

# Le Déracinement

## On Diasporic Imaginations

How did you experience the exhibition?

We'd love to hear your thoughts via @z33be #z33be

# Intro curator

*Le Déracinement* (Uprooting) is a title borrowed from the field study conducted by sociologists Pierre Bourdieu and Abdelmalek Sayad during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962). Their work scrutinized how the forced displacement and resettlement of Algerian peasants by the French military resulted in large-scale migration and the erasure of familiar patterns of life. This inquiry into the drastically altered human and natural environment of Northern Algeria was documented by Bourdieu through the series of photographs that form the starting point of this exhibition.

Turning to the Mediterranean and the Atlantic, the exhibition features artworks that reimagine, disentangle and rewrite colonial and postcolonial histories of displacement. They document the encounters that took place in diasporic settings and narrate the networks of solidarity that have emerged in between worlds.

The artists in the exhibition read the natural landscape as an archive of the extractive histories and migratory patterns that gave rise to the modern world. Throughout history,

the act of uprooting and resettling went hand in hand with the destruction of existing ecosystems. Yet, while the displacement of populations has been foundational to the construction of Western modernity, European policies today continue to create hostile environments for those considered outsiders along racial lines, affecting modes of existence and disarticulating forms of attachment and belonging.

The exhibition foregrounds the radical challenges posed to the image of a self-contained Europe by diasporic communities. Artists evoke fictions and imaginations, shifting our gaze from the comfort of solid ground to one of restless seas and hybrid identities created over centuries, through trajectories that crisscross the Mediterranean and Atlantic. They question the language of integration, assimilation and inclusion that is assumed within national frameworks and disrupt exclusionary concepts of belonging. Through works that carry inheritance and intergenerational transmission across times and geographies, they suggest notions of roots that put nation, territory and citizenship under strain, emphasizing in their stead the imaginative possibility of inhabiting several spaces at once.

By employing a wide range of strategies, artists confront the desirability of building a shared world at a time when deep divisions and power asymmetries everywhere prevail.

Silvia Franceschini



Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, *The Night Reader, for Wilson Harris (2)*, photo by XC.HuA

# Artists

Raphaël  
Grisey  
(1978, FR)  
&  
Bouba Touré  
(1948, ML)

Mounira  
Al Solh  
(1978, LB)

Vincent  
Meessen  
(1971, VS)

Mathieu  
Kleyebe Abonnenc  
(1977 FR/GF)


Fatma  
Bucak  
(1984, TR)

Yto  
Barrada  
(1971, FR)

Sara  
Ouhaddou  
(1986, FR)

Kapwani  
Kiwanga  
(1978, CA)

Francis  
Aljys  
(1959, BE)



Mohamed  
Bourouissa  
(1978, DZ)

Anna  
Boughiguan  
(1946, EG)

Pierre  
Bourdieu  
(1930-2002, FR)

Lydia  
Ourahmane  
(1992, DZ)

Lorenzo  
Pezzani  
(1982, IT)

The  
Otolith Group  
Anjalika Sagar  
(1968, GB)  
&  
Kodwo Eshun  
(1967, GB)



© Pierre Bourdieu, *Images d'Algérie*, 1957 – 1961. Aïn Aghbel, Collo (in the middle, with white shirt: Abdelmalek Sayad) / Fondation Pierre Bourdieu, courtesy of Camera Austria, Graz



# Pierre Bourdieu

Testimonies of Uprooting, 1958-1961

Photographs

After his year-long military service during the Algerian War of Independence (1954-1962), the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu stayed on as a lecturer at the University of Algiers. In 1958 he undertook ethnographic research across Algeria with his former student and now colleague and friend, the sociologist Abdelmalek Sayad. Together they documented the destructive impact of the French colonizers on all aspects of the Algerian society and culture and described how Algerians were being driven from their land. This large-scale uprooting disrupted the social fabric of village communities and put an end to centuries-old ways of life. Their fieldwork research, along with interviews, recordings, sketches and statistical surveys, was published in 1964 in the book *Le Déracinement* (Uprooting)

The many photographs they took during this research would not be shown in public until shortly after Bourdieu's death in 2002. This selection of images juxtaposes two sides of Bourdieu's and Sayad's accounts of Algeria. On the one hand, they are an attempt to reconstruct the traditional society that French colonization had irrevocably brought to an end. On the other, they depict land expropriation, the relocation of millions of people to government-built camps, and how the peasants were forced to migrate to the cities and urban labor markets. The photos show to what extent the colonial reorganization of space left its mark on the Algerian landscape. But they are more than just an ethnographic study. Above all, they show Bourdieu and Sayad's strong attachment to a country fighting for its independence.



