WHAT WE FORGET

ALANA JELINEK RAJKAMAL KAHLON SERVET KOCYIGIT RANDA MAROUFI

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Cover: Randa Maroufi, *Nabila & Keltoum*, 2015, Colour print on cotton paper, 200 x 300 cm. Courtsesy of the artist.

WHAT WE FORGET

In its present identity crisis, Europe seems to forget its past. Questions about who is or can be European have become increasingly urgent. Mounting anxieties about culture and identity produce strong narratives of a Europe in peril, whose people are threatened by an imagined influx of racialised and culturalised others. Such narratives hinge on a denial of Europe's histories of colonisation and decolonisation.

Artists Alana Jelinek, Rajkamal Kahlon, Servet Kocyigit, and Randa Maroufi challenge this dominant representation of (post)colonial Europe. Revealing the ongoing legacies of colonialism in Europe and other parts of the world and the long histories of migration entangled with it, these artists explore how these unfinished histories shape contemporary Europe. They trace the often invisible ways in which Europe's colonial projects are inextricably tied to contemporary global economic structures, the unequal distribution of resources, border securitisation and controls, and restrictions of movement on some groups of people. Together they explore the intimate and abstract ways in which colonialism continues to impact those people made most precarious by it, while demanding more critical consideration of the central role that colonialism has played and continues to play in the making of Europe.

ALANA JELINEK

AUSTRALIA/ UNITED KINGDOM

Born in Australia, but working in Europe for most of her career, Jelinek's practice interrogates colonialism's ongoing legacy from the position of being an immigrant. As an academic and artist, Jelinek investigates art as a site of knowledge from which to challenge colonial afterlives in the present and to provoke the public to question their complicity as beneficiaries of colonial structures and systems of representation.

Installation shot of Europe the Game, 2002-2003. (Photo: Janiek Dam)

Europe the Game, 2002-2003
In this game, participants collaborate in 'constructing' Europe by selecting no more than 36 painted tiles out of a total of 54. In actively choosing what gets included and what gets excluded, this game touches on contemporary anxieties about who is considered European and what constitutes the borders of Europe.

INTERVIEW WITH ALANA JELINEK

What inspired you to make Europe the Game?

So, you'll see the dates on it — it's quite old. What I found interesting is how relevant, and even increasing relevant, it is. In 2002, it was the first time that Europe was talking about a united border — a coherent and cohesive border — that would form a kind of Fortress Europe. This would result in a strong demarcation between who was Europe and who wasn't. That's why I made this work, it was a response to Fortress Europe and the emphasis on an external border. Obviously, there was already one. But the project of the European Union — and why Britain is deciding to leave now — was to enforce greater unity and a greater awareness that we have a contiguous border. This wasn't part of the discourse prior to 2002.

You alluded to this, but we are quite interested in the changing context of the work in the last 20 years because it feels increasingly relevant.

To be honest, I am very sensitive to these questions because I am Australian and I migrated here. And it's only an accident that I have a British passport. Australia is very racist, a different kind of racism from European racism, but still very racist. Who belongs and who belongs more is a lively question. When growing up, this made me feel like I didn't belong in Australia, even though I have a longer history than most people telling me I didn't belong. I brought that sensibility with me when I moved to Europe. I am always interested in that question of belonging.

As an extension of that, what role does participation play in this work? Because who gets a say appears to be a more democratic process?

Yes, indeed. Knowing that most people who encounter art are people who consider themselves good and liberal, has made me very interested in liberal hypocrisy. I have done a number of works around how people, who think they are liberal, make decisions that aren't or make decisions that reek havoc on somebody else. I'm interested in that dynamic, and for me [Europe the Game] embodies this. I require people to make a decision about who is in and who is out, and to take responsibility for it. They don't get to just look at it. In order to engage with the work, you can't just passively look at it, you have to make a decision.

Have you noticed that people actually have thought about this work in relation to these larger questions about European identity and the border?

This is the hard thing. A strategy in my artwork is to make things accessible. I write novels and they are accessible and funny and light. And [Europe the Game] looks accessible—they're pretty paintings, it's a simple idea—so usually people will say at the time: 'Oh that was fun' or 'I really like that'. And then later, they will get back to me and say 'That really stuck with me, that made me think'. But it depends on people's capacity to think, because a lot of people—nowadays in particular—are very tuned into having fun. And it is fun, but that's the downside. What if people only takeaway that it was fun?

This exhibition is intervening into colonial discourses as well. So we are bringing your work into this discussion of colonialism, was that something you were thinking about when you made the work?

Well, I am always thinking about colonialism, because I am Australian, which was a British colony, and also because I am an Australian who moved to Britain. It was in Britain where I suddenly discovered Australian history, because we weren't really taught it in Australia — at least not in regard

to the full genocidal impact that we have had. It's too awful to hear the actual truth, so the school system waters it down. There's some acknowledgement, it wasn't all ra-ra, but in our education system, Australians imagine that we were colonized by the English. And when I say Australians, I mean white Australians who are British derived or European derived. To imagine that we were colonized, makes the enemy Britain, and then there's no responsibly on us.

In terms of these landscape paintings that we are moving around, there seems to be a focus on the land. Has the meaning of the work changed in the course of your career, as your interests have changed to engage more with ecology?

That's a really good question. I originally used landscape, because there is a cliché that the true nation is in the soil. There is an unexamined stereotype that cities are the same everywhere, and the real differences come out of the land. I guess that's the Nazi blood and soil thing. And that's very strong in Australia as well. It's a way of asserting the essential difference between my land and your land, and therefore the characteristics of the people who live on that land. That's why I used landscape, it wasn't from an ecological perspective, but I love that we can bring that to it. It just wasn't there originally.

In relation to the title of the exhibition What We Forget, what do you think we forget and what does your work bring forward?

Wayne [Modest] and I were talking about the title because it came up in response to looking at the People of Afghanistan. What is it that we actually forget? I guess because I know why I made [Europe The Game] which wasn't about forgetting… Wayne thinks we forget things, and we do, but I don't think we have forgotten.

Installation shot of Europe the Game, 2002-2003. (Photo: Janiek Dam)

What would you suggest instead?

[Laughter]

I think that maybe Wayne's being more benign in his understanding that it's merely a forgetfulness. So in the past how knowledge worked, in terms of the left, was an uncovering. There was a cover-up of an event or a denial of genocide or something similar, and the project of the left was to say, 'Oh but look what happened,' or 'Oh look, women were also great', or 'Oh there was also great black people.' This was the project of the left. So now, there is a lot knowledge that it wasn't just white men who did everything amazingly. It is a more nuanced story.
So I don't think it's a forgetting I think it's an active decision to say 'I am actually denying you your humanity. I now understand that you also had an amazing history and that we took all your resources, but I don't care, because I'm this'. That I think is much more chosen than forgotten. But that's very depressing so don't write that.

