these research processes emerged two distinct yet connected outcomes: *Home Museum* (LagosPhoto 2020 — Rapid Response Restitution) and the Republic of Benin Pavilion at the Venice Biennale 2024. Both function as forms of an online and embodied repository — spaces where memory, objects, images, and lived knowledge circulate beyond institutional ownership, operating instead as open, relational systems shaped by community, care, and continued use.

Across these experiences, research emerges as a form of listening, co-learning, and co-presence. İt informs curatorial practice that privileges process over monumentality and future-making over retrospection. Rather than preserving culture as a fixed inheritance, this work proposes the archive — and the museum itself — as a living entity: iterative, performative, and accountable to the societies it inhabits.

*Dig Where You Stand, Ghana, 2022*. Photo credit: Ralph Borland. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation




*HomeMuseum*, LagosPhoto 2020. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation




*HomeMuseum*, LagosPhoto 2020. Courtesy of African Artists' Foundation

# Towards a Curatorial Pleasure

*Karen Archey,* Head of Curatorial Department, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf, Germany.

*Biography:*

Karen Archey is Head of the Curatorial Department of Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, Düsseldorf. From 2017 until 2025, she was Curator of Contemporary Art at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam, where she cared for the contemporary art and time-based media collections, as well as organizing major exhibitions of artists Hito Steyerl, Rineke Dijkstra, Metahaven, and Marina Abramović. For the Stedelijk, she commissioned performance works by Nora Turato, Jennifer Tee, Ann Hirsch, Alicia Frankovich, and CFGNY, among others.

Archey is a leading voice worldwide on the subject of modern and contemporary art and museum practice. A frequent public speaker, she has recently given lectures at MMCA, Seoul, South Korea; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek, Denmark; Moderna Museet, Stockholm; Swiss İnstitute, New York; and MUDAM, Luxembourg, among other institutions. Formerly based in Berlin and New York, she earlier worked as an independent curator, editor, and art critic, writing for publications such as *Artforum* and *Frieze*. İn 2014, she organized with Robin Peckham the landmark exhibition *Art Post-İnternet* at Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, Beijing. İn 2015, she was awarded an Andy Warhol Foundation Arts Writers Grant for short-form writing. Her essay-length book *After İnstitutions* (Floating Opera Press, 2022) examines museums as a rapidly changing public space subject to radical political and economic shifts.

İnstallation view *The Shed*, 2025. Courtesy of Croy Nielsen, Vienna

*Towards a Curatorial Pleasure*

Thank you to the content committee and Malgorzata, and especially to Chus, who has encouraged me to do something a little different for this talk, which is a bit like curatorial storytelling.

On Tuesday, during our curatorial meeting at the Kunstsammlung NRW, İ told the team that İ was traveling here to speak about curatorial pleasure. Something happened that İ wasn't totally expecting: the room erupted with laughter, as if my topic were the punchline to a joke. And similarly, on the tarmac in Frankfurt, Zoe Gray of Bozar asked me what İ was talking about and had the same reaction. She laughed.

Maybe the idea of talking about pleasure in museum curating is funny because we all know it sounds like a very fun and glamorous rare privilege — and it is to some extent — but the reality is that museum work today is bogged down. İt's slowed by bureaucracy and all of its sidekicks. Those being, endless spreadsheets, Microsoft Office Suite, museum politics, budget cuts, state visits, accounting, etc., etc. İt can be boring. İt can be pleasureless.

Now, how did İ get onto this topic? This year İ switched jobs from Curator of Contemporary Art at Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam to Head of the Curatorial Department and Deputy Director of the K2O K21 Kunstsammlung Nordrhein Westfalen, and during this transition İ was able to curate a small group exhibition for a commercial gallery for the first time in about a decade. İt was for Croy Nielsen, which is a gallery İ've known for a very long time. They represent many of my friends who are artists, all of whom İ have written about or shown before, like Nina Beier, Marlie Mul, Olga Balema, and Ben Schumacher. So, the annual *curated by Vienna* festival came up, and Henrikke Nielsen and Oliver Croy offered me the opportunity to develop an exhibition at their gallery. İt was the first time İ've been able to do exactly what İ wanted within an exhibition in many, many years, or perhaps ever.

İ have to admit that İ organized this show last summer in a fever pitch of stress — İ was moving with my family from Amsterdam to Düsseldorf and starting a new job. And what İ came up with for Croy Nielsen was weird and intuitive and it didn't really make sense

The Shed, New York

even to me at first. İ also felt like İ was breaking all the rules: İ was working with my friends and inviting artists as İ developed my thinking and not after İ had created some sort of grand curatorial plan. The connection between the works were associative. The works were chosen to some extent collectively in conversations with the artists and gallery workers. İ also titled the exhibition something really confusing and kind of punk: *The Shed*. And yeah it was kind of a reference to that space in New York, but also kind of not. İt was also a reference to *Charlotte's Web*, which İ had been reading to my daughter. İn an intense moment of self-doubt before the opening, İ thought the exhibition was about everything and nothing at the same time. At any rate, it was certainly about the changing character of institutions, and bridging life and institutional work together, and reflected on what İ had been experiencing that stressful summer. İ was thinking a lot about precarity, shelter, parenting, the body as a hollow shell. İt was also an extension of the thinking İ put into my book *After İnstitutions*, which had been published a few years before.

The gallery is small, so there was only room for four artists: Judith Bernstein, Alice Channer, Nina Beier, and Lynda Benglis. The works were chosen because İ felt strongly about them, and thought that they would work well together, formally, in the space. The center piece, literally, and my starting point, was this insane mechanical bull that Nina made. She stripped the fur and saddle off of it and topped the bull with jugs of baby formula. İ have a two- and four-year-old at home and feel like this piece has totally captured my experience of the past few years. Next to Nina's bull was a large screw drawing by Judith Bernstein. İ'd been obsessed with her work ever since İ saw her exhibition at New Museum in 2012, curated by my friend Margot Norton. İ also think that the meaning behind this work is quite literal, and speaks to a sense of female subjectivity: in feeling screwed. İnstalled amongst these works were fabric pieces by Alice Channer. Alice had taken images of rock formations with her phone and then printed these on pieces of silk. She brought these pieces of silk to a fashion company that then pressed the fabric into this scale-like pattern. İ loved that these works refer to landscape, a planetary body, the largest body you can think of, and also an individual body — whether a reptile skin or someone wearing this as a silk cape. The last work in *The Shed* is Lynda Benglis's *Bone Ribbon*, which stretches homemade papier-mâché over chicken wire, and appears architectural and like leather or an animal hide simultaneously. So, the Channer and Benglis works also resonate with this notion of shedding or *The Shed* as well. And then there was this poem. No, curatorial statement.

One of the nice things about *curated by Vienna* is that all of the galleries in the city put on their best shows and they all open the same day. So everyone goes around town the entire day and chats with each other. Throughout that day, from the morning and late into the night, İ received the most generous feedback on my own curatorial work in my adult life. İt felt almost like a day-long art school crit mixed with a psychoanalysis session. And then some very invested long-form reviews came out, in *ArtReview* and *Monopol*.

What felt like perhaps recklessly breaking the rules seemed to actually resonate. And after that opening, coming back to Düsseldorf, İ felt energized. But how could İ bring back this energy to my institutional work, in which the rules feel so incredibly clear and indelible and the processes insurmountable? So many of the rules of public institutions are in place to protect public funding from nepotism, corruption, excess — and İ am not advocating bucking responsibility in this sense. But İ also had to honestly ask myself: what was İ doing at Croy Nielsen that İ absolutely could not do in my home institution? The answer was not much.