*Untitled (Tangier - Tarifa), Study for "Don't cross the bridge before you get to the river"*  
Courtesy of a private collection

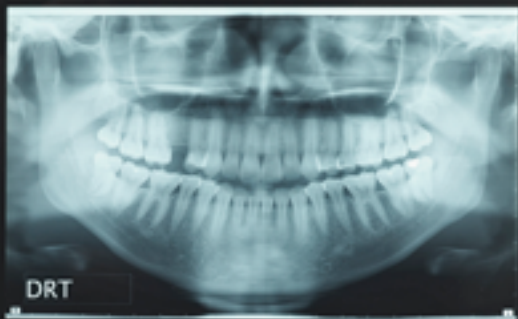
# Francis Alÿs

Untitled (Tangier - Tarifa), 2007

Study for "Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River"

Diptych, oil on wood

Francis Alÿs paints the views from two opposing sides of The Strait of Gibraltar. Once from the coastlines of Spain (Tarifa) and once from the Moroccan side (Tangier). The empty space left in between evokes the migration histories that lie hidden in the invisible depths of the Mediterranean Sea. The paintings are a preliminary study for the video performance *Don't Cross the Bridge Before You Get to the River* (2008). In it, a line of kids each carrying a boat made out of a shoe leaves Europe in the direction of Morocco, while a second line of kids with shoe-boats leaves Africa in the direction of Spain. The two lines meet on the horizon and allow us to imagine a metaphorical bridge between Europe and Africa.



Nom: OURAHMANE \*LYDIA 24 ANS Date: 19/03/2017

*In the Absence of Our Mothers*, photo by Andy Keate  
Courtesy of Chisenhale Gallery, London



# Lydia Ourahmane

*In the Absence of Our Mothers*, 2018

X-ray scan, text, two 18kt gold teeth - one of which has been permanently installed in Lydia Ourahmane's mouth

*In the Absence of Our Mothers* consists of a gold tooth, which resides in an exhibition space, and another one which has been permanently implanted in Ourahmane's mouth. This work is shown alongside a text referencing Ourahmane's grandfather's attempt to avoid the draft for military service in French-occupied Algeria by means of extracting his own teeth. The tooth implanted in Ourahmane's mouth was cast from a gold chain she had bought from a young man for a sum comparable with the fee charged by traffickers for a place in a boat to Europe. The seller claimed it was his mother's chain. The artist saw this gesture as an act of going against your own flesh and blood, deceiving your own mother, as one's only means for escape, much as her grandfather had pulled out his teeth.

Ourahmane engages both her own body and the body of the viewer to explore how localized trauma is felt on a collective level, and how forms of resilience manifest themselves.



*The Sleepers*, courtesy of The Galerie Polaris, Paris

# Yto Barrada

The Sleepers, 2006-2007

Photographs

Yto Barrada's photographs show anonymous figures lying down in a public park in Tangier, waiting to cross the Strait of Gibraltar. They were commissioned from Barrada to form part of a larger collaborative research project entitled *The Maghreb Connection*, addressing Sub-Saharan transit migration and the turning of the Maghreb into a transit zone and an external frontier of the European Union. Situated near Ceuta, Spanish enclave on the North African coast, the city has transformed into a vast waiting room for thousands of people hoping to cross the channel at the risk of their lives, or to climb over the barbed-wire barriers that surround the Spanish enclaves. Yto Barrada speaks of an "obsession to leave" and portrays this as a new form of emigration, replete with its own vocabulary, legends, songs and rituals.