What's going to be your hopeful way of finishing this interview?

Yeah, no I'm not in a hopeful place. Speak to me in a year. I'm just not in a hopeful place, I'm just not. We need hope but it's not going to come from me. Generations of people will be effected by Brexit, but also climate change. The people who have exploited with impunity will eventually die, leaving absolute shit for the next generations. And sometimes it's because they didn't know what they were doing. But really they weren't looking hard enough.

SERVET KOCYIGIT

TURKEY / THE NETHERLANDS

Kocyigit's translocational practice shifts between his birth country of Turkey, his current home in the Netherlands, and South Africa, a country that has been subjected to multiple colonisations, including by the Dutch and British. Kocyigit uses the symbolic form of the map to navigate between these localities, alluding to the complex social, historical, and cultural processes that construct geographical borders and imagine nations and national identities. Through a collage of materials that bear strong ties to specific places, Kocyigit unpacks the economic and historical roots of these artificial geographic divisions.

Servet Kocyigit, *My Heart is Not Made of Stone (Africa),* 2016, Courtesy of the artist.

My Heart is Not Made of Stone (Asia) (Africa), 2016
The photographs from this series represent South African mining laborers holding antique maps taken from Dutch classrooms and decorated with gemstones by Johannesburg artists. Linking the ecological aftermath of imperialism with the destructive practices of the mining industry, this series visualises colonisation's dual exploitation of land and people.

Road Kill, 2019
Stitching together imagined spaces, this newly commissioned work presents images on a richly layered map made from Shweshwe fabric, a traditional South African cloth introduced by French missionaries. This work contrasts the free movement of commercial goods with the controlled movement of bodies. The outline of the malfunctioning vehicle upon this fictitious map highlights this hypocrisy, revealing a broken system of inequity.

INTERVIEW WITH SERVET KOCYIGIT

How can we position your work in this exhibition and within your larger artistic career? Have you always been interested in issues of the colonial and migration? If not, how did you come to this theme?

That's a very good question. For me, my artworks always reflect something autobiographical. I know some artists like to be anonymous, but for me my work always overlaps with my life. I didn't start with the issue of colonialism intentionally, it was actually a coincidence for me. It began with the maps series. Before colonialism I was interested in cartography, and the topics overlap naturally. For example, you can't talk about colonialism without capitalism, so I was researching cartography, and I immediately ended up in colonialism. Cartography is a science that has been developed by the colonial powers to transport goods from the colonies. As a science, it was never developed to improve people's lives. In this way, I came to colonialism through cartography, but my work with it now is much more conscious.

It began with the textile maps, and through my research on the history of these textiles I could retrace colonialism. I found the textile shweshwe in the Albert Cuypmarkt here in Amsterdam. When I began looking into the history of this textile, I saw that it wasn't just a textile, or aesthetic object, or fashion item, it has a long history. The textile is directly connected with colonialism, but it also represented a group of people and how the group of people define themselves. This brought me to the issues of immigration. When I dug into this history I also learned a lot about myself. I was looking at a place to create myself and that's reflected in the maps of this non-geography, this place of home. It has been a long and open process of creating a narrative and a feeling of belonging. And I was very lucky to have the chance to actually go to Johannesburg and work there. So the subject got more complex for me after that visit. However, I don't just position my work in relation to Africa or to colonialism—my work is not only about that.

So you begin with the material and then that provokes questions that lead you to all these different locations around the world?

I had a residency in South Africa, where I could directly face the after effects of colonialism. I came there after making the textile maps on colonialism. I thought it would be good to study the history of Johannesburg. There's nothing like experiencing the city and talking with people. I was already interested in cartography, immigration, and mining so they all overlapped with each other in a nice way. If I had been in Capetown it would be a different story. Johannesburg is quite diverse because it is a mining city. This is quite interesting because cartography and mining are considered to be sciences with direct links to colonialism. Especially considering how the Dutch and English are very good at cartography.

So it was an invaluable experience to be and see this ongoing history very clearly. I also witnessed how everyone defined themselves with textiles. I did a lot of research and stayed in the fashion district, which is where all African textiles come from. In this way, my work developed via improvisation. In fact, all my projects develop like that. The only thing I brought with me was the Dutch school maps.

You mentioned improvisation, and I think that's very interesting in relation to the non-geographies of your maps. You said that a lot of it is intuition, but when I have spoken with people about your work, they kept trying to identify specific locations in your map. And I was wondering how you construct these non-geographies?

I develop them like drawings and work totally from hand. Of course there are similarities to real geographies in these drawings, but they never represent real places. And after a while I introduce the textile to create a color contrast, and it's at that point that it becomes very aesthetic. Then I add images and embroidery to create a narrative. The buttons are supposed to be cities and the roads are stitching. These are all elements that are used on conventional terrestrial maps. Maps are very graphic and packed with a lot of information. I play with this symbolism in my buttons and stitches. The main idea is 'remaking'. Is it possible to rewrite this system? I want to create a new language for the map that is more human, more helpful, more to the people and about the people.

Servet Kocyigit, *Road Kill,* 2019, Courtesy of the artist.

Could you speak about My Heart is not Made of Stones? For this work you also use maps, but in a very different way, you also let other artists intervene. How was your work with maps different here?

The photo series developed in Johannesburg and related to the history of mining. The photographs are taken from around the city. I tried to find significant locations that were specific to the city. We went around in a car for almost 2 months, and in this way, we also mapped the city. From 15 locations I produced a series of 24 photos. There was a lot of research involved, and I took a lot of photos of the locations. So the whole process was a bit different from my previous works, especially because it focused on mining. My work is often about specific locations. I work in different geographies, and the problems are the same and you come across similar issues. So I try to

always work with these global similarities in my approach. Mining is done everywhere in the world in the same fashion. It's always very destructive with environmental hazards and it doesn't help the locals.

I want to get feedback about how people see my work here in Holland. Because the mines and gemstones that were painted on the maps were from a Dutch book and it was called From the Dark Underground. It was a book for children to educate them about mines and gemstones. I still have the book and the maps have the illustrations of the gems on them which I really like. But they were illustrated in such a scientific way. The authors of this book are able to distance themselves and claim that they were just doing their job, and their distant understanding of this industry will be taught to the kids. The book does not attempt to teach children the other side of this history. This other history is the huge war in Johannesburg between the Dutch and the English over ownership of the goldmines. These imperial powers didn't even fight themselves, they brought others to fight for them. This unspoken history is so visible in South Africa, and of course there is also the history of apartheid. No one seems to confront this historiy and their relation to it in Holland. This is why I find this kind of exhibition very exciting because it gets people to talk about it. But this does not change the fact that the young people don't talk about it, and the schools don't teach it.