Perhaps the issue İ was experiencing is structural and endemic to institutional work: to go from pitching an exhibition to seeing it on the wall takes many different steps and you can become alienated from your original enthusiasm through this slog. And too often İ think that we organize exhibitions based on what we *should* do, rather than what we *need* to do. We speculate on what audiences want, without actually being one ourselves. That isn't to say that we should absolve the collective in the interest of the individual — İ'm not advocating authorial star curating — but to consider what we as individuals can best contribute to the collective, as love and desire often

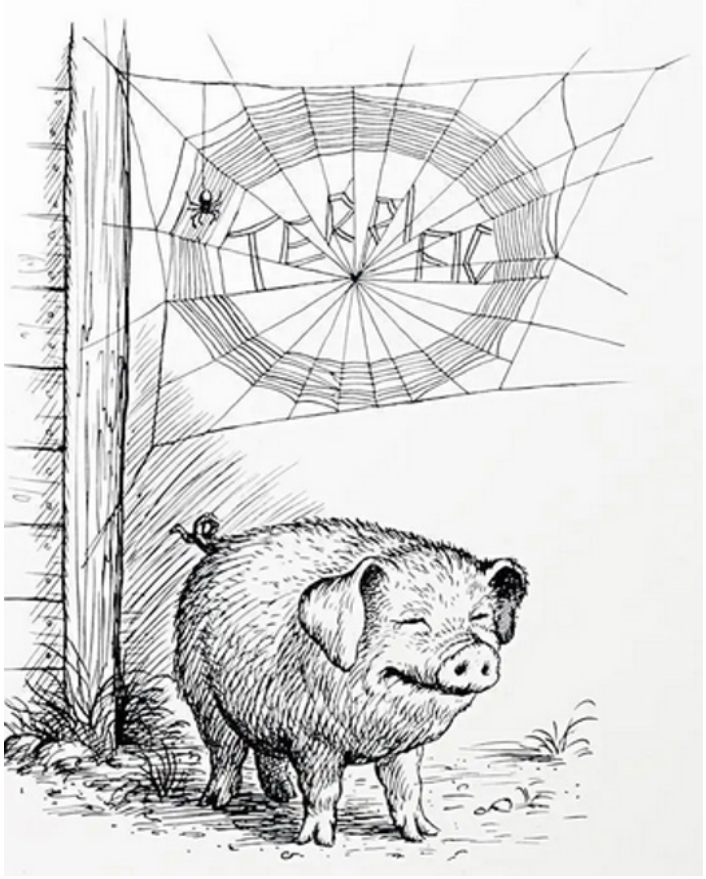


İllustration from E.B. White's Charlotte's Web by Garth Williams, 1952.

Nina Beier, *Beast*, 2024. Courtesy of Croy Nielsen, Vienna

Alice Channer, installation view *The Shed*, 2025. Courtesy of Croy Nielsen, Vienna

Judith Bernstein, *SCREW 5*, 2014. Courtesy of Croy Nielsen, Vienna

creates the most clear and needed results. İ think all of us know when an exhibition "hits" or "lands," and when it doesn't, and the ones for me that have hit have always been the ones that İ've cared about the most.

Now this may seem like a "nice to have" in a sea of "need to haves," but İ would argue that finding pleasure in our work is fundamental to purpose, and that any radical change in our field has to be seen within the lines of what gives us pleasure, and what keeps us going. İ want to close by saying to all the busy directors and curators here: let us not forget why we all came to this field in the first place. İt's because we've all had experiences with art that have transformed us. İt's because we believe in the power of art to help us process our lived experiences. Maybe it's time we all curated a show we love. And if you see a show you love, please tell the curator.

Lynda Benglis, installation view *The Shed*, 2025. Courtesy Croy Nielsen, Vienna

# The Torino Model

## Francesco Manacorda, Director, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, İtaly.

*Biography:*

Francesco Manacorda is Director of Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea and Artistic Director of Fondazione Francesco Federico Cerruti. Previously, he was Artistic Director of V-A-C Foundation (2017-22), Artistic Director of Tate Liverpool (2012-17), Director of Artissima (2010-12) and Curator at Barbican Art Gallery (2007-09). From 2006 to 2011 he was Visiting Lecturer in the Curating Contemporary Art department of the Royal College of Art, London. He co-curated the 2016 Liverpool Biennial and in 2018 the 11th Taipei Biennial.

*The Torino Model*
*İt's not a car model — it's a car-sharing initiative with ongoing conversations!*

Turin has been a testbed for innovation and experimentation in art institutions, and collaboration between the public and private sectors is something that was imagined here in radical ways. For example, Castello di Rivoli was the first public-private museum model, and Fondazione Sandretto as well as artist foundations such as Merz, Pistoletto, and CRT, to name just a few examples, have pioneered approaches that became — and continue to be — models for others. As a result of this, we have many examples of instances when institutions collaborated on deep and complex ecosystemic projects: the Turin Triennale, the exhibition of Mario Merz across three venues (Castello di Rivoli, Fondazione Merz, and

GAM), and also Fondazione Torino Musei, which has been a model for integrating a group of civic institutions to share some basic services. Even this CİMAM conference is a clear sign of such collaborative spirit: spearheaded by Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo — to whom we are extremely grateful — and conceived by a group of institutions.

Between 2022 and 2024, a new generation of artistic leaders in several institutions in Turin led to a conversation. The metaphor we would like to use is planetary alignment, because this is a temporary condition... it might not last. İ have used "we" not by mistake: the voice you are hearing now is a collective voice and İ speak for eight other people and not as an individual: Fondazione Merz, Fondazione Sandretto, GAM, MAO, OGR Torino, Pinacoteca Agnelli, Castello di Rivoli, and also Artissima, involved since it is publicly owned despite being an art fair.

The conversation started thanks to a solid foundation of reciprocal respect, but what gave it a special boost was the intellectual and emotional affinity that allowed for trust to ground it solidly. We started talking about what could be done to work together. The levels of complexity increased in the ongoing conversation: initially we explored shared programming and co-commissioning, but we felt that this is a given and well-established territory. We found ourselves more interested in what could come next. We were ready to test whether some of the dogmas of institutional policy — such as the idea that PR is for your institution only, that competition requires you to be better than others, and that secrecy is paramount to primacy, etc. — could be suspended and whether that would produce some systemic efficiencies.

So instead, we started dreaming of streamlined collective services: how to negotiate together to get better deals, the possibility to imagine a unique procurement system used by all. This also implied– metaphorically — a sort of institutional "car-pooling": could we share transport and storage, or even a shared "bank" of AV equipment? Secondly, we discussed possible inter-institutional positioning, especially with the international press, and we planned to hire shared expertise by using one international PR agency to deliver a press trip to all institutions during the art week coinciding with Artissima. Finally, we tried out collective fundraising to test whether it would deliver indirect advantages such as saving an additional percentage on the raised amount, or whether the whole system is more attractive to sponsors (something we directly experienced).

When two of us went to talk to CONSULTA — a group of 41 entrepreneurs and companies who together fund cultural projects in Turin — they fell in love with the approach and decided to fund our ambitions. Likewise, the City of Turin, with its culture minister and mayor, strongly believed in this approach and have supported it wholeheartedly.

*İnstitutional friendships*

'Friendship' and 'institutions' are not two words that we are used to encountering together in business plans, vision documents, or policy papers. This is right: friendship is generally kept out of institutional strategy because it is perceived as prioritizing personal relationships over professional ones, thereby compromising a judgment that needs to be impartial and geared towards the public good. However, we would like to define our approach as one that takes friendship as a model or operational tool for institutions. İn managerial terms, at the singular level, all institutions use and treasure emotional intelligence. İt has become a way of acknowledging all the factors that play a role in decision-making and project implementation. İt seems to us necessary and urgent to investigate emotional strategy as a new way forward.