Palette #1, courtesy of Blum & Poe, Los Angeles



# Mohamed Bourouissa

## Brutal Family Roots, 2020

Bird of paradise plant (*Strelitzia*), raspberry, speakers, cables

### Palette #1, #3, #5

Watercolor and pencil on paper

### Frequence-I

Watercolor and pencil on paper

Mohamed Bourouissa's immersive installation, uniting moving images, drawings, plants and sound, pays homage to the psychiatrist, political philosopher and revolutionary Frantz Fanon (Fort-de-France, Martinique, 1925 – Bethesda, USA, 1961) and to his work at the psychiatric hospital in Blida-Joinville, Algeria. Fanon's contribution to anti-colonial struggles and to the analysis of the mechanisms through which oppression, uprooting and racism operate, are articulated through the pieces that comprise *Brutal Family Roots*. Blida is also Mohamed Bourouissa's hometown; his investigation thus becomes a simultaneous investigation of his own roots.

A bird of paradise plant, which arrived in Algeria from the Caribbean through various colonial exchanges – and a tribute to Frantz Fanon's presence in Blida – actively contributes to the soundtrack of the installation. Its frequencies are made audible through a system programmed by French sound designer Youmna Saba.



Video still, *The Whispering of Ghosts*

## Mohamed Bourouissa

*The Whispering of Ghosts*, 2018

Video, 13 min

The film delves into the story of one of Fanon's former patients, Bourlem Mohamed, who took up gardening as a form of occupational therapy and gave expression to the organization of his mental space in the structure of the garden. The film is edited in an erratic fashion that follows Bourlem Mohamed's trains of thought, jumping from his own memories of being a *Fellagha* (a freedom fighter in the anti-colonial Algerian War) to the planting and nurturing of the garden he created at the hospital in 1969. Gardening was one area through which Frantz Fanon hoped to end the segregation of colonial and indigenous patients. Bourlem Mohamed's work exists as a testimony of Fanon's clinical reforms, the embodied echo of an emancipatory gesture and a symbol of resilience.



Video still, *Incomplete Herbarium*

## Mohamed Bourouissa

*Incomplete Herbarium*, 2020

Video, 13 min

The title of this work refers to the careful augmenting action of the artist, documented in the video, though it also addresses the fallacies and power relations implicit in any form of taxonomy or categorization. The camera makes a close-up of an old herbarium; the hands of the artist leafing through its pages as he adds his own illustrations of flowers to the unfinished volume. Bourouissa discovered this book in a public library in Blida, albeit without any information on its authors, who had clearly meant to produce a catalogue of the region's flora.

Having always been interested in the migratory circumstances of plant species, their historical links to colonial expeditions and the divisive classification into native, foreign or invasive types, the artist engages with this 'unsigned object' through gesture, literally laying his hands on his own country's past.



*Attack*, courtesy of The Silvia Fiorucci Roman Collection, Monaco

# Anna Boghiguian

## Sail, 2017

Boat sail, birds, paint, cotton, plaster, wax

## Attack, 2017

Pencil, paint, encaustic on paper

The impact of the movement of people and goods on the making of the modern world is at the heart of Anna Boghiguian's installation. The large painted planisphere in *Sail* describes the world from the perspectives of the slave trade, salt roads and the cotton trade. The 19<sup>th</sup>-century sail, made by strips of cotton woven by hand in a village on the Nile delta, was bought by the artist from a fisherman in Cairo. The artist reappropriates the symbol of the sail, historically denoting an image of trade and accumulation, and transforms it into a symbol of freedom through her intuitive and expressionistic rendering. Birds, a recurring theme in Boghiguian's work, hover over suffering and exploitation. They represent free people who cross the borders imposed by nation-states and markets. Like the birds, the fish complete the circle of history, sending us back to a past that predates human existence, as depicted in the cut-out *Attack*.



*After Eight*, courtesy of the Sfeir Semler Gallery, Hamburg

# Mounira Al Solh

*After Eight*, 2014

Hand-knit and machine-knit works on felt, plastic nylon bags, paper and other materials

*After Eight* consists of various hand and machine-knit sentences that the artist has embroidered on everyday-life surfaces, enabling her to register notes and contradicting thoughts on language in relation to the process of integration which so often produces forms of non-belonging. The series emerged out of the period the artist spent in an asylum in Antwerp where she had tried to learn Dutch in order to pass her exam to apply for a Dutch passport. Inspired by Louis Wolfson's study *Le Schizo et les langues*, she believed it would be helpful to learn the language from people with schizophrenia. In the asylum she organized a workshop made up of people from various nationalities and invited them to write love letters in their own language.