Wayne Modest and Servet Kocyigit at the opening of *What We Forget.* (Photo: Janiek Dam)

I am interested in the reception of your work, and how that perhaps changes depending on where it is shown. This show is in Amsterdam, but you've also shown in Istanbul. Do people respond differently and think about colonialism differently depending on if they are from former colonizer or colonized countries?

Definitely, I think that's also one of the big challenges with every artwork. Although colonialism is global, it is considered very differently in different parts of the world, because people don't share the same experience or the same history. When I exhibited in Istanbul, it was an interesting experience because the exhibition was on textile and immigration. It was a good exhibition with a lot of great works, but other than me, no one was talking about colonialism. I exhibited one of my maps made from an African wax print called vlisco. I used textile, but textile itself is not what I am interested in, I am interested in the story of the material. But the critical reception of this was sparse, as the history of colonialism is so embedded in the culture that no one questions the use of such textiles. In Holland, there is a sense that people just did their jobs. This is why I am curious to see how people react to my work here.

When we interviewed Alana, we were talking about the title of the exhibition – What we forget – and she actually disagreed that it was an issue of forgetting. Rather, she saw it as a very systematic and intentional erasure of this history. What's your perspective – did we forget?

If you don't speak about it, if you don't write about it, if you don't display it, people forget. I think a big problem is with the education system. Young people don't know of this country's colonial history. In South Africa, they have the Mandela Museum and I think they should open it here. It was really the most touching thing. I would never have understood how difficult it was for non-White South Africans to live in a system that was created by two Dutch men. The Dutch were the masterminds of the whole thing—how to separate people and how to force people to live in different neighborhoods, how to control what people could buy and make money—people don't know this because we don't talk about it. And it is very systematically and consciously done. It made a huge impact on me to see how this system has affected people's lives. We cannot ignore that. So if I am helping to reveal this even in a little way, I'll be very happy.

For me another important aspect was Turkey, as I was maybe the only Turkish artist working with the issues of post-colonialism. Artists should talk about what is silenced. I think that's what art should be about. This is historically what artists have done. They pay a price but that's what you have to do. We are not the Western government, we don't have to follow policies, but we have the power to talk. It was amazing the things I was told during my stay in Johannesburg. Apartheid is ongoing. I think it's important that people in Holland as well as people in Turkey become aware of it. So I think that's what we as artist try to confront and that's what museums are for. We have to write this history back again, in a self-reflexive way.

Servet Kocyigit, *My Heart is Not Made of Stone (Asia),* 2016

In speaking out against the scientific narrative and historical amnesia, what history is it that you are writing? Because you spoke a bit about emotion, perhaps you could elaborate on that?

Yes, I am looking at history's geographies and places where we belong. I investigate geographies and immigration because we were all immigrants once. But I take a very emotional approach to the whole thing. I am not able to separate the emotional side from my work. I don't see it as just an idea and concept, just data that needs to be translated to art. It doesn't work that way.

My individual story is also very global. For me, the whole thing was this search for belonging. But

it’s not just about being lost, rather it is about the fact that we define our own story. If you are not defined in the mainstream, or apart of the majority, it doesn’t mean that you are less, in any form or shape. Or for that matter that your history is less important. It’s not like that, because it’s not about being lost. Rather it’s about the search. I am very hopeful, a lot has happened and I hope and trust that things are changing. But I think there is a lot still to do, especially in the school system and in the way in which science is conducted. I think the biggest challenge is to make young people intervene and participate. We have to keep talking about how real the aftereffects of colonialism are. So that’s what we as artists are doing—we continue to remind people.

How do you think your work fits in with this exhibition and with the other works?

I think they all work wonderfully together. I was really amazed because I have never been in an exhibition with these artists, and so that’s always the thing—you don’t know—if you’re invited to something, you don’t know exactly the reason because you don’t know the other artists, you don’t chose the artwork. It’s done by the curators. There are numerous connections to be made. I was watching [Randa Maroufi’s] video in which there’s a car scene, which got me excited because I looked at my work with the car. So there are different perspectives on the same or similar things. It’s the same thing especially with Rajkamal’s work. I really love this intervention where she has critiqued a book’s visual language in a very poetic and very strong way. These works, as well as my works, are deeply political. But it is also very beautiful and aesthetic. It is good art with a lot of meaning, and a lot of content. All of them have this very strong, smart, beautiful and unique, way dealing with the subject. I have a lot of respect. It was very good experience for me.

I am very happy to have a voice and individual perspective. I have done a lot internationally, but I’ve never been exhibited much in Holland. I am really a Dutch guy though. I’ve spent 25 years of my life here. I finished two schools here, yet I’ve never been considered a part of this art world. That’s another sort of strange thing. I’ve exhibited here, I have some works in museums, but I never felt included. It’s a weird system, but I never cared. I am not interested in nationalism, but in conversations across borders. So I am very glad that I am in this show here in Amsterdam. It is not easy to have this critical voice, so in a way you have to be given a space where you are allowed to use it, and that’s what happens with an exhibition like this. I will continue speaking my mind. We artists will continue to voice our opinions and speak our truths. So the exhibition does not change what we are saying, but it helps to be given this platform.
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RANDA MAROUFI