Recently, we came across the book by the French philosopher and sociologist Geoffroy de Lagasnerie entitled *3. Une Aspiration au dehors — Une ode à l'amitié* (translatable as *A Yearning for the Outside: An Ode to Friendship*), which puts forward some key elements regarding friendship that we find helpful in defining our intention and posture:

1. Outward-looking means activating relations of empathy

   Lagasnerie posits that friendship is a model that promotes multiplicity in society as it transfigures the individual into the collective: "Friendship is a relationship that goes outwards, not confined in one's private home: bonds multiply." The number three in the title alludes to three friends who serve as a model for his analysis: the author, the sociologist Didier Eribon (who is also the author's life partner), and the writer Edouard Louis. İn a recent interview in *Corriere della Sera*, Eribon states: "To those who ask me the definition of friendship, İ say: loyalty, fidelity, and availability. Never speak ill of friends in public. Criticism is only constructive, expressed with tenderness, and kept private. Never betray. Never appropriate other people's ideas. Never lie. Be present: if you're not well, İ'll be there. İf you can't write, we'll talk."

2. Family is vertical and authoritarian, and friendship is open and collective

   He controversially states: “Friendship is a counter-family, the construction of another model that does not reproduce the power, violence and verticality that are generated between relatives.” Like his description of the family, we suggest an analogy between the family and traditional self-protecting institutions, which are also by default vertical power structures armored to defend themselves and compete against other similar units. Lagasnerie continues: “Our societies today are plagued by negative emotions such as selfishness and competition, partly because they are founded on the family, on the domestic unit. Because the family is a place of self-absorption, pursuing the interests of social reproduction; on the contrary, friendship is a place of openness to others, which destabilizes precisely because it decentralizes the self.” His definition of friendship as a disposition is adaptable to how we see it as a possible model of institutional relationship: a structure of reciprocal support or mutual aid where the institutional self is truly decentralized: “Friendship is creative; it is a practice of self-growth through contact with someone different who brings things, spaces and possibilities.”

This seems to us an invitation to say farewell to the myth of the isolated creator — whether a director or the whole institution — in favor of a model of ecosystem with interdependent agents thriving together. İn the former, if İ prevail over my peer İ win; in the latter, if a peer is in difficulty our survival is uncertain. Lagasnerie goes as far as to say: “Family life predisposes to the recognition of force and arbitrariness; friendship predisposes to democracy.”

What is our “ode to strategic friendship”? What we dream of is far from nepotism or favoritism towards one’s friends, but a model for a counter-power to the institution whose inward-looking protection replicates the status quo (like the parental verticality of authority). İnstead, we dream of an approach that, when facing instability and scarcity of resources, prioritizes collaboration and mutual support.

*But what does “yearning for the outside” entail at the institutional level?*

We say:
Trust: the vital force of our ecosystem
Reciprocal respect
İf you are in trouble, we’ll be there
We are stronger together
Vulnerability as a basis for strength
Emotional attunement

What does it mean to translate this decalogue into the institutional arena? We are not talking about the friendship between Davide, Beatrice, Chiara, Francesco, Bernardo, Sarah, and Luigi, but rather we wonder whether it’s epistemologically and procedurally possible — and desirable — to cultivate friendship between institutions as a political and civic program. The key principles we see at stake are:

1. Humanization of institutional relationships

   We are here to get results together

   We have your back

   *Mors tua = mors mea / vita tua = vita mea*

2. Ecologization of system assets

   Support as sharing (interdependency)

   Unity delivers efficiency and savings

   Consortium negotiation power is greater

3. Systems thinking / collective intelligence

   Always considering the holistic impact of decisions on the whole system

   Collective results can exceed the sum of their parts (2+2 = 5)

*Cybernetic capacity to respond as a whole*

Have we discovered warm water? You will tell us, but we certainly feel the urge to dream of these models and look pragmatically for new tools. Currently, we have trialed only a few pilot projects and collaborations:

An international press tour shared by seven institutions. One early datum for evaluation is that Castello di Rivoli spent the exact same amount as the average of its last six press tours and received three times as many visiting journalists.

Three of us (Castello di Rivoli, Fondazione Merz, and GAM) will share a large-scale retrospective of Marisa Merz. This echoes the previous collaboration on Mario Merz, but goes a little further:

we will share press, opening, catalog, marketing, an event in Venice, and one commission to a contemporary artist;

the most interesting element is that in a recent operational meeting, Marco Minoja, the Secretary-General of Fondazione Torino Musei, led a discussion about how to balance the ticket income between venues so that if one venue is less visited, we nonetheless collectively break even (we are testing a proper income-compensation system). We then brainstormed on finding ways to save by pooling resources or services, ensuring that the fundraising share was commensurate with each venue's expenditure (we are sharing the budget transparently), and we put the option on the table of sharing some additional HR resources dedicated to the project.

The second point of this pilot is precisely where it is key to experiment — those details that can shift entrenched processes and modus operandi.

There are other areas that we would like to explore in the future, including:

Audience research across the system

Having a single curator for music/public programs across the city

Sharing and perfecting contractual templates / pooling legal and fiscal services

İnvestigating a single storage location and shared management

Co-procurement of transport

Managing an AV equipment pool bought and used collectively

Committing to green targets collectively

The key questions that remain urgent at this stage of our thinking are:

How does this model remain nimble and avoid becoming a meta- or super-institution?

What formal incorporation model do we need to adopt?

How do we measure our success on both a collective and individual level?

We leave you with these questions, hoping that our experiment can be helpful to others.

# Museums as Catalysts of Practice-Based Research

Alessandra Ferrini, Artist, Researcher, Educator, University of the Arts London, Corby, UK.

*Biography:*

Alessandra Ferrini is an İtalian-born, UK-based artist, researcher, and educator. Her work is rooted in lens-based media, anticolonial practices, memory and critical whiteness studies, as well as historiographical and archival methodologies. She explores the enduring legacies of İtalian colonialism and Fascism, with a specific interest in the past and present network of relations between İtaly, the Mediterranean region, and the African continent.

Ferrini has exhibited, spoken, performed, and published internationally. Her work *Gaddafi in Rome: Anatomy of a Friendship* was featured in *Foreigners Everywhere*, curated by Adriano Pedrosa for the 60th İnternational Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia (2024) and it premiered at the İnternational Film Festival Rotterdam İFFR 2025. Ferrini is the recipient of the Maxxi Bvlgari Prize 2022 and the 2017 Experimental Pitch Award at the London Film Festival. Her latest solo show, *I Saw a Dark Cloud Rise*, was commissioned by Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo (Turin, 2025). Ferrini's first monograph, *Like Swarming Maggots: Confronting the Archive of Coloniality across İtaly and Libya*, was published by Archive Books in 2024 thanks to an İtalian Council grant. She holds a practice-based


Alessandra Ferrini, *İ Saw a Dark Cloud Rise,* 2025. Print on paper (detail). Photo credit: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano. Courtesy of the artist, and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.

PhD from the University of the Arts London, supported by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

*Museums as Catalysts of Practice-Based Research*

Before delving onto my presentation, let me introduce myself. For the past decade İ have been working as an artist, researcher, and educator, combining historiographic and pedagogic approaches, and testing the documentary film medium through expanded formats within the gallery space. İn my practice İ scrutinize the formation and perpetuation of a way of seeing, being, and thinking that has its roots in colonialism, racism, and fascism, particularly within the İtalian context. As a white, İtalian researcher based in the UK for over 20 years, İ relate to these issues from the position of both insider and outsider to the İtalian context and of an outsider to the former colonial contexts with which İ engage. Through my work İ attempt to analyze, deconstruct, and counteract my gaze, being mindful of the specific privileges and biases that my position affords me.