*After Eight* relates to the time of day when the artist worked on the piece – at nighttime, this being the most silent part of the day, in which language can most seldom be heard and images emerge out of the unconscious.







*Semence*, exhibition views at formerly known Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art, 2020  
Photo by Kristien Daem

## Kapwani Kiwanga

*Semence*, 2020  
Glazed ceramic

*Semence* is based on Kapwani Kiwanga's research into the role of plants as witnesses of human history. The work revolves around a red rice variety, African Rice (*Oryza Glaberrima*). According to various sources, enslaved women from West Africa introduced this variety to Suriname and the United States by hiding grains in their hair during their forced movement across the Atlantic. This oral narrative offers a contrasting view to the transoceanic seed transfers that took place between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, attributed, in Western accounts, to European sailors, colonists, and men of science. West-African women sequestered grains in their hair to enable their descendants to survive in plantation societies. The grains have been reproduced in ceramic and are positioned in the installation in accordance with the distances between grains on paddy rice plantations. This rice becomes an invisible seed bank of sorts for possible future communities.



Berber dancers, photo by Flandrin

# Sara Ouhammadou

Kharboucha - Extract: Liyam wa liyam (Days and days), 2021

Screen-printing on paper

Sara Ouhammadou's work addresses the erasure of Moroccan local culture and how this is reshaped by diasporic experience. In this installation she departs from the story of her family: members of the Amazigh community who immigrated to France. Her parents never learned to read or write the Arabic language, but they did approach it in a visual way. That 'seeing' of language became the starting point for this large-scale screen print, made up of an alphabet of symbols derived from Arabic and Amazigh weaved into Islamic geometric patterns. The alphabet depicts a song by Hadda Al Ghitia (Kharboucha), a popular and mythical figure from the oral tradition of rural Morocco. Her love songs denounced the political injustices of the French colonial occupation and mobilized a population that could neither read nor write towards women emancipation and anticolonial resistance. By using paper, the medium of the written word par excellence, Ouhammadou addresses the (im)possibility of documenting oral traditions. In imagining a universal alphabet, the artist presents a way of inhabiting hybrid positions that allow us to change without erasing who we have been.



*Sowing Somankidi Coura, a Generative Archive, Irrigation System, photo by Bouba Touré, 1977*



Video still, *Traana* (Temporary Migrant)

# Raphaël Grisey Kàddu Yaraax Bouba Touré

*Traana* (Temporary Migrant), 2017

Video, 27 min

The theater script of *Traana* was written in 1977 by Bouba Touré after his decision to resettle back in West Africa on the Senegal River, a region typically experiencing massive emigration. The play tells a story of rural exodus, from the countryside to the city, from the city to Europe, and bears witness to the failure of the liberation movements in Senegal and Mali to change the neo-colonial conditions for the rural poor since gaining independence.

The adaptation of *Traana* by Raphaël Grisey and Kàddu Yaraax, a company founded in the 1990s and adopting the method of the Theater of the Oppressed, is the result of a ten-day workshop with eight actors from Yaraax and other suburbs of Dakar.

# Raphaël Grisey & Bouba Touré

Sowing Somankidi Coura, a Generative Archive, 2015-ongoing

Our life and struggles in France, 1983-2019

Slideshow of photographs by Bouba Touré

Foundation of the Somankidi Coura Cooperative, 1975-2019

5 prints, photographs by Bouba Touré

The long-term research project *Sowing Somankidi Coura* investigates the history of the agricultural cooperative founded in 1977 by Bouba Touré and thirteen other African migrant workers and activists who decided to return from France to their home in the Sahel. They settled along the Senegal River, an area from which many inhabitants had previously migrated. The group implemented a cooperative model and new forms of permaculture, reviving agricultural practices that had fallen into disuse. Through the practices of film, archiving, publication, workshop and theater, the militant visual essays presented in the exhibition articulate liberation narratives, collective care and peasant alliances.

Bouba Touré's photographs of his former *foyer* (migrant housing block) in Saint-Denis in France, of *sans-papiers* struggles and the early steps in the making of the cooperative tell the story of a generation of migrant workers in Europe shortly after the independencies. They present a historiography that is missing from the national narratives, contradicting the idea of the migrant as a passive subject of history while reversing north-south relations.