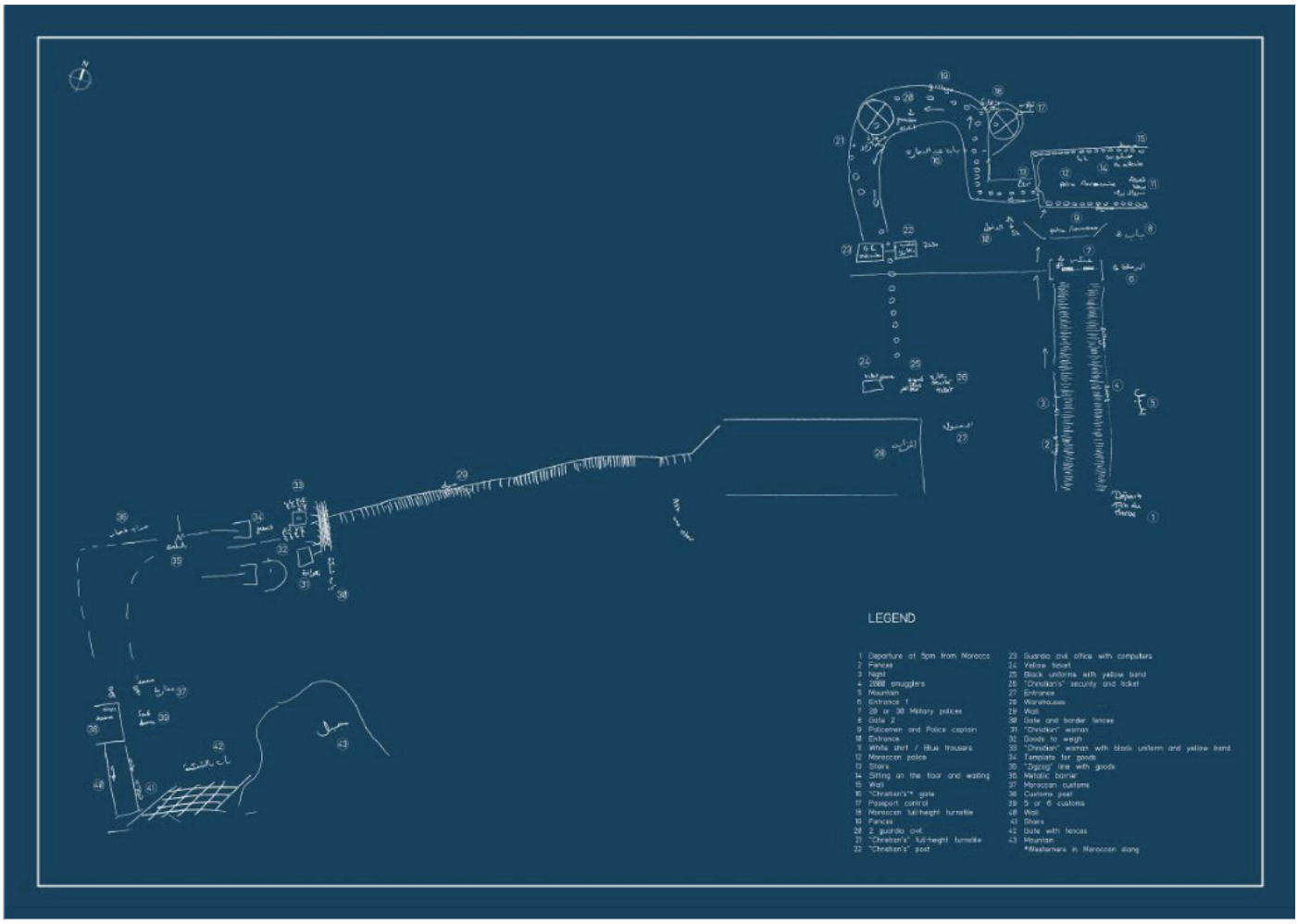
MOROCCO / FRANCE

Born in Casablanca to a customs inspector, who had worked in different airports in Morocco, Maroufi explores the physical and emotional aspects of borders from the position of someone whose personal history is intimately entangled with them. Through her examination of the surveillance and control of public spaces and the policing of gendered bodies, Maroufi highlights colonialism's spatial dimensions, which continue to restrict and control the lives and movements of many post-colonial subjects in the present. t

Randa Maroufi, *Nabila & Keltoum*, 2015- (Photo: Janiek Dam)

Nabila & Keltoum, 2015
Staged with baroque drama, this photograph challenges narratives of the submissive migrant woman. These women assume the appearance of passivity, which enables them to smuggle goods across the border unnoticed. Maroufi's depiction emphasises their self-determination and dignity through their striking gaze at the viewer.

Diwana, 2018-2019
This diagram explores Cueta as a contemporary territory of transmigration and conflict. Drawn by different smugglers from Cueta, these three maps present a selection from a series of 20 and illustrate the daily commute through the border checkpoint. Transformed into a blueprint, a reproduction technique typically employed by architects, they acquire an aura of legitimacy that the illicit activity of smuggling conventionally



Randa Maroufi, *Diwanana*, 2018-2019

Bragida (work in progress), 2019
This video captures the choreography of goods and people at the border in Cueta, a Spanish enclave in Morocco. Contrasting the visual richness of the smugglers' wares with the barren concrete of the checkpoint, this work depicts the repetitive and arbitrary procedures of border security. Emphasising their restriction of movement, these border rituals are unveiled as absurd and ineffective vestiges of colonial control.

Rajkamal Kahlon, *Do You Know Our Names?,* 2017. Courtsesy of the artist

RAJKAMAL KAHLON

UNITED STATES / GERMANY

Working across different media, including painting, photography, film, and sculpture, Rajkamal Kahlon explores the (visual) legacies of colonialism and racism, both on the grand scale of borders and territories and the intimate level of their protracted effects on women's bodies. Kahlon grounds much of her practice in processes of amendment, refiguring historical and archival sources to reclaim identities and cultures that have been lost. Her work highlights the violent though often invisible toll of colonialism on the body and emphasises the transformative potential that acknowledging such violence may allow.

People of Afghanistan, 2017
Juxtaposing thermal imagery footage of an American AC-130 Specter Gunship attacking unknown figures near a mosque in Afghanistan with archival photographs of Afghan men from a 1960s Russian anthropometric survey, this film posits both a political and aesthetic link between the occupation and aerial surveillance of the region's physical territory and the categorisation of its people. Here Kahlon invites us to ask how contemporary wars fought in Afghanistan, as with other regions of the world, might be linked with earlier colonial practices of violence, categorisation, and exploitation.

Do You Know Our Names?, 2017
A critique of the selectivity of institutional memory, this work is an attempt at the recovery of identities lost. It is a practice of archeology to reclaim female subjectivities that have been relegated to exoticised others. By painting over women's bodies that have been "lost" in the colonial archives, Kahlon rehabilitates their anonymized, even commoditized, bodies, transforming them from passive objects to self-possessed individuals, who wear contemporary garb and confront viewers with direct, unblinking gazes.

Installation shot of *Do You Know Our Names?,* 2017. (Photo: Janiek Dam)

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

As a part of the exhibition's programming, a round table discussion between artists Alana Jelinek (AJ), Rajkamal Kahlon (RK), Servet Koycigit (SK) and curators Wayne Modest (WM) and Lora Sariaslan (LS) was held in the gallery space with members of the public on 2 March 2019.

WM: Rajkamal, to introduce your practice and concerns as an artist, I'd like to ask you about the way in which your practice has been very involved with the ethnographic museum. I am interested in what is at stake in that and why that site? So perhaps to introduce yourself, what animates your practice in the first place?