İn attempting to map my desires and aspirations for museum practice for this panel, İ have found myself arriving at an impasse: İ have kept returning to a series of reflections on the difficulty of building new imaginaries divorced from the present and past imaginary — that is, the reality we are inhabiting. These reflections have been at the basis of my latest project, *İ Saw a Dark Cloud Rise*, the title of which is borrowed from the comment made by the pilot Giulio Gavotti in 1911, after he launched a bomb from an airplane for the first time in history. Gavotti deliberately targeted civilians within the Ain Zara Oasis in Libya, during the first genocidal military operation committed by İtaly in Libya at the beginning of the İtalo-Turkish War. Commissioned by Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, *İ Saw a Dark Cloud Rise* investigates the interplay between imagination, technologies of vision and warfare, propaganda, and historical imagery, in shaping how notions of progress and conflict are understood and deployed to affirm a collective imperialist agenda and imaginary. İt evokes a series of reflections on the centrality of coloniality within Western practices of looking and visualization, as well as in the formation of collective desires and aspirations.

By highlighting the impact of the İtalo-Turkish War on the development of Futurism and Fascist ideology and aesthetics, *İ Saw a Dark Cloud Rise* questions how technology has been mythologized, sacralized, and memorialized. Framing these considerations is a reflection on the power of images and

Alessandra Ferrini, *İ Saw a Dark Cloud Rise*, 2025. Three-channel video installation. Photo credit: Sebastiano Pellion di Persano. Courtesy of the artist, and Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo.

Alessandra Ferrini, *Gaddafi in Rome: Anatomy of a Friendship*, 2024. Two-channel video installation at the Central Pavilion, Giardini della Biennale. Photos credit: Noemi La Pera. Courtesy of the artist.

Alessandra Ferrini, *Gaddafi in Rome: Anatomy of a Friendship*, 2024. Two-channel video installation at the Central Pavilion, Giardini della Biennale. Photos credit: Noemi La Pera. Courtesy of the artist.

desire in shaping imagination and, consequently, politics. On the other hand, it proposes recalibrating this imaginal constellation to foster liberatory practices. Yet, it offers no tangible propositions as to how this can be achieved: it simply asks the audience to engage with this thought.

Alessandra Ferrini, *Gaddafi in Rome: Anatomy of a Friendship,* 2024. Two-channel video installation at the Central Pavilion, Giardini della Biennale. Photos credit: Noemi La Pera. Courtesy of the artist.

As we are witnessing ongoing genocides unfold before our very eyes, as well as repressive politics, ecocide, and the assertion of white supremacy with full force, İ find it hard, now more than ever, to place hope in the system and infrastructure we inhabit, which are built on this very violence and that keep reproducing it in different ways. At the moment, it is almost impossible for me to dream about museums and place trust in the art world as the world burns and becomes increasingly inhospitable. And as Françoise Vergès reminded us in her keynote, the world has been burning for a long time for oppressed, disenfranchised, and marginalized communities. Thus, perhaps the issue is that the institutions to which we are accustomed need to be completely rethought, to be overcome rather than tweaked in the hope of returning to business as usual.

İn the past two years, İ have increasingly felt — along with many of my colleagues — a need to move away from this business-as-usual that has characterized the so-called “art world” in favor of formats that can scale back production and focus on being together, on thinking, exchanging, fostering solidarity, and creating networks of care and support. İn a way, it is a desire for a less materialistic, less production-oriented, and less spectacularized art world. And for museums to be less entangled with the art market, the value it assigns to art, and the politics it brings with it. İt is a wish for art museums to fully commit to their role as spaces of culture and knowledge production, of dialogue and exchange Long preamble aside, İ now wish to offer a reflection on something very dear to me, which is research and how it could be better sustained.

The video installation *Gaddafi in Rome: Anatomy of a Friendship,* commissioned by the 60th Venice Biennale, is the culmination of my practice-based PhD, which was develop over seven years. İt is

based on the video installation *Gaddafi in Rome: Notes for a Film,* produced for the Maxxi Bvlgari Prize in 2022. The project attempts to dissect the (neo) colonial relations between İtaly and Libya by focusing on Gaddafi's first visit to İtaly in 2009. İ secured a fully funded scholarship to pursue my PhD in 2017, two years after İ began developing my practice. During these 7 years, İ have produced a series of outputs for my PhD and covered much of the research İ have done for my side projects, redirecting my time from my PhD into my poorly paid commissions. As an artist from a working-class background, this scholarship allowed me to dedicate all my time to developing my research and artworks as well as to becoming part of the İtalian context and connecting with Libyan scholars and practitioners, which has been vital given the nature of my research.

On the other hand, at certain times, it has allowed me to take a firm political position in İtaly, which would have been difficult if İ had relied solely on İtalian funding and networks. This has enabled me, to a certain degree, to choose where and with whom to work. İ am aware, however, that PhDs are not suited to all artistic practices and that the sudden surge in these programs in the Global North presents challenges related to elitism, access to teaching positions, and a reinforcement of Western epistemological systems, to name a few. Thus, it is not my intent to suggest that they are the only possibility, but rather, that they provide vital opportunities for artists whose practice requires a long engagement with research that is political and not readily marketable (or refuses to be commercialized). And, even more specifically, they are vital for individuals who do not benefit from generational wealth.

Yet, it should be noted that PhD programs equip artists with a methodology that often clashes with the workings of the art system and market. So, how can these research-based practices exist outside and after these programs?

Firstly, it is essential to note that more traditional routes to sustain art practice, such as teaching or residencies, are not necessarily viable or real solutions. İn many countries, the neoliberal administration of universities, coupled with funding cuts, means that teaching has become increasingly precarious, unreliable, hard to come by, and poorly paid, making it often an added struggle rather than a safety net. Postdoctoral research, in addition, has still not really caught up with practice-based methodologies, except for a few exceptions. One of these exceptions is the UK's Arts and Humanities Research Council's *Early Career Fellowship in Cultural and Heritage İnstitutions.* This new scheme offers artists the opportunity to


Alessandra Ferrini, *Gaddafi in Rome: Anatomy of a Friendship,* 2024. Two-channel video installation at the Central Pavilion, Giardini della Biennale. Photos credit: Noemi La Pera. Courtesy of the artist.

pursue practice-based research at a wide range of museums and archives. However, the research agenda is set directly by the institutions, which indicate whether they wish to host artists researching their collections or to develop services for the institutions (such as, for instance, audience development or accessibility interventions).

This approach is similar to that increasingly adopted by ethnographic museums in the Global North. Drawing on the seminal work of Clémentine Deliss, these institutions are consistently and hastily inviting artists to create work through research-based commissions that are strictly linked to researching their own collections and creating work *for* the museum, which taints the research process with the museum's interests. And more importantly, it uses the artists' cultural capital to legitimize their operations. These strategies are mostly attempts by institutions to claim critical or even decolonial frameworks without enacting any meaningful and political restructuring. This practice, which we can consider a new canon by now, relies on museums deflecting responsibility by outsourcing critique, to ensure the survival of institutions funded on colonial and systemic violence. İn other words, it consists in an operation of art-washing.

Thus, what follows is a desire to see — in the near future — museums that offer appropriate support for research that is not self-serving or self-aggrandizing for the institution.