Video still, *Xaraasi Xanne - Crossing Voices*

## Raphaël Grisey & Bouba Touré

*Xaraasi Xanne - Crossing Voices*, 2021

Video, 63 min

Production: Spectres Production, Weltfilm GmbH, Raphaël Grisey & Bouba Touré

Using rare cinematic, photographic and sound archives, the film recounts the exemplary adventure of Somankidi Coura, an agricultural cooperative set up in Mali in 1977 by West African immigrants living in workers' residences in France. The story of this improbable, utopic return to the Sahel region follows a winding path through the ecological and decolonial challenges and conflicts of agricultural practices from the 1970s to the present day. One of the major actors in the movement, Bouba Touré, tells this story by plunging into the heart of his personal archives, which document the struggles of farmers in France and in Mali, as well as those of immigrant workers, over a period of decades. But it is also a story about dialogues and transmission, friendships and cinematic geographies; the story of Touré and Raphaël Grisey, who became Touré's spiritual son and ally, as well as the history of cinema by militant filmmakers such as Sidney Sokhona or Med Hondo. Over the course of the film, different voices enter the sound-scape to accompany Bouba Touré's narration; they bring the tale of a forgotten memory toward a possible future sung by an electronic *griot* or West African praise singer.





*Miss Interdépendances, courtesy of the artist*



# Vincent Meessen

Miss Interdépendances, 2019

9 black and white photographs enhanced with stencil and watercolor, 1 lithograph

In *Miss Interdépendances*, Vincent Meessen draws on the archival documents of the Association Metis van België (AMB/MVB, the Belgian Association for People of Mixed Race). This organization was the first in Belgium to work for the recognition of the 20,000 children of African women and white colonial administrators who were forcibly displaced from Burundi, Rwanda and Congo to Belgium throughout the colonial period. The woman in the photo is Juliette Emond. She was elected *Miss Indépendance* on the occasion of the (only) Belgian celebration of Congo's independence in June 1960. Her bouquet is enhanced with colors taken from Paul Broca's chart. This doctor and anthropologist identified skin colors, hair types and the colors of human eyes at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The new color scheme of the lilies, for centuries a symbol of purity, evokes the absurdity of the idea of "purity" underlying early anthropological conceptualizations of "race". In this work, those lilies now exhale a perfume of interdependence constitutive of any relation, composite by nature. By drawing on notions of desire and métissage, Vincent Meessen captures in the work the simultaneous attraction to and repulsion of racialized others.



*The Night Reader, for Wilson Harris (2), photo by XC.HuA*

# Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc

Walking Through the Arawak Horizon, for Wilson Harris, 2020

The Anatomy of the Invaders Resurrected and Tuned  
to the Painted Silence, 1675-2018

Frontage of the Dukes of Savoy's organ, 32 Organ Pipes

The Night Reader, for Wilson Harris (3), 2018

Turtle shell, gallium

Morsels of Flesh Taken From the Enemy Bones, 2021

Copy of a Kuna shamanic necklace, (Panama, inland from San Blas,  
Chucunaque River area, donated by Lady Richard Brown), 14 bone flutes, glass pearls

The River, the Forest, the Rain, 19.., 2018

Mooring buoy, cast iron dishes, coffee maker, stove, candlestick, soil

Against All Firearms, Highway Robbers, Incendiaries,  
Witches and Evil Spirit, work in progress

Metal box containing documents and objects belonging to Joseph Bernes

Study for the Ransom Room (Atahualpa) 5 & 6, 2021

Copper frame, oil tempera, cinnabar

The new polyphonic installation by Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc references the magical realism of Guyanese writer and poet Wilson Harris. In Abonnenc's installation, the Maroni River, the natural border between French Guiana and Suriname, is the main protagonist in a story of struggles, explorations and exploitations. Filtered through the biography of Joseph Bernes, the installation presents the story of the migration of West Indian Creoles to French Guiana in search of gold. Bernes was a miner from Saint Lucia and the former owner of Abonnenc's mother's house in Wacapou, a village on the banks of the Maroni. His path is presented through a series of documents, letters and maps that recompose a cartography of his displacements as well as his private life. They present evidence of the subordination of economic migrants to the rule of French colonialism.