RK: Well I guess I have been working on colonial visuality for 20 years, so it's funny to me that right now it has become such an important topic, because it was not a fashionable topic before. Before getting into the specifics of why ethnographic museums, however, I am reminded of something someone just asked me. They asked me why I work on colonialism, and I answered by saying that, to me, colonialism is like patriarchy—it is everywhere—and because it is everywhere, it is rendered invisible. I'm just trying to make it visible. I think because I have been thinking about colonialism and visuality, this has often brought me into contact with anthropology and ethnography. Both disciplines are situated within colonial projects, scientific disciplines, museums, knowledge production, and they have also buttressed, held up, and supported the political and military projects of these colonial regimes. Anthropology and ethnography have created a vast visual archive of imagery that has deeply shaped the world we are living in right now. I feel like I'm marked by those images. The way people look at me is informed by those images. So my practice is a way of talking back or pushing back against those structures and, of course, exposing them as well.

WM: In a funny way working with the ethnographic museum as a framing device has also had its history for contemporary art. Contemporary artists have been invited into the ethnographic museum as a kind of quote-on-quote 'salvation.' They offer a way out for a lot of the issues for which ethnographic museum are critiqued. Could you say a little bit more about your first entrance into that space, and how you feel as an artist being a part of the ethnographic museum?

RK: My first experience was in 2016. I was an artist in residence at the Weltmuseum, which is Vienna's oldest ethnographic museum. I felt deeply ambivalent about going in because I think artists in general—not just in ethnographic museums—are used as neo-liberal cheerleaders. We are adding value to the brand of the museum, and the museum profits off our criticality. I had an exhibition at the Weltmuseum for 18 months, which was often cited as a kind of progressive feature of the museum. It was a credit to the museum that they had my exhibition there. Yet, they didn't employ any of the politics themselves in terms of what my message was in my work. So there was a lot of ambivalence from my end. On the other hand, working in the ethnographic museum afforded me a kind of intimacy and access to the archive. I was able to be around the objects, this history, and learn about them in way I never could outside the museum.

WM: I want to actually connect you to Alana. Alana, you've been working with this type of museum for a much longer time.

AJ: Well, not much longer. Only 2009. I came to the Museum of Archeology and Anthropology at Cambridge University with an interest in colonialism. My interest in interrogating colonialism was actually because, as a white Australian, I had no idea about it. It was only really when I moved to London after my art degree, and everybody was saying to me, 'Australians murdered all the aborigine people,' that I realized I had to deal with this history. It's a history that Australians kind of know, but also kind of try not to know. So having lived in London since 1991, I've been thinking about the legacy of colonialism, including what we forget, what we remember, and the stories

that are passed down since the colonial period. So beginning in 2009, I had the opportunity to work with the Museum of Archeology and Anthropology, and I did that for 9 years. However, I also worked on this topic at the Volkenkunde [in Leiden] here in the Netherlands. I researched the material artifacts of colonial encounters.

WM: Servet, how might you introduce your own work and interest? In a funny way, we imagine colonial structures and formations to be in particular places. Europe both had and continues to have colonies. We imagine that these places are where anti-colonial work happened, so we imagine places in Africa. The battlefield for thinking the colonial in the Netherlands is often around Suriname and the Caribbean or Indonesia. How would you say that your practice emerged in relation to this topic?

Wayne Modest at the opening of *What We Forget*- (Photo: Janiek Dam)

SK: It was not planned—it was very organic. I had an interest, before my direct interest in colonialism, in cartography. The topics actually really overlap. This is how it is with many things. Colonialism and capitalism are often paired together, but in the same when, I realized as I was thinking about cartography that I was also thinking about colonialism. The history of cartography is a science that has been developed by colonial power, and the main reason for this was to efficiently transport goods back and forth. As a science, cartography was never developed to improve peoples' lives. So when I started working with cartography and mapping, I immediately ended up thinking about colonialism. Overtime, it became a much more conscious investigation. I started making these textile maps. I looked at the history of these textiles. It was very interesting. I was basically tracing the history of this product an din the process retracing the history of colonialism. I first found the textile in Albert Cuyp Market [in Amsterdam]. So I started to look into the history of this African wax print. This was a wake up call for me. It wasn't just a textile, or an aesthetic object, or a fashion item, it was a complex product with a very long history. I started to dig into this story and learned a lot in the process. I was very lucky to then have the chance to actually go to Africa and work there in Johannesburg, South Africa. So it gets deeper. I don't just position my work in Africa or in colonialism—my work is not only about that. There are so many other connections to make.

LS: So on that note, the freshest piece in the exhibition is *Road Kill* (2019). Can you tell a bit more about it and how it fits within your practice and the exhibition? It's basically the newest addition into your textile map series.

SK: During the residency in South Africa, I collected the textile. I was very lucky to be in the Fashion District. There were many people producing textiles and also selling textiles and clothing. The idea behind [the work] is that we are in a broken system. Hopefully, it may be repaired, but perhaps in a more hopeful way. It's a part of my map series made with all different textiles as you said, and these works are also about geographies. They are not real geographies, but imaginary ones. We all live in imaginary geographies. For myself, what I am referring to is a place that not physically exist, but one which I connect to the feeling of belonging. It's a map about how I feel. In a similar way, borders and nationality are also imaginary maps.

WM: This relates to the question of travel, or the traveller, in relationship to being rooted or fixed.

RK: Well it's funny because I looked up the definitions for 'traveling' and also for 'migration.' The definition for 'migration' was really straightforward. It was like 'migration: moving from one place to another.' But 'traveling' had this strange permutation where it began with something like 'my voyage from Libya to Ireland', but then when you broke it down to its root meaning, it meant 'instrument of torture'. For me, it's about trying to reimagine what and how we think about that word. Because when I think of travel, I think of European and white tourists. I think it is really situated within very romantic language, and it's something that's seen as desirable. Whereas, when black and brown bodies are in movement, when they are travelling, they are marked as pathological, as criminal, as something to be scared of. So somehow they form two very different markings. I am trying to disrupt these narratives and bring about some kind of tension by putting things together that you normally would not. I've been looking at lots of luxury travel magazines to understand how travelling is marketed, and who is marketed. In parallel, I'm looking at how immigration is seen, and how it's pictured. I'm trying to disrupt some of these logics. I am still trying to figure it out. I'm in the midst of this project.

WM: One of the things that always fascinated me is that the people who are poorest in the world are the ones who have to pay the most to travel. For example, the relationship between the Netherlands and somewhere like Jamaica. There is no real economic or diplomatic utility to having a relationship from the Netherland's perspective. Therefore, if you wanted to go to Europe, or the Netherlands, from Jamaica, there was a certain time in the recent past where the only way to do that was to go to Cuba first to get a visa. But that means you have to pay to go to Cuba and then pay to go to Europe. So it marks out the idea that the afterlife of borders is also an afterlife of this unequal distribution of the possibility of travel.

AJ: I just want to add an intervention, because I am a bit nervous that there's an equation happening right now between black or brown and poor, and white and rich. Obviously there is a disproportionate amount of white rich people globally, but I want to draw out class here, because rich brown and black people can travel. Yes, there are issues, but our discussion was sounding too bifurcated.