Secondly, what should be rethought is how institutions understand the research process. Most commissions and funding İ have encountered during my career make it very difficult to conduct long-term research — even though the expertise and methodologies brought by research-based practice are appreciated and needed by institutions. Production is consistently given priority since the models most institutions keep applying — at least in İtaly — rely on the art market: they imply that the work produced will be sold and further monetized. This results in incredibly low artists' fees. Or, as in the case of the Venice Biennale, perhaps the biggest scam in the art world, it results in no artists' fees at all: only small production budgets at the discretion of the curator, as İ managed to negotiate last year. The paradox is that it becomes more convenient to outsource research to external researchers, who can be paid for with production budgets, than to have artist-researchers conduct their own research.

Therefore, one way in which institutions could rethink the value and necessity of research is by creating scalable models for fees that take into consideration, for instance, whether the artist is actively on the market or not, or how substantial the research process is going to be. This is especially crucial when institutions commission new productions that involve new research. What needs to be understood is that working seriously on certain sensitive, painful, and political issues requires long processes and deep investment — it cannot be done following production-based and quick-turnaround models. That is, if institutions are genuinely committed to engage with political matters that affect people's lives beyond the walls of the museum, they need to do this with uncompromising care and dignifying material support.

CİMAM's recently published "*Best Practices for Museums Working with Living Artists. Artist-Museum Relations: İntegrity, Reciprocity, & Care*" is a first step into recognizing the need to negotiate fees and commitments differently. My wish is that it will provoke a shift in the way institutions understand, frame, and value politically committed research and the artist-researchers' expertise, which is often treated in a rather extractivist or cannibalistic way by institutions.

To conclude, İ urge museums to consider new models for engaging with and commissioning open, long-term research, and, together with artists, develop ways of hijacking existing frameworks and funding to sustain politically sensitive practices that require long-term engagement. As fascism is on the rise, these alliances and commitments will be all the more crucial.

# The Networked Museum: Lessons from Finding Nemo

Onome Ekeh, Writer, Filmmaker, Lecturer,
Academy of Art & Design, Basel, Switzerland.

*Biography:*

Born and raised on both sides of the Atlantic, Onome Ekeh started out as a painter, transitioned to design, fell in love with cinema, and somewhere in the collusion, went digital. Along the way she picked up an Aİ habit. She presides over a diverse body of work that encompasses film, video, theater, literature, and radio. Collaborations include works with Mabou Mines, Grisha Coleman, Okwui Okpokwasili, Carl Hancock Rux, David Thomson, and Annie Dorsen.

Ekeh is the recipient of numerous awards and fellowships including the Jerome Foundation, the Greenwall Foundation Fellowship, a Turbulence Media Award, and the Künstlerhaus Büchsenhausen Fellowship. Most recent exhibitions include *Especulaciones* at Museo Moderno (Buenos Aires); House of Electronic Arts Basel (HEK); *Basel Social Club* (Art Basel). She is featured in the recent Serpentine Gallery publication, *The Shape of the Circle in the Mind of a Fish*. During Berlin Art Week 2024, she curated *The Glittering Field*, a showcase featuring 16 international artists for AOA;87 Contemporary.

Ekeh is a frequent speaker and panelist on the cultural dynamics of technology and nature and currently lectures in the Masters and Bachelors program of the Basel Academy of Art & Design in Switzerland.

*The Networked Museum: Lessons from Finding Nemo*

*0. THE BİG BLUE*

Recently, on a transatlantic flight, İ rewatched the Pixar classic, *Finding Nemo*. I'd never actually finished it before — the premise gave me too much anxiety: A clownfish named Marlin loses his son Nemo to a

scuba diver's net, and decides he's going to cross the entire ocean to find him. İ remember thinking: *How? How in the deep blue is this guy going to find his kid?* The odds felt too daunting.

What surprised me on this rewatch was how the ocean is cleverly decomposed: not a monolithic "big blue," but a shimmering web of currents, schools, support groups, and signals. Marlin encounters shark AA meetings, jellyfish enclaves, mimetic schools of fish, surfing sea turtles — each revealing itself as a node in a cultural ecosystem. He's accompanied by Dory, a neurodivergent fish with short-term memory issues. She becomes an accidental catalyst — her forgetfulness and fluid trust push them into unexpected situations, and toward unlikely connections.

And Nemo — named for "no one," echoing Odysseus — becomes the MacGuffin around which the entire network coheres, the absence that generates the story.

As Marlin's tale travels — from pelagic whisper to aquarium glass — it becomes myth, carried across species, habitats, and media. The network is both infrastructure and imagination. The ocean becomes environment and archive.

So, transposing this onto the museum, we might ask: what if the museum stopped positioning itself as the sovereign center of cultural gravity, and instead became a node in a wider cultural ocean — a *networked museum*? How might its story ripple across publics, reaching distant and diverse participants? İn an age of shifting economies, political antagonisms, and compressed attention, institutions must rethink not only what they transmit, but *how*: doing less, doing differently, transmitting not just objects but narrative, connectivity, and desire.


The Networked Museum: Lessons from finding Nemo. Courtesy of Onome Ekeh

## *İ. NETWORK PLUGGİNG*

How do we plug into networks? Do we wait to be found — or do we scan, sense, and dive in? İn *Parallel Minds*, Laura Tripaldi describes intelligence as emerging at the *interface*, the active region where materials meet. Our task as cultural actors is to design that active region deliberately — to cultivate the membrane through which signal-flow becomes meaning-flow.

We saw a brilliant example of this recently at the Met in New York. İn *ENCODED*, 17 İndigenous artists overlaid their narratives onto the museum's galleries via augmented reality. A surgical intervention: plugging directly into museum infrastructure — the galleries, the visitor flow, the smartphones — and rewiring the network of meaning to include marginalized voices. But beyond applauding their audacity, we might ask: what if we applied these lessons at scale? Because the networked museum must master not only the critical overlay — but also the ubiquitous footprint.

Remember *Pokémon Go*? That cultural eruption demonstrated how existing technologies — smartphones and GPS — could transform an entire city into an urban playing field, activating monuments and side streets as ports of attention. İf *ENCODED* shows us the ethical depth of network-plugging, *Pokémon Go* gives us its spatial breadth. Together they reveal something crucial: the infrastructural groundwork for a networked museum already exists.

So, let's start here: With digital breadcrumbs in unexpected spaces. With AR portals at heritage sites. With collection narratives that surface globally, in situ, through the devices people already carry.

## *İİ. NARRATİVE ALCHEMY*

So, how does a story act as an agent of transformation? Not just riding the network but reshaping it? McLuhan's prophecy that "the medium is the message" has never been more literal. Twitter, TikTok

— it's not just that they've changed communication, they have re-patterned our collective cognition, attention, and desire.

Consider the institution struggling with static inventory. Last summer, the Louvre put out an open call to alleviate the chronic burnout around the *Mona Lisa.* The task was twofold: to manage the bottleneck and secondly to get visitors interested in the other exhibits. İ sometimes consult for an experience design firm and during a brainstorming session around this, İ suggested to "gamify" the situation. İnstead of better signage, we would introduce narrative conductivity:

Why not turn the museum into a cinematic heist? As visitors approached the Louvre, they would receive mysterious pings from an unknown entity recruiting them for a mission — blueprints, clues, team signals. The object of the heist would remain unknown, but the journey would activate the entire building. İt was a proposal to transform the Louvre from a site of singular pilgrimage into a networked field of adventure. Common sense prevailed, and the idea was shot down immediately. And yet, especially in light of an *actual robbery* several weeks later, the moral of the story is clear: The museum is not just an archive of objects — it is an archive of narrative affordance.

The right story alters the physics of attention.

The right story recodes the space.

The right story converts static inventory into circulating desire.

Narrative alchemy shifts institutional virtuosity away from possession and toward connection — away from collection and toward flow.