Following Harris's poetic construction, a 17<sup>th</sup>-century organ, an important instrument of Baroque music and an emblem of European culture, stands in front of a Kuna shamanic necklace made from Carib bone flutes generating something of a mutuality between alien cultures. A turtle shell, turned upside down to serve as a gold pan, still contains traces of the gallium used to separate gold from other materials polluting the natural environment. An alchemical transformation of matter occurs in two monochromatic paintings colored with cinnabar, a mercury oxide with a capacity to amalgamate with copper.

Through a delicate autoethnography, Abonnenc's research sketches out a complex allegory of elements that by tracing the connections that the first waves of gold panners had with the end of the slave period and the aftermath of colonialism, reference to the possibility of renascence and rebirth from the wound endured by our ancestors.



*Against All Firearms, Highway Robbers, Incendiaries, Witches and Evil Spirit*

Photo by Studio Rémi Villaggi. Courtesy of Collection 49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine, Metz, France



*Videostil, Wacapou, A Prologue or A Room in My Mother's House*

# Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc

Wacapou, A Prologue or A Room in My Mother's House, 2018,  
France, French Guiana

Super 8 film transferred to HD, 26 min, Black & White, Color

Production: Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, music: Thomas Tilly, Mary Jane Leach

The film describes the artist's search for the home once owned by his family in the small village of Wacapou, on the Maroni River. The wooden house was sold to Abonnenc's mother in 1984 by Joseph Bernes, a former gold digger from Saint Lucia, but was never lived in by his family because of the civil war that broke out in Suriname in 1986. Abonnenc gives pictorial shape to his fragile memory of the house by combining photographs taken in the 1980s by anthropologist Michel- Baj Strobel and Abonnenc's mother, with archival materials and his own footage of the lush rainforest that took over the girdling in recent years – and the latter's powerful sonic environment. The artist follows the traces of the region's Creole gold mining communities from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to their descendants who still live there today.



Installation shot, *And men turned their faces from there*, Brown University David Winton Bell Gallery, 2017  
Photo by Jesse Banks III



# Fatma Bucak

Damascus Rose, 2016-ongoing

Damask rose cuttings from Damascus grafted in rose plants

The Damascus rose is one of the oldest rose varieties in existence. In Syria today, the flower is threatened with extinction as a result of the civil war that is forcing farmers to abandon their lands, reducing the fertility of the soil. There are barely any of these roses left growing in the wild. They can be cultivated, but there are no farmers left with the skills to do this. For this installation, one hundred rose plants from Damascus undertook a journey of more than three thousand kilometers. The artist worked with a network of collaborators to transport young cuttings of the rose from fields outside Damascus to Belgium, via Lebanon. The cuttings that survived the turbulent journey were grafted onto “host” rose plants and replanted. Lying awaiting the chance to regrow, the garden reminds us of the nature of conflict: it not only affects people and local economies but even transforms the soil. The fresh new flowers embody an idea of resilience and rebirth in the face of loss and erasure.

Each time the work is reinstalled, a donation is made to Médecins sans frontières – MSF.



*Avi Varma, Carrizo Cane and Mixed Vegetation along the Rio Grande, Remote Sensing Image 2021. Image composed from the datasets of the NAIP (National Agriculture Imagery Program, US Department of Agriculture, Farm Services Agency)*

# Hostile Environment(s) Project

Atlas of Critical Habitats, 2019-ongoing

Mixed Media Installation

A project by Lorenzo Pezzani, with contributions by Dimitra Andritsou, Geoffrey Alan Boyce, Samuel N. Chambers, Sarah Launius, Forensic Oceanography, Lodovica Guarnieri, Tom James, Faiza Ahmad Khan, Stefanos Levidis, Tara Plath, Robert Preusse, Hanna Rullmann, Avi Varma, and the participants at the Tempi Morti workshop

Design by Hanna Rullman and Tom Joyces, Martina Soffritti and Stefania Rigoni

The *Atlas of Critical Habitats* is organized according to a standard climate classification system and consists of a growing collection of legal documents, maps, 3D models, videos and a media archive. Gathering materials produced in collaboration with various activists, artists and researchers, the installation carefully composes a comparative geography of different border environments. In doing so, it critically reflects not only on how “natural” and civic spaces have been turned into borders and weaponized to expel those deemed alien, but also on the *longue durée* entanglement of ecologies with different forms of (im)mobility and displacement. The installation emerges out of Lorenzo Pezzani’s ‘Hostile Environment’(s) project, which attempts to explore the interconnected nature of the so-called migration and environmental crises beyond catastrophist and security-oriented perspectives.