WM: You are right, which relates to how colonialism maps onto capitalism.

AJ: Exactly, it was the intersectionality that I wanted to draw out.

RK: I want to bring up Emily Jacir's work. She's a Palestinian American artist, who did this work called *Change/Exchange*. It highlights what you were saying about who it costs what to travel and to move. It also brings up this issue of class and economics. It's a very simple performance, but it's

a really profound work in which she takes a $100 or 100€, and she exchanges it at a currency exchange. Each time she exchanges it, a little is lost because of the transaction fee. She continues to exchange it until there is no money left. So then the exhibited piece is the set of receipts and the amount of time it took to go from $100 to $0. So it highlights the cost that is somehow invisible or not marked in these exchanges.

WM: I think that it is important for us to think theoretically about questions of the intersectionality between class, race, and gender. One has to admit that there is such inadequacy, theoretically, in how to do that well—to understand how they overlap with each other. Thinking about the complexity of even the conversation of whether one speaks of black or brown; one could also take that away and simply talk about which passport allows you to move and which does not. The passport is also a regime. Whether or not you are brown-Jamaican or white-Jamaican, it's still a Jamaican passport.

RK: Yes, there is this global elite of people that are not European—in the art world you encounter it all the time—but have difficulty traveling despite their privilege because of their passport. I just had a meeting with a Pakistani curator for the Karachi Biennial, and he had a very last minute meeting with me. The reason that the meeting was so last minute was a set of issues. So he is coming from a sort of global elite background, but he cannot travel around Europe very easily with a Pakistani passport. He gets last minute visas. If he's purchased a ticket to a certain place and doesn't get the visa in time, he has to lose the money. He wants to go to all these places, but he's constantly on the phone trying to secure the visa to every city. I, as an American with an American passport, had no idea. I was like, 'How rude! This guy wants to meet on like a days notice'. But then he explained to me the reason behind his last minute meeting, and I was like there is so much privilege that goes into my American passport that I am unaware of and take for granted.

SK: It's true. I also switched passports. I took a Dutch passport exactly for the same reason. My Turkish passport required me to apply for a visa each time for every country, and I had to wait in the queue each time, and pay money for each visa. I don't have a double passport—when I applied for the Dutch passport I had to give up my Turkish one.

WM: I want to tie 'imagined geographies', 'imagined ideas of place', 'place making', and 'belonging' to Europe: The Game. And ask you, Alana, to talk a little bit about Europe: The Game, its emergence, what was a stake when this work came to be, and what was or is it that you are trying to do.

AJ: So *Europe the Game* is the oldest work in the room. It took many years to paint, but it emerged in 2002-03. It's all done from journeys I have taken—either flying over landscapes or walking through them—that's why it took me many years. I embarked on the project in response to 'Fortress Europe', which anybody who is young is not even going to remember and most people don't even remember even if they lived through it, but it was a time, basically around the millennium, around 2000, when Europe had started thinking about its external borders. Prior to that, there was the European Union and all the various states in the European Union, but nobody was really thinking about well 'where is the border?' and 'what is the border?' of the union. We can see with current migration questions that this is now paramount—the idea of the external border. We take for granted that Europe was not always like this. But in the very beginning, there was a critique of this idea of a border around Europe with the idea being that Europe would become a fortress. We could see what was going to happen, and it happened. So I was thinking about 'what is Europe?', 'who gets to decide what Europe is?', 'who is Europe?' and 'how do we, in our daily encounters, make people feel European i.e. welcome, or not'. So what I chose to do through Europe: The Game is to produce an oversupply of Europeans; all of these landscapes are European; all of them are Europe. Every single one of them is Europe. Some of them are stereotypically Europe. Some of them are less stereotypically Europe. Some are probably identifiable—I think most people

can see there's a Dutch Tulip field and there's Ireland. I know where they are all from, I think. But what I am forcing on audiences, or inviting audiences to do, is to participate in what we are probably doing anyway, which is deciding who is in and who is out, who belongs and who doesn't. That's the whole point of this. It's to force that question and for us to take responsibility for the fact that there are inclusions and exclusions. Europe has always been diverse. There is a myth that it was all white. Europe has been part of the world since we left Africa, and I'm going to let you know that Europe was populated last. People got to Australia before they got to Europe. Europe has always been diverse. There is a myth that prior to WWII it was all white. It is just untrue.

WM: I want to come back to that because there is actually a national global mythmaking, which is also the mythmaking of Donald Trump. 'Make America Great Again' is also a mythmaking around Whiteness. So it is true to say that diversity is changing, but the very nature of the narrative of Brexit, the narrative of Trump, is a narrative which—and I'm going to be very difficult right here—is like in the Netherlands when one person asks another, 'where are you from?' and the other responds, 'why do you ask that?', and then the first person responds with 'I don't see race.' However, race is precisely why they asked, because the other person 'looks different' to them. There is a conception in our heads that the two are tied together. This narrative is not only in Europe, but also in many settler colonies. One could say it's how European colonialism has spread itself.

Lora Sarislan, Servet Kocyigit, Wayne Modest, Chiara de Cesari and Alana Jelinek at the opening of *What We Forget.* (Photo: Janiek Dam)

RK: What often goes unspoken is that for many people, the idea of Europeanness collides with the idea of being white. And this is not true. This has to be challenged. And this is why I don't understand when people say, 'He didn't seem European.' I got into a taxi in Bergen, Norway, and the person was nonwhite, and my question to him was, 'Are you from here,' and he laughed and said, 'No, I am from Turkey.' We then had this conversation where he told me, 'people who ask me that usually ask, 'Where are you from?'', which he said he especially got from Americans. He said

he'd get that question and then turn it around on them and ask, 'Where are you from?', and Americans, he said, don't like to be asked that question because they would suddenly get confused. We had this whole conversation about identity and belonging in the taxi, but it was very different from getting into a taxi and assuming the driver wasn't from there and asking 'Where are you from?'. So I think this exhibition is trying to get people to rethink these categories and not just assume.

AJ: I'd like to add to this, because it's very evocative. I was brought up in Australia and for most people, I might appear adequately white, but in Australia, I was constantly asked, 'But where are you from?'. In Australia, there are gradations of white, and I wasn't white enough to just walk along the street and be Australian. So it's a very very loaded question, even if you are only asking out of curiosity. In the context of Australia, which is an extremely racist culture, it is highly loaded to say 'Where are you from?'. The white person asking me, or the Anglo-Celtic person asking me, was letting me know that I'm not the right person to belong in Australia, to claim Australia as my home, or to have this accent. It was a micro-aggression. In other contexts, it may not be a micro-aggression, it may be pure curiosity. Only you can know that, and also the victim of your question can know that.