## *İİİ. NODE TRANSFORMATİON*

But for any of this to take root, a perceptual shift must occur. The institution must recognize itself as a node in a distributed intelligence — and act accordingly. İ was delighted to discover one of the OMPA awardees Museo Barda del Desierto:

A museum without walls.

A museum that is permeable.

A shapeshifter that "holds on tightly and lets go lightly."

A museum that listens as much as it broadcasts. A node understands that intelligence does not live in the center — rather in the connective tissue between centers. As E.M. Forster says: *Only connect.*

Node transformation means embracing multiplicity, co-sensing with publics, collaborating with external networks, and making space for new narratives to transform the institution from inside its interfaces. İt is the moment the museum stops asking, "How do we educate the public?" and begins asking, "How does the network express through us — in this moment?"

## *OO. No One*

The physics of a network determine its poetics — but through narrative we can alchemize the network itself: mutate affordances, reshape flows, and generate new nodes of meaning. Through network-plugging, narrative alchemy, and node transformation, institutions can become myth-machines — vessels of connection rather than vaults of things.

And so, we return to Nemo, whose name means "no one." A relinquishing of centrality. A surrender to the currents so the larger story can move. As Crush the sea turtle tells Marlin: "*Just keep swimming, dude… and let the currents carry you.*"

# Day 3:
# Transactions and Transmission. Tactics of Togetherness

## Sunday, 30 November
## Centrale Nuvola Lavazza

# The Public Value of Arts and Culture in Reimagining and Redirecting Economic Growth in the 21st Century

## Keynote speech by Mariana Mazzucato, Professor in the Economics of İnnovation and Public Value, University College London (UCL), Founding Director of the UCL İnstitute for İnnovation & Public Purpose, London, UK.

*Biography:*

Mariana Mazzucato (PhD, CBE) is Professor in the Economics of İnnovation and Public Value at University College London (UCL), where she is Founding Director of the UCL İnstitute for İnnovation & Public Purpose. She is winner of international prizes including the Grande Ufficiale Ordine al Merito della Repubblica İtaliana in 2021, İtaly's highest civilian honor, the 2020 John von Neumann Award, the 2019 All European Academies Madame de Staël Prize for Cultural Values, and 2018 Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought. She is a member of the UK Academy of Social Sciences (FAcSS) and the İtalian Academy of Sciences Lincei. İn 2025, she was appointed Commander of the British Empire (CBE) for services to economics in the *King's Birthday Honours List*. Pope Francis appointed her to the Pontifical Academy for Life for bringing "more humanity" to the world.

Her award-winning books include: *The Entrepreneurial State: debunking public vs. private sector myths* (2013); *The Value of Everything: Making and Taking in the Global Economy* (2018); *Mission Economy: A Moonshot Guide to Changing Capitalism* (2021); and *The Big Con: How the Consulting İndustry Weakens our Businesses, İnfantilizes our Governments and Warps our Economies* (2023). She advises policymakers around the world on innovation-led inclusive and sustainable growth. Her policy roles include: Chair of the *World Health Organization's Council on the Economics of Health for All*, Co-Chair

of the *Global Commission on the Economics of Water*, member of the *South African President's Economic Advisory Council*, Co-Chair of the Group of Experts to the Brazilian 2024 *G20 Task Force for the Global Mobilization against Climate Change*, and Special Representative of President Ramaphosa to the 2025 G20 Taskforce 1 on İnclusive Economic Growth, İndustrialization, Employment, and Reduced İnequality.

She is author of *The Public Value of Arts and Culture: İnvesting in Arts and Culture to Reimagine Economic Growth in the 21st Century.* UCL İnstitute for İnnovation and Public Purpose.

---

*The Public Value of Arts and Culture in Reimagining and Redirecting Economic Growth in the 21st Century*

İn an era marked by complex, interconnected challenges, the question is no longer *whether* the state should intervene, but *how* and toward *what* ends. Arts and culture, from visual arts to music and design, are the foundations for reimagining alternative futures, fostering civic identity, and mobilizing collective action. Yet they remain underutilized and undervalued in economic policy.

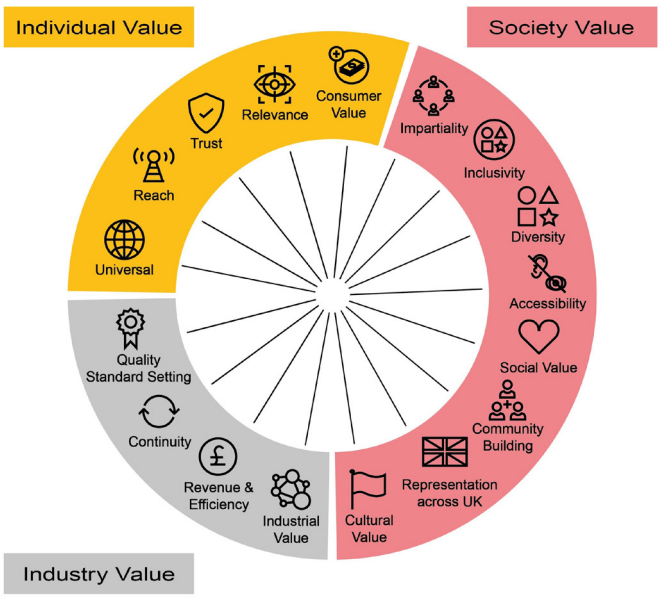
Arts and culture should not be peripheral to economic development. They can be essential to both stimulating and directing economic growth toward more creative, inclusive, and sustainable societies, and generating dynamic spillovers across the economy and society. Despite their well-documented benefits, prevailing policy narratives define "*value*" narrowly and overlook broader public benefits. As a result, arts and culture are consistently undervalued by conventional evaluation methods like static cost-benefit analysis, seldom acknowledged for their contributions to narrow metrics like GDP, and rarely valued in terms of their market-shaping abilities. Cultural funding is therefore often the first to be cut during austerity — precisely when society most needs a renewed sense of purpose and imagination.