Video still, INFINITY minus *Infinity*

# The Otolith Group

INFINITY minus *Infinity*, 2019

Video, 52 min

The Otolith Group's film *INFINITY minus Infinity* brings together dance, performance, music and digital animation to compose a transhistorical cinematic zone that weaves together the unpayable debts of slavery and colonialism, the contemporary politics of migration and the ongoing climate catastrophe.

The work addresses the “hostile environment” regime, a series of policies enacted by the UK's conservative government from 2012 onwards, that discriminates against the Afro-Caribbean communities who migrated to Britain under the 1948 British Nationality Act and helped rebuild the country's industrial infrastructure after the Second World War. The recent effort to detain and deport people of the “Windrush generation”—named after the HMT Empire Windrush ship that sailed from Jamaica to London in 1948—reveals the commitment of the British state to disarticulate forms of belonging of Afro-Caribbean populations whose powerful cultural avant-garde aimed to decolonize the British Empire from within.

Inspired by Black speculative fictions and cosmologies, a chorus of deities allude to the times and spaces of the United Kingdom's environmental and racial hostility which are inscribed in everyday urban spaces such as the London transport system, or in the financial districts' mirrored buildings that reflect the sky yet obscure ongoing extractions elsewhere.

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## Support

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Sharjah Architecture Triennial

Francis Alijs - *Untitled (Tangier - Tarifa)*

Courtesy of a private collection

Lydia Ourahmane - *In the Absence of Our Mothers*. Courtesy of the Nicoletta Fiorucci Russo De Li Galli Collection, London.

Yto Barrada - *The Sleepers*.

Courtesy of the Galerie Polaris, Paris.

Mohamed Bourouissa - *Brutal Family Roots; Palette #1, #3, #5; Frequence-I; The Whispering of Ghosts; Incomplete Herbarium*.

Courtesy of Blum & Poe, Los Angeles  
New York / Tokio.

Anna Boghiguian - *Sail & Attack*.

Courtesy of the Silvia Fiorucci Roman Collection,  
Monaco.

Mounira Al Sohl - *After Eight*.

Courtesy of the Sfeir-Semler Gallery, Hamburg,  
Germany.

Sara Ouhaddou - *Kharboucha - Extract: Liyam wa liyam (Days and days)* Commissioned by Z33.  
Courtesy of the Galerie Polaris, Paris. Courtesy of  
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Raphaël Grisey & Bouba Touré - *Xaraasi Xanne - Crossing Voices*. With the support of the Artistic Research Programme Norway, NTNU Trondheim, CNAP Image/Mouvement, Fondation des Artistes, 9. Contour Biennale, HKW Anthropocene Curriculum, Arbeitstipendium Berlin Senate.

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc - *Walking Through the Arawak Horizon, for Wilson Harris* Commissioned by Z33. With the Design Consultancy by Studio Gisto, Milan.

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc - *Against All Firearms, Highway Robbers, Incendiaries, Witches and Evil Spirit*. Courtesy of the Collection 49 Nord 6 Est - Frac Lorraine, Metz, France.

Hostile Environment(s) Project - *Atlas of Critical Habitats* Commissioned by ar/ge kunst, Bolzano, Italy and co-produced with Z33.

The Otolith Group - *INFINITY minus Infinity* commissioned by Sharjah Architecture Triennial SAT01. 2019 and co-produced with Z33. Courtesy of LUX, London.

# Colophon

## Artists

Mathieu Kleyebe Abonnenc, Francis Aljys, Yto Barrada, Anna Boghiguian, Pierre Bourdieu, Fatma Bucak, Mohamed Bourouissa, Raphaël Grisey & Bouba Touré, Kapwani Kiwanga, Vincent Meessen, Sara Ouhammadou, Lydia Ourahmane, The Otolith Group – Anjalika Sagar & Kodwo Eshun, Mounira Al Solh, Lorenzo Pezzani/Hostile Environment(s).

## Curator

Silvia Franceschini

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De Standaard