WM: The US has a strange narrative about itself, which is that it is a space of migration—everybody is a migrant. Ask that question in the US in a moment prior to Donald Trump, it would have a different resonance, because everybody is a migrant. Now with Donald Trump, being a migrant is something else, but one of the questions that this exhibition exactly wanted to raise, is—if we start thinking about the massive histories of movement and migration, if we start to think about what colonialism inaugurated: control, flows, movement, bodies being under control—is it even possible to think of nationalism in relation to phenotype anymore? Can you even make that statement anymore? Because what Brexit does is say 'Go back to your own country,' but if you say 'Go back to your own country' to migrants who have been there since 1891, at what moment is that their country anymore? In the Netherlands, it's even more complex because when we say 'Go back to your own country' to a person from Bonaire — which is just an overseas municipality — you are essentially saying 'Go back to the Netherlands.' The question that the exhibition poses is, after colonialism, can we make this culture-place isomorphism — the phenotype-place — overlap anymore? Or should we think otherwise? And what is your role when we start thinking otherwise? So perhaps stop asking that question, because to ask that question is already to foreclose the possibility of the person being just simply Dutch.

SL: In a way, when we were thinking about the exhibition, we were thinking about 'Where are you from?' Obviously, it is a very loaded question, but I was thinking, for example, when you are in a taxi in Istanbul, it's the beginning of a small talk. You want to enjoy your long long journey in the mad Istanbul traffic so you strike up a conversation and you say 'So where is memleket', which is the word in Turkish. What it means is 'Where is home,' or 'Where do you belong'. It is a given that you may have been born in Istanbul, but where are your parents from, where is the village or city that you go back to during summer? This was in the back of my mind the whole time. It's beyond national borders, and fundamentally is an issue of belonging and othering. In the context of the Istanbul taxi, you're supposedly from the same country, but you are still trying to strike something similar and familiar with that question.

WM: I want to close this section, but I first want to add one more thing. In Jamaica, I say my name is Modest. And the next thing that they say is 'Are you the Modest from that part or that part?' It's just always a thing. The person is never ever claiming your unbelonging, he's never trying to put you outside of Jamaica, what he is trying to do is suggest that you are Jamaican, but he wants to understand a certain detail. My question is that in the present political moment that we inhabit — a particular political moment that is hyper-national in some instances, hyper-racialized in terms of national belonging — is it possible for curiosity to only be taken as curiosity?

RK: And it is also hyper-violent time.

WM: Yes, and hyper violent. I am not suggesting that curiosity is bad. The ethnographic museum where I work is an institution built on curiosity. We wanted to know about those other people, but that curiosity was also the handmaiden to a whole lot of violence. When is curiosity? In what political landscape does it work? And when is it an extension of a particular kind of Trumpian exclusion that one has to be more cautious about?

Audience member: This exhibition has given me a lot of ideas, one of which is the interplay between a linguistic and visual vocabulary that we use to describe history, politics, and borders. I think that it's interesting that the very etymology of the word 'politic' comes from the Greek 'polis', referring to the wall. Also 'xenos' refers to the host of the guest, so 'xenophobia' means 'fear of foreigners', as well as the obligation of hosting those who come for hospitality. These words evolve from the very idea of who belongs and who doesn't belong. I wanted to ask if anyone had come up with an interesting way to frame movements through European and extra-European countries in a linguistic mode? Also the movement from European languages and European assumptions of language to maybe like Eastern languages and how the very approach to language is different. I wonder if anyone has any experiences or would like to talk about the movement of languages in Europe, both spatially and linguistically.

WM: Servet, is there a difference when you speak Turkish? Is there a different understanding within that language of borders or other concepts?

SK: There are different meanings and cultural understandings for a lot of words when you translate them. They will always have this cultural connotation. So it is very different being the guest versus being the host. I was quite amazed by South African culture. It is so different from Europe, so open. And this also has something to do with language as well, because we grow up speaking certain languages. To translate, we have to, in a way, forget.

WM: I am not an artist, so I am going to talk just simply from thinking through the language and from my location at an ethnographic museum. We often, in our struggles of the present in the Netherlands, think very negatively about Dutch language. We talk about the English language having so much more pizazz and nice words. Not everyone thinks that — if you come from France, you don't think that. But one of the interesting things that I have been thinking about is being a non-Dutch speaker and coming into Dutch. There are a few words that I just find fascinating. So if you were to talk about the word 'hospitality', which is an important word when you are thinking about polis, 'to be hospitable', in the Dutch context, the word is 'gastvrijheid', which has the word 'freedom' in it. What does that mean that that word 'freedom' actually is a part of the notion of hospitality? The word literally translates to 'guest-freedom'. To think of another word, a word that I also find fascinating, the word for 'collaboration' or 'samenwerking'. 'Samenwerking' has something else in it in a much more explicit way than English. In English, you have to go back to the Latin part of it to understand 'co' and what that means. In 'samenwerking' it is clear: 'working-together'. There is clarity to it, but what happens when you use the word in the context of the Netherlands and Germany? 'Samenwerking' has a word that means complicity in it—so 'samenwerking' relates to Dutch collaboration with the Germans in the Holocaust. But by contrast—and we have been thinking about this in my research center—what does it mean to be complicit in fashioning other kinds of futures? So in all of these languages, you have that opportunity to think otherwise about these conceptual framings. And I would like to suggest something that is quite dangerous in a critical audience here. I find it fascinating that your tracing of a particular genealogy of what it means to belong went to the Greek. My fascination and enjoyment in working in an ethnographic museum is that there is probably 500,000 ways of tracing another genealogy than the Greek. What we need to be able to do is to be able to trace the other genealogies to what it means to live together, what it means to think borders.

LS: So to put it all together, we have discussed the ideas of movement, mobility, and language. Actually something we haven't discussed yet is the language of the media that the artists are using. When you think about this exhibition, you have video, you have photography, you have textile, works on paper, and installation. So perhaps we can talk about the works that have not really been touched upon yet — the photos of Servet. Thinking about the language of the media, what does photography enable you to present? How does the imaginary and the reality fit together? These are set up photos that relate to many issues in regard to most of the topics we have discussed so far: class, gender, the gender of the earth, that digging feeling, and again, cartography, with all its order, signs and formulas. So can you talk a little bit about this series that you worked on when you were in Johannesburg, and which we could actually say is thanks to the Dutch colonial system of Mondrian Funds, but it's a good way of using the system.