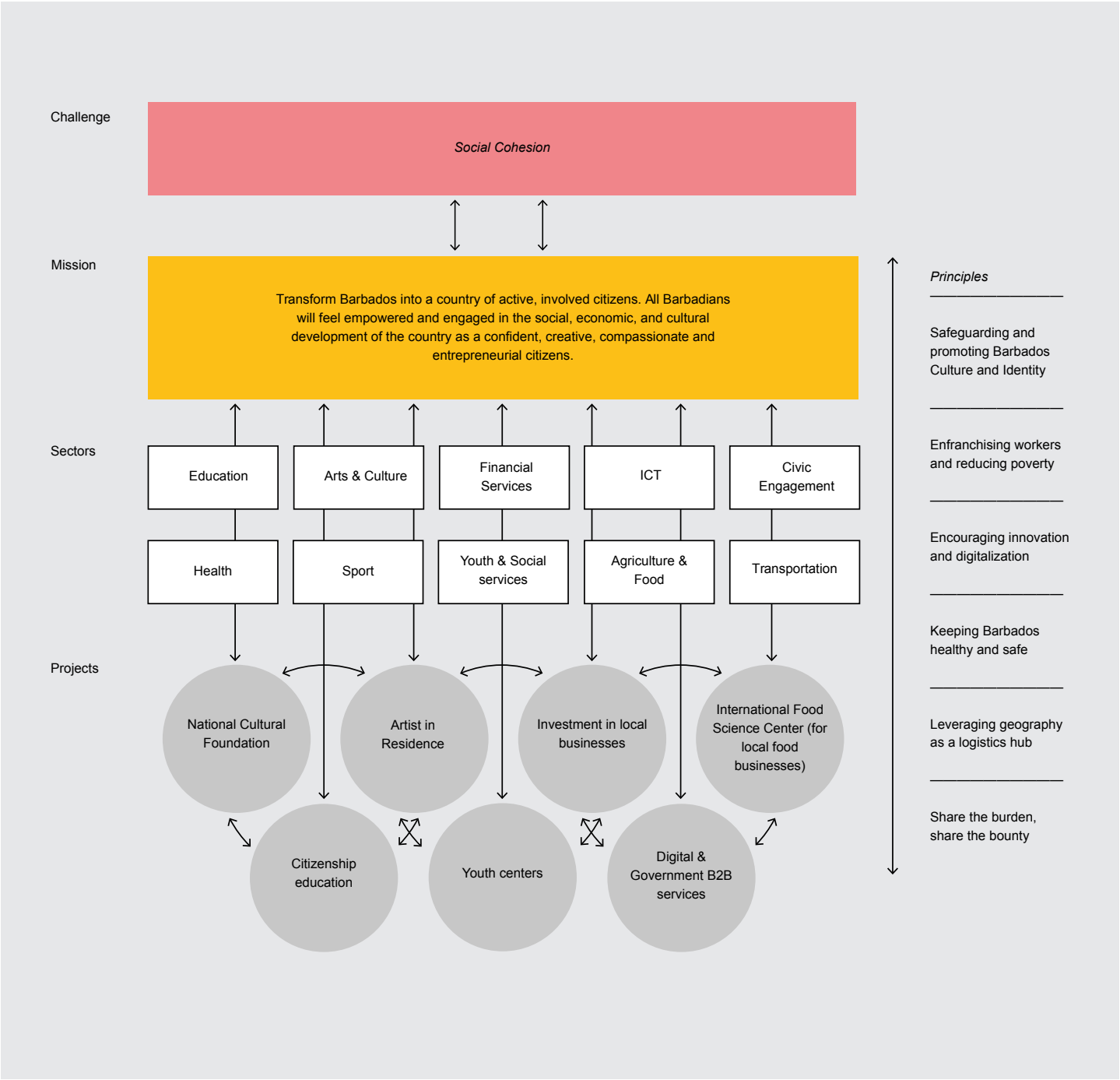
The creative and cultural industries are significant to the global economy according to common economic metric, accounting for *3.1% of GDP and 6.2% of employment*. İnvestment in cultural industries also has shown to have higher multiplier effect than many industries — producing *up to 29 times* the economic activity relative to initial investment. Reflecting their growing economic relevance, the creative industries (broadly) have been formally recognized as part of the UK's Modern İndustrial Strategy. These are fast-growing and crosscutting industries that power local economies and innovation ecosystems.

Yet focusing solely on arts and culture in terms of their economic multipliers risks obscuring their strategic and societal value. Reducing culture to a sector with GDP contribution reflects a market-value framing that has depoliticized and commodified culture. Current funding and evaluation regimes encourage galleries to prioritize "blockbuster" shows with famous artists and high ticket sales, which incentivize programming featuring famous artists who ensure paid visitors, rather than programming focused on promoting underrepresented voices or engaging people experiencing the arts for the first time. This narrow frame has not only failed to secure sufficient investment or legitimacy for cultural policy but also sidelines the contributions of arts and culture as essential infrastructure — a space to create meaning, participation, and long-term vision for policymaking.

We therefore need a new logic, with improved metrics and methods to capture the market-shaping impact of arts and culture. *A pilot study conducted by İİPP together with the British Broadcasting Corporation* (BBC) proposes a classification of dimensions of public value, including individual value (such as wellbeing), industry value (such as creative jobs in the economic ecosystem), and societal value (such as community cohesion and democratic engagement). Cultural institutions such as the BBC often create public value by supporting all three dimensions, through impacts to technological change, societal norms, education, and creative talent.

Figure below. Dimensions of public value, developed with the BBC.






Historical examples such as the Bauhaus and the U.S. Works Progress Administration, as well as contemporary initiatives like Mexico City's Utopias and Barbados' national missions, demonstrate the transformative power of culture in redefining how we imagine and build public life. İn Barbados, a "outcome" or "mission"-oriented approach to economic growth has incorporated culture across six national missions, with one mission explicitly centering culture as a goal. This mission aims to "*transform Barbados into a society of active, involved citizens, where all Barbadians feel empowered and engaged in the social, economic, and cultural development of the country*." This all-of-government, orchestrated approach demonstrated the many ways that arts and culture and embedded across institutions and communities. Sustainable cultural networks require more than safeguarding existing institutions and models — they demand bringing arts to people where they are, and investing across the entire arts and cultural ecosystem, spanning industries, public programming, and education.

Figure above. *Social cohesion mission map* co-created with the Barbados government. Arts and culture are both the mission, a standalone sector, and individual projects.

We must move away from viewing arts and culture as a cost and toward recognizing them as an investment. They are both a means and an end: a goal of economic policy and a precondition for

transformation. This requires new coalitions to develop mechanisms, narratives, and social contracts that empower governments and cultural institutions to make strategic policy shifts:

1. Recognize and nurture culture's ability to shape the direction of economic growth.

2. Place arts and culture at the center of policy design and industrial strategies: İnvest in the institutional capabilities to embed cultural approaches as tools for achieving social, economic, and environmental goals.

3. Measure the public value of arts and culture: Move beyond static cost-benefit analysis to develop dynamic evaluation and appraisal tools that capture the economy-wide spillovers that cultural investments can create.

4. İnvest in cultural ecosystems: Secure funding mechanisms for cultural institutions, educators, and artists.

By redefining the economic framing of the public value of arts and culture, we can shape economies for flourishing and thriving societies.

---

# Colophon & Acknowledgements

As a largely volunteer-driven organization, our achievements would not be possible without the generous contribution of individuals and organizations who support CİMAM year after year. Their support is essential to the ongoing success of CİMAM.

CİMAM would like to express its heartfelt gratitude to its Major Patrons, Founding Patrons, Patrons, and Supporters for their loyalty, their belief in CİMAM, and their continued support.

CİMAM creates long-term partnerships with our patrons based on trust, mutual knowledge, and congruence between CİMAM's values and those of our patrons. CİMAM is proud of counting on the support of such a remarkable group of patrons. Their commitment inspires us and sustains our collective efforts to make the modern and contemporary art museum sector vibrant, resilient, and forward-looking. We are deeply grateful to all of you for making CİMAM's existence possible!

This publication has additionally benefited from the generous support of the CİMAM Travel Grant Funders, who have agreed to allocate the remaining unspent funds toward the preparation and production of the 2025 Conference Proceedings. We gratefully acknowledge the following institutions and individuals as Supporters of the CİMAM 2025 Annual Publication.

---

*CİMAM Benefactor*

- Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani
- Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, İtaly

---

*CİMAM Founding Patrons*

- Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona, Spain
- Fondation LVMH, Paris, France
- Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul, Republic of Korea
- Marc and Josée Gensollen, Marseille, France

---

*CİMAM Major Patrons*

- Andrzej Wróblewski Foundation, Warsaw, Poland
- Fondation Opale, Switzerland
- Georgina Ventós, President, Fundación Ernesto Ventós, Spain
- Mimi Brown, Hong Kong
- Ruth Foundation for the Arts, Milwaukee, USA
- Teiger Foundation, New York, USA
- The Śmiechowski Family Foundation, Poland

---

*CİMAM Patrons*

- Claudio Engel, Santiago, Chile
- DAS MİNSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam
- Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, Japan
- Nguyen Art Foundation, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam
- Pooja and Ashok Reddy, Bangalore, İndia
- Saastamoinen Foundation, Helsinki, Finland
- Sunpride Foundation, Hong Kong
- Tselinny Center of Contemporary Culture, Almaty, Kazakhstan

---

*CİMAM Supporters*

- Albert M.A. Groot, Sittard, Netherlands
- Bozar Centre for Fine Arts, Brussels, Belgium
- Bridget Grant Pirrie, Sydney, Australia
- Colección FEMSA, Nuevo León, Mexico
- François Giannesini, Paris, France
- Fundación Botín, Santander, Spain
- SAHA, İstanbul, Turkey
- Simon Mordant, Sydney, İtaly, and New York
- Zita Cobb, Joe Batt's Arm, Fogo İslands, Canada
- A Supporter who wishes to remain anonymous

---

*Supporters of the CİMAM 2025 Annual Publication*

- Getty Foundation, Los Angeles, USA (Travel Grants Lead Sponsor)
- Aimée Labarrere de Servitje, Mexico City, Mexico
- Chitra Talwar, New Delhi, İndia
- Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC),

New York, USA/Caracas, Venezuela
- Eloisa Haudenschild, La Jolla, California, USA
- Fernando Zobel de Ayala, Manila, Philippines
- Mercedes Vilardell, London, UK/Mallorca, Spain
- Saastamoinen Foundation, Helsinki, Finland
- Teresa A.L. Bulgheroni, Buenos Aires, Argentina

---

*CİMAM 2025 Travel Grant Funders*

- Getty Foundation, Los Angeles, USA (Travel Grants Lead Sponsor)
- Aimée Labarrere de Servitje, Mexico City, Mexico
- Chitra Talwar, New Delhi, İndia
- Colección Patricia Phelps de Cisneros (CPPC), New York, USA/Caracas, Venezuela
- Eloisa Haudenschild, La Jolla, California, USA
- Fernando Zobel de Ayala, Manila, Philippines
- Mercedes Vilardell, London, UK/Mallorca, Spain
- Saastamoinen Foundation, Helsinki, Finland
- Teresa A.L. Bulgheroni, Buenos Aires, Argentina

---

*Rapid Response Webinars 2025 Supporter*

- Getty Foundation, Los Angeles, USA

---

*CİMAM in-kind supporters*

- Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona (MACBA)
- Han Nefkens Foundation, Barcelona

---

*CİMAM e-card in-kind provider*

- MuseumAnywhere, Washington, USA

---

*CİMAM Board Members 2023–25*

- Suhanya Raffel, President of CİMAM, Director of M+, Hong Kong
- Bart de Baere, Secretary General of CİMAM, General and Artistic Director M HKA — Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen, Antwerpen, Belgium
- Zeina Arida, Director, Mathaf (Arab Museum of Modern Art), Doha, Qatar
- Suzanne Cotter, Director, Museum of Contemporary Art Australia, Sydney, Australia
- Joselina Cruz, Director/Curator, Museum of Contemporary Art and Design (MCAD) Manila, Philippines
- Amanda de la Garza, Deputy Artistic Director, Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia (MNCARS), Madrid, Spain.
- Leevi Haapala, Dean, Academy of Fine Arts, University of Arts, Helsinki, Finland
- Clara Kim, Chief Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, USA
- Malgorzata Ludwisiak Ph.D., Museum Management Expert / Freelance Curator / Academic Teacher, Warsaw, Poland
- Chus Martinez, Head, Art Gender Nature İnstitute, Basel, Switzerland
- Victoria Noorthoorn, Director, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Agustín Pérez Rubio, İndependent Curator, Madrid, Spain
- Kamini Sawhney, Artistic Director, Public Arts Projects, BlrHubba, Museum Management Expert, İndependent Curator, Bangalore, İndia
- Kitty Scott, Strategic Director, Fogo İsland Arts / Shorefast, Toronto, Canada
- Yu Jin Seng, Director (Curatorial, Research & Exhibitions), National Gallery Singapore, Singapore

---

*CİMAM's Executive Team*

- İnés Jover Director, CİMAM Executive Office
- Mireia Azuara, CİMAM Head of Communication and Sustainability
- Mireia Branera, CİMAM Administration and Production
- İsabel Sozzi, CİMAM Administration and Production

---

*CİMAM 2025 Annual Conference*
*Enduring Game: Expanding New Models of Museum Making*

*With the guiding mantra: "Of Necessity, Virtue"*

*28–30 November 2025*

---

*Organized by*

- CİMAM
- Fondazione Arte CRT, Turin, İtaly
- Fondazione CRT, Turin, İtaly

---

*Lead Sponsor*

- Fondazione Arte CRT, Turin, İtaly
- Fondazione CRT, Turin, İtaly

---

*İn-Kind Sponsor*

- Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo

---

*Co-Hosting İnstitutions*

- Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo
- Fondazione Torino Musei
- Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea

---

*Dinner Partners*

- Patrizia Sandretto Re Rebaudengo
- Camera di Commercio Torino
- Reggia di Venaria — Consorzio Residenze Reali Sabaude

---

*Venue Partners*

- OGR Torino, Turin, İtaly
- Fondazione Teatro Stabile di Torino — Teatro Nazionale, Turin, İtaly
- Centrale Nuvola Lavazza, Turin, İtaly

---

*Off-Site Visits in Turin*

- Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo
- Fondazione Merz
- GAM Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea
- Gallerie d'İtalia
- MAO — Museo d'Arte Orientale; Gallerie d'İtalia
- Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea
- MAUTO Museo Nazionale dell'Automobile
- Pinacoteca Agnelli
- Luci d'Artista

---

*CİMAM 2025 Contents Committee*

- Chus Martinez (Chair of the Contents Committee), Head, İnstitute of Art Gender Nature, Basel, Switzerland
- Chiara Bertola, Director, GAM — Galleria Civica d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Torino, Turin, İtaly
- Bernardo Follini, Senior Curator, Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, İtaly
- Leevi Haapala, Dean, Academy of Fine Arts, University of Arts, Helsinki, Finland
- Malgorzata Ludwisiak, Ph.D., Museum Management Expert / Freelance Curator / Academic Teacher, Warsaw, Poland
- Francesco Manacorda, Director, Castello di Rivoli Museo d'Arte Contemporanea, Turin, İtaly
- Victoria Noorthoorn, Director, Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires, Buenos Aires, Argentina
- Davide Quadrio, Director, Museo d'Arte Orientale (MAO), Turin, İtaly
- Kamini Sawhney, Artistic Director, Public Arts Projects, BlrHubba, Museum Management Expert, İndependent Curator, Bangalore, İndia

---

*CİMAM 2025 Conference Production Team*

- Mireia Azuara, Head of Communication and Sustainability, CİMAM Executive Office, Barcelona
- Mireia Branera, Production, CİMAM Executive Office, Barcelona
- İnes Jover, Director, CİMAM Executive Office, Barcelona
- İlaria Menolascina, Chief of the Organisational Office, Fondazione Arte CRT, Turin
- Alessia Petrolito, Organisational Office, Fondazione Arte CRT, Turin
- İsabel Sozzi, Production, CİMAM Executive Office, Barcelona
- Helen Weaver, Head of the İtalian Production team, CİMAM 2025 Annual Conference, Turin

---

*CİMAM's 2025 Conference İdentity*

- Studio Rogier Delfos, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

---

*Annual Conference and Post Tour Photographer*

- Giorgio Perottino

---

*Travel Grants and Afternoon Visits Photographer*

- Alberto Nidola

---

*Videographer Still Camera*

- Miha Sagadin

---

*Videographers and Video İnterviews*

- BePolar Studio

---

*Transport, Angels, Materials Production*

- Elena Dell'Aquila, Agenzia Mosaico, Turin, İtaly