The opening of *What We Forget.* (Photo: Janiek Dam)

SK: This series deals with a lot of things. I studied mining before art, so I had this connection to the whole gold mining story of Johannessburg, which is a very rough place. People were brought there to work in the mines. The city was created around this gold mining industry so there is this diversity created by the mining industry. For example, Johannesburg has the largest Indian population in South Africa and outside of India. So many people were brought to work there and that has created numerous cultures and sub-cultures. There are a lot of very complicated connections between mining and the city. And another thing about mining is the exploitation of the land as well as the exploitation of the people. Mining has never helped the people [or it has only helped the very few]. It's always only been for the benefit of a few. For me, the mediums of photography and video are the most popular mediums for immigrant art. When you are mobile, you don't carry your sculpture around, but you can carry your camera. So for this series, we worked outside with people, and we travelled a lot to find these locations. It took two months of research.

LS: Can you also tell us about the maps? Because there is a layer of movement there too.

SK: The maps I collected from Holland. These are school maps, which you can find in any classroom. And if you look at older maps, you actually see the traces of colonialism much more clearly. It is actually in the language of the map. The modern maps are quite different. I bought all of them from here from ebay, and this was my starting point. There are also these gemstones painted on them, so they became mining maps in my mind. And [the gemstone paintings] were actually copied from a Dutch book for teaching children about mining. It is a very innocent book to teach kids that this is a diamond and where you can get it. It was written very scientifically. So this series is an intervention on that book and on cartography. This became a large series of almost 24 photos. We mapped the city, looking for some of the characteristic locations. It was very much developed from a sense of place, from the city.

WM: I just want to point out one of the ways that this work ties back to the work that we do in the Tropenmuseum. The Tropenmuseum started out as a colonial museum, and because it started out as a colonial museum, it also had — as part of its displays — these mineral samples from different parts of the world where you would mine. We also created these school boxes, which schools used to learn about the colonies. So it actually ties very closely to that, and especially to the maps. I just want to close off with how colonialism affects us in the intimate. In our curatorial questioning, we also included your work Rajkamal, as not necessarily only about the bigger discursive space in which everything operates — which is always attached to the intimate — but actually as a kind of delving into the intimacy of colonial violence. I want you to tell us a little bit about those works in relation to colonial intimacies, or what you were trying to do with that work perhaps.

RK: This work comes out of a German anthropology book from 1902 called *People of the Earth (Die Völker der Erde)*. This is a book that I started to take apart, and on the pages I started to make a series of quick interventions. Through the process of working on this book, I found these images of women—very brutal, very violent images of women. Often they wouldn't have hair, their gaze would be unfocused, they would have no clothing, and I decided I had to do something beyond the quick interventions. I felt I had to work further with these images and, in a very intuitive manner, I had the images scanned—they are often very small, just laid out in a page of text. I would scan them, produce photographic prints in what is a kind of standard portrait size in a life-size scale, and then bring them back to my studio and start to paint on them. It turned into a very joyful process of dressing the women, giving them hair, giving them makeup. It's become a process about restoring their humanity, their dignity, and giving them a kind of individuality, which was absolutely taken in the original book. For me, out of any of my works, I think of this work as not being specifically a political project, but really a highly personal one for me. There is a politics around it of course, and there's also a critique that can be made. A white feminist friend of mine said to me that she has been running away from this gaze her whole life and that I was giving them this makeup, these clothes, and hair styling. But my response was that as a white woman, her humanity has never been questioned the same way that these women's humanity has, and so for me this is a step of rehabilitation that feels deeply spiritual and empowering and seems necessary for me to do. I am a temporary resident in Florence right now, so I am in the midst of the politics of what's taking place in Italy. There was a Senegalese man who was shot on a bridge in Florence last year in February, simply for not looking European. So the stakes are really high about whose humanity can be taken away and who is afforded humanity.

WM: I want to close with a very difficult thing. My closure is one of the things that we have been thinking about recently. I have been trying to set up a series of events around 'hope' and can one use that word 'hope'? What is hopeful in the present moment? And every time I invite people to come talk about hope, it takes me a long time to write the email, but an even longer time to press send. I have this idea in my head that they are going to just simply laugh at me. Hope emerges in my own work from a study of the lives of the enslaved — people who had no reason to be optimis-

tic. There is no imaginable optimism for the enslaved, but people had to hope to imagine possible futures. It emerges for me from activism, which I call a 'practice of radical hope' — a kind of impatience for the present moment. I want to ask you — within what we have just sketched, within the present political moment, the moment in Britain now — is it possible to imagine other more hopeful futures? What is at stake in terms of our own implicatedness, your own implicatedness, in fashioning those futures?

AL: It is so not a hopeful state. Does anybody have any hope post-Brexit? Anybody? I can't do it. Most of us are living in denial on both sides of the question. I like the idea of wanting to be hopeful. I'd like to be hopeful at some point again. I'm not now.

SK: This is hope. When we give the people a face like with Rajkamal's portraits. I think the problem is very complicated as well as the solution, but we have to believe and keep on doing the work. I think that being here is very positive, this coming together.

RK: I think we are in a moment of collapse and extinction. That is the truth. And you have to mark the truth of the fact that we are in a moment of extinction and collapse, but — and I don't know where this takes anyone but me — I have a four year-old son. Before he was born, I could only see the collapse and the extinction, and now, I look at him and — it doesn't change that I have brought him in to a collapsing world — but I feel completely blessed to have this time with him. And that is a huge blessing, and then I feel this tremendous beauty and hope. That sits together with the reality that everything is collapsing; it's there and it's the thing that I am always trying to think about in my work. It's like bringing things that you think are opposites together, but they are not opposites — they should belong together. So the collapse and the hope actually belong together. They sit side-by-side somehow.

WM: Happily and thankfully the artists that are included in this exhibition are interested in a practice of refusal, and that practice of refusal suggests that to be able to fashion other futures, you can't use the same system. You can't just say that you are going to invest in the same system, and the same system is going to solve the problem, because this system is the problem. But it doesn't mean that one gives up on the possibility of creating other alternative futures. Refusal is to refuse precarity, to refuse the categories that ensnare you, and perhaps what is at stake in all of their works — whether or not it is thinking through the vulnerability of women and their invisibalization, thinking through the planet and planetary precarity and our own economic logic — is how we are connected through the material world through the colonial project. Our own implicatedness in who belongs, who doesn't, and our constitution of this imaginary, what is at stake is if we can't remember how colonialism shapes all of this — not just the ethnographic museum, but the art museum and all other institutions in which we inhabit — than perhaps there is no future that we can sketch because all we are doing is sketching a future with the same tools that we inhabit. So the hope is a hope that is outside institutions, not necessarily in their abolishment, but in their abolishment as a starting point for recreating something anew, that is more human, or human in relationship to nonhuman, the planet.

RK: Amen